

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 28, 2020

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the Hon. Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Edmund Dillon, MP, Member for Point Fortin, seeking leave from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Sessional Report of the Fourth Session (2018/2019), Eleventh Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Esmond Forde)*]
2. Notification of Her Excellency the President in respect of the nomination of Dr. Simon Alexis, for appointment as a Member of the Police Service Commission. [*Mr. E. Forde*]
3. Annual Report of the Operations of the Interception of Communications Act, Chap. 15:08 for the period January to December 2017. [*The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young)*]
4. Sexual Offences (Amendment to Schedule 1) Order, 2020. [*Hon. S. Young*]
5. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government on the Twentieth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on the Examination into the Approval Process for Land Use in Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]

6. Second Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts on the Twenty-Seventh Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Examination of the Expenditure and Internal Controls of the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago for the years 2010 to 2018. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
7. White Paper on the National Cultural Recognition Policy. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Presentation)

National Security Security, Safety and Protection of Citizens

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the honour to present the following report:

Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security in the Fifth Session (2019/2020), Eleventh Parliament on an Inquiry into Crime: the Security, Safety and Protection of the Citizens.

Cannabis Control Bill, 2019

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the honour to present the following report:

Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cannabis Control Bill, 2019 in the Fifth Session, Eleventh Parliament.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are seven questions for oral answer. We will be answering all seven. There

are no questions for written response.

**Completion of Schools
(Details of)**

17. Mr. Fazal Karim (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

With regard to the announcement that \$800 million dollars were allocated to complete schools yet to be completed since 2015, could the Minister provide:

- a) the list of schools to be completed; and
- b) the expected commencement and completion dates for each school in part (a)?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in September 2015, upon assuming office we encountered a disorganized school construction programme with 116 construction projects in various stages of completion and billions of dollars owed to contractors.

On closer examination we found that contracts for 46 of these projects were awarded during a six-month period between March 2015 and September 2015, in an election year. The financial commitment of these 46 projects amounted to approximately \$894 million; this was in addition to \$2.1 billion in commitments to the incomplete projects initiated earlier than 2015. All told at September 2015, the total commitment of the Ministry of Education for incomplete and ongoing school construction projects was in excess of \$3 billion.

Given the drastic decline in revenues from petroleum which began in 2014 and accelerated in 2015, burdening the State with additional commitments in the latter half of 2015 to the tune of \$894 million can only be considered as irresponsible and unsustainable.

Further, in September 2015, when we assumed office with oil and gas prices plummeting, we found that several contractors were already owed substantial sums

which negatively affected their ability to maintain construction site activity.

Faced with this challenge, the Ministry of Education has been using its resources available to it to settle the amounts owed. Over the past four years hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent to pay overdue accounts from previous years and associated claims and high court judgments awarded to contractors. The sheer weight of the remaining indebtedness is still daunting in addition to almost \$1 billion in funds provided under the IDF over the last four years to the Ministry of Education to settle debts to school building contractors incurred by the previous Government, the Ministry of Finance has also raised \$400 million directly to settle arrears of payments owed to these contractors using MTS as a pay agent.

Madam Speaker, in view of the massive debt burden and economic challenges we faced, one of the practical approaches taken was to develop a priority listing of schools for completion. This priority list largely comprised incomplete ECCE centres, primary schools and secondary school projects, but also included a few completely new projects. This list initially numbered 22 projects but was later expanded to 27 projects.

To complete these 27 projects the Ministry of Finance has been authorized to raise \$800 million in loan financing, \$400 million of which has already been raised, and MTS has been selected as the implementing agency for the projects. The 27 priority projects are as follows: Belmont Boys' RC School, Santa Flora Government Primary, Malabar Government Primary, Ramai Trace SDMS Primary, Siparia Union Presbyterian Primary, San Juan Boys' and Girls' Government Primary, Marabella Boys' and Girls' Anglican Primary, Lower Morvant Government Primary, Piccadilly Government Primary, Moruga AC Primary, St. Phillip's Government Primary, Fanny Village Government Primary, Chatham Government Primary, Belle Vue ECCE, Wallerfield ECCE, La Horquetta ECCE,

Egypt Oasis ECCE, Holy Cross College, Arima Central Secondary, Mount Hope Secondary, St. Joseph Secondary, Barataria North Secondary, Toco Secondary, Bishops Anstey High, St. Augustine Girls' High, Hillview College and Holy Name Convent.

Madam Speaker, one of these priority projects is already complete and construction has already resumed at nine other priority projects. The approximate start and completion dates of these schools are as follows: Belmont Boys' RC Primary, status, school completed and occupied, outstanding payment to consultants is pending.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your speaking time is now spent. Supplemental, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, could you tell us, I know you were on the way to saying some that are completed, could you tell us during that period of time whether—you said one was fully completed. Are there any other schools that have been fully completed and occupied over the last four years of your tenure?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon. A. Garcia: Madam Speaker, I was very clear in my response. One of those schools has been completed, that is the Belmont Boys' RC School. I do not see the reason for asking that question, it is just repeating what I have said. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, did that school start under your tenure or was it an inherited school?

Madam Speaker: Member, I will not allow that based on the question that was asked and the answer given. Any more supplemental questions? Okay.

**Ministerial Statement
(Details of Procurement Regulations)**

29. Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

With regard to the House of Representatives Ministerial Statement on February 22, 2019, could the Minister state:

- a) whether a revised draft of the Procurement Regulations was submitted; and
- b) the expected approval date for the Regulations?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Act No. 1 of 2015 pertaining to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property states at section 63 that:

“The Minister may, on the recommendation of the Office, make regulations to give effect to the provisions of this Act, including regulations with respect to—

- (a) the conduct of challenge proceedings under Part V; and
- (b) the addition to, or removal from, an ineligibility list under section 58.

(2) Regulations made under this section may provide that the contravention of any regulation constitutes an offence and may prescribe penalties for any offence not exceeding a fine of one million dollars and imprisonment for five years.

(3) Regulations made under this section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament.”

On various occasions in 2019, draft procurement regulations were submitted by the Procurement Regulator to the Minister of Finance who sent them to legal counsel for review to determine whether the draft regulations were *intra vires* the Act.

The Ministry of Finance also undertook its own internal review to determine whether the draft regulations were consistent with the aims and objectives of the Act.

The Procurement Regulator was subsequently advised of the comments of legal counsel and the Ministry's own views on the draft regulations, and the regulations were revised by the regulator and resubmitted.

There were also discussions and an exchange of views on the wording of the Act itself particularly the manner in which government to government contracts and public/private partnerships should be treated, as well as how the disposal of public property should be handled, and whether further amendments to the Act should be made before it is fully proclaimed.

The last correspondence from the regulator was received by the Minister of Finance on December 18, 2019, in which the regulator indicated among other things, that his office should not be responsible for the disposal of public property because the Office of Procurement Regulation is a regulatory and oversight body and should not be directly involved in matters which it is required to regulate. This point has been accepted and requires an amendment to section 13 of the Act.

The regulator also gave his views on section 7 of the Act in that letter with respect to government to government and public/private partnership projects. These views will be considered in the final proposed amendments to the Act. Naturally, the final form of the regulations will flow from the final form of the Act.

Following that letter of December 18, 2019, the draft regulations and proposed amendments to the Act were submitted to Cabinet and sent to the Legislative Review Committee for final review. Barring unforeseen circumstances, it is anticipated that the final amendments to the Act will be laid and debated in Parliament in March 2020, followed by the regulations shortly thereafter.

**Budget Statement 2020
(Payment of Government Bonds)**

30. Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Given that the Budget Statement 2020 indicated that the Government would offer \$3 billion, in the first instance, in interest bearing Government bonds to all eligible VAT-registered businesses to meet VAT arrears, could the Minister provide the number of bonds paid out to eligible businesses to date and the accompanying value?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. No interest bearing government bonds to meet VAT arrears have been issued to any businesses to date. However, it is anticipated that the first tranche of these bonds in the amount of \$1 billion will be issued by the end of March 2020, with two more tranches of \$1 billion each to follow shortly thereafter.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. Minister: could you state what was the delay of issuing any of these tranches of the VAT refund via bonds based on your budget statement in October 2019?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: There was no delay, Madam Speaker. We had always indicated that these bonds would be issued in the first quarter of 2020, calendar 2020. However, I can say that one of the things that we have considered is what the relevant interest rate should be, and the relevant tenor of the bonds in order to ensure that businesses derive maximum benefit from the bonds, but there was no delay.

Madam Speaker: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, bearing in mind the percentage that you had on the bond issue, is there any thought process of changing the interest rate on that in pursuance of the bond to come?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister state what will be the interest bearing amount or the interest rate on the first tranche of bonds?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, what we are seeking to do is to ensure that the bonds would be traded at par; these are interest bearing tax-free bonds. The yield curve currently for three-year financing to the Government is 3 per cent, but those are tax-payable interest bonds. So you have to gross-up the tax-free interest to get the interest rates, so we are looking at it closely, but it will be somewhere between 2½ and 3 per cent based on further discussions with the banks to see that they would trade the bonds at par, so people will get 100 cents on the dollar. That is what we are seeking to do.

Madam Speaker: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, what could be the Government's position in relation to companies which have decided not to go into the bond issue or participate in it and stay outside of that realm, what will happen to their VAT refunds which have been long outstanding?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I think in my response to the supplementary question from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I would have allayed any concerns the Member for Caroni East would have, but let me elucidate further.

If the bonds are tradable and transferable and tax-free, and the interest rate is so chosen so that commercial banks will purchase the bonds at par, they are equivalent to cash. So if a businessman gets an instrument which is a government-guaranteed bond tax-free, that can be purchased by a commercial bank at par, then—and he does not want to take it, I would be surprised.

1.50 p.m.

**Issuance of Importation Licence
(Private Operators)**

31. Mr. David Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister state whether the Ministry has given consideration to issuing an importation licence to private operators to import fuel?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, import and export licenses in respect of goods that are still subject to import/export control such as transportation fuels are issued by the trade licence unit of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The section operates under the authority of the Imports and Exports Trade Regulations of 1941 as continued in force by section 10 of the Trade Ordinance 8 of 1958 and the Third Schedule of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01. At present, Madam Speaker, Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited is the only entity authorized to import fuel to the domestic market. At present there are no plans to open up the market to private operators.

Madam Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister, Paria Fuel Trading Company as you just stated is the only company in Trinidad that has the rights to import fuel. If that company is sold by the Government in the near coming months, would there be consideration to open up the market for the importation of fuel by private investors?

Sen. The Hon. F. Khan: Madam Speaker, the issue of Paria Trading and its future is intrinsically linked with the current negotiations between Patriotic Energies and the Government. I can give this House the assurance that at no point in time would the country be out of fuel, and for whatever reason when the refinery restarts it will supply the domestic market. Until then Paria would be allowed to

trade in importing fuel as the sole trader. [*Desk thumping*]

**Regional Examination for Nursing Registration
(Status Update)**

38. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister provide a status update on the results of the Regional Examination for Nursing Registration (RENr) on October 03, 2019?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to the Nursing Personnel Act, Chap. 29:53, and regulations made thereunder, the Regional Examination for Nursing Registration (RENr), falls under the direct, and let me repeat, direct remit of the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago, not the Ministry of Health. However, the Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago has indicated that the Regional Examination for Nursing Registration held on October 03 2019, were released by the Caribbean Examinations Council on 21 January, 2020, and to date, all candidates who wrote the examination have received their results. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

**Influenza Virus
(Mortality Rate)**

39. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Could the Minister provide the number of confirmed deaths from the influenza virus over the past twelve months?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much again, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this question deals with the number of deaths for the influenza virus. The annual number of confirmed deaths with respect to the influenza virus is as follows:

- 2013—and pay attention Trinidad and Tobago—2013, no data available. Data was either not collected or made known to the public.

- 2014, no data available. Data either not collected or made known to the public. What was being hidden, no one knows.
- 2015, no data available. Data either not collected or made known to the public.
- 2016, under this administration, zero. We started to collect data and make it known.
- 2017, zero.
- 2018, seven.
- 2019, 44.

Over the last 12 months, February 19, 2019 to February 18, 2020, the number of confirmed deaths from the influenza virus is 41.

Before I take my seat, Madam Speaker, I would like to put on record the interest of the Member of Fyzabad for influenza deaths, and ask him directly, and I would give way, do you agree with the statement made by Caroni East—

Madam Speaker: Member.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Supplemental Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Speaker, question No. 40 to the Minister of Health—*[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Order! Order! Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Peter Mayer
(Status Update on Suspension)**

40. Dr. Lackram Bodoë (*Fyzabad*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

With regard to the suspension of privileges for Dr. Peter Mayer, visiting neurosurgeon, could the Minister provide a status update on his suspension inclusive of the reason(s) for the suspension?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much,

Madam Speaker. The South-West Regional Health Authority has indicated that visiting privileges of Dr. Peter Mayer have been suspended since December 2019 and that he can reapply for privileges based on new guidelines that were recently approved by the board of directors, and due consideration would be given to his application. The key reason for the suspension was concerns raised about alleged and potential breaches of patient confidentiality. Thank you again, Madam Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

National Cultural Recognition Policy

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have been authorized by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago to make the following statement. I have the privilege of laying before this honourable House the National Cultural Recognition Policy for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as a White Paper.

On February 12, 2020, I had the privilege of laying before this honourable House the country's first National Policy on Culture and the Arts as a Green Paper for public comment. That groundbreaking policy initiative, with its vision of a thriving, inclusive and dynamic cultural sector at the centre of national development is the impetus for this National Cultural Recognition Policy which responds to several goals and objectives in the draft National Policy on Culture and the Arts.

Two of these related goals are:

1. To enhance cultural confidence by enriching the participation of all in cultural development that transforms the social and economic experiences of the nation; and
2. To support artists, entrepreneurs and industry associations in the

production of high quality output.

The National Cultural Recognition Policy's contribution to these goals is premised on the view that encouraging and rewarding cherished qualities in the nation's artists, will produce artists who innovate and consistently produce superior cultural product while encouraging consistent financial supporters of Trinidad and Tobago's art forms.

The National Cultural Recognition Policy will deliver three types of culture recognition initiatives:

1. Cultural awards which seek to honour excellence in culture and the arts;
2. Cultural ambassadors who will promote the culture of Trinidad and Tobago afield; and
3. Cultural legends which would commemorate the long and meritorious work of artists and artistes in the cultural sector.

The cultural awards component carries 10 categories of awards, allowing a range of artists at different stages in their journey in the arts to be recognized. The 10 categories are:

- i. Best new artist/artiste/group.
- ii. Most consistent artist/artiste/group.
- iii. Most innovative artist/artiste/group.
- iv. International breakthrough artist/artiste/group.
- v. Outreach/advocate individual/artist/artiste/group.
- vi. Cultural Heritage award.
- vii. Sustainable Environment award.
- viii. Cultural Entrepreneur of the Year.
- ix. Champion of the Arts award.
- x. Culture and Arts Education award.

Most of these awards target artists, organizations, groups and educators in culture and the arts. However, the Champion of the Arts award targets persons or organizations which consistently support, sustain, and promote the arts and culture of Trinidad and Tobago through their financial generosity. These awards require individuals to be of good character and to uphold the values and principles incumbent upon a representative of Trinidad and Tobago. The cultural ambassador in particular will be expected to promote and advance the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and to promote this nation globally as a premier cultural and heritage tourism destination in the Caribbean.

The National Cultural Recognition Policy will devolve a range of benefits to awardees and the nation as a whole. Beneficiaries of the cultural awards programme will have the permanent honour of having received such a distinguished award. Cultural ambassadors will receive a diplomatic passport for the duration of their term and an honorarium. The cultural legend will receive an array of benefits including:

- i. A one-time bursary in their name for undergraduate degrees in any performing, literary or visual arts discipline at a local university;
- ii. The issuance of a diplomatic passport to the legend for the duration of his or her life;
- iii. A lifetime pass for two at national performing spaces;
- iv. A commemorative biographical magazine; and
- v. A permanent artist expression for display at the national museum and art gallery of Trinidad and Tobago; along with:
- vi. A cash benefit of \$250,000.

A National Cultural Recognition Committee will oversee this array of award programmes. The committee will have a three-year life cycle and comprise senior

public officers and cultural experts drawn from academia, the media, young artists, the business sector, and cultural organizations representative of the two major ethnic groups in Trinidad and Tobago. Secretarial services for this committee will be provided by the Culture Division of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts.

Madam Speaker, the National Cultural Recognition Policy will reward and encourage excellence in the arts, nurture talent and culture in the arts, and impact the expansion and sustainability of financial contributions to culture and the arts from sources outside of the Government. I am therefore pleased to contribute this important initiative to the culture and ecology of Trinidad and Tobago as a stimulator and energizer to an already dynamic cultural sector to ensure that the sector deepens its impact on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago and the lives of every citizen of this beloved nation. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have been authorized by the Cabinet of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to make the following statement.

Madam Speaker, I last addressed this honourable House on the 31st January this year, on the measures that Government were putting in place to mitigate the importation of the novel coronavirus, now called COVID-19, into Trinidad and Tobago, and to treat with the virus if it arrives on our shores. At that time the assurance was given to this honourable House that the Government will continue to be transparent in this matter and will keep the population informed of developments. In that address to the honourable House in late—[*Interruption*]
Madam Speaker, could the Member for Naparima please be quiet?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, let us try and abide by the Standing Orders.

Statements by Ministers
Hon. T. Deyalsingh

2020.02.28

Please, if one has to speak, speak in low tones. Minister of Health, please continue.

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Thank you. In that address to the honourable House in late January, it was indicated that there were approximately 9,776 confirmed cases of the virus worldwide with approximately 9,658 in China, with the remaining 118 spread over 20 countries.

At that time, and in an effort to mitigate against importation of the virus into Trinidad and Tobago, the Government imposed travel restrictions on visitors from China for a 14-day period after departure from China. This honourable House was also advised at that time of the measures that were being put in place at ports of entry for thermal screening of arriving passengers. There is currently thermal screening of passengers at the nation's airports and heightened vigilance at sea ports inclusive of commercial and cruise vessels. It is also to be emphasized that at this time there are no confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 in this country. However, we need to continue to be proactive and vigilant.

Madam Speaker, the situation with regard to the spread of this virus has now escalated considerably. From approximately 10,000 confirmed cases in late January, the number of confirmed cases worldwide has now increased to 82,294 with 78,630 of these cases in China and the remaining 3,664 now spread to 46 countries worldwide. The World Health Organization has recently indicated that it is not "if" but "when" the virus will reach pandemic proportions. Additionally, PAHO yesterday called on countries of the region to ramp up preparations and response capabilities against COVID-19. It is noteworthy that CARPHA has now revised the risk factor for this region from low to moderate to high in respect of the importation of the virus into the region.

This honourable House is assured that the Government has been proactive in

treating with this issue. The Government is fully aware of the risk factors to this country of this virus which is considerably highly virulent in that it is fast-spreading, infectious and aggressive. Through you, Madam Speaker, the Government wishes to assure this honourable House that it is in control of the situation and has put measures and resources in place to manage this risk. Our immediate focus remains to interrupt the transmission of the virus to this country.

In this regard, yesterday the Cabinet took a decision to impose travel restrictions, similar to what prevails for travel from China, to five other countries where there is the greatest local spread of the virus. These countries are: South Korea, Italy, Iran, Japan and Singapore. Further, travel restrictions will be imposed on other countries as and when required given the rapid spread of this virus. It is noteworthy that the number of new cases outside China is now greater than within China.

Given the serious threat of the rapid spread of imported cases across the globe and the need to protect health and well-being of the population in the event of an outbreak here, the following measures have been implemented to increase the capacity for isolation and quarantine to treat patients and to prevent the spread of the virus through the following measures:

- The increase number of quarantine beds at Caura Hospital from four to 24 becoming available in another two weeks;
- If required, the use of the 67-bed facility at the St. James Medical Complex within two weeks, and access to the new 85-bed facility at the Port of Spain General Hospital. It is noteworthy that these facilities were designed and built a year ago with their own isolation capacity; and
- In the event of a major outbreak, a dedicated facility within the Couva

Hospital and Multi-Training Facility will be made available to treat with patients. This will provide another 230 beds.

The Ministry of Health is examining the requirements to make such an isolation unit and quarantine facility available at the Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility, and plans have already been put in place for speedy implementation. In this regard, the Ministry is at present conducting an audit of equipment and supplies required in the event of a serious outbreak of the virus in this country and will take steps to source what is required.

In moving forward, a holistic approach is required to mitigate the high risk of emerging new infectious diseases which have occurred in the last decade and with the potential to disrupt national life. As such, there is a need for a multi-sectoral approach that will act as the main driver for further action as there can be severe implications for the country for key sectors including: tourism, sports, culture, trade, foreign affairs and national security. This will also be the management strategy in dealing with any emerging infectious diseases in future. In this regard, Cabinet recently approved a new grading system as an alert for public health emergencies.

The Cabinet yesterday agreed also to the establishment of a standing multi-sectoral committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Medical Officer and comprising representatives of relevant organizations to treat with COVID-19 and any emerging infectious diseases. Some of the organisations on this committee are: relevant arms of the Ministry of National Security such as the Defence Force, the Police Service; the Immigration Department; and the ODPM, in addition to representatives from the THA and TEMA (Tobago Emergency Management Agency). The committee will be charged with the following responsibilities:

1. Translating the World Health Organization's strategic objectives to

- the national context;
2. Leading the development and implementation of an integrated and multi-sectoral activity to execute the contextualized objectives;
 3. Providing oversight to the monitoring and evaluation of these activities; and
 4. Reporting to the Minister of Health and the Minister of National Security on progress and achievements made with regard to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 or any other emerging infectious disease.

With these measures the assurance is given to this honourable House that the Ministry of Health is continuously monitoring the progress of COVID-19 within the global, regional and local context, and will scale up its overall response plan with sufficient resources to allow for building local capacity, networks among agencies within the public and private sectors, and training, and most importantly protection of our front-line personnel with full PPE hazmat suits, et cetera.

At the Ministry of Health, it is our responsibility and duty to ensure that the population is protected from any public health risks. As indicated before, we have already instituted precautionary measures, and we are scaling up operations in the event that we have to treat with the virus in terms of isolation centres, quarantine facilities, health personnel, personal protective equipment, pharmaceuticals and other related resources.

As Minister of Health, the assurance is given to the population through you Madam Speaker, that the technocrats at the Ministry of Health will keep the population continuously informed and updated with relevant information concerning COVID-19. The population is urged to take all precautionary actions and adhere strictly to the guidelines and protocols, information and instructions of

our medical and non-medical workers, who continue to go beyond the call of duty in offering an invaluable service to our population.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 24(4), if I am permitted. Hon. Minister, bearing in mind the incubation period had been spoken about by WHO of nine to 14 days, and with the recent finding of that extending to possibly 24 days, the Government's policy on the quarantine for people coming into Trinidad from these five countries, bearing in mind you have 14 days that you spoke about, waiting before coming in, and the incubation period being 24 days, is there any reconsideration on that issue, or are you going to stay with the 14 days?

Hon. T. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, I have seen no definite source of material that can be confirmed, that has been peer reviewed, that says conclusively that the incubation period is 24 days. If you have it make it available. We stand right now at 14 days. We would adhere to WHO guidelines, and if the incubation period is seen to be more than 14 days, the Government would act responsibly and do what is in the best interest [*Desk thumping*] of the every single citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not a matter for political grandstanding. This is a matter for all of us [*Desk thumping*] to come together and show the world that we can fight a common enemy without political ranker. Let us stand together [*Desk thumping*] against this unseen, invisible, common enemy to Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I seek leave to defer this item of business to later in the proceedings in order to

move procedural Motions arising from the interim reports laid today. Thank you, Ma'am.

Madam Speaker: Leave is granted, this item is deferred till later.

GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO DEAL WITH RAMPANT CRIME

Mr. Rodney Charles (*Naparima*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hereby seek leave to move the following Private Members' Motion in my name under the relevant Standing Orders:

Whereas since 2015 this Government has been unable to provide for the safety and security of citizens resulting in increases in serious crimes particularly murder;

And whereas in 2019 Trinidad and Tobago has experienced two consecutive years with over 516 murders and witnessed in 2019 the second highest annual murder rate in its history;

And whereas the Government has been unwilling or unable to articulate specific, measurable, timely, and outputs-oriented crime reduction targets;

And whereas the Government has failed to realize that an 'Whole of Government Approach' to solving crime is necessary;

Be it resolved that this House condemns this Government for its failure to deal with rampant crime. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, before I begin I would like to extend sympathies and condolences to the MP and constituents of Fyzabad. Ms. Kavita Premchand was shot this morning and is fighting for her life at the San Fernando General hospital, we extend sympathies to her family. We also extend condolences to a fisherman who was shot and killed at Otaheite Bay yesterday, and condolences to his family.

Madam Speaker, that lays the sense of recency, the sense of nearness, pervasiveness of crime in Trinidad and Tobago at this time and I would like to identify seven points prior to getting into my presentation. The first, Madam

Mr. Charles

Speaker, fundamental and strong statement, is that this Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley-led administration, given that we are on target for close to 600 murders this year, is clearly not up to the task of providing for our safety and our security. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, with over 2,000 citizens killed since taking office in September 2015, this Rowley-led administration must take shame, if it has any, and do the honourable thing and resign immediately. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, this Rowley-led administration cannot forever continue to blame others for its gross incompetence, since in 2015 it falsely claimed that it was red and ready to deal with crime. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, they must not, never be allowed to get away with the foolishness, that while this National Security Minister is not performing on the job, yet he displays the requisite energy. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, the fifth point. This Rowley-led administration must not use the excuse that it is now belatedly aware from Caricom that crime is a health issue. Was he not aware of this prior to 2015, Madam Speaker? Was he not aware of the People's Partnership—

Madam Speaker: Who is he?

Mr. R. Charles: Who is the he?

Madam Speaker: He.

Mr. R. Charles: The hon. Prime Minister and his Government. The hon. Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, was he not aware—

Madam Speaker: “Was the Member”.

Mr. R. Charles: Was the Member not aware of the People's Partnership sterling performance record in this area [*Desk thumping*] as identified in the IAD report dated November 2016? This Government must call election soon so that our country can find solace, hope, safety and security in the performance oriented and

competent arms of a new UNC Government led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC. [*Desk thumping*] And that is why we are here today in the last days of the most incompetent Government ever seen in this country, and which must be removed forthwith. [*Desk thumping*]

2.20 p.m.

We are here to discuss what is the most pressing crisis in our country today. Never in the history of Trinidad and Tobago have we witnessed crime so pervasive, so overwhelming, and so beyond the capabilities of those charged with its responsibility. Everywhere is unsafe, everyone is scared, no one is untouched by it and we heard today the constituents of Fyzabad. In every corner citizens are indicating that they do not feel safe. Foreign governments are telling their citizens not to come to Trinidad and if they do to exercise extreme caution. We avoid certain areas; we do not go out at certain times; we have become a citizenry governed by and in constant fear of the scourge of crime; we swiftly perform errands and race back home; we think twice about defending ourselves, we are scared even to watch someone the wrong way. This is no way to live, Madam Speaker, no way to exist.

I remember the days when we could go to a neighbourhood parlour without fear; when we could visit even secluded beaches with our families; when you could send your children on errands and not worry, and offer rides to strangers. Not again. What is the background to the crime under this PNM, Madam Speaker? Over 2,200 citizens have been murdered under their watch; 2,200 of my fellow citizens are dead today; 810 murdered under this clueless Minister of National Security. I repeat, 810 living bodies dead; 30 elderly citizens murdered last year—30 elderly citizens. Sexual assault and domestic violence cases increased to 757 in 2018, from 531 one year earlier and 491 were reported in 2016. So it is a

progression of murders and deaths in this society. For the first six weeks of 2020, 10 females have been murdered compared to eight last year. Since 2015 crime has worsened, culminating in a spate of murder, homicides and news reports with headlines like, 11 killed in 24 hours. That is one person being killed every two hours in this country. For heaven's sake where are we going? Is this Baghdad? Is this Afghanistan we are talking about? Is this Gaza? *Express* front page, 7th January:

Bloody Monday...; triple murder in Arima, School Principal stabbed to death.

Express front page, January 16, 2020, just a few weeks ago:

“Kidnapped doctor dies in bloody crash; gunmen kill two in city attack”—and it ends with—“Rampage”—rampage.

Express front page, 17th January this year:

“3 shot dead”

Guardian front page, February 12, 2020:

“Another bloody day...

Six more murdered”—for heaven's sake.

In the Senate recently, Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Security in his characteristically modeled response to Sen. Hosein's well-articulated Motion on crime, attempted to blame the UNC for his poor performance record. And we could say: Father forgive him, for he knows not what he says, perhaps too young, perhaps too unexperienced, perhaps too unqualified or too lacking in a track record to know that it is the People's National Movement that invented, sustained, maintained and engrained crime in the culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Al-Rawi: 48(6), Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will give you a little leeway. Please continue.

Mr. Charles (cont'd)

Mr. R. Charles: Tell us about Gene Miles, they do not want to hear about it, who was sent to the mad house for whistleblowing. Tell us about the gas station racket and I am responding to his response in another place. And it will be brief, it will be brief. Tell us about O'Halloran, tell us about—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: You are responding to his? Who is the "his"?

Mr. R. Charles: Would the Member tell us about O'Halloran who broke the law with impunity and was handsomely rewarded.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). This is a response to a Senate response? That is beyond our remit.

Madam Speaker: I will rule on 48(1) on the issue of relevance having regard to how your Motion is crafted. Okay, so I uphold the objection.

Mr. R. Charles: I will end by saying that crime is a PNM problem and they must take ownership of crime. That has nothing to do with what was said in the Senate. It speaks to what we are talking about today, crime. Meanwhile the cries of mothers, while we are talking, the cries of mothers of murdered children fall on deaf ears. The mother of Gabriella Du Barry allegedly murdered by estranged husband on January 09. Hear what this mother said. Quote:

"It is really, really bad. It is really out of control...

You know you hearing...(murders) all over but you did not think it would come home..."

The *Guardian* 20 November, 2019:

"...a relative of Grill King businessman Randy Neil Dwarika"—said:

"People doing an honest living, law-abiding citizens are not safe anymore in this country..."—nobody not safe at all here.

These are the cries, Madam Speaker, of everyday citizens.

It is clear to all that those on the other side have no plan, no vision, no will,

no capacity to take us out of this dark hole. [*Desk thumping*] This administration is at a dead end, it is lost, it is floundering, making excuses. Madam Speaker, we need—"we" need to set measureable targets on crime detection rates, police response times, murder reduction rates, lower recidivism rates, less bullying in schools, we need safe zones, our children, our women, our elderly, our visitors must feel safe. This Minister continues to operate without a vision, refuses to deal frontally with problems at hand and this Minister reshuffles his problem from one area to the next. This Minister, his friend and mentor, the hon. Attorney General is even worse, Madam Speaker.

Recently the hon. Attorney General in his haste to appear that he is doing something about crime, proffered that the abolition of preliminary enquiries would eliminate over 25,000 cases from the Magistrates' Court. He had to be reminded publicly and forcibly that this would not bring relief since it would lead to these matters being shifted to the Office of the DPP which is, as most institutions under this clueless administration, significantly under resourced.

Madam Speaker, on January 28, 2020, this clueless National Security Minister held a belated "crime-stakers" meeting to discuss crime strategies. Minister Young said and I quote:

We wanted to show that we were listening to the people.

Madam Speaker, are they serious? In the dying months of this administration this clueless Minister tells us that he is now listening. Who are they fooling? This is back to front Government. You come prepared with a plan and a vision, you articulate the vision, you operationalize the vision and then you consult. You do not after four and a half years ask stakeholders, "What should we do because we are lost and we are floundering"? What was the point of that meeting? What new plans came out of it? What measurable targets would he

find? What new strategies put in place?

You know what, Madam Speaker, the national witness that this Dr. Rowley-led administration making a public confession of failure. They do nothing except talk, unmindful of the fact that performance beats old talk any day. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM's main concern is to hide its incompetence and ineptitude. During the same meeting the National Security Minister said:

Attendees wanted less front page coverage of crime stories.

He further stated:

It is up to the media houses to decide.

Madam Speaker, have you ever heard such arrant nonsense? Ostrich-like—they wish to hide their abysmal failures. They cannot—we are seeing it, we are feeling it, citizens of the country are feeling it, it is coming closer and closer to home. Days before the PR exercise, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce pleaded with the Minister to take a more serious approach to crime. It said:

“...the Minister of National Security in his leadership role”—this is the Chamber of Commerce speaking—“must acknowledge that we are not just in a difficult situation, but in fact in a crisis regarding crime and do not have the luxury of time to deal with it.”

It went on to say that the TTPS needs help and suggested that the Government should seek assistance from its Caricom partners who have been successful in dealing with crime. We say on this side, accept that you have failed and do the patriotic thing and make way for a UNC Government that knows what it is doing. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, I will show you that under the leadership of the Member for Siparia, we took steps, laudable steps that were acknowledged by the IDB [*Desk thumping*] to deal with crime. Under the People's Partnership Government

serious crime were significantly reduced after consistent efforts and an unrelenting commitment to take back our communities by 2014 we recorded the lowest number of serious crimes in 31 years. [*Desk thumping*] Overall serious crime was cut almost by half. Burglaries, robberies, car crimes went down by more than 15 per cent; drug crimes were down by more than 15 per cent; shootings down by 19 per cent and kidnappings down by 41 per cent. That is performance. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, murders went down by a fifth; that is 20 per cent. We can stand tall and proud that we have the answers on this side, we have the performance record, we have the track record and we have competent people to manage the crime scourge in this country. Madam Speaker, we introduced the Rapid Response Unit, a counter-human trafficking unit, Community Comfort Patrols—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Shut down.

Mr. R. Charles: “Ah getting to that”, they shut down everything. Thirteen surveillance bays along major highways; we increased CCTV by 500 cameras; opened eight modern police stations and countless other effective measures. I will name some, I will name some.

One, and I must give my colleague Dr. Tim Gopeesingh credit for the first one, the Student Support Services of the Ministry of Education, implemented a bullying intervention programme in nine primary schools in Port of Spain. You remember that my colleague? [*Desk thumping*] The National Parenting Programme, an initiative of the Ministry of Gender Youth and Child Development, introduced a National Parenting Policy, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] We were ahead of the game. You know why we did that, Madam Speaker? You know what is different between us and them? And I go to the IDB, I go to the IDB for

solace, Madam Speaker. It says and I quote:

“However, crime prevention is now recognized as an indispensable component of any meaningful approach to dealing with crime. While suppression was the primary response to crime in Trinidad and Tobago in the past, successive governments have recognized that this”—initiative has its—“place. Within the last decade there has been a proliferation of preventative interventions, and an increasing”—hear the important point—“an increasing recognition within state and non-state agencies that preventative approaches are just as important as, or even more important than, suppressive approaches to crime control.”

They are into suppression, we are into prevention and suppression. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, hear some of the interventions we had. Defining Masculine Excellence Programme. That was a programme of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, masculine excellence, critical problem. [*Desk thumping*] In 2014 the Citizen Security Programme received a loan from the IDB to expand this project from 20 to 30 at-risk communities. The aim is to re-engineer the culture of gun violence in at-risk communities. We were going into the communities and doing the necessary hard work, [*Desk thumping*] not coming and holding gallerying meetings with stakeholders to say as the Minister said, to give the impression that we are listening to them.

Madam Speaker, from January to November 2013 we expanded operations of the Youth Micro-Entrepreneurship Programme, giving the young people hope—hope. The Ministry of Justice was tasked with implementing the Prison Service Reform and Rehabilitation Programme and the Women's Institute for Alternative Development and—this is close to me—was a significant advocate at the UN for

the passage of the Arms Trade Treaty.

Madam Speaker, we had a holistic, all embracing, comprehensive approach to crime solution. [*Desk thumping*] And you know what hurts Trinidad and Tobago, you know what hurts the PNM destroyed these initiatives when they came into office. [*Desk thumping*] They axed Community Comfort Patrols, they reduced allocations for programmes aimed at re-engineering disadvantage youth towards an alternative lives. They failed, failed to produce performance improvements in MiLAT, MYPART, scouts, police youth clubs, cadets, 4-H Clubs and boy's scouts. When you tell them we need to emphasis scouts all they do is put more scout troops, you have to rethink and re-engineer the curriculum, and the vision of the scouting movement and the cadets. That takes a certain amount of brain, that takes a certain amount of intelligence and that takes a certain amount of thought to make it happen. It does not reside on that side.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West, during a Joint Select Committee on National Security said and I quote:

“It appears as though some members of the African community...have fallen behind.”

And that was recorded in the *Trinidad Express* February 02, 2020.

But after all this old talk and urging our inner city youths to not lag behind, the facts tell a different story. Budget allocations for programmes targeted at at-risk youth most times are not fully spent or inadequately resourced. Madam Speaker, I want to make a statement here today, they do not care about their support based in this country. They do not care about poor black youth whose records show they make up the bulk of the prison population. I am not dog whistling today, I am stating a fact. If the IDB could tell us that 76 per cent of the prison population is comprised of inner city black youth, is it not the responsibility

Mr. Charles (cont'd)

of those on that side to take responsibility, mentor, nurture, resource, re-engineer and change. [*Desk thumping*] Lazy people—and they cannot say—I would be ashamed, Madam Speaker, if the kinds of crime existed in Naparima, I would call the parents, call the churches, I would be talking to the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West, now the Member for Arouca/Maloney who is handling family services, come into Naparima and help. Look, the Crime and Problem Analysis Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, police station district to the highest number of murders between 2006 and 2013 and 2009 and 2013, the biggest is Belmont. Oh heaven's sake, you are their constituents, they elected you for hope—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are your constituents.

Mr. R. Charles: They are your constituents, sorry, sorry. I get emotional, Madam Speaker. They are your constituents, they are looking to you for salvation and hope and somebody has to tell the PNM that they have a responsibility to young black males in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] at this time who are crying out for help, for heaven's sake. Besson Street police, 21 per cent of crime, murders, Besson Street; Movant; Arima; West end; St. Joseph; Belmont; Barataria; Arouca. The list goes on and on and on and they have no shame on that side, no shame, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I spoke about not resourcing the institutions in those communities that need help. Madam Speaker, the Movant/Laventille Initiative, \$2 million budgeted in 2018, only \$386,000 spent; police youth clubs, \$6 billion budgeted in 2018, \$1.6 billion spent. And they come and cry crocodile tears, we love the people who support us. Shame on you. [*Desk thumping*] YTEPP, from \$55 million spent in 2018, \$10 million budgeted in 2020; Youth Apprenticeship Programme in agriculture, \$500,000 allocated, nothing spent in 2018, nothing in

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2019, shame on you; [*Desk thumping*] 4-H clubs, a measly \$33,000 spent out of \$400,000 allocated in 2018. Does that show caring? Does that show empathy? Does that show concern?

Madam Speaker, the National Mentorship Programme under the Ministry of Sport 2.3 budgeted for 2018, nothing spent, not one red cent spent. And this is a Government that claims that they are interested in youth. The PNM is the problem [*Desk thumping*] they are not the solution. I am not dog whistling today, they have failed their supporters, they have failed inner city youths, they have, they—and I specifically mean this PNM. This was not the PNM of Eric Williams. This Rowley-led PNM has failed young black men period. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot spend \$126,000 on the scout movement but \$198 million on the SSA in 2020 and say that you are concerned about youth.

Madam Speaker, money talks. All the SSA does—because they cannot give us the intelligence on the gangs, because they would be able to anticipate what they are doing and stop them in their tracks. All they are doing is spying on the Opposition so that they could come and say “who getting lock up and who eh getting lock up” tomorrow. Do your work, Madam Speaker. I want to make this point to Trinidad and Tobago. You see, it has to do with the transcendental mission of Members of Parliament. You cannot, and I am speaking specifically to my colleagues, attempt to criminalize a young man from Beetham whose main fault was that he did not know how to express his utter disgust at poor representation by his MP. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, that should be a teachable moment for any MP who cares about his constituents, but here you take the gallery and you lock them up and you get on the press, teach the young boy he needs help. I plead with you. You cannot close down Petrotrin and be totally blind to the ripple effect of unemployment in

Mr. Charles (cont'd)

the line in Pointe-a-Pierre and Battoo Avenue in Marabella. You have failed your supporters. We looked after the interest of inner city black youths better than you, [*Desk thumping*] and the IAD and the Inter-American Development Bank knows it. You know, it reminds me of the late Mackie Padmore, the week before he died he made the statement on Power 102 and I must get it. He said, we love the PNM, but the PNM does not love us. That was the late Mackie Padmore's statement.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: When?

Mr. R. Charles: It was made just before he died, it had to be last year, a year ago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This PNM?

Mr. R. Charles: This PNM. This PNM, Madam Speaker, is like a fish out of water when it comes to fighting crime. This PNM is unable to restrain violence at every level, in homes, between spouses, on the streets, in temples, in mosques, churches, everywhere you go. We have a Minister of National Security who take no ownership for increasing crime. With 88 murders in 56 days and rapidly increasing, he sees no issue, no issue at all, ending in 2018 with 516 murders and 2019 with 538 murders and heading in 2020 for a record forecast, Pontius Pilate. Worse than the Member for Point Fortin who did a better job as Minister of National Security based on his performance record and the murder rate. Minister Dillon, we apologize to you, we did not think it could get worse, it has. Hear the Minister of National Security, hear. Trinidad and Tobago listen, quote:

“I don't for a moment have to have an excuse as to why crime is existing and what is going on with respect to crime. At the end of the day I am not responsible for crime...”

That is the Minister of National Security, handsomely paid and confessing that he is not responsible for crime. Well if you are not responsible, get out! Resign! [*Desk thumping*] Having produced no results in the last four years, crime

could never be their first priority. Minister Dillon said, it is reported in the *Guardian*, October 11, 2015, this Government sees fighting crime as the number one priority. That is what they said.

Now in their fifth year they attempting to get the Chinese to construct a forensic science centre. They say it will be fully accredited, but can we believe them, can we believe them. They have no crime plan, their detection rate is abysmally low, no solutions and do not tell them about police response times and never ask for commitments on reducing the murder rate. They always know but can never act. Speaking in Parliament while discussing the Interception of Communications (Amdt.) Bill, 2020, the:

“Attorney General...said an attempted assassination was made from within the prison as recently as Tuesday”—11th February.

He—“said legislation is needed in order to enforce more efficient crime-fighting techniques.”

Here we go again, here we go again. Any time you have a problem, pass a law.

Madam Speaker, the Attorney General's solution to—and I am presuming here, the Attorney General's solution to a child wetting his bed would most likely be passing a law prohibiting bedwetting and making it a non-bailable criminal offence subject to fines of \$1 million and or 10 years in prison. But the IDB tells us it is not about suppression and laws, it is about prevention, prevention. [*Desk thumping*] And do not tell me because I have never lost every case before the Privy Council.

If this Government was serious on dealing with the issue of cell phones, Madam Speaker, in the prisons, this would have been dealt with since 2016. What has happened to the talk about jammers and other internal security measures? But, “nooo, lazy, lazy, we not doing that, pass ah law”, come to Parliament and waste our time. The Attorney General claimed that he had the names, whereabouts the

Mr. Charles (cont'd)

alleged activities of 2,459 suspected gang members nationwide, they were known to the authorities since 2017. Why was nothing done to intercept and disrupt them as except for passing laws?

2.50 p.m.

We are told by the AG that the Anti-Gang Act would give the Government a fighting chance in the war on crime. Clearly, clearly, clearly it was just the—that the Member was just “gallerying” as he constantly does. How many gang members have been convicted? How many?

Mr. Al-Rawi: How many charged?

Mr. R. Charles: Do not tell me about charged. In our system they are innocent until proven guilty. But, Madam Speaker, we need to focus on rehabilitative justice rather than youths being convicted for life sentences. We have a Government focused on jailing more and more of our inner city males and our able-bodied citizens, constantly overcrowding our prisons. Madam Speaker, on a per capita basis we have more prisoners than China, Colombia, Jamaica, Iraq, Syria, and Mexico. Shame, shame, shame on a per capita basis. [*Desk thumping*] On every front they have failed. I challenge them to name one tangible success in the war on crime.

They talk about our borders being locked down. Madam Speaker, *Newsday* reported that there are currently 91 illegal ports of entry known to the security forces. In July 2018, the Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, told reporters that there were 140 illegal ports of entry in Trinidad and 19 in Tobago. So it jumped from 91, to 140 plus 19, and the National Security Minister, Minister Stuart Young, has since put the number at 240. You know, the left hand do not even know what the right hand knows about how many illegal ports of entry. What we do know, is that as we stand today, they are coming into our country and

populating our country, and the Government does not have a clue of how to stop them, a clue as to how many are in our country.

Madam Speaker, and they talk about OPVs. Ten OPVs under this Rowley-led administration would not solve our border issues. Those are offshore vessels, expensive to maintain, and they operate in the 200 mile exclusive economic zone. But, Madam Speaker, the waters between Trinidad and Venezuela are visible to the eye. We do not need offshore patrol vessels. We need fast patrol vessels that are present and can intercept and outrun the migrant-loaded vessels, and those coming in with drugs, arms and ammunition. What is needed is better management of the coast guard, adequate resources for our modern fleet of coast guard vessels which we supply, and a commitment to perform rather than talk. Why are there instances where our fishermen are under attack and they are nowhere to be found, and we have the case yesterday in Otaheite? Where are our radar systems? Are they functional? Where are the 14 coast guard interceptors which Minister Young promised? Where are the 12 high performance naval vessels we left them? Tied up in Staubles Bay.

Madam Speaker, their incompetence is embarrassing. It is embarrassing. [*Desk thumping*] They have failed on national security and under their watch, our education system which is supposed to stop the pipeline of males to the prisons, it is crumbling. There are issues plaguing our schools, bullying, and you saw how we dealt, how the erudite, high performing Minister Tim Gopeesingh, how he dealt with that in a manner that was complimented by the IDB. What are they doing about bullying in schools, sexual misconduct, physical violence, peer pressure, and the lack of male role models in the teaching system? You have schools with 97 per cent of the teachers female. Where is the role model? Where can these men get the role model?

Madam Speaker, we left them with everything. We left them with the plan, we left them with the strategy, we left them with targets and they killed all. They killed all, and we left them with, I always say—how much is the Heritage Fund?—6 billion and in reserves 10 million, 17 billion—US 17,000,000 million. “Ah get vex, eh.” In this day and age you have no repurposed cadet force in secondary schools in at-risk areas. The Arima Secondary School, none. None in the Arima Secondary School. Twenty-five murders in Arima for 2019, 10 so far for 2020, but none in the Arima Secondary School. I challenge the Minister of Education to tell me I am wrong. La Romaine High School, seven murders in 2018, none. Union/Claxton Bay Senior Comprehensive, none. Marabella North Secondary School, none. Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive, none. Even at the primary level, no scouts in Laventille Boys Government Primary School. What is the Member for Laventille West doing? Shame! Shame! No guides for girls in Laventille Girls Government School.

The Minister of Education himself, hear what the Minister said—and he is a learned fellow. I respect him, he is a friend. So it has to be a misquote. They say:

“...fighting in schools is inevitable and ‘part of growing up’.

In growing up, boys, in particular, would have to fight as a means of establishing themselves...”

Not only has the PNM failed our males but we are seeing a pattern of increased violence among our girls. The PNM destroys everything you know. They destroys man, woman and child, and “who eh kill and who eh dead, badly wounded.” How can we deal with school violence with one guidance officer on average three primary schools when the ratio of officers per school right now is 1:500? It should be 1:250.

Conclusion, Madam Speaker. Others on this side will speak to our crime

fighting strategies and Trinidad and Tobago will know that they made a mistake in 2015 in electing that incompetent bunch of clueless administrators. We will seek after discussions with stakeholders, including the TTPS, to set realistic targets for reducing murder rates by an agreed percentage annually. This is my leader. We talk about the targets, boy. We talk about performance benchmarks. We talk about best practice. [*Desk thumping*] They talk about blaming us about corruption. That is their thing. We will ensure that the present 2 per cent of the budget allocations for such line items as cadets, school sports, 4-H clubs, et cetera, will be increased to a specified targeted figure within an acceptable time frame.

It is immoral [*Desk thumping*] to spend 97 per cent of the budget on the crime suppression and locking up people, and only 3 per cent on educating them, reengineering them, providing changes for them. We will revise our school curricula to emphasize civic-mindedness [*Crosstalk*], commitment to social norms, women empowerment—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We want to hear the Member.

Mr. R. Charles:—a more empathetic role for males [*Crosstalk*], and developing alternative ways of dealing with crime.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You cannot take the truth.

Madam Speaker: Members, I want to hear the Member for Naparima. Please continue, Member for Naparima.

Mr. R. Charles: We will ensure that our borders are completely locked down, and the Forensic Science Centre and the DPP's office are fully resourced and given performance targets based on international benchmarks. We will make Trinidad and Tobago safe again. [*Desk thumping*] God will not leave Trinidad and Tobago to suffer under this wicked PNM led by a clueless and an uncaring Prime Minister. There is no hope for us under Dr. Keith Rowley and his band of bungling

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Ministers. They will come after me and say all kind of nonsense. They will not address the fundamental issues that I have raised. [*Desk thumping*] This inept Prime Minister must now take shame, if he has any, do the honourable thing and resign forthwith [*Desk thumping*] and call election now. I beg to move, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I beg to second the Motion moved by my honourable colleague and reserve the right to speak. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question proposed.

Madam Speaker: Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on reflection over a period of time and in particular, following the ramblings and the public utterances from those on the other side with respect to crime, I have accepted that when you take on crime, you take on corruption and you take on the status quo of criminality, meaning that you take the fight to them fearlessly, what it will inevitably lead to is that you would be subject to the most vicious of attacks and personal attacks on your character if you do not participate in the same manner as those who engage in corruption, criminality, and those intent on protecting the status quo of a continuation of those elements.

I would like to start today's contribution, Madam Speaker, by thanking all of the men and women in Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, our defence force, our traffic wardens, the fire services, all of the arms of national security including our intelligence services, for what I have seen described by the Commissioner of Police as the safest Carnival ever. [*Desk thumping*] Because you see, Madam Speaker, after all of the ramblings, all of the misinformation, and sometimes

unfortunately the untruths, the fact is that the Carnival of 2020 and the Carnival of 2019 were amongst the safest in Trinidad and Tobago and I thank the men and women for that.

I will also go on to say, Madam Speaker, that it is useless saying that we should not politicize crime. It is obvious that the Opposition has decided since 2015 to do so. The UNC's strategy, Madam Speaker, obvious to the population of Trinidad and Tobago and those beyond our shores looking on, has been to fearmonger, to scare people, to spread misinformation, and importantly, in this House and the other place, to slow down and in some cases, to blatantly block various initiatives to combat criminal activity. [*Desk thumping*] The Opposition has been intent since 2015 to block initiatives to tackle the issues related to crime and criminality, and one must wonder why.

So unfortunately, Madam Speaker, but not surprisingly, the Opposition's obvious strategy is to politicize crime, but you see the question that the population is asking is a very simple one. The question that the population is asking, and especially the civic-minded and right-thinking members of the population are asking now is: How far is the UNC Opposition willing to go to promote crime? [*Desk thumping*] Because you see, Madam Speaker, crime is not a new phenomenon. In fact, a lot of the crime and the criminality that we are currently facing and dealing with is as a result of years of certain actions and inactions which have culminated in what we as citizens and as a society face today.

Madam Speaker, without a doubt, we are reaping what was sown many years ago and, in particular during the period of 2010—2015. We are dealing with the results of certain, very deliberate actions taken in 2010—2015, and actions which continue to be taken by Members of the UNC hierarchy up to today, actions which continue to be taken by Members of the UNC hierarchy up to today in their

collaboration and their communications with those in the criminal world. [*Desk thumping*] It is an undeniable, irrefutable fact that the difficulties faced today in the fight against crime, including the disturbing murder rate in Trinidad and Tobago, is as a direct result of the actions and inactions of the past. The murder rate rightly concerns every civic-minded and right-thinking citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and it has been increasing.

The tool of trade for the vast majority of murders in Trinidad and Tobago is the firearm. The use of illegal firearms, Madam Speaker, contribute to over 80 per cent of the murders in Trinidad and Tobago. Over 80 per cent of the murders of Trinidad and Tobago are being carried out by those who are engaged in criminal gang activity in one form or the other. So immediately one must ask: what do you do to tackle the scourge of illegal firearms and the scourge of gang activity; and what do we do as parliamentarians to tackle that? And I would like to start, Madam Speaker, by reference to certain information that was provided to a joint select committee on National Security by none other than the Commissioner of Police recently in a report that was laid only today, and what the Commissioner of Police says to the population is—and this is very important because all of the screams, and the shouts, and the rants, and raves, are designed to camouflage and to sweep under the carpet this important information.

The Commissioner of Police has told the population, via a joint select committee in a report laid today, that there was a reduction in every violent crime inclusive of homicides between 8 to 15 per cent from August 2018 to August 2019. Pause. What is the relevance of August 2018? The first thing you do is you put in place leadership. The first thing you do, Madam Speaker, in the fight against criminality is you ensure there is permanent leadership. The body constitutionally charged with dealing with crime in Trinidad and Tobago is the Trinidad and

Government's Failure to Deal with Rampant Crime (cont'd)
Hon. S. Young (cont'd)

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Tobago Police Service. In August 2018, this Government appointed a permanent Commissioner of Police regardless of his previous curriculum, his previous CV, and I want to remind the population that even though the current Commissioner of Police, who is doing an excellent job [*Desk thumping*], was a former advisor to the Member for Siparia as Prime Minister and a former Minister of National Security for the UNC Government— [*Crosstalk*]

The Member for Siparia is now shouting across the floor, “He is a good soul,” but I remind the population today, through you, Madam Speaker, when we came to this House to elect and select a permanent Commissioner of Police, not a single soul in the Opposition, not a single Member of the Opposition supported the Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] And the Member for Siparia, let us remind the population, screaming, “He is a good fella,” fired Gary Griffith for telling the truth. [*Desk thumping*] Fired Gary Griffith for telling the truth in protection of an Attorney General who is now before the criminal court—her Attorney General—in two sets of criminal charges [*Desk thumping*] and that is the UNC plan for crime. The UNC plan for crime speaks on the record to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. Members of Cabinet do not tell the truth. If you tell the truth, be fired because I am going to protect an Attorney General who is now before the criminal court with two sets of criminal charges. [*Desk thumping*]

To get back to what the Commissioner of Police is telling the population, there was a reduction of every violent crime inclusive of homicides between 8 to 15 per cent from August 2018 to August 2019. I became the Minister of National Security on the 6th of August, 2018. So a year later, the murder rate and all serious violent crimes had been reduced by 8 to 15 per cent. The next thing is that in the first six months of 2019, Madam Speaker—this is according to the Commissioner

of Police—there was a 12 to 13 per cent decrease. So everything was going well in 2019. The trajectory was going well. It was heading downwards. So the question the population must then ask is: What happened? The question the population must then ask is: Who is it that stands to benefit from an increase in crime and an increase in murder in Trinidad and Tobago?

So having not supported the appointment of a permanent Commissioner of Police—and I will also remind the population, in fulfilment of one of our manifesto promises, by December 2015 we had laid in this House, Madam Speaker, an order to simplify the appointment of a Commissioner of Police—and who was it that went and challenge that—and the only success they had was that that order said that the Minister of National Security must trigger the process. Common sense, because at the end of the day the Government is the being held responsible for crime and the fight against crime. So the Government then said, well, we will start the process for the simplifying of the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. The courts found there should be no Government involvement in terms of starting the process. It was taken out. The process started and we ended up finally with a permanent Commissioner of Police in August 2018 without a single vote of support by his former colleagues, the Members on the other side.

Hon. Member: They said “no”.

Hon. S. Young: Let us get back to illegal firearms because if 77 to over 80 per cent of murders are committed through the use of illegal firearms, what do you do about it? So in 2012—2015, the then Government passed two important pieces of legislation, and you have the current Commissioner of Police saying that is one of the main pillars of what helped him when he was the Minister of National Security in the reduction of murders, anti-gang legislation and bail amendments. The bail

amendment, Madam Speaker, are bail amendments targeting specifically anyone found in possession of illegal firearms. We met the most vociferous of opposition when we came now as the Government to continue those two pieces of legislation. The Opposition, the UNC Opposition, told the population of Trinidad and Tobago they will not support anti-gang legislation. It was on two or three occasions they told the population they will not support it. It was when the population screamed that you need to have bipartisan support to tackle the scourge of gang activity, the Opposition finally capitulated and supported it. I will come to that in a short while.

Currently, over 80 per cent of the murders in Trinidad and Tobago are being committed through the use of illegal firearms, and I ask again because the population asked this question, Madam Speaker, through you: Why would any person have in his or her possession an illegal firearm? A firearm is designed to kill. The sole purpose of a firearm, Madam Speaker, is to kill someone. Why would anyone have possession of an illegal firearm? So we came to the Parliament with legislation to deal with it at the request of those charged with the constitutional responsibility of arresting crime because none of us in here, apart from performing a citizen's arrest, which I am sometimes very tempted to do, can arrest anyone, or can charge anyone, or can prosecute anyone. That is the purpose of the police. The police have asked, if you are calling upon us to bring down the murder rate and over 80 per cent are being committed through the use of illegal firearms, when we catch the perpetrators in possession of these weapons of death, do not permit them bail. Again, the Opposition in typical form refused to support that. The Bail (Amdt.) Bill was then reformed and it was permitted only if you have prior convictions you then be not permitted bail.

As we have heard the Commissioner of Police say repeatedly in the past few weeks, the number of shooters in Trinidad and Tobago who are repeat offenders in

possession of firearms is astronomical. The Commissioner of Police has gone so far as to say if these persons who the police have caught and charged, and locked up, were kept off of the streets, he would have been able to bring down the murder rate by half. So let the population understand the implication of that, and all we can do in this House and in the other place, as I say repeatedly, is pass legislation. That is what we come here to do, but we are faced with an Opposition that is resolute, they would not support it. So it was watered down. Another thing that the Commissioner of Police has said very, very clearly to the Parliament is the type of firearms being utilized now are going to result in murder.

The types of firearms being used now, the AR-15s that use a 5.56 round, and AK-47s that use a 7.62 round, are weapons of war. These are not meant for civilian use. The vast majority of our police officers do not even have access to these weapons. These now are in the hands of criminals, and I will get to why in a short while. But the Commissioner of Police has said another reason for the increase in the murders—because the number of shootings have gone down—is the type of weapons and the rounds being used. So we came to Parliament and we said, “Anyone found in possession of an automatic firearm, an AR-15 and an AK-47 with these types of rounds, should not be granted bail. Only for 120 days the police will start the case and they proceed with the case.”

The Opposition, again, has been resolute in saying they will not support that legislation. One must question, and the population is questioning, why? Why is it that the Opposition, the UNC Opposition, wants persons to be in possession of automatic firearms, and these are the firearms that are driving up the murder rate? So answer the population here today, why is anyone found with an automatic firearm, a machine gun, an AR-15, or any incendiary device or bomb, a hand grenade, should be allowed bail? Because that is what the UNC Opposition is

telling the population. So do not call upon the Commissioner of Police and the men and women in the police service to reduce murders if you are not prepared to help them take those who are committing the murders off of the street. [*Desk thumping*]

Do not stand here and in other places outside with the hypocrisy just to politicize crime, and just to attack the Minister of National Security, and to attack the Chairman of the National Security Council, as the Member for Naparima started to attack the hon. Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security, the Attorney General, and other members of Cabinet saying, "What are we doing?" The first thing we should do is no bail for those with automatic firearms. But no, the Opposition are the only ones in the country who see it fit that murders, shooters in criminal gangs, should continue to be permitted access to these weapons of war unimpeded. [*Desk thumping*] The small island next door to us, of Barbados, with a population of less than 200,000 people, have taken a decision and have said no bail for anyone found with any illegal firearm for two years. That is how you deal with a rising murder rate. But what do the Opposition sit here and do? No, they will not support that, but when they were in Government, the PNM Opposition supported the anti-gang legislation as well as the bail amendments. I remind the population.

So, allow persons to continue to be in possession of weapons of war and other illegal firearms and do not expect it to affect the murder rate. The anti-gang legislation, very often we hear it being bandied about because you see, the population pressured the Opposition to support for the passage of the anti-gang legislation. Again, the Member for Siparia laughs but we will all recall that we came here in under six months, they voted against it twice, the Opposition then said when the public outcry became too much, bring it to Parliament, come to Parliament, shorten the time frame of six months and we will support it. You see, facts are a stubborn thing and that is exactly what happened. The anti-gang

legislation is in place, so now the cry is before anyone was charged, well it is not being used. Again, the population is smarter than that. It is not retroactive so the investigations had to begin at that point, and I am happy to say that since the anti-gang legislation has been in place, there have been a number of significant criminals charged.

So now the cry is for conviction, but conviction is not in the police's hands nor is it in this Executive's hands. They may have persons in the Judiciary who they can get to do what needs to be done. We do not operate that way, Madam Speaker.

3.20 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I stand on 48(6). You are imputing improper motives that the Opposition may have people in the Judiciary to do their bidding. He is attacking the Judiciary and attacking us.

Madam Speaker: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I would uphold and ask you to state that—

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Withdrawn. The point is that all the police can do is detect crime, investigate crime, and charge persons for crime and that is what has happened under the anti-gang legislation. But you see, Madam Speaker, some of the people that were charged under the anti-gang legislation recently included persons being charged for being gang leaders and one of those persons who was charged and is now out on bail once again is someone that certain Members of Parliament on the other side may be very familiar with.

Mr. Hinds: Are very familiar with.

Hon. S. Young: He is very familiar with the person.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Who is "he"?

Hon. S. Young: So, Madam Speaker, this anti-gang legislation is being utilized by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Major gang leaders have been charged. Up to last week, police officers have also been charged under the anti-gang

legislation because our mantra is no one is above the law and every step of this PNM administration since 2015 has shown that. There has not been any interference in any police investigation. There has not been any interference in the police's work. So gang members have in fact been charged. There is multi-agency work being done under the anti-gang legislation, because you see, it is not only about the charges. It also provides specific powers and very different expressed powers to those who are in law enforcement and in intelligence and there will be more charges to come, I can assure the population.

The next problem that you have is with respect occasionally to the prisons and yes, you can use jammers to an extent with the prisons but anyone who does any research—and I used it in the other place in a debate on the amendments currently being proposed to the Interception of Communications Act—in the United States and in Europe and in every country where there are prisons, there are reports that there are still contraband cell phones and other modes of communication being utilized by prisoners in prison. We are no different. So what do we do?

Again, to tackle that scourge, we come here to Parliament to pass legislation to criminalize. That is what the legislation is for. The population needs to know that this interception of communications amendment being proposed is to criminalize conversations with prisoners who are incarcerated and utilizing contraband phones. I saw a few days ago, a Member of the Opposition being quoted in a *Newsday* article saying that the Opposition will not support that. So, again, on behalf of the right-thinking and civic-minded citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, I ask the Opposition why they would not support the criminalizing of prisoners who are incarcerated speaking on cell phones to persons on the outside. Because that is a question that is a pertinent question. And as my colleague,

Member for Diego Martin North/East, is whispering for me, it may be for personal reasons. It may be for personal reasons because deputy political leaders of the Opposition like to have conversations with those prisoners. [*Desk thumping*]

So, again, Madam Speaker, through you, I put the population on notice that if you are really serious about tackling crime and not all the “reh reh, ra ra” and screaming and shouting but really tackling crime fearlessly on the premise that no one is above the law, why is it that the Opposition would not support bail amendments to stop persons from being in possession of automatic firearms? Why is it that the Opposition would not support legislation to criminalize prisoners having cell phones and communicating with those on the outside?

We heard a short while ago, Madam Speaker, the rambling and rantings as to what the UNC crime plans were, what they utilized when they were in Government, what it is they did in Government and what they hoped to do at some point in the future, hopefully never granted by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But I would like to remind the population at this stage, Madam Speaker, through you, of the initiatives utilized by the United National Congress when they were in power between 2010 and 2015, what is it that they did in the arena of crime or crime-fighting, probably crime.

The first thing they did, or one of the first initiatives, was destroy facial recognition. Get rid of facial recognition at our airports. Great crime initiatives. The question is why and that great crime initiative, of course, is sarcastic. The second thing they did is attack and destroy our intelligence services. Destroy the SSA, destroy the SIA, get rid of people, appoint Resmi Ramnarine. But also let the country not forget the dismantled equipment that was being utilized. The same Dennie that they put on “ah platform”, one of the allegations against them was what happened to the servers that were being used for intelligence. Why were the

servers dismantled and destroyed? That is not how you deal with crime. It has all been rebuilt under this administration. [*Desk thumping*]

The next great UNC crime initiative was to dismantle and destroy SAUTT, S-A-U-T-T. SAUTT is regarded by all persons in law enforcement as being one of the most successful crime-fighting initiatives because what it was, Madam Speaker, was a gathering together of multi-agency men and women specially trained who were vetted. They passed polygraph tests on an on-going basis. They did their jobs to the best of their ability and crime was going down. They brought in training from all over the world: Scotland Yard officers, FBI officers. When you go up to Cumuto and you see the facilities built by the PNM, [*Desk thumping*] it is built exactly as the best facilities in England and the United States are built. And let the population not forget that between 2010 and 2015, the UNC dismantled that organization, cost the population millions of dollars in damages.

They do not like to hear about the cancellation of the OPVs—we will get to border security—but that is a fact. And those OPVs are now the pride of the Brazilian navy. So, again, why would you not want to protect your borders? Why would you not want to protect your maritime borders? And I heard it being suggested by the last speaker, “Tell us about the interceptors, tell us about the vessels we left”. I will get in a short while to tell the population or to remind the population, there was absolutely no maintenance or proper maintenance in 2010 to 2015 of the six Austal fast patrol vessels, so by the time we came into Government, those vessels could not be used anymore. The interceptors that I have been working so hard to try and get back into the water were not maintained by the UNC. The question is: Why did they not maintain these assets? We have gotten the engines but some of the difficulties we are facing now is because of the lack of maintenance of those vessels previously. They are not being able to stand the

rigours of use. We have ordered two Austal Cape-class vessels. Fortunately, they are on their way this year.

The next great initiative. You know, in the Motion, Madam Speaker, it talks about whole of Government approach. I want to utilize at this juncture the opportunity to remind the population what the UNC's reference to a whole of Government approach in the fight against crime is. It is a programme called LifeSport. The UNC's sole programme for whole of Government approach to promote crime was LifeSport and you ask anyone in intelligence or in law enforcement now what we are dealing with, and the seeds that were sown in LifeSport are what the country is reaping now. It was over \$400 million, almost \$500 million paid to criminal enterprise. Four hundred million dollars in a LifeSport programme paid to criminal enterprise that sprung up the whole Carapo and all along the East-West Corridor, these pockets of criminals.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 15 minutes to wrap up your contribution.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed.

Hon. S. Young: So that is the seed that was sown. That is the answer to crime and criminality. Because you see, one of the reasons or one of the ways you may suppress crime is if you decide to pay criminals and that is something that we will refuse to do. So the LifeSport programme not only was that but what it had is, remember people were murdered coming out of that programme. Remember people were murdered in that programme.

The prisons. This one is a pet peeve of mine and forgive as I repeat it. But even this morning as I was going to the East for the handing over of certain disaster management equipment, I had to see it again, an \$80 million fence around

nothing. Let the people of Trinidad and Tobago remember this. Their prison reform, the UNC's prison reform, was to spend \$80 million on "ah fence" that there is nothing in the middle of. It is not around any prison. But we as a Cabinet, in times of little, and I thank my Cabinet colleagues for this, on the first occasion, gave their full support, approval and confirmation for us to spend \$26 million to build a fence around the whole Golden Grove prison, the Remand, the Women's Prison, YTC and that is what they should have done. Twenty-six million versus 80 million spent around nothing.

Worse than that, \$300 million spent on the purchase of a warehouse with less than 8 per cent of the square footage of the warehouse being utilized as a prison. Explain that, \$300 million in cash spent. That was the UNC's initiative. Rather than spend that to fix Remand, rather to spend that on improving our prisons, they spent it to buy a warehouse and use less than 8 per cent of the square footage. The failed state of emergency. These are some, not all, but some of what we faced coming out of 2015.

Let us talk about what has happened now since 2015 and what it is that we are working on. Border security because we have to stop the illegal flow of firearms. We have improved the coastal radar system and it is being upgraded. It is working and being upgraded. It was not upgraded during their tenure. We have ordered two Cape-class vessels. We are working on and restoring and properly maintaining the coast guard vessels that are here. Because you see again, any forward-thinking Government would have gotten facilities in Trinidad and Tobago to maintain the Damen vessels, but no. Typical UNC-style, enter into an arrangement where the vessels can only be maintained by Damen even after the warranty period is over and you have to go to shipyards outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I remind the population, the procurement of those vessels is now under international criminal investigation by the Government of the Netherlands. The UNC procurement of the Damen vessels is now under international criminal investigation by the Government of the Netherlands. We also put scanners in the ports. We fought hard, got it done. The multi-agency approach is being utilized on our borders and it is being used successfully. The restoration of the interceptors, as I said a short while ago, is happening.

The ballistics and forensics. We are the ones as an administration that told the Americans we will have re-established and properly populated by the people they spent millions of dollars training the SERU Unit, Special Evidence Recovery Unit. That is back in place. It was dismantled by the UNC. So again, why would they not want that unit to be operational after the Americans spent millions of dollars training certain officers?

The CCTV. Well I am glad that was raised. I want to remind the population and we heard the Member for Naparima talk about how they increased the CCTV cameras. Let me just quickly give a history of the CCTV cameras. So it came in in 2009 under the Manning administration at very sensible cost. What was happening is the Ministry of National Security bought the equipment, TSTT established the network. So in 2009, 389 cameras put in place. March 23, 2010, Ministry of National Security entered into another contract with TSTT for the provision of fiber optic connectivity for 18 cameras, again purchased by the Ministry, and then deployed an additional 41 cameras. It all went awry after that. So in 2011, Madam Speaker, what you had was then 18 cameras being added for surveillance bays along the highway by the Ministry of Works at a cost per month of \$11,250 a camera.

In 2013, a further expansion of 500 cameras, again, at a cost of \$11,250 a

camera. This is per month. So every month, the contracts entered into under the UNC for these cameras were costing us \$11,250 a camera. They then went for an additional—"they" meaning the UNC—800 cameras in 2015 at \$14,060 a camera. What we did with a lot of struggle because when you have a contract that inflated, certain people will not want the disruption of status quo. We finally got the RFP out, we finally got the proposals in and we went with a provider that is saving the country \$310 million per annum [*Desk thumping*] versus what the UNC put the country in. And these cameras are state-of-the-art, facial recognition, licence plate recognition. We also negotiated and are currently utilizing some free cameras to use with our NOFC. So that is how we do it.

The multi-agency approach is working, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, our Defence Force, prisons and intelligence services working together and it is bearing fruit. It takes some time. When things are dismantled and then they are reconstructed and reconfigured, it takes time. For the first time—their vision of a National Operations Centre spent half a billion dollars of taxpayers' money, no financing in place. One of the first crises we faced as a National Security Council coming in was: where do we find \$500 million to pay the contractors and the suppliers of the equipment for the NOC? No plan, no financing, nothing in place. The National Operations Fusion Centre, as it now will be, is operational. The equipment is working and it is being populated. [*Desk thumping*] The technology has been updated at no additional cost to the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago.

We are soon to introduce an NIFC, national intelligence fusion centre. It shocked me coming into office that there had never been one central intelligence unit in the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. So for the first time, this country is having introduced a national intelligence fusion centre which will be similar to the JTAC out of England which is the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre which is an all-

source intelligence organization.

Madam Speaker, the reformation of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has also been happening since August 2018. We took certain decisions. In the new structure of the police service, there is, for the first time, a white collar crime division and we have transferred the Anti-Crime Investigation Bureau, ACIB, back from the Attorney General's office to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We are boosting the cyber and social media unit.

The Operational Command Centre under the police service is fully functional. The technology has been increased and improved. For the first time, we have a Central Intelligence Bureau in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service that pulls together the SIU which is comprised of the former OCIU, the Organized Crime and Intelligence Unit, the Human Trafficking Unit, Terrorism Investigation Unit and gang enforcement team. We have also introduced and revamped the ERP patrols. We are now currently restoring the police hospital. We introduced SORT, a special vetted team. They are now working with MOPS. We introduced a Gender-Based Violence Unit. The Child Protection Unit and the Victim Witness Support Unit are working.

The Commissioner of Police was told by this administration by none other than the Chairman of the National Security Council, the Prime Minister, that he would have this Government's full support in rooting out corruption in the police service. And what has that resulted in? Seventy police officers charged in the period 1st of August, 2018, to the 27th of February, 2020. We have also, as I said a short while ago, had recent police officers being charged all the way up to Acting Inspector, Acting Sergeant, by the Child Protection Unit and our Counter Trafficking Unit for human trafficking. That is something we are tackling.

The use of GPS in ERPs, an operational command centre, that is working.

We got gratis from the Chinese, 200 patrol bikes. New state-of-the-art Trinidad and Tobago police stations at Shirvan Road, Roxborough. Another one being constructed in Carenage, one in St. Clair. Non-fatal devices being utilized for the first time, Tasers. *[Interruption]* Two separate police stations in Tobago. For those on the other side who may not understand, the Shirvan Road Police Station and then the Roxborough Police Station.

Also, body cams are being used and in fact, we gave body cams to the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force for the use in Carnival and it fed back to the National Operations Fusion Centre. A Child Protection Unit, a Gender-Based Violence Unit, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. Again, how we dealt with it is we appointed in our tenure three permanent Chief of Defence Staff. It was not an extension and a buy-out of leave of some Chief of Defence Staff. And the current Chief of Defence Staff has years to go to give the service—the Defence Force—the ability to ground itself.

This weekend, we launch the new air unit and I do not have much time but just to speak about the helicopters because you see, what we came in and met, Madam Speaker, as an administration, was astronomical cost to the taxpayers for helicopters. The UNC purchased three helicopters, one of which could not even come to Trinidad and the taxpayers were paying US \$200,000 a month to park up in a hanger in Delaware. The Attorney General under the UNC administration took out the termination clause in these contracts so the taxpayers were stuck with these helicopters they could not use. They also, in 2014, negotiated salaries that were astronomical. What did we do? We took on the difficulty. We are now saving over \$250,000 a month on pilot costs alone. We have reduced those bills. We have two of the helicopters back up and we will deal with AW139s.

Initiatives being used. The cadet force is operational with over 70 cadet

forces deployed throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The CCC and MiLAT programmes, we did a tracer study to understand the benefits and then took a decision as a Cabinet to increase the intake in these programmes. We have over 8,000 members in the police youth clubs that were expanded. We are about to launch the Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres. We transferred both the Chatham and the Persto Praesto Centres to National Security. The Persto Praesto Centre has been repurposed for the utilization of females between the ages of 15 to 18 and Chatham would be used for males between the ages of 15 to 18. These are some of the initiatives.

I spoke about the launching soon of a programme based along the lines of cure violence because we are getting down on the ground. We are going to have people going into the communities and to deal with it. I heard the shallow and useless talk and conversation about the consultation with stakeholders. That was at their request. That was at the business community's request to meet with the heads of national security. As I have said many times before, the empty vessel makes the most noise. The empty vessel is the one who meets with them.

So, Madam Speaker, these are the things that are being done by this administration. In national security, there are some things that you cannot talk about, there are some things that you cannot tell the population about but I assure the population that the men and women in national security are working. They are working hard and they are working overtime and they will continue to do all that they can, as the Commissioner of Police has said, to protect and keep Trinidad and Tobago safe and secure.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC (*Siparia*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to join in this debate. I support the Motion brought by

my colleague [*Desk thumping*] and endorse the comments that he has already given on that Motion. As I listened to the hon. Minister of National Security, I am thinking “Oh Lord, what they will blame me for again”. [*Laughter*] What will they blame me for again? I am so fed up, “dey calling my name, UNC, blame Kamla, blame UNC, blame”. Listen, you have said you have done all these things, you have done all these things and yet today, the murder rate is—what?—89 in 57 days, maybe more. We are in the Chamber, I do not know. So you are singing your own praises you have done so many things, but none of it is working. [*Desk thumping*] That is very, very clear, it is not working.

And whilst I could stand up because I anticipated everything that you would have said that we did wrong, blaming us, because you have repeated those untruths. Repeat it, repeat, repeat, repeat ad nauseam. Look, I have here a press release from your Commissioner of Police, our Commissioner of Police issued in July. Just to debunk one of those untruthful things, that we dismantled some facial recognition thing at the airport. This is in July 2017. The person who is your present Commissioner, our present Commissioner, made this statement before he became Commissioner of Police and it was in response to Minister Young's recently made alarming comments in Parliament alluding that the previous Government was not in communication with the international allies and also about deliberately switching off a security system to pinpoint facial recognition. That is the exact thing that he said here in 2017. [*Desk thumping*] And the press release from July 2017 answering that untruth. I read from it:

I have the world of respect for Minister Young but I am obliged to clarify that those comments are totally inaccurate—[*Desk thumping*]—and I do believe that he may have been misguided, et cetera.

Continuing:

Switching off the system for facial recognition.

This is from Captain Gary Griffith, Commissioner of Police in 2017.

Being the Security Advisor and Minister of National Security almost throughout the whole period of the previous administration's term in office, I can categorically state that at no time was any decision or discussion made at the National Security Council level to direct that any switch be turned off that could have pinpointed facial recognition.

[*Desk thumping*]

So likewise, the cancelled OPVs, those OPVs were defective, they had deficiencies, there were delays and we recovered \$1.4 billion [*Desk thumping*] cancelled OPVs. The Austal vessels, you blame us for buying defective vessels that never sailed one day and you are still coming for these Austal vessels. They were ordered by a previous PNM administration, [*Desk thumping*] came into the country, and we had been advised by the Australians that those vessels were for lakes. So they remained there, they have not been used, "yuh could go down now", you will see them all parked up there rusting. It reminds me of the MV *Su* which never sailed a single day [*Desk thumping*] bought by Diego Martin; reminds me of that. So look, I can continue with this with the rebuttals and the rebuttals but this blame game will get us nowhere.

And I listened carefully to see what the Member would share with us. Does the Government have a plan to deal with crime, to fight the crime? And listening to him, it is the same old, same old, but there is an underlying thread and threat in the matters that the hon. Minister raised which goes back to what the Member for Naparima talked about, that this Government is not about preventing crime, this Government is about locking up people, suppressing crime. [*Desk thumping*]

3.50 p.m.

So when the Minister talked about legislative initiatives that they had brought that we had not supported, and he talked about anti-gang, and he talked about the Bail Bill, you know why we did not support those and we will still not support it, not because we have any love for any criminal, but because you cannot erode. I do not know of any family member as well who may be a criminal. I do not know. You will have to tell me, because you seem to think everybody we talk to are criminals. [*Desk thumping*] But I doubt that anyone here, anyone of us, has a family member who may be such.

And in this country, you see it is all nice. It is a good child. That is a good child. When you have money you could pay bail and get out. [*Desk thumping*] But the people who cannot afford to pay bail, they are the ones who in jail. And I will talk a bit about that, tying back with my colleague here. This thing is not just about locking up people. So you come here about legislative interventions, legislative interventions and said: why did we not support this? Why not?

Let me just share with you very quickly our legislative track record, which I will find in a moment. Contrary to a song that is sung all the time from this Government—here it is—a mantra that they repeat, we do not support special majority Bills, we do not support their Bills, we do not support their Bills. Let me read this for you. Crime-fighting Bills, we supported eight crime-fighting Bills. The bail access, or Bail (Amdt.) Bill, and we made extensive amendments. So we do not trust you because your initiative—you know, you talk about why we want to protect people with those “big gun and thing”. Do you know why? Because there are wicked people in this country. One is like those who were behind putting missiles and cocaine in the water tank of a Member of Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] And so we have to guard citizens to make sure we have the check back and the hold back to make sure their rights are not violated. And that is why we

make these amendments. And that is why we cannot support your Bills as they were, as they were. [*Desk thumping*]

We made amendments to the Bail Bill, 2017. The Miscellaneous Provisions (Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, Proceeds of Crime, Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, Customs and Exchange Control) Bill. We supported that with amendments. [*Desk thumping*] The Miscellaneous Provisions (Supreme Court of Judicature) Bill, we made extensive amendments. We supported. The Payments into Court Bill, again we made amendments, supported. The Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) (Amdt.) Bill, 2018, again made amendments and supported. The Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, 2019, we support. It was not needed, but we took a division and we supported it—[*Desk thumping*—the Firearms Bill. The Civil Asset Recovery and Management and Unexplained Wealth, 2019, you did not need our support but we supported it because it was a good piece of law. [*Desk thumping*]

You are always pointing fingers saying “we afraid, we afraid”. The only thing I am afraid of is that you should get back into Government. [*Desk thumping*] You should all go. This country, you say we are fearmongering? We are hearing the people are scared. The people in this country are scared. You would see it. People are "fraid" to go out. "Yuh 'fraid tuh leave yuh children at home. Yuh 'fraid tuh send dem tuh school." People we are scared, because we are in a crime crisis in this country. [*Desk thumping*] And what does the Minister tell me? Put up his hands and say: "I am not responsible for crime." Your own words; Pontius Pilate, wash your hands. [*Desk thumping*] That is not good enough. That is not good enough, and today you shared no, no, no ideas. No plan, no hope could you bring us. You said what you were doing and what you had done and it is clear to every human being in this country that those things have not worked. The crime

continues to spiral.

We supported you on other special—so that is eight crime-fighting Bills we supported you on. We supported you on another set of Bills that required, six bills, that required special majority, [*Desk thumping*] six. The Tax Information Exchange Agreement, we supported it. The FATCA, the famous FATCA, we did not support it at first, because you did not have the checks and the balances. [*Desk thumping*] We made it a better piece of law. We supported the Anti-Gang Act, 2017. [*Desk thumping*] You come here to talk about anti-gang that we do not support. We supported the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, 2018. [*Desk thumping*] We supported the Licensing Committee (Validation) Act, where you validated retroactively; Licensing Committee (Validation) Act, 2018. We supported the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2019. [*Desk thumping*]

From the record, from the *Hansard* record, it is on the parliamentary records, there was one Bill that we did not support, the Miscellaneous Provisions (Anti-Gang and Bail) Bill, 2016. We defeated it because we were not satisfied that the checks and the balances were there to protect people. [*Desk thumping*] And then we asked you again. On December 7th, we defeated it and I wrote to you, you wrote to me. And the last time the Attorney General said that he sent me these big letters from the Minister of Finance and I never replied. I gave the letter and it was read here that we had replied to that letter. [*Desk thumping*] So they do not tell the truth you know. And they sing the same song all the time.

The Anti-Gang Bill, 2017, we reintroduced it. We put it together, made amendments and we passed it. So you are now coming back with another one, another one, legislative, legislative.

The Minister talked about legislation that we are not supporting. So let us get that very clear. And then uses his time here to talk about the interception Bill

that we "fraid". You know before we passed the interception Act in this country, we did it. We did it—[*Desk thumping*—]giving the circumstances in which you would be able to listen in to conversations, and so on. Yes, we brought it and we gave three officers in the protective services the power to apply for warrants, and so on. Now you come here and tell me that Bill is before the Senate. It is not yet on our Order Paper. So I guess it was not anticipated. But in my respectful view, it was anticipating that debate when that Bill comes here, and talks about interception.

But why would we be afraid that prisoners in the vans and wherever they are, that you want to be able to intercept it. But that is not what that Bill is all about. The other provisions in that interception Bill are going to damage every citizen in this country and breach their rights. [*Desk thumping*] This will attack media personnel, journalists. Yes, I mean everything, yes. It is not telling the whole truth. Because we said, I did put out a statement that we will not support that as it is. It is going to damage everybody that you could—

You know, when I looked at the SSA reports, Madam, I do not have it in front me, so I will just use the figures about. I know one was laid today for 2017. But the one that was laid previously for 2016, it talks about 283,000 intercepts being made. Right? That is just "macoing yuh know", 283,000 "macoing." Because you cannot use that in court. In order to use it, you have to get a warrant. But when you look at the number of warrants granted, eight or nine. So you tap 283,000 about, conversations, and only went for nine warrants, "real maco Bill". That Bill, as I said, is a "Macomere Bill brought by a Macomere Government to maco the citizens"; [*Desk thumping*] talking about interception.

So, UNC scaremongering, we block the initiatives, we politicizing crime, how far we will go to promote crime. Insinuating, insinuating, and not very

cleverly either, that we in fact promoting crime in this country. Nothing could be further from the truth. [*Desk thumping*] Nothing could be further from the truth. We have tried repeatedly to bring Motions about crime fighting in this House. Today we have that opportunity to talk about it. And so, as I say, I can debunk all the points made, the OPVs cancelled, Austal vessels that was your orders.

About the Damen vessels under international investigation; international criminal investigation. It has absolutely nothing to do with Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I challenge you to go up and find the evidence to substantiate that outrageous statement, the untruth that the Damen vessels purchased here, some investigation. That has to do with Damen Holland. It has nothing to do with Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] This is the information. That is fine. Show us the evidence. You made all these unsubstantiated comments. [*Desk thumping*] He talks about the serious evidence unit down and what and what. When we disbanded the SAUTT, which was an illegal entity—

Mr. Al-Rawi: How was it illegal?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: It was a Cabinet-appointed body.

Madam Speaker: Member for Siparia, one minute. Members, the crosstalk is really becoming unbearable. So please comply with Standing Order 53. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Illegally obtaining performing body, one. They brought these foreign-used retirees from Britain, 130 of them. They paid them far more money than they were paying the locals, and so on. When we disbanded and sent those, that is where we were able to get some of the money to give every officer the thousand dollars per month. [*Desk thumping*] “Yuh paying” these foreigners and the crime was not going down, Madam. The crime was not going down. It was going up. So they were

inefficient, ineffectual, very costly.

Okay, yes we shut them down. And when we shut them down, the SERU that you talked about that we disbanded or whatever it is, we did not do that. We relocated him. They were at Cumuto. We put them under the TTPS which they still are. So again an untruth.

SAUTT disbanded, I spoke about that. Talking about Ministers going to Cumuto and picking up cars. All those cars were distributed to Ministries and to Members. These were the vehicles used by Mr. Manning for the Summit. Yes. No Ministers went and pick up those vehicles anywhere. Talk about the CCTV camera. I know my colleague, MP Moonilal, has dealt with this issue before and I leave it in his ballpark to raise it again. Talk about the prisons fence, all these things, look I have them all here to rebut every one of those points. But let us not waste time, because I really want to spend some time to talk about some plans we have.

Madam, I have this. We shared with you in the Parliament the master plan for economic transformation and I will share some, because the time will not permit. I will share some of our master plan—national security master plan—for when we get back into office. [*Desk thumping*]

And again the approach is not just about what my colleague talked about, suppression and locking up people, Madam. And that is all I heard the Minister speak about. I did not hear anything about how you will help people to prevent the crime. How we can help people. How we can help these young people who get “lock up, go to jail, they doh have money tuh pay bail”. We have to look at different mechanisms to help people, not just “lock them up, throw away the key”. That is not the answer to fighting crime.

My colleague mentioned certain initiatives we had, which were outside of

the criminalization of people. I will not repeat those. And then with the failure in the economy, I think our fourth year into recession, and so on, the job losses, poverty and jobs, and so on. These are the things we have to look at, if we have to have a holistic approach in the fight against crime.

So, Madam, the first thing I would propose, and we will discuss it further, these proposals which I have extracted from my master plan, is to restructure the Ministry of National Security. So it is not about locking up people. It is about better competencies in the fight against crime. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, where is he? He talked and gone. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West told us today, he said all we can do here is legislation. And I am thinking, okay, well we come here and we pass legislation. But when you sit down in your office, what do you do? What do you do in the fight against crime? Your job is, if you see your job as coming here and passing laws, then that is a totally flawed kind of reasoning. Flawed, flawed, flawed, logic. You need to be able to do the administrative aspects of crime-fighting. Those are some things that we do.

I propose that we will restructure the Ministry of National Security, because the present system is obviously flawed. You have three Ministers in National Security at the moment. What is happening? Crime continues to spiral. So that is not the answer. It is not the answer. I think the present way the Ministry is structured, they cannot adapt to what is going on and what is happening in our nation. So we split the Ministry of National Security and we create a ministry of home affairs and a ministry of defence. [*Desk thumping*] What is in a name? What is in a name? It is what each Ministry will be comprised of. That is what this is about. It is not just a name change.

So, in the ministry of home affairs we will deal primarily with internal law

enforcement, which involves the focus on policing, to ensure that deterrents are provided and will involve action before the crime is committed as well. If the crime is committed and there is apprehension, such measures would include all aspects of policing surveillance, use of electronic security, proper intelligence gathering, as well as major aspects to internal security, and will comprise the fire services as well.

The ministry of defence will be based on the critical need of protection of our borders from illegal entry of drugs, weapons, human trafficking, worldwide increasing concern of terrorism. So we need to have a ministry that will encompass all of this known as the ministry of defence. This ministry would be newly established, based on news, threats, and clear and present danger that all nations are now facing, both in border protection, problems encountered with illegal entry of weapons, drugs, human trafficking. Hence, the focus on border protection and established networks to work with international allies.

That is another thing. The Minister said we did not work with international allies. That same media release from Captain Gary Griffith talks about that not being true as well, Madam as I comment on this.

So, what I see here, the major arms of the ministry of home affairs, the TTPS, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service for the time being, but we will eventually go back to our Ministry of Justice, because that is an important component of the fight against crime. And, of course, the ministry of the people, we will go back. [*Desk thumping*] You took the people out of that ministry. [*Desk thumping*] You took the people out of that ministry, that is why you could boast you take away 18,000 food cards, people lost their jobs, you do not know how they are eating. And you are happy you take away 18,000 food cards. The ministry of the people for the social aspects of helping

people who are in poverty—[*Desk thumping*—]—and therefore fight crime.

So, Office of Disaster Preparedness, cadets, SSA, national security training academy, E99 Call Centre, community comfort patrols, which you took away. These are the things I see will fit nicely into the ministry of home affairs.

In terms of the ministry of defence, now remember what I said. This is for border protection, whether it be in terms of people, whether it be in terms of drugs, whether it be in the term of illegal arms, and so on. This will comprise, first of all the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. Secondly, the Customs Division. Customs should be removed from finance. Because, once upon a time you thought Customs was just to collect money. It is not about that. It is about everything passing through Customs. It is not about money. So this has to be a defensive measure that has to be part of the architecture. [*Desk thumping*] The Customs Division shall be removed from the Ministry of Finance and come under this newly created ministry of defence.

The Immigration Department would come under the ministry of defence because both Immigration and Customs, they fall into the category of border security.

Then the transnational organized crime unit, again international networks. National security special operations group, the radar centre, counter trafficking unit, covert and counter-terrorist unit. These amongst others will be placed in this ministry to be created, to be known as the ministry of justice. This has become really international best practice. In the US, for example, you have the Ministry of Homeland Security. Yes? And then you have your other national security apparatus and architecture.

So for the ministry of defence it is border control. As I said before whether it is food coming in, whether it is guns coming in, whether it is people coming in,

whether it is human trafficking. All these matters, border control.

And you know talking about that OPV was to lock down borders, that thing would have been so far off out in the ocean, far, far out. It would never have been able to lock down borders. That is what we got the Damen vessels for. But you are not resourcing. [*Desk thumping*] You are not resourcing the coast guard. They do not have fuel to put in the vessels so that they can properly use them. And my God you complain about that Chinese vessel. I do not know what it is. But I will tell you, that vessel is being very much used by the coast guard; that vessel we got from China. [*Desk thumping*] So, I am saying these two new ministries, and of course Madam, again time will not permit all the details, but that is the gist of it.

The second thing I want to share with you is that we will implement an increase in the retirement age for persons in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, increase in the retirement age. [*Desk thumping*] Why? Why would we want to do that? Because, at the moment very experienced people have to leave at such an early age, 47, yeah 47. And they are experienced personnel. Yes? When they leave where do they go? What jobs are they getting? That is the other side of it. In other countries, again best practice. You look at, in the case of Canada and Denmark, compulsory retirement age for regular forces and primary reserves is 60 years. Norway military persons can serve maximum of 40 years or up to the age of 60, whichever comes first. Australia has a general ceiling for commissioned and non-commissioned officers of 60. This is based on—principal assessment should be based on the person's ability to perform the task of the particular job, regardless of their age. And I well know that. Age is just a number. It is your ability and your strength to perform. [*Desk thumping*] That is what counts. So you are working on ability; on the person's ability. I am sure Madam Speaker is well aware, age is just a number. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: Well said. I endorse that. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: So it is your ability. I mentioned Norway, Australia, and so on, based the person's ability to perform rather than a set age, you say by 47 goodbye, goodbye go.

The records show us, Madam, that within the Defence Force over 98 per cent of the TT Defence Force, they never continue up to the age of 50 years, primarily because of the present retirement ages. There is also a significant proportion of servicemen at the rank of Major, Lieutenant, Commander, squadron leaders. They have to retire at 47 after working for really maybe approximately half of their working life. So we should note that the Defence Force has been actually generating a large pool of young retirees, I mentioned it before, and if not employed will have to wait until pensionable age to get even an old age pension, which is what 65 for old age pension? Yeah. They have to leave at 47. What do you do between 47 and 65? The extension of these ages would assist in retention of experience in the Defence Force. And, of course, you know, there are those who are of the view that the Defence Force is like an appendix; it is disposable.

In Costa Rica—I remember once I was in Brazil in a world economic forum on a panel, together with the then President of Costa Rica. And she boasted how they had disbanded the Defence Force and taken the money to build schools and, you know, deal with poverty reduction, and so on. So they do not have a Defence Force. And at one time, at that time, I thought maybe we should get these men involved into more internal policing. But given the way the world is now, I think it is very important and given my vision for having a ministry of defence and allocating Immigration, Customs and all those other matters that I raised before, we do need the Defence Force there. We have tremendous experience in them. So we will increase the retirement age, Madam.

But we will also increase the maximum age for recruitment. At the moment it is 25 years. So after 25 you cannot be recruited. So we are saying the maximum should be 27 years, which will allow access for a wider and more mature pool of suitably-qualified persons. An extension again, Madam, of the retirement age is part of a wider holistic human resource reform, which includes a more aggressive recruitment approach.

Further, Madam, I have said this before, I repeat it again, that in future as we go forward, we should recruit—police recruits, they should come in with diplomas, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees in policing. So we had envisaged that these courses could be taught at the UWI. There is an available facility. We talked about setting up a forensic centre there, as well as training for police officers. Some of the courses: law, governance and the criminal justice system; neighbourhood and community safety; understanding vulnerability, risk and threats in society; technology in policing; policing criminology; practical forensics for policing. That is a very important thing; practical forensics. You may not be a forensic scientist, a professor of forensics, and so on, but the ordinary policeman has to have a good grasp of something like that.

Several other courses, Madam, but to really train these officers prior to recruitment. We bring them in and we give them some of these diplomas, graduate and postgraduate, improving efficiency, of course, and competence. How much time do I have please? About 15? Okay.

I want to talk a bit about bail reform. This Government, their answer is lock up everybody, keep them in jail without bail forever, forever. We have to leave the checks and balances. We have to have the discretion in the judges. They have a discretion too. But we can assist if we do proper bail reform. Not just come and find more and more people to lock up for longer periods of time without bail,

Madam. That it not the answer. There must be a more humane way in dealing with bail. My colleague spoke about young people being incarcerated. I made the point earlier, and the Minister may have thought I was referring to him and someone he knows. But it is this. Bail, the present system of bail is structured in such a way that the people who have the money can pay the bail of the bond or whatever, and they can get out. It is the poor people who cannot afford that, they remain in jail. They remain because they cannot, and that cannot be right.

So I think we should have things to do with pretrial detention and bail reform. So, for example, if—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Siparia, your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes to complete your contribution. Members, I would just advise if the Member for Siparia is taking the 15 minutes, it will take us a few seconds after 4.30. So that I will ask if it is your wish that she is allowed to complete before we take the suspension. Please continue.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. On the issue of pretrial detention and bail reform, Madam. The scales, I say, benefit those with the resources. Defendants who currently remain incarcerated are often poor, they may be suffering from mental health issues, substance abuse issues, and so on. And so the bail should not be used to punish these individuals, really. It is not to be set higher than necessary to preserve public safety. What is it for? We know bail is to ensure that you return to court on your court days. That is what it is for. It is not a punishment. Because you have not been found guilty or not guilty yet. It is not punishment. But for those who cannot afford to pay it, as I say, it is in the nature of punishment.

We know what the jail situation is like, the overcrowding, the—whatever else. You could imagine the worst possible, what happens there. This gives you,

the overcrowding gives you—the acute psychological trauma that somebody gets when they go in there and the consequences, Madam, are very, very real for people who are poor people, especially. They are brutal. Many of them live from pay cheque to pay cheque. When you incarcerate them inside there what happens? Yes, what happens? They have no support financially for themselves or for their families. And if they do not go to work what happens? They get fired. They do not show up to work. They are stripped of the ability to earn a living. They may lose access to housing and benefits. They may fall short on payments they may have to make. Cut them off from their families and support system. And I say this happens whether you are guilty or not guilty, because it is pretrial detention.

If you keep low or medium-risk persons in jail pretrial, you are destabilizing them. You are taking away from them the things that made them low-risk to begin with. So there are alternative approaches. There will be those you will definitely want inside there without bail. I am not speaking about those. So we are speaking about risk assessments.

In other jurisdictions, this is what happens. You have individual risk and financial assessments. Other places, Madam, they are turning to this now, because they also face that problem of inner city youth being incarcerated, poor cannot pay bail, and so on. So what is done, we do individualized assessment to consider the defendant's personal, financial, criminal background in order to inform bail decisions.

These risk profiles can be used to determine appropriate amounts, as well as who must remain behind bars. I am saying there will be some that you really do not want them out there, stay in without bail, and there are those who can be released under the supervision of pretrial services programme and they can leave on their own bonds, as it were.

So, I propose that we look into and consider minimum security detention centres. We set up a number of these, minimum security detention centres, and we put there now these facilities to house non-violent offenders who are remanded pretrial, but they cannot pay for the bail. So they can stay there. There are non-violent, and we tie this together with a work release during the daytime. So you have a centre, one in north, one in south, one in east, one in central, one in Tobago. And not maximum security. As I said these are non-violent offenders. I mean, a man did not pay his parking ticket, well we have the demerit system now but, you could go to jail.

4.20 p.m.

You cannot pay your maintenance for your children, court ordered maintenance, you going to jail. How are you making the money to even pay the bill? So we have these pretrial centres and during the daytime they can be released to go to work. Because you did not pay the maintenance does not mean you are violent, it means maybe you know, you are not working for enough money, you do not have the money. A host of reasons, but you should not go to jail for that. In most cases, again, I am saying there will be exceptional cases. And you allow them to go, to work in the day and then come back and stay in the night.

All rehab facilities and treatments should be offered to persons who have issues with drug abuse and/or mental illness issues. We should not be placing persons by just locking them up in jail there. We need to give them rehabilitation. So we must have always— my colleague spoke of it— rehabilitative measures.

And then we work on a case-by-case basis to access work release, as I said, during hours and let them come back after. So that is one suggestion, one alternative method to just locking up poor people and throwing away the key.

We will bring a piece of legislation to prevent incarceration of non-violent

drug offenders. It is drug abuse. [*Desk thumping*] Locking them in there is not going to help you. We bring compulsory drug treatment and not incarceration. Again, this is for non-violent offenders. We must give them drug treatment programmes for rehabilitation. Locking them up now is just going to further ruin their lives. So, we are doing a disservice to our citizens by just locking them up, no rehabilitation.

In this country when you are poor, you are really poor, eh. The worst happens to you. That is what is going on. And when you talk about they do not care, they really do not care, because even in the same breath today, “coming about more law to lock up people.” And I am saying I will not support those laws where they could frame you. And be it known, possession of guns and so on, Madam Speaker, you may well know it is everybody—I mentioned the “set-ups” already—but it is everybody on the premises, you know. A man “pelt” in your yard a gun, sleeping in the night and next morning you come and find it. What happens? Everybody in that house “gone down”, you know, “every man jack gone down”.

So would cannot pass those kind of draconian laws without proper balance. And I mention already about planting people, framing you up and so on. So it is not that we are afraid—I “doh” own a gun, I “doh” even want to own a gun, “doh” even want it. It is not a question of fear, it is a question of rights and so on.

Then we have this with the ankle bracelets and house arrest. There are some offenders, what has become of that? We left the legislation for the ankle bracelets, remember that? We passed the law. So there are some offenders, again, the non-violent offenders. What about old people and so on, infirm people, locking them inside there is not going to help. So this is pretrial detentions I am talking about eh, Madam. So we can monitor them. You have the ankle bracelets, you could monitor them. Wherever they are, you know where they are.

House arrest, there are some you may say, “Okay, you cannot leave the house.” The others, you can have the ankle bracelet but you can go to work and so, again, pretrial detention, we need some serious reform in that regard.

Further, Madam, I think there should be some level of state-funded support for children whose parents may be in jail. [*Desk thumping*] Some kind of state—and that is something we have as part of the plan that we will flesh out. These children suffer. It is not because they did something on their part, of their fault—parent incarcerated. And I think we have to consider—and I am saying we will bring the legislation long promised by this Government to give the million-dollar compensation to the protective services if they are killed in the line of duty. We will bring it. [*Desk thumping*] Spend four and a half years, promise, promise, promise, never bring the legislation. We will bring that. And we will also bring legislation, as I am saying, to set-up some kind of fund for children of persons who have been killed. No parent, no money, how do you live?

Hon. Member: Reduce dropout in schools.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Reduce dropout, yes. End up with a criminal record as well. So we will have to consider some minimum level of state funding to children of persons who have lost their lives.

And you know, the comfort—what is it? The community comfort patrol. You shut it down, did you bring it back? That is so important in hotspot areas, especially, that you need this bonding with the police. They are not just there to lock you up. They are not just—this lock-up concept that you have, that is not what they are about. They are there to give you that level of comfort as you are in your communities, hotspot communities and so on. And/or—

Hon. Member: Community comfort patrols.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah. That comfort level, but working closely

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC (cont'd)

with communities. We have a police post hotspot there in the Duncan Street police post. I think we built that, Dr. Moonilal? Duncan Street police post. [*Interruption*]
Who is Spanish? The Venezuelans?

Dr. Moonilal: And homework centres.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: You know, that is so totally untrue. I could tell you who built it right now, you know. It is Caribbean financial something. Caribbean facilities something. [*Crosstalk*] Are they criminals? They continued working for your Government. I challenge you to bring any evidence [*Desk thumping*] that Caribbean Facilities, who got the contract— bring the contract, bring the contract. They got the contract to build the Duncan Street police station. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Order, order.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: They got the contract from the government. The government built it. We built it, the government. Caribbean Facilities— Madam, I have one minute. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Laventille West, if you want to make an intervention, you know how to do it, please. Member for Siparia.

Mr. Indarsingh: Have some decency.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, this allegation being made all over the place, I challenge them to provide the contract that was signed between Government of Trinidad and Tobago through UDeCOTT, Caribbean Facilities— [*Crosstalk*—and tell me if they are criminals.

Dr. Moonilal: Normal finance bill.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: If they are criminals, they built it, Madam, the Duncan Street police post. I am saying at that police post we had a lot of intra-family matters happening, taking place, giving assistance to the community

there. It was done in a bid to suppress crime, of course, and also to help the communities. So homework centre, children coming in, a lot of that. That is something we may want to look at island-wide, the two islands, community and intra-familial violence within—domestic violence. Community and domestic violence issues could be dealt with in that regard.

Now the Member, in his bid to be—and he had done such a great thing, he said they built what? Two police stations? Four and a half, going into five years later, that is your claim to fame? You built two police stations? In our term in office we built eight state-of-the-art police stations, eight, eight police stations. [*Desk thumping*] It is very clear—

Mr. Charles: “Performance finish ole talk”.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC: Finished St. Joseph, yes. Well, they turned the key for the St. Joseph, but it was built in our term. Madam, as I close, I believe that the Government has totally failed to fulfill its mandate to protect the people. That is like your first task. Because if you are not alive, you cannot enjoy any good health, any education, any job. You cannot enjoy anything. So the first thing is to protect our citizens. Crime is indeed at a crisis level and today I have lost all hope in [*Desk thumping*] that Government and that Minister. All they can do is blame, blame, blame, blame, blame but they have no plan, and they never had and they never will. They are on their last legs as they go out of office. [*Desk thumping*]

It is clear that into this five years this Rowley-led Government has no clue to deal with crime. We cannot afford another five years under the Rowley PNM and we say tackling the crime is a menace, and we put menace as a number one priority. So serious it is, we will continue our consultations with various stakeholders.

Madam, and as I close, I commend my master plan, you cannot see anything [Holds up document] Okay. This master plan, we will go out, we will roll out more of it as we go along. With those few words, Madam, I thank you very much for your time. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, it is now 4.28.54. I suggest that now is a convenient time for us to take the suspension. So this House is now suspended. We shall resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.29 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[Hon. Hinds and Dr. Moonilal stand]

Dr. Roodal Moonilal: (*Oropouche East*): Thank you, Ma'am. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and speak on this matter. May I first begin by congratulating the Member for Naparima on having the courage to bring this defining Motion in the House.

Madam Speaker, I begin by indicating my complete support for the Member for Naparima on this Motion and the fact that that it is the most timely Motion to come to the House given the realities that we face in the country today. There can be no doubt that the criminal enterprise, as it were, has gotten control of the national community. There can be no doubt that fear has taken hold at every level, at every community.

Madam Speaker, whereas a few years ago we spoke of hotspots and places where it was known to be rampant with criminals and so on. Today, because of escalating number of persons involved in the criminal enterprise, because of the technology that is available, because, of course, of the spread in some cases of

business and so on, these elements roam the island and can be found here, there and everywhere.

In our community, Madam Speaker, in the constituency of Oropouche East, which I have the honour to represent, I hope I will have that honour again soon, but the constituency that we have the honour to represent, Madam Speaker, our constituency is overrun by the criminal enterprise, not only the murders and so on but by robbery, vandalism, larceny and so on. In fact I met, Madam Speaker, over the Carnival holiday, I attended a function at a school and I met a business person and he came up to me and he was speaking to me. And he indicated to me, he asked almost like a riddle, he said, "Do you know how many times I have been robbed?" And I said, "No." He said, "Guess." So I said, "Six, seven times" because I know him to be a traditional business person. He said, "I want to tell you between the last couple years," he said, "I was robbed 29 times." His businesses. He said—

In my constituency as well on Ash Wednesday, on Ash Wednesday morning, a prominent place, a restaurant/bar, the bandit elements thinking that they would keep cash and they would keep from overnight from Carnival Monday and Tuesday, businesses would have cash on their premises, they robbed early morning on Ash Wednesday, a major proprietor as well. So that this matter, Madam Speaker, is with us. It is diabolical, it is something that we have to confront, and it is something that if left unchecked in this way we could have serious very, very long-term impact on the country and indeed the next generation.

Madam Speaker, there are persons in our community who would tell us that they are just waiting a few months, they wished the election was on Monday coming to decide what is happening. [*Desk thumping*] And that will determine their fate whether they stay here or not given crime. I am not talking about

unemployment, I am not talking about the collapse of Petrotrin, I am not talking about health, I am not talking about education, given crime.

So, Madam Speaker, we are at this point. Now, I just want to make a few references because—and again, we want to congratulate the Member of Parliament for Siparia and Leader of the Opposition [*Desk thumping*] on giving another defining presentation in the House in which the Member indicated clearly that it was not her intention to stand in this House and just blame the Government, blame other elements in the society because while we can blame, it is also important that as an alternative government, we outline boldly and with courage, at a time like this, our alternative policy recommendations to deal with this matter. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Madam Speaker, the Member for Siparia has defined the debate as not just one to blame but one to define policy, and programmes, and strategies. [*Desk thumping*] What would we do that is different? In going forward, what can we replicate from 2010—2015 that worked? And what would we add to that policy menu upon return to office? [*Desk thumping*] And I think that was a very important statement for that reason.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Security, coming down to his last minute, I remembered it well, Madam Speaker, I thought that the only acceptable and decent thing to do was indeed to tender his resignation in that last minute. [*Desk thumping*] His entire presentation was one, Madam Speaker, that lacked confidence, that lacked policy, that lacked hope, that lacked even sense of achievement of anything done.

And, Madam Speaker, you know, it is a time like this, the electoral cycle is rolling over. When we were in office in the first administration '95 to 2001, second, 2010—2015, National Security was a Ministry in which I personally

would feel overwhelmed because of the demands of that job, because of the pressure, because of the critical nature of that Ministry. So it is not something you could accept as a Minister without your own personal confidence and know-how and commitment and experience in public service as well. Today the Minister came across, and I say without disrespect, almost school-boyishly, unprepared, unfit, even unmade to take on this task. [*Desk thumping*]

And true to form it took him, I think, 45 seconds before he reached the UNC and with 13 minutes to go, Madam Speaker, I think, 720 seconds left in his speech, he then came to policy and programme and achievement and sought to tell us what he will do in the future. What future are you talking about? Today is your future. You have no more future. [*Desk thumping*] All you have to do, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, wherever you are, if you are listening, all you have to do is take off the lights when you leave with your little cardboard box of whatever personal items you may have. And even then we will have to scrutinize what they are leaving office with.

Madam Speaker, there is no time left to tell us that you have the national intelligence fusion centre coming. When is this fusion centre coming? And what did you do with the National Operations Centre, the NOC? [*Desk thumping*] There was a commission of enquiry into the 1990 coup. There was a commission of enquiry into the coup and that recommended the establishment of a National Operations Centre to coordinate all the branches of intelligence. We put that in place, the Member for Siparia put that in place with our administration. The current Commissioner of Police knows about that. What did they do with that? They could not keep it because they found it sounding too much "Partnership-ish", too much "UNC-ish".

So they disband that. Now it is the fusion centre. But the fusion centre is

coming, that is coming. Madam Speaker, the Minister tells us 80 per cent of crime linked to illegal firearms. “Whew”, what a revelation in your fifth year of office. After last month going to a meeting of stakeholders and asking essentially, what to do? What to do? This is where we have reached and this is why in the coming days that you have left, the few days, there will be no change, I regret to say that. It is painful to say that. There will be no change. The population cannot expect any change in terms of the crime situation given that they are in office.

The manifesto promises and so on, I will come to that. That is a special one. Manifesto promises and budgetary promises, what they promised to do and so on, all of that is fine. They have not implemented nothing but it is whatever they have implemented is not working.

And as the Member for Siparia said repeatedly— you know, I was taken aback when the Member for Siparia made a point in reference to a statement from the Minister and read from a press release was the first time I was hearing that as well. That the former National Security Minister, current Commissioner actually pointed out three years ago that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West was telling an untruth and he continued three years later. [*Desk thumping*] About the last government remove facial recognition, we want to tell him today, he should not show his face [*Desk thumping*] in the public domain, if for three years you are peddling the same untruths that is where we are today. And of all people, it is the current Commissioner who had to point out that three years ago, telling us, Madam Speaker.

And in their blame game—I have to also respond to a few of these matters because, Madam Speaker, unlike several of my colleagues, not all, I also would have some institutional memory so I would have an idea of what the Minister is trying to do because I was there and I had the honour as well to spend, I believe it

was the complete five years, as a Member of the National Security Council when we had less crime, when we had less murders, when you could have seen patrols on the highway. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, the Member spoke about a warehouse the last government bought for 300 million. Well, it is not 300 million but we leave him with that. It was more like 227 million but millions go up in their minds like that and I think that is a global finance type of approach. [*Laughter*] Because they move from 23 million—I saw a clip on the Internet the other day, I “doh” know who saw it. A clip, where this global finance move from 23 million to a half billion dollars in work. So it was not 300 million, it was 227 more or less.

But, Madam Speaker, for “donkey years”, since Independence people complaining in this country. How bad things are in the prison, Remand Yard. A former professor Independent Senator, Deosaran, went to visit there. I think he cried when he went to visit the prison. “Everybody go there does cry”. But they were complaining that, you know, it is 10 men in one little area, hygiene and this and that. We were hearing, what did we do? We purchased a property that already had the infrastructure to convert into a prison. So the 227 we spent, that was for a full comprehensive, fully outfitted building with all infrastructure paid for. Untruth.

And you know, Madam Speaker, what that was supposed to do? I remember. They were supposed to move persons out of the crowded Remand Yard or—and a part of that was for, when persons reached the time close, let us say, two/three years before they are due to exit and go back into the society, you would use that facility to bring those men and women there and do more education, more training, more vocational work, skills. [*Desk thumping*] That was the intent, it was a noble intent. Today the Minister admits that after five years in office, 8 per cent of that

building is being utilized. Could you imagine? Eight per cent of a complete area that could be converted to take the dire and desperate state of the current prison at Golden Grove to reduce that despicable scene, you could have developed that and brought the prisoners two/three years before and train them; give education. Madam Speaker, they are proud today only 8 per cent being used after five years and we bought it for that purpose.

I visited that place one day, Santa Rosa, I think it is. I went there with I think—in fact, I think I went there with Mr. Griffith as well and I was impressed in the area they had the prisoners, when you look into the little jail area and so on, you saw whiteboards and blackboards and chalk and persons identified as YTEPP tutors and so on, working with prisoners. So, of course, they raised that. Then raised this matter of the pass government bought vessels in Holland and it is the subject of an international enquiry. The Member for Siparia dealt with that.

Madam Speaker, “Damian” if that is the correct pronunciation of the term.

Hon. Member: Damen.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Damen, they are the subject of investigations in their entire organization throughout the world with projects. Trinidad and Tobago is not singled out for anything. It is that company. [*Desk thumping*] But, you know, there is a company called BAE, what does BAE, anybody who is—British aviation—that was the OPV. We were supposed to buy OPVs. The OPVs were \$600 million more than similar vessels in Australia. Under the Manning administration, somebody went and “cut deal”. We were supposed to buy that. They were defective, Madam Speaker.

Do you know today if you type “BAE”— and I challenge anybody to do it now— “BAE” and put next to it “corruption”, “you get about 25 webpage” that BAE is involved in corruption all over this planet and that is what they wanted us

Dr. Moonilal (cont'd)

to continue to deal with that company. In fact, they are paying out, I read, they were paying out US \$430 million, they would have to pay over allegations of bribery. And the PNM Government entered into contract with them and wanted us to continue it. That is BAE today, just type "BAE corruption" and you will see.

Mr. Indarsingh: Shame and scandal.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Shame and scandal. And we already spoke about the vessels were not appropriate. It was 200 miles off the coast. When you passing with 10 "box of gun by de time that reach there", what is it? Madam Speaker, so we dealt with that.

The CCTV cameras, the Member for Siparia said we had some knowledge. Let me begin by saying—and I make no apologies I think we have reached a point where we must say it as it is. Forty per cent of the existing CCTV cameras are not working in this country. [*Desk thumping*] They are not working.

Madam Speaker, a few months ago I had a personal experience, an accident involving my vehicle. The man hit and run because when he saw the vehicle, he did not want to stop, and police came, we gave a report. After a week or two, I called the police, I said, "Well, officer tell me. I mean it was very clear, daylight, four cameras all in a row around the incident, have you found this owner yet and charged him for all of this, I mean it is a bad thing." You know what the police tell me? He dropped his head, and he said, "Boss, you know, none of the cameras working." "Case done". And today boasting, four years in office. No, if you hear them, they saved this, they saved that, they saved the other. The only thing they have not saved are lives. That is the only thing they have not saved. [*Desk thumping*] They saved everything.

Seven hundred million for one building here; 20 million for a building there; over in Tobago, 20 million for a building. All the castles fixed but no diesel for the

boat, we “doh” have money for that. No money for CCTV cameras. Madam Speaker, the technology that underpins CCTV cameras, they are expensive technology and if you have to fight crime, you have to spend money. What you think you will do, eh? “You think you would put up ah flute and peep through with yuh eye to see who hitting who?” These things carry expensive equipment and so on.

The Patrick Manning Government entered into a contract. Our contract with the providers was not to increase the amount of cameras and because we were increasing the amount of cameras, you have to increase the amount of infrastructure. What you think, you will take a Kodak camera—what you used to call it again? You would take a camera and put it up on a post? No, it “doh” work so. You have to run underground fiber cable, you have to do all type of technological innovations if you are going to expand by 1800 and we did it.

When they came in office, I “doh” know whether they had a provider of choice but they refused, they refused to extend the contract for the provider. The provider is TSTT, a state enterprise. [*Desk thumping*] So you would think that TSTT, a public/private company, but public shareholding with profits to the public. You would think that the Government would be happy that TSTT is running this and making profits. Madam Speaker, they refused and frustrated for four years the completion of a contract. In October last year, they wanted to announce with fanfare a new contract awarded for 100 million less. Madam Speaker, when we exposed it in Parliament, they “mash de brakes and stop because it was bobol” because they had problems with the tendering process. [*Desk thumping*]

And you know they do that all the time. They blame us and say more money for this, more money for that. The OAS highway in Point Fortin, our government, so much money. On May 25, 2010, the election was May 24, 2010. NIDCO under

a PNM board entered into an agreement OAS to build that highway. The Member for Siparia was not even sworn in yet as Prime Minister. And they did the same thing they all doing all the time, they called something a “preferred bidder”. When we were in office we never had preferred bidder, “yuh either win or yuh loss”. You do not have a preferred bidder and then decide after well, we have to negotiate with you now so we could change everything because you are preferred. That is recipe for “bobol”. Curepe interchange the same thing, announcing to the world that we were giving out a contract for 500 and they do it for 300. The Partnership never signed one contract to this date to give out for the interchange. [*Desk thumping*] But they repeat, and they repeat, Madam Speaker.

5.20 p.m.

They change the scope of works in Point Fortin Hospital and then say they are doing it cheaper. Maracas beach facility, they changed the scope of works, you know, one person told me and I will make this as decent as I could, one person told me—that is like if you have an outfit, and you see two outfits on two persons and you say ours cheaper. To dress the person like that is cheaper, and the one you have is X dollars more expensive, but one is not wearing underpants. Yeah, you changed, one simply is not the other. And that is how their approach has been. They change the scope of works, and then they come to say we doing it cheaper, value for money. That has been their approach.

Madam Speaker, their approach in Tobago is from \$500 million to \$800 million for a terminal building. They are doing it cheaper, Madam Speaker. Today we heard the Minister earlier, OPV, the Austal vessels, and so on, the cameras, we raised that, helicopters. Helicopter matter as well, raised. The Partnership administration purchased helicopters and one was in Miami, paid X amount of money. Madam Speaker, the arrangement to buy those Augusta Westland

helicopters was undertaken by the Patrick Manning administration. [*Desk thumping*] Winston Dookeran as Minister of Finance brought a note to Cabinet to indicate to us with legal advice that our Government could not rescind that agreement of the former Government without serious cost, so we had to go through with it. Today, they blame us for that as well, Madam Speaker. They blame us for that. And you know, the favourite part of the Minister of National Security, and I have to come to that now I must, Madam Speaker, because there is no Motion to debate anything here today apart from this matter. As far as I am concerned, this is the only matter we are debating today.

Madam Speaker, I was waiting for when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West would raise issue about Members of Parliament and Opposition Members, and he just saw a report laid today in which they talked about people with links to criminal gangs and so on. Madam Speaker, the truth is that this Government today is abusing the police, is using and abusing the police in a political year [*Desk thumping*] for campaign and scandals associated with a political campaign.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(6) please.

Dr. R. Moonilal: They are doing that and I will now explain—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(6) please.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, I uphold the objection. Please withdraw that and continue.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I withdraw the remark, and let me quote more precisely from the Member of Parliament, the Minister of National Security. He said and made reference that if it is that Members on this side of the House, the Opposition, did not support crime legislation, it could well be because they were also working with or associated with, or had an interest in the criminal enterprises

in this country. He said that. He then said that there were Members of the Opposition who would be making phone calls to persons in jail. I heard that, he referenced deputy leader and so on; he said that. Madam Speaker, he referenced Member of Parliament as well, and I assume he meant Member of the Lower House who would have connections to gang leaders and so on.

Madam Speaker, what has happened in this country, it has been in the public domain, in the newspaper, I have the clippings here, I do not want to read extensively from them, is that the Minister of National Security is on a frolic of his own, and he has been able to do something that no National Security Minister has ever done before, to take raw information provided from secret and confidential sources, according to him, and put it in the public domain before it is tested, before anyone could verify whether that information is intelligence or could ever be evidence. You know, before you become evidence, you will have intelligence, but do you know before you have intel you have what is called information. You could get information on anybody for anything, but you have to go through a process, verify, then you say you have intel, from intel you work to get evidence that you can put in court. This Minister has been on a campaign to use raw data that he found himself with, Madam Speaker, data that the Commissioner of Police does not have, and accusing Members of the Opposition of having criminal connections and gangs. But if there are Members of the Opposition committing any crime, arrest them, lock them up. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, a document was laid today in this House; I can refer to it. It is a public document that we received in the House, an interim report of the Joint Select Committee on National Security. This is a report that is now public, it is in the public domain now, Madam Speaker. It is not the subject of any debate, so I

cannot be anticipating a debate, it is a report that is laid, Madam Speaker, and if one reads this report as I have had the opportunity in the last two, three hours to read it, it is diabolical, calling people's names and making allegations and accusations as if they are involved in criminal enterprise, Madam Speaker.

And when the Commissioner is interviewed he is at pains to say first, "I cyah call nobody name, we ought not to be calling people name". Then, any time he tries to make a point and we can read verbatim from this, anytime he tries to make a point, Madam Speaker, to indicate that crime has nothing to do with politics or Opposition politicians, he is stopped in his tracks. When they asked him, Madam Speaker, about a particular Member of Parliament, whether that Member of Parliament—sitting Member of Parliament—Madam Speaker, is promising people contracts and so on. He says "No, we do not have any such information." And then he stops, because he is not allowed to continue, that is what we have.

Madam Speaker, what is diabolical coming out of this report as well, is that the Minister of National Security, and I put it to you, Madam Speaker, has admitted in this report that he is spying on the Commissioner of Police. He has indicated in this report, Madam Speaker, that he was aware of what the Commissioner was doing on a said day, that the Commissioner was meeting someone at Town Restaurant in Port of Spain. How do you know that? How in the world do you know what the Commissioner is doing? So that, they want us to trust them with interception amendments for unwarranted evidence and then you are spying on the Commissioner of Police. [*Desk thumping*] How do you know where the Commissioner is?—he is in this restaurant or that restaurant, who he is meeting with. That, Madam Speaker, is diabolical.

In the report the Minister of National Security is saying as well that he receives plenty intelligence report. You know what the Commissioner says? He

said “Yes, he may receive that but we don’t receive it. Some reports the Minister receives, we don’t receive”. So, the Minister of National Security with his claws on police reports that the Commissioner of Police has never seen. That is the country we live in today, and we must trust them, Madam Speaker, with further erosion of our constitutional rights [*Desk thumping*] in the interception of communication amendments.

Look, it is there, Madam Speaker, page 117 verbatim, when they asked “Is the particular MP making promises to people and so on, to give them contract if they win election?” He said “Well we have information and so on, but he is not involved in making any—” And then they stopped him, page 117.

Madam Speaker, let me put to rest this matter again that they are raising. And you know, it is sad that people would raise and continue but, you see, there are people who believes that if you say something that is untrue and you say it all the time, all the time, it will become the truth. Madam Speaker, page 78, I was shocked to read this myself. You know, when we asked Madam Speaker, if Opposition Members meeting criminal elements? Asked the Minister of National Security, “Are you aware of any criminal conduct or offences?” He said “My view is that is irrelevant”. He is not concerned with criminal offences and so on, he is just concerned with allegations and linking.

And you know I heard the Member for St. Ann’s West today, he made a fascinating statement I thought, he said—I do not know if he was thinking it through—he said that criminal enterprise and people criminal conduct cannot be traced today. It does not happen overnight like that, you have to go through to when the seed was what—was sowed, how long you planted it and you nurtured it. And he was making reference I think to LifeSport, his reference. But it happens in families as well, Madam Speaker. The conduct of children does not happen

overnight. It does not happen overnight. If children are involved in criminal conduct, it did not happen overnight. It happened over a period of time, and therefore, we all as parents must take responsibility for children.

Madam Speaker, that is something that is missing in this crime debate. The importance of parenting and taking responsibility for children than to bawl “She is ah nice girl, he is ah nice boy and don’t bring them in the public domain”. Take responsibility. Your child is not supposed to be in the court with guns on the table as exhibit A. Take responsibility instead of buffing up people. Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, I am standing on relevance and reminding you what is the text of the debate, okay.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I wanted to come back to an issue that was touched earlier. Sorry, sorry Ma’am.

Madam Speaker: That is all right. Your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 15 more minutes to wind up your contribution. You may proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, a matter was touched earlier and I just wanted to dwell on it for a few minutes, and then to move to what would then be probably my final point. Madam Speaker, I want to put on record an important matter. It was 2017, October, between the period August to October 2017. Madam Speaker, there was a spate of murders in Port of Spain, in the Duncan Street and surrounding areas. Unless I am mistaken we had four murders a day, and in one week we had eight murders. That was too much. What did we do? Madam Speaker, in collaboration with the TTPS we came up with a plan involving the Housing Development Corporation to fight crime. Madam Speaker, we constructed a Duncan Street police post and homework centre. We do not say the words “homework centre” anymore, at Duncan Street, Madam Speaker. So that the children from that area, many of whom were tenants

and so on of the HDC, would be in a position to go there and do their homework with professional help.

It was also supposed to be powered by solar, the first ever solar powered police station in the country. Madam Speaker, we had the latest state of the art technology in that place, for interviews and so on, for the privacy or witnesses and persons making complaints and so on, Madam Speaker. And when we opened that the Member for Port of Spain South came there, and I saw the TV clip last night when I was doing my research, was in high praise of this beautiful area there, high praise for the police station and told us it was very beautiful and so on. The Duncan Street police post and homework centre ensured that, in the months after, former Commissioner Williams indicated in an address that crime had gone down in that area. That is what we did, [*Desk thumping*] that is what we did, Madam Speaker. That was the vision.

And then, on that day I went as Minister of Housing and I put in the public record. When you go to tour a place as Minister, if you are the Attorney General and you are touring a place, everybody comes in front of you, you start shaking hand left, right and center. Madam Speaker, sometimes we shake the same person hand twice, because you are just shaking hands and you take your picture, your photo op or something like that. Madam Speaker, I met someone there. I speak English, I do not speak German, French or Spanish. I met someone there, they took a picture and said, "Look, look, look, associating with gang leader, associate—". Madam Speaker, if I knew it was a gang leader "I wouldn't ah shake he hand neither". If I knew. But, Madam Speaker, that is what we do in normal course of action. And then they started a campaign that lasted for seven years. Give out contract to gang leader to build.

Madam Speaker, Caribbean Facilitates Corporation Limited, a company that

we met working for the HDC under Mr. Manning's administration, got the contract. The principal there is Lenox Fingal, he got the contract to build that Duncan Street police post, the HDC has the contract. And under freedom of information we will ask for the contract. Nobody got a contract except that company. Yes, they hired, they subcontract and they do what they have to do, it is not the HDC, it was not the Government that hired any subcontractor, assuming but not admitting somebody else was there. But they peddled that and they take away from the fact that this place was meant for the children of the area to be safe and do their homework.
[Desk thumping]

And as I am on children, Madam Speaker, in the Beetham the Member for Laventille West you know always asking why is it that I have to meet people from Port of Spain, Laventille and all about, and I represent south, Oropouche East, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hinds: Madam Speaker, may I deem your attention?

Dr. R. Moonilal: What Standing Order? What Standing Order? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Hinds: 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Three of us cannot be standing at the same time. Member for Laventille West, if you have a Standing Order raise it please.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I have never asked the Member for Oropouche East, he is telling an untruth.

Madam Speaker: No, no, Member—

Mr. Hinds: 48(6), 48(6).

Hon. Member: You is a “bad john”?

Madam Speaker: One minute please.

Mr. Hinds: And he is imputing improper motives.

Madam Speaker: One—now, Member for Couva South and Member for

Government's Failure to Deal with Rampant Crime (cont'd)
Dr. Moonilal (cont'd)

2020.02.28

Naparima, I recognize your difficulty as you sit so close to the Chair, you may sometimes feel, you know, a sort of link to the Chair. Please, I will do my job. Member for Laventille West, you are standing on 48(6)? All right. I overrule. I have not heard anything that imputes improper—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: But again, what is the difficulty with everybody here? Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I pray that my time would reflect this interruption.

Madam Speaker: Your prayer will not be answered.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you. Madam Speaker, when it is that Members of Parliament and anyone enquire as to what in the world would someone like myself for example, would be doing meeting with persons from Port of Spain, Laventille, Beetham, Madam Speaker, when I held the position as Minister of Housing, those were the areas that were highly tenanted for the HDC of which I had responsibility. And we supported programmes in those communities and when I demitted office I continued to support programmes in those areas. [*Desk thumping*] And I will just take 30 seconds because the Member opposite may not know—Members may not know—but in that area of Beetham for example, just one example, nobody would believe that women in the Beetham under a project by the Rose Foundation and their community group in Oropouche East, women in the Beetham were learning in the last six months to make Indian delicacies, including roti, for sale [*Desk thumping*] and to make food items to sell to earn a living. Madam Speaker, it will surprise everyone to know that last year in the Divali Nagar an entire restaurant was established there every night, and ten women from Beetham were in the kitchen working making food [*Desk thumping*] due to a collaboration project

between the Rose Foundation and Oropouche East activists.

Madam Speaker, we have done more for people of Beetham than the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] So that, that is why we have an interest. Madam Speaker, there are persons in those areas who do community work. Every single year we make a small donation to buy books for children who are poor, for Christmas parties, to buy popcorn and cotton candy and so on for children because sometimes they cannot find their MP. Their MP does not help them. This is why they kick water and hurl abuses at their MPs. I did not call anybody's name.

Madam Speaker: I am not going to allow that, right.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay.

Madam Speaker: I am going to ask you to withdraw it.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Yes.

Madam Speaker: And I am going to give you this warning. There is a particular penchant to bring a particular incident which has reached a particular place, okay. I am not going to allow freedom of speech. And Member, watch your demeanour please. Member for Naparima, watch your demeanour, watch your demeanour please. Thank you. I am not going to allow that to be used for any kind of excuse in this House. So withdraw that, and you can proceed.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I withdraw the statement. Madam Speaker, let me get to this issue now. I have in my hand an analysis, because we are dealing with crime. The Member for Naparima made his case, he made a compelling case, a compelling case on the failure of the Government to deal with crime. [*Desk thumping*] The Member for Port of Spain North East/St. Ann's West made a feeble attempt. As I said before with 12 minutes left in his speech he came with what he is going to do.

And I want to remind the House and the national community, Madam

Speaker, that it was in 2015 the Minister of Finance, the current Minister of Finance, promised the establishment of a joint border patrol agency to manage the security and integrity of our open and vulnerable borders; promise never materialized. 2015, promised the modernization of the police service and the introduction of a police management agency; promise never materialized. In that first budget speech, promised the establishment of a police service inspectorate to treat with the potential abuse of state power and overreach by police. Member for Diego Martin North/East. where is that police inspectorate that you told us about? 2016, I go now, the Government having failed in National Security they re-promised a national border patrol agency, Madam Speaker, and the establishment of regional municipality constabulary. Madam Speaker, no border patrol. I think by now they may have appointed a few of the municipal police. That has some problems we will deal with on another time.

Madam Speaker, 2017/'18 I can come to that now. Madam Speaker, they promised a national crime prevention programme. This is a holistic programme for crime fighting; promise never materialized. Madam Speaker, well they spoke about the boat and the vessels and so on, including the vessels that they were acquiring, Madam Speaker. They said that vessels from Damen were going to be acquired in December 2016. So today we hear that that is "bobol", but they acquired the vessels presumably because contract work had already been done and so on.

Madam Speaker, we heard of naval assets, nothing happened, Madam Speaker. We go on now, national security. They said they were building—Madam Speaker, my note said the Minister shamelessly boasted that they were constructing modern police stations. Announced with fanfare, completed and commissioned Besson Street, St. Joseph, Maracas St. Joseph, at no time mentioned in that all three police stations were initiated, planned, and implemented by the

former partnership Government.

We were promised the Trinidad and Tobago police operational command centre. Well I do not know where that gone. We heard, Madam Speaker, of a national operation fusion centre. Now I am talking in 2017, 2017 we are promised a national operation fusion centre. In February 2020 the Minister get up to tell us today "It coming soon, it coming soon" having announced that in 2017, Madam Speaker.

They promised drone technology that we will go in the air and look at drones flying all over the place, and they will be collecting camera footage and so on and we could prosecute. Anybody see a drone? Anybody? Madam Speaker, the Minister promised increasing use of technology, global positioning systems for vehicle tracking and so on. When we hear now, around the same time, Madam Speaker, I must tell you, around the same time we heard, Madam Speaker, that the Commissioner of Police was complaining all over that moneys were not being released in 2017 for his capital programme, meaning buying equipment.

So, Madam Speaker, that is why they face the problem they face today. They tell the Commissioner of Police, announced with fanfare, all these big projects and starve him, give him no money, but they want to spy on the Commissioner of Police. That is what they are doing. Thank God they do not have drones. They might use that to spy on Gary Griffith as the first man. Madam Speaker, these are some of the promises they have made over the years. We are where we are, Madam Speaker, we are where we are.

Today, if you travel from Port of Spain to San Fernando in the night, in the day too, but in the night when some of us go down, you will not see a patrol car, because the patrol cars are waiting for resources so that they could be fixed, many of them to be fixed and repaired. When we were in office some time ago, we were

even asking the private sector to contribute by fixing police cars free of charge for the police station in your area. They have refused to do that, and that would have been part of a solution to a problem, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the former Minister from Point Fortin as well came to the House some time ago when he was there. And you know, every time they talk you would think that Resmi Ramnarine, who had an office for one day, destroyed the national security infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago, in that one day, Madam Speaker, if you hear them talk. Because they will stand up and say the same thing, Resmi Ramnarine. In fact, she changed her name and I think they find out.

Madam Speaker, in the coming months the population will have an important decision to make. You either believe that the Government is doing a good job fighting crime or you do not. You either believe you are safer today than you were prior to September 2015, or you do not. You either believe things will get better on the crime front or you do not. And if you do not, you have a choice to make. It cannot continue like this. The society is boiling and blaming politicians and—listen we have had Government by Opposition since 1962. Eric Williams had to deal with Rudranath Capildeo. Basdeo Panday had to deal with Patrick Manning. Today you have to deal with an Opposition, deal with it, do not cry and complain.

Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, your time has now—

Dr. R. Moonilal: Extra time?

Madam Speaker:—expired.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Oh, sorry.

Madam Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

The Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the

Member for Oropouche East ventured to tell this House in the course of his deliberation, that the Minister of National Security can be accused of spying on the Commissioner of Police. That is on the record. Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, why he may have said that, and why that cannot be correct. The interim report of the joint select committee was laid today and in fact he is right, it is a public document, a copy of which I have in my hand. And in that joint select committee as reported here at page 18 of the report, the Minister of National Security having appeared before us at the request of the Member for Oropouche East following a post Cabinet press conference told the national community that he had information, and it was not the first time on many occasions he said, but on that day he repeated it, that certain members, certain politicians were engaged in discussions and deliberations and collaborating with criminals.

And secondly, the police has noticed an unusual spike in crime in the run up to Christmas that could not be ordinarily explained in terms of its classification, robbery, gang and that sort of thing. The Minister of National Security at that press conference called no names. Within the next 24 hours, high elements of the UNC, led by the Member for Oropouche East, was out in the national community denying paternity and saying, "We did not collaborate with criminals, and we cannot be so accused." He went as far as to accuse the Minister of National Security of being reckless and outlandish, and demanded of me and the Joint Select Committee on National Security that we call a meeting and call the Minister of National Security to explain his outlandish statements.

So, the Minister came and gave evidence before that committee and indicated that yes, he had reports that politicians and on this occasion before the committee where he was sworn to speak the truth, he called the names including the member for Oropouche East. And this is the evidence, and I now quote from

page 18 of the report. The commissioner came before us after the Minister of National Security. And you will see here at page 18 where he corroborated what the Minister of National Security said in relation to the Member for Oropouche East, so let me quote from the report now:

“The Commissioner confirmed that the special branch reported an incident at the Hyatt Regency Hotel involving the MP...”

—meaning the MP for Oropouche East—at the constituency office of the MP.

“It was brought to the Commissioner’s attention and the Special Investigations Unit was going to do surveillance because that is what they normally do to verify what the individuals(criminals)”—were—“doing.”

5.50 p.m.

So the commissioner confirmed that the Special Investigations Unit got information that the Member for Oropouche East was engaged in certain nefarious activity, and that the Special Investigations Unit of the police service had gone to do surveillance on him and his office.

I continue:

“The MP apparently was made aware of the surveillance on the individuals’ meeting with the said MP.”—and—“The said MP brought that to the attention of the Commissioner.”

Hon. Member: What?

Hon. F. Hinds: So the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East became, somehow or the other aware, that surveillance was being conducted on him and his office, where a meeting with three known gang leaders was planned, based on the police information. So if anybody was spying “might be he”. So he, at that point, contacted the Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner told us that:

“The meeting between the MP and the gang leaders”—no longer— It—“did

not take place;”

And the commissioner said, or he indicated to us that he could not recall if it was a text message to him or a call message from the MP, but either way, he received a contact from the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East regarding a report to the police that he was about to meet with three criminals at his office: one from Sea Lots, one from Diego Martin and the other one from where? Gang leaders! Not his constituents, coming from miles away in Port of Spain to meet with him at his office. And, of course, Madam Speaker, the meeting did not come off. They recoiled. And the Commissioner told us that he had a conversation at the request of the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East in respect of that meeting, and:

“The Commissioner”—said he—“indicated that this matter was concerning to him because such matters are supposed to be very confidential and...indicated...there was a leak;”—that came to the attention of the Member for Oropouche East.

And that, Madam Speaker, is one of the reasons why this interim report has been laid, because immediately thereupon and the commissioner also reported that he had information that one day during a Parliament sitting like this—and I remember that day. I saw the Member for Oropouche East leave the Chamber at about the time as spoken by the commissioner, and the commissioner reported to my Committee, our Joint Select Committee on National Security, that the Member for Oropouche East left the Parliament Chamber and went to the Hyatt, because the Hyatt management reported to the police that certain gang leaders and criminals had gathered at the Hyatt, and they refused to pay their lofty bill which they ran up for drinks and eats, and told the Hyatt management when they refused to pay that they were supposed to have been meeting there with the Member for Oropouche East, and he would pay the bill, and the commissioner reported that the Member

left his chair in this Parliament and went down to the Hyatt and he paid the bill, and there are records of him paying the bill for the criminals with whom they had planned a meeting.

It is on the basis of those two pieces of evidence in relation to the Member for Oropouche East that this interim report was laid, because the committee then called on him to recuse himself, because he, as a committee member, had now become the subject of the issues in front of the committee, and you cannot be criminal and investigator or associated with the facts and committee member at the same time.

Every single other member of the committee, except member Saddam Hosein, agreed with that and felt that the Member for Oropouche East should recuse himself. He refused and, therefore, the work for the committee had to be aborted. We filed an interim report, which is what the Member quoted from today and twisted it to hide the fact that he was now the subject, because the commissioner told us those matters continue to be under police investigation. [*Desk thumping*] And all of this arose because the Minister of National Security who receives intelligence briefings on a minute by minute, hour by hour basis across this country from different agencies—and I have acted as Minister of National Security so I know. I am a member of the National Security Council, so I know. He received information and receives information—I heard the Member for Oropouche East saying that the commissioner told the committee that the Minister had some elements of information which he did not at that time have, and that is not strange, because there are different elements in national security that report to the Minister of National Security other than the Commissioner of Police.

So for the Member for Oropouche East to suggest that because the commissioner told the committee that he did not only speak to the Member for

Oropouche East on that one occasion that I related a moment ago, but he also met with him at a certain town restaurant which the Member mentioned, and the Member wants to know how did the Minister of National Security know that he met with the commissioner. It is the Commissioner who told us that. So there is no question of the Minister spying, and even if the Minister spied, he would not be doing it personally. He is no intelligence operator, he is the Minister. The spies report to the Minister. And on this occasion it is the commissioner who told us, and based on the evidence in front of us, I suspect the commissioner told the Minister of National Security that too.

So, Madam Speaker, what we are dealing with here in this Motion is the business of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, and the Member for Siparia told us en passant that SAUTT, the Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago as it then was, was disbanded by her Government in 2010 because it was illegal. SAUTT could never have been illegal. It was not an incorporated unit under an Act of Parliament or otherwise, but every single member of SAUTT was a sworn officer, either from the prison service, the police service, the regiment or the coast guard or the intelligence agency, everyone. And those who came from abroad, experienced, retired Scotland Yard personnel, they were made SRPs in accordance with the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, and were there governed by those laws. *[Interruption]* Correct. And the AG is reminding me, none of them, with all the talk about illegal ever challenged its legality or illegality in the courthouse. So it was a group, just like the Inter-Agency Task Force where you have coast guard and army personnel working with the police. You had in SAUTT different people working under one umbrella doing great and yeoman service to Trinidad and Tobago with a record of bringing kidnapping for ransom in the year 2003 or 2004 from 51 down to three, and today they want to take credit for that.

Madam Speaker, what you heard from the Member for Oropouche East today is what we were hearing in the committee. He was there sitting as a committee member and wanting to plead his own case, and give evidence from the chair as a member, and we would have none of it. [*Desk thumping*] They want to impose new moralities on Trinidad and Tobago and more specifically on this Parliament, but we on this side stand by the highest principles and the standards and [*Desk thumping*] you cannot be feathered fish. [*Desk thumping*] You cannot be a fish with feathers. It is either this or that, and this is what we are about.

The Member went on at length about the police station on Duncan Street, and he knew because I showed him before he got up here to speak when he denied that Spanish built a police station, I showed him a picture with him in the helmet “shaking Spanish hand” in the *Guardian* of that day when Spanish gave him the tour. But he came here today to twist it: “Well, you know what? Spanish is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. Spanish worked and everybody in town know Spanish build the police station. Whoever get the contract is the formality.” That is one thing, but everybody in Port of Spain know Spanish built the police station. Why are they hiding that? [*Desk thumping*] Why when SIS built the house in Philippine, why were they hiding that? [*Desk thumping*] Why? Why would you be hiding that? [*Crosstalk*] When a house was built for a certain Ashworth Jack in Tobago, and he said it was on the basis of pumpkin and bhaji, why would you want to hide that? In fact they are doing Spanish an injustice, because if Spanish built a police station that should enhance his businessman’s resume and he should get more work to do under them. But they are doing him an injustice by trying to hide him.

Madam Speaker, we do have a crime problem in Trinidad and Tobago as indeed countries all over the world. What you heard from the Minister of National

Security today, Madam Speaker, is what the Government has done and has been doing in relation to dealing with this issue of crime. So when they tell you about how much murders and how many people in the constituency get rob that is normal—well normal in the sense that it is happening, we know that. But there are different kinds of responsibility, I submit, in dealing with it. The police have a certain responsibility that the Minister does not have. Parents have a responsibility that the police do not have. Teachers have a responsibility that parents do not have. The churches, the mosques and the mandirs, they all, men and women of the cloth, have responsibility in dealing with this social phenomenon of crime which is behavioural and as a result of certain kinds of socialization. We all have a responsibility. The Parliament has a responsibility, the Government has a responsibility, and the Minister pointed out at great length here today, all of the things that he has done on behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago in satisfying that responsibility [*Desk thumping*] and his record is impeccable and admirable, if I may say so. [*Desk thumping*]

And when I heard the Member for Siparia get up here today and talk about the eight Bills or so—anti-crime Bills that they supported—in every case, Madam Speaker, we had to hold them by their throat and they came crying and kicking and screaming to do it, in particular, the FATCA legislation, and the anti-terrorism.

On one occasion they wanted to kill the Attorney General, not literally, in metaphor. They wanted to kill the Attorney General in metaphor. They wanted to castigate him because he was forced to remove a special majority provision from a particular Bill in order for it to pass in this House in the income tax Bill—amendment to the income tax law. So when the Member for Siparia deceptively gets up here today and lists for the national community all the Bills they supported, we know here in the engine room that they came kicking and screaming to do it.

In the case of FATCA, it took the banking industry and the leader of the banking industry to scream out and say, you would have devastated our economy and our correspondent banking options and it is on that basis that they reluctantly did it. So the Member for Siparia is as hypocritical as she could always be.

This Motion says—it concludes by saying:

“Be it resolved that this House condemns this Government for its failure to deal with rampant crime.”

I reject that and reject the entire Motion, Madam Speaker, because we have two types of crime here. We have red or blood or street crimes and then we have white collar crime on the other hand and, of course, they have created “yellow collar crime” too, specialized in that and, of course, we all know the effects of white collar crime.

We had a situation here where in the closing months a \$1.2 billion contract—as they were going out of office, within the space of two months, they issued a \$1.2 billion contract to her friend, SIS, Krishna Lalla. You will hear all of them speak here today, Madam Speaker, not once you will hear the name Krishna Lalla or SIS from any of them.

Mr. Deyalsingh: “Mamoo”.

Hon. F. Hinds: Or “Mamoo” as he was called. Not one!

I heard the Member for Siparia get up here today talking about children. Only within the last—on Carnival Tuesday, one of their strong supporters, a man by virtue of his criminal record and horrific behaviour, qualifies for membership in the UNC, welcomed in the UNC, used a woman and a child in All Stars Steelband where the Prime Minister and I played. I have not heard the Member for Siparia speak once on the matter. You will not hear that from them here today.

[*Crosstalk*]

So when the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of National Security comes before a joint select committee and speak in the way they do, they do not have to work very hard to convince me that the UNC has demonstrated—is possessed of criminogenic tendencies and associate with criminals [*Desk thumping*] and all the disbandment of the facial recognition and all the disbandment of SAUTT and chased away the then commissioner, James Philbert, and chased away Col. Brig. Joseph from the SAUTT, it is because they do not like law and order. They function better in an atmosphere of disorder and feel they could fool us.

The Member for Naparima who moved this Motion got up here today and started to sound—pretend like he speaking for black people, and I am going to use the term because he used it and it was allowed. [*Crosstalk*] Well, I am one of them and I grew up in Belmont and Laventille in the roots too and I joined the police service as a young man at age 18, and spent seven years in there and then became an insurance salesman and spent seven years in there, and then leave Trinidad and went to England to become a lawyer and spent seven years doing that, and then as I came back I got involved in this. If anybody in here know about pulling yourself up by the bootstraps and what the roots is without GATE, without any gold spoon, I am the Miller's son. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Member: The man could write.

Hon. F. Hinds: I was fortunate they did not pass me through the mill. But I hear them now coming along the corridor and pretending and the Member for Naparima, talking about we have not done anything for black people. Madam Speaker, let me tell you something. If the PNM did not do for black people in this country, the question will remain, who did? Who did? We have so—you know the difference that the Minister tried to point out, the Minister of National Security,

is that we on behalf of the people consider criminality and assuming a life of crime to be wrong, morally wrong and legally wrong. [*Desk thumping*]

I, Madam Speaker, have several examples of young men for the 23 years I have represented Laventille, I have several examples of young men who would have come to me who were involved in criminal activity and I, sometimes using my own money, helped them out of that. I have some outstanding cases. [*Desk thumping*] But you know what? With a little help, they changed their lives, they behaved differently. I would not support criminality. I put it down to one of them plain. "If you would stop your ways and follow me, we will do it together". And he did. Today he is a successful businessman. [*Desk thumping*] The difference with this and with that, is that they pretend to be their friend and they court them and work with them.

In fact, about two months ago, a man on the Beetham told me he overheard and he spoke to four young men who were discussing the fact that they were offered money by the UNC to create problems on the corridor and disrupt PNM meeting in the local elections. [*Desk thumping*] And if you find that hard to believe, Madam Speaker, you just have to look at the LifeSport experience.

Let me tell you what this Joint Select Committee report says. From the Commissioner—[*Crosstalk*] Mauvais langue? Well, let me tell you what the Commissioner of Police on the record of the Parliament told us. Let me tell you what he said and this is in the document before us today, laid in this Parliament, evidence taken at the joint select committee and I am quoting from page 17 now—and, by the way, the report speaks of two others deputy political leaders of the UNC who have had long relationships with serious criminal elements based on police intelligence. But I am not going to call their names here today. I am not going to do that. [*Crosstalk*] "No, I eh afraid nutten, but I eh gone do it" because

Hon. F. Hinds (cont'd)

they are not here and they did not raise the matter like Oropouche. That is the only reason why. But their conduct is the same. Let me tell you what the evidence is, Madam Speaker. I am quoting from page 17 going on to 18:

“The intelligence of the”—Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—“had prior to 2010 went along the same lines as what happened with LifeSport.”

Madam Speaker, I am being disturbed by the Member for Naparima.

Madam Speaker: Just one minute. I am just advising all Members, you will have an opportunity to join this debate in the right time. If a Member wants to make an interjection, I am sure the Member is well familiar by now with the procedure.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you very much. I quote, and this is the commissioner speaking:

“TTPS records show that over 70 persons have been killed...”

You hear them talking about the number of figures being killed under the PNM. I want some one of them to explain to me, what you mean by under, under the PNM. What does that mean? Does that mean that the PNM killed somebody? Do criminals pay attention to who is Government when they ready to prey and pounce and kill and rape and rob? Do they ask who is the Prime Minister? Is only their friends might do that. And you may not want me to, but I hear the Member for Oropouche talking about me and the water kicking on me on the Beetham. I am very happy to discuss that, Madam Speaker, but I see you stopped him. I am very happy to discuss that, because the records of the people who were involved in that, the two people, who the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre described as their soldiers on the Beetham, claimed them. We know the records. One of them who is before the court now was within the last two months convicted of illegal possession of a gun. And that is the reason why in the Joint Select Committee, I asked the commissioner whether he believed—the records are there, Madam Speaker—that

some of their reluctance to pass certain criminal laws and resistance to it in this House might be attached to the relationships that the police discovered between some high-up officers of the UNC and their failure to support Bills, and he said yes. But let me continue to quote.

So when you sit down in this Parliament and you see them reluctant to support Bills you have no idea what the undercurrents might be. I am in the midst of strangers. I know that. I know the firm moral ground on which I stand, on which the PNM stands [*Desk thumping*] and it is not the same ground on which they stand. [*Desk thumping*] And not all of them, eh, Madam Speaker. I want to very clear because I have watched them now for 23 years, not all of them. When the Member for Siparia tried to bring back the former minister Anil Roberts on a Diego Martin platform and welcomed him back, there were some of them on that side who resisted it. But the Member for Siparia was quite happy, just as she brought back Glenn Ramadharsingh who had all kinds of issues on the ground and in the plane; and she kept Glen Ram. If a PNM councillor or a chairman of a corporation was accused of, much less charged for bribery of \$1,500, the fella sitting down in the second chair here called Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley, “he eh no councillor, he doh sit on the council”, but he was going to tell the PNM who controlled that council, we do not do it that way. [*Desk thumping*]

But when I said they are alligators from the same place, they had a problem. But I said so because, you see, the Member for Siparia, when I was challenging the one in Tobago for the house SIS built, she put his hands around him and say: “Ashworth boy, all ah we in the same position. They accusing you of gehing home and me too”. She said that and it is on that basis that—the Member for Siparia.

Mr. Charles: Madam, Standing Order 48(5). I was admonished for using the same “she” and “he”.

Hon. F. Hinds (cont'd)

Hon. F. Hinds: The Member for Siparia

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima, this is the last opportunity I am going to warn you. There are certain innuendos that I do not like when you address me. Okay? If I have ruled on something, I have exercised the authority that I have. Continue.

Hon. F. Hinds: So, in those circumstance, when they we were challenging the morality in public life of a public leader of a political party in the union with the UNC, the PP as it was then called, getting a house under questionable circumstances which he explained on bhaji and bodi and pumpkin, the Member for Siparia volunteered sameness and embraced it, and it is on that basis, he being African Trinidadian and the Member being Indian Trinidadian, I said they are all from the same murky place, and they took offence and called me a racist.

Madam Speaker: Member for Laventille West.

Hon. F. Hinds: My Lady.

Madam Speaker: Your original speaking time is now spent. You have 15 more minutes to wind up your contribution.

Hon. F. Hinds: I would gladly have it, My Lady. [*Desk thumping*] The Commissioner of Police told us, and I continue on page 18:

“TTPS records show that over 70 persons have been killed because of LifeSport and it continues because the strength that was given to that gang because of the affiliation and hundreds of millions in state contracts given”.

That is from the Commissioner of Police.

“Links between politicians and gang leaders have proven to be the catalyst towards homicides in this country”.

“De commissioner say that”. He said it demoralized the police service. And so he continued.

Madam Speaker, I remember during the heyday of the LifeSport, the COP had their internal elections and the COP complained that there was thuggery in that leadership election when a certain Anil Roberts took part in it. Thuggery! They saw it for the first time. It was some muscle of the LifeSport coming in on them. And I must thank God that this issue, thanks to the now commissioner, then Minister Gary Griffith, who was fired for standing on the principles, the highest principles of truth, if he did not break the issue and if the issue did not go to the public before the 2015 election, courtesy the UNC, we were going into that election with a gang well-oiled and well-financed from LifeSport to create problems in the electoral process in Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember a friend of mine living in the east, close to the epicentre of LifeSport told me—and if I am telling a lie, may God take my speech—he told me that one evening a little youngster in the house, maybe about 18 years old at the time who is now, by the way, dead, came home with \$8,000 in cash and he told us that a former Minister of Government responsible and involved in LifeSport gave him in cash, and I have to wonder where would a Minister get that to give away like that in cash. The commissioner now tells us it costs us 70 lives. They started off with \$6 million under the Member for Siparia and it ended up with 460 or \$480 million and 70 lives and then coming to tell us nonsense about what we do for young people.

I have been representing Laventille now for 23 years almost and not one of my constituents—let me repeat that—not one could ever say I ever gave them bad or untoward advice. The other day when someone kicked water on me, some of my constituents from another quarter came to me to get my blessing to retaliate on my behalf and I put them down. I do not go in for that. I chose the path of the law. I reported the matters to the police and the police charged two people for the

Hon. F. Hinds (cont'd)

offences and that is how it is in the court. On the other hand, the UNC has a history of a former UNC Minister being in court for conspiracy to murder. I did not choose that path.

6.20 p.m.

The UNC has a history of its former Attorney General not making the full term, being arrested and put in handcuffs for criminality, and the Member for Siparia will join him Monday morning in a brief, "holding red bag and going up and down de court step like nothing". That is not how we do it. Her favourite attorney, Ramdeen, a fella called Gerald Ramdeen, also locked up facing criminal charge. And I will tell you something about solving crime, they are challenging the Minister, that is the one white collar crime, two of them locked up, and that is because an Englishman, African Englishman called Mr. Nelson who was disbarred because of it in England; he, unlike plenty of them, had information about crime, he was a co-conspirator and—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Speaker, I stand on 49. That is sub judice, please.

Hon. F. Hinds: This is not intended to influence no court.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Member, what I would ask you is to stay off of that and go on.

Hon. F. Hinds: But I am just saying in conclusion on that before I move on, that Englishman decided to come out and give evidence.

Madam Speaker: Member, I would ask you to move on.

Hon. F. Hinds: I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Right.

Hon. F. Hinds: I heard the Member for Siparia apologized twice recently in this country, nebulous apology; hypocritical and political in the extreme because up to

Hon. F. Hinds (cont'd)

now [*Desk thumping*] nobody “doh know what she was apologizing for.”

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Speaker, 48(1)—48(1).

Madam Speaker: Please continue, Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: And we do not only want an apology, the damage, according to Anthony B—

Hon. Member: Restitution.

Dr. Khan: Madam Speaker, 48(4).

Madam Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. F. Hinds: According to Anthony B, one of my favourite Rasta artistes, the damage has already been done. [*Desk thumping*] “We doh wuh no apology, we want restitution”, and more than that, we want you to do like the Queen’s Counsel of whom I just spoke and whatever you know, co-conspirator or not, come out and tell it to the police, “gih” evidence like Nelson. That is what we want. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker, as I wind to a conclusion, I am personally, intellectually and emotionally satisfied with the work of this young, professional and hard-working Minister of National Security. [*Desk thumping*] I watch this young man, just joined the political arena but exerting conscientious efforts on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] So, Madam Speaker, the Member for Oropouche East told us that the Damen vessels, which we met and had to repair, there was nothing wrong with it, well let me, Madam Speaker—and Siparia said so too. This article published in the daily *Express* makes reference to this matter, and listen to what it says:

“Damen Shipyards, the company hired by the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration to supply Coast Guard vessels to Trinidad and Tobago costing TT\$1.358 billion, is at the centre of an ongoing bribery investigation

in the Netherlands in connection with”—that—“contract.”

And the AG is now reminding me, that which I almost forgot, that he went to The Netherlands in relation to this matter, it had to do with that particular contract, but yet the Member for Siparia and Oropouche East telling us today it had nothing to do with it. [*Crosstalk*] Everything to do with it, everything to do with it, and talking about we are on our way out. Well, if loving Trinidad and Tobago is wrong, I do not want to be right. [*Desk thumping*] If standing up for what is right and unprincipled in this country—and if that is going to cost me my seat, I am prepared to lose it. But to stand up on what is right and to seek the wider public interest on behalf of all the people, Chinese, Indian, Syrian, Lebanese or African origin, I stand on PNM philosophy and I will do just that. [*Desk thumping*] And pound for pound, policy for policy, truth for truth, record for record, they cannot come close to the PNM, especially on the test of morality in public affairs. And we are confident, Madam Speaker, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will support that which is good and right. Notwithstanding we have a crime problem, they know that the Minister and the Government has done all that it possibly and reasonably and constitutionally can. We have done our part.

Then it is up to the Parliament to do its part and it is up to parents. So rather than pander to the young, sometimes disaffected people in the society who they go around and scrape for and capitalize on their personal disaffection and use that as a strategy against the PNM, what we do is remind them that we have YTEPP, CCC, OJT, a whole [*Desk thumping*] \$7 billion a year education programme, a housing programme for families. “Oh my God”, we just expanded the OJT to 8,000 young people. [*Desk thumping*] All the young people you see in white here are police officers today. They are all young people from Trinidad and Tobago. When “de army take in is young people”; the nursing service, young people; teaching service,

young people; all of them have opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago and you do not have to cheat to be a winner, you do not have to follow the UNC, you do not have to thief to succeed. Great is the PNM, Madam Speaker. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for D'Abadie/O'Meara.

Brig. Gen. Ancil Antoine (*D'Abadie/O'Meara*): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to be part of this debate on a Motion brought by the Member for Naparima, and the Member for Naparima in his Motion speaks about the increase in serious crime, murders since 2015 and about the Government's inability to provide a safe and secure environment for its citizens. There were a lot of claims made by, in particular, the Member for Naparima on the increase in murders during our tenure as Government but in truth and in fact, there has been a steady increase in murders since 2011 when there were 354 murders, and that was the year that the previous government called a state of emergency. In 2012, it went up to 383; 2013, 408; 2016, 463; by 2019, 538, so there have been an increase in the murders but it goes back to their tenure in Government. It did not start in 2015 when the People's National Movement became the Government, there has been a steady increase. And although there has been a decrease in serious crimes, the steady increase is in the murders, and the instrument that is responsible for almost the majority of murders—the Minister of National Security said for 80 per cent of the murders are guns and the majority of them, unlicensed firearms.

So there is an abundance of guns in Trinidad and Tobago, guns, guns everywhere, and you ask the question, “Why are there so many guns in Trinidad and Tobago?” There are various reasons. There is a political reason, and I will like to lay that at the feet of the UNC because the previous PNM administration set about building an architecture to deal with crime and it involved an intelligence

agency with the ability to interact with people in the underworld, gather information and process it to intelligence that it can deal with the criminal element. But lo and behold when the UNC came to power, they proceeded to dismantle this infrastructure that was put in place. So they got rid of SORT, they got rid of the intelligence apparatus that was being put in place, and we all remember Resmi Ramnarine and the attempt by the UNC to put her in charge of the intelligence agencies.

A lot is said about the OPVs but the lack of OPVs means that our borders are porous, and I gather that those on the other side did not understand that the OPVs intention was to take Trinidad and Tobago in terms of its defence and security of its borders for the next level. I remember the Member for St. Augustine saying that in cancelling the OPVs, the previous Government intended to save money, and that money they saved they would have bought more police vehicles to be in the stations, but what good it is having a set of police vehicles in the station when every Tom, Dick and Harry is in possession of guns in the community? By the time the police vehicles respond, somebody is dead, so what good is that? The OPVs were meant to extend the range and the ability of Trinidad and Tobago to secure its borders and thereby provide a safe and secure environment for its citizens.

The OPV was a platform, a platform that can be used in various ways. One way the platform could have been used is when you put a helicopter on board, helicopters extend the range of the OPV. It meant that once that helicopter was within range of an oil rig then communication, physical materials could be transferred from the land to the OPVs. It also meant that the skipper of the OPV had the authority, had the means whereby he could place his vessel anywhere within a 200-mile limit of Trinidad and Tobago to interdict, interfere with, stop the

flow of guns, drugs, et cetera, into Trinidad and Tobago, and that would have solidified our borders, but now our borders are open so the guns are coming in. They cancelled the OPVs, the guns are coming in. And in our desire or the desire of the Opposition to blame this present administration for the increase in murders, serious crimes, they are not taking into consideration the situation in our neighbour, Venezuela. Because of the situation in Venezuela there is a demand, in the sense, for goods in Venezuela and an easy medium of exchange is weapons. There is a proliferation of weapons in Venezuela and they can be easily transferred to Trinidad and Tobago in terms of barter, in terms of goods as the case may be.

So you have to take into consideration the political situation in Venezuela and the easy access to guns by Trinidad and Tobagonians because of the situation in Venezuela. And of course, there is the drug trade where, again, guns come with the drugs into Trinidad and Tobago, the guns and drugs remain so there is access to guns through the drug trade, but also what has developed in the last few years is a trade in sophisticated military grade weapons to the gangs, et cetera, in Trinidad and Tobago. So we have guns coming in, sophisticated military grade weapons through the gun trade. You have guns coming in through the drug trade and you have guns coming in through the political situation brought about by the deterioration of the situation in Venezuela.

So guns, guns and more guns. And the UNC, during their tenure in Government, by dismantling the security structure, SORT, NOC, SIA, they interfered with everything, now turn around to lay the blame for the present situation solely upon the PNM Government, as if they were not in Government before—as if they were not in Government before. And when they were in government, what did they do to help solve the problem? They could not appoint a Commissioner of Police for the five years they were in government, no

Commissioner of Police. We appointed a Commissioner of Police— one of their own actually in a previous incarnation— we appointed a Commissioner of Police and now it will appear that they want to put a little pressure on the Commissioner of Police in a sense and the police service, by the words in terms of the Motion that seeks to ask about targeted results, but is that the responsibility of the Minister of National Security or is that the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police? So who are you targeting, the Government in terms or are you targeting the institution whose responsibility it is to deal with crime? But in their desire to go at it or go at the Government, they are asking for measurable targeted results. Well, that is the realm of the Commissioner and the police service to get it done.

I heard the Member for Naparima, he spoke about the fear in the communities, that people are so afraid to leave their houses, they are so afraid that they go out quickly and they return. I do not know if he was in Trinidad and Tobago over the last few weeks, but that was not what I saw. I saw thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people in the streets of almost any city in Trinidad and Tobago. I am not playing down the trauma of the crimes and the trauma of the murders that is taking place, but I want to say that over the last few weeks Trinidad and Tobagonians have been out of their homes in their numbers. [*Desk thumping*] As a matter of fact, there is a debate and the Commissioner of Police has said that the carnival celebrations was the safest carnival in history.

So where is the fear, Member for Naparima, that the population has about what is going on with the crime, and so forth, that they did not participate in the carnival celebrations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, not just in Port of Spain but in San Fernando, in Arima, in Tobago? And they were out not just for the two days of carnival but for the entire season for all the different competitions in all the various, different aspects of the carnival. So this desire to give the impression that

Trinidad and Tobago, we are cowering in fear. Yes, countries give travel advisory to their citizens when they are visiting other countries, that is normal, and you get travel advisories from the United States, from England, from Australia warning their citizens, obviously, when they are going to a country of the various areas that they should avoid, that is normal. But the situation in Trinidad and Tobago in terms of the crime and the murders is not as— especially during the carnival period when Trinidadians are out to enjoy themselves and to portray to the world that we are safe, they are safe to visit us, safe to spend time with us, safe to be a part of our society and enjoy all the various aspects that we have in our society. And in stating that the Government is unwilling and unable to articulate specific, measurable timely outputs oriented towards crime reduction targets, it is a matter for the Police Commissioner and the police service.

I must join with the Minister of National Security in commending the police service and the Commissioner of Police on an excellent job done over the carnival period. [*Desk thumping*] And being a former member of the protective service, we need to thank the security forces, police, soldiers for the long hours they work during that period to ensure that our citizens are safe. [*Desk thumping*] It is long hours. It is not only long hours they work but they sacrifice their families because believe it or not, their families, their children, the spouses of policemen and policewomen go out in their numbers to enjoy the facilities as well without the guidance of their loved ones who is on duty looking to ensure that the citizens of the country are safe. So I find this entire debate really is vexatious. It is just political in nature because there is nothing presented by any of the Members on the other side that says that when they were in power, they did anything better, they did anything differently. They undermined the structure that was put in place. [*Desk thumping*] They prefer to have a Commissioner who was just acting.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 50(3), I beg to move that the debate on this Private Members' Motion No. 1 be adjourned.

Agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Members, we shall now revert to an item of business which was earlier deferred. Leader of the House.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
(REMOVAL OF MEMBER DR. MOONILAL)**

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, having regard to the recommendation contained in the Joint Select Committee on National Security in the Fifth Session, 2019/2020, Eleventh Parliament, on an enquiry into crime, the security safety and protection of citizens, and having regard to the evidence adduced at the last meeting of that Joint Select Committee on National Security it has become patently clear that the Member for Oropouche East is conflicted as he sits as a member of that Committee. And it is clear from the report that, and I wish to quote, Madam Speaker, where the Commissioner of Police said, and I quote:

“The Commissioner concurred that an individual who was well known, with a serious criminal record appeared on the platform at a meeting of a political party in February 2019;”

Also:

“There is information that a senior member of that political party allegedly approached an individual to go up as a councillor for a certain seat in the local government election.”

Also:

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“That individual has some degree of affiliation with a very notorious gang leader who is presently incarcerated and who is involved in a major case that is being dealt with at this time pertaining to the assassination of a senior attorney and the intelligence before the TTPS is that it was on the condition that the individual provides protection for the supporters during the campaign”:

Also, that:

“The TTPS has reports of a female politician *walking the ground* and affiliating with certain gang members on par with what would have taken place nine years ago prior to the 2010 election in the Carapo area;”

Also:

“That person was a Managing Director of the HDC;”

Also:

“An Opposition Member of the House of Representatives...was the Minister responsible for the HDC during that time;”

Also, that:

“That person was closely linked with senior gang members and gave a state contract to the gang member to build a police station;”—and—

“The intelligence the TTPS had prior to 2010 went along the same lines as what happened with LifeSport;”

Additionally:

“The profit acquired from the State in these contracts, whether LifeSport, CEPEP, HDC, Colour Me Orange have been used to purchase more firearms, hiring more gang members and putting hits on other gang members to get their state contracts;”

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All said by the Commissioner, and I continue:

“The Commissioner confirmed that the Special Branch reported an incident at the Hyatt Regency Hotel involving the MP and individuals known to the police and the payment of a bill by the MP:”

Additionally:

“The Special Investigations Unit confirmed a planned meeting between two major gang leaders and the MP at the constituency office of the MP;”

6.50 p.m.

Madam Speaker, additionally, the committee reports that:

“Your Committee is in the process of evidence-taking and therefore in this report no findings nor conclusions have been presented. Having regard to the evidence before your Committee, there is further work to be undertaken in relation to this inquiry. Upon resumption, the process of evidence-taking will include both oral and written submissions. However, your Committee is of the view that, given the evidence presented, Dr. Roodal Moonilal has a personal and direct interest in this inquiry and should not—“I repeat—“should not be allowed to participate any further in this inquiry as a Member of your Committee.”

Additionally, Madam Speaker:

“Your Committee notes that a minority report has been prepared by two of its members, one of whom is the very Member who in the view of your Committee has a direct and personal interest in this inquiry and, for that reason, was asked to recuse himself from the inquiry.

On account of his refusal to recuse himself, your Committee was constrained to suspend its work and refer this matter to this Honourable House in

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anticipation that the House would approve the recommendation in paragraph 8.1 below, so that the inquiry could continue...

Your Committee therefore recommends that Dr. Roodal Moonilal should not serve as a Member of the Joint Select Committee on National Security..."

Madam Speaker, clearly it is impossible and going against issues of fairness and decency for the Member for Oropouche East to sit on this committee. Madam Speaker, if the Member for Oropouche East had any decency he would have recused himself from this committee. However, given the fact that he has failed to do that, given the fact that he has refused to do that, it is now incumbent on me as Leader of the House to move this Motion requesting, in fact demanding, that the Member for Oropouche East be removed from this committee permanently because, Madam Speaker, this committee will consistently have to deal with national security issues and it is clear that the Member for Oropouche East will consistently be conflicted.

Madam Speaker, I repeat: If the Member for Oropouche East had any decency, [*Desk thumping*] he would have removed himself and not have us in this House have to ask for his removal.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move therefore that with immediate effect Dr. Roodal Moonilal should no longer serve on the Joint Select Committee on National Security.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put.

Mr. Charles: Division!

The House divided: Ayes 17 Noes 13

AYES

JSC National Security
(Removal of Member Dr. R. Moonilal)

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Al-Rawi, Hon. F.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Young, Hon. S.

Deyalsingh, Hon. T.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Mitchell, Hon. R.

Cudjoe, Hon. S.

Garcia, Hon. A.

Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. G.

Forde, E.

Crichlow-Cockburn, Hon. C.

Francis, Hon. Dr.

Jennings-Smith, Hon. G.

Leonce, R.

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.

Cuffie, M.

NOES

Lee, D.

Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Kangaroo court, all of you. You move a Motion and debate your own Motion.

Charles, R.

Rambachan, Dr. S. [*Interruption and crosstalk*]

Karim, F.

Madam Speaker: May we have some order and silence while we take the count.

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(Removal of Member Dr. R. Moonilal)

Tewarie, Dr. B.

Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.

Khan, Dr. F.

Indarsingh, R.

Bodoe, Dr. L.

Ramdial, Ms. R.

Paray, R.

Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.

Question agreed to.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT
(EXTENSION OF TIME)**

Cannabis Control Bill, 2019

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, having regard to the recommendation contained in the Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Cannabis Control Bill, 2019 in the Fifth Session, Eleventh Parliament, I beg to move that the committee be allowed an extension of two months in order to complete its work and submit a final report by April 30, 2020.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Wednesday the 4th day of March, 2020, at 1.30 p.m. At that time we will deal with Motion No.1 under Committee Business, and that is:

Adjournment

2020.02.28

Be it resolved that this House adopt the report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters Bill, 2018, and related Bills.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, there is one matter that qualifies to be raised on the Motion of the Adjournment of the House. I will now call upon the Member for Tabaquite.

Unacceptable Rate of Violence against Minors

Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan: (*Tabaquite*): Madam Speaker, I have brought this matter on the adjournment simply entitled “The Unacceptable Rate of Violence against Minors”, but particularly children, in the country, because I do believe that this Parliament has a duty to speak on behalf of a segment of our population whom we often describe as the future, but in my view for whom and for many of whom there is inadequate protection, and that many of them are being treated in a manner than often does not befit the status of a human being or a person.

Madam Speaker, when I speak today about the unacceptable rate of violence against minors, I am not just referring to violence against minors that is taking place in the homes where parents are involved, or where guardians are involved, but I am also talking about the kind of violence that is also taking place in learning environments, where you have children with different disabilities, where you have children on the autistic spectrum, where you have children with ADD and ADHD, conditions which are not very much understood in the educational system. These children are subjected to emotional abuse and sometimes physical abuse. So that I hope that by raising this matter, as I do this afternoon in the very short time that we have, I will in fact be speaking, along with every Member of Parliament here today, on behalf of the children of this country who need to be protected.

Madam Speaker, as I speak, you know, recently we had the story of child abuse dominating the social and traditional media with the death of eight-year-old

Makeisha Maynard, and the story had several spins attached to it. Initial reports indicated she was beaten to death. Later we would hear it was not as a result of physical abuse, or physical abuse and what have you. But the point is that just hearing reports that children are being beaten, ill-treated and killed at the hands of parents, guardians, relatives, sometimes neighbours, is enough to get anyone more than upset, especially when we also hear that they are kidnapped and tortured by strangers, as has also occurred in this country. We remember Sean Luke. We remember other children, Amy Annamunthodo, and we also remember 13-year-old Parmanand Persad who on October 29, 2006, a student of Chaguanas Junior Secondary, was beaten, buggered, tortured and murdered at Crown Trace, Enterprise. A neighbour was arrested for this crime.

Madam Speaker, these are not just about sad stories, and I do not think that the conscience of this country and nation should only be awakened when something like this happens, because that is what happens. The conscience of the country gets awakened, social medial is abuzz and then after two or three days it is forgotten. The child is forgotten, the incident is forgotten and we go on with our lives. The reality is that we have to be keepers of our children's future. I would like to think that we need desperately in this country, desperately, to develop a new culture of child protection in Trinidad and Tobago.

It would seem to me that in many cases, including the case of eight-year-old Makeisha Maynard, according to what we have in the newspaper reports and on television, *Express* as well as *Guardian*, that the grandmother was pleading that this child was being abused, and that the police confirmed they had two reports that were made against the alleged perpetrator of this crime.

Madam Speaker, on the 11th February the Minister of National Security in the Senate confirmed that the father of that child was charged with abuse,

including abuse of the child. Now that case along with so many other cases is telling us what is wrong with in our system—and the sad reality is that there are too many reports of child abuse that are not being dealt with the efficiency that it should be dealt with, and especially for what I like to call a “360-degree” standpoint.

Madam Speaker, according to the World Health Organisation, in June 2019 up to one billion children aged two to 17 experience physical, sexual or emotional violence or neglect in one year, and that included violence perpetrated by parents. If you listen to the startling figures according to the Children’s Authority on April 03, 2019, in our own country there were 400 cases of child abuse reported per month. This amounts to about 13 cases per day, and this is just for cases that are reported. How about cases that go unreported?

You know, you would not believe this, but I have relatives of people come to my office, and they come and tell me that they have relatives who are abusing their children because the children are crying out for food or items in the home that they do not have, and their response is to abuse them and beat them. I have evidence of children who are only going to school because they cannot get breakfast at home, but they are hoping to get the breakfast in the school. That too is a kind of violence.

I raise this matter because two things go hand in hand, the state of an economy when people cannot take care of their children and poverty, and as well that leads to criminality also, so there is a relation. Today if I had spoken in the last debate I would have talked about the relationship between crime, the economy, poverty and what is happening in this country and unemployment. But there are serious social issues to be dealt with if we are also to handle the child abuse problems.

But the scary part for me though is the statistics, because since its inception there have been 22,000 cases of child abuse reported to the Children's Authority, and this was when we last checked on February 14, 2020. And it gets even worse, because since the inception in May 2015 that body has gotten over 90,000 calls. That is over 18,000 calls per year.

Madam Speaker, from the Child Protection Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service they reported that just for 2019 over 600 cases of child abuse were taken before the court; 600 cases of child abuse cases taken before the court. For 2020, up to the end of January this year, 44 persons were already charged for offences against children. This is serious business in this country, very, very serious business in this country. If we continue to have children who are abused mentally and physically, consider what kind of persons we are growing up in the society, especially when there is a lack of psychological help for the number of children who get abused, because the parents do not provide the psychological help.

That is why, while I know we have social institutions, and while I know there is a unit in the Prime Minister's Office and what have you, I think Government as a whole has to do more, much more. This is one of the places I feel Government can spend money. Government should be spending money with the social organizations, with the religious organizations, asking them to set up the kinds of institutions within their own institutions that will help to deal with these problems where they are occurring at the level of the community. There are some things that some social organizations can do better than the Government, better than public institutions, and I think that we should give them the opportunity to do that.

I remember our political leader and Opposition Leader, then Prime Minister,

used to work with the religious organizations to support the elderly and support the cause of children in this country. I think that we have to return to that value system and that culture in this country.

Madam Speaker, in many cases people in this country are fearful to report incidences of violence against children, because they fear that the perpetrators are going to come after them. In fact, Prof. Ann-Marie Bissessar on February 26, 2011, in a *Guardian* article asked two very important questions: Will the whistleblowers be expected to face the accused, and will the whistleblower be subject to litigation if the case is unfounded?

In schools, for example, are we training our teachers to pick up on signs of abuse? I did a round-robin set of calls to ask—and I say this to the Minister of Education too—what are we doing in our schools to train our teachers to pick up on abuse? And what I discovered is that about 75 per cent of the schools I called, they said that there was no specific training in how to do that, but because of their sensitivity they would pick up some of these cases. Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Member for Tabaquite, your speaking time is now spent. I will now call upon the Minister of National Security.

The Minister of National Security and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At the outset the Government states that violence against any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is unacceptable, even more so against children and minors, as they are a particularly vulnerable group. It was Mahatma Ghandi who is quoted to have said that the greatness of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest members. As such, we condemn any violence perpetrated against children or minors, the elderly and other vulnerable groups in society, and it should not only be of concern to the Government, but to all of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government's response, according to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Child Protection Unit within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Children's Authority are two of the main agencies tasked with the responsibility for the protection of children in Trinidad and Tobago. These agencies were established and guided by specific legislation, in particular the children's legislation, that suite of legislation was implemented by this administration. You hear on a daily basis the work being done by the Children's Authority seeking to protect the vulnerable children in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Child Protection Unit within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is mandated specifically to deal with illegal and criminal matters affecting children. The CPU investigates matters of recent sexual offences, abuse, physical abuse, abandonment, neglect, ill treatment of children under the age of 18. Further, the CPU is tasked with providing support to the Children's Authority to carry out its legislative mandate.

The CPU apprise the Children's Authority of all reports as they facilitate the psychosocial aspects of all investigations, while the Child Protection Unit deals specifically with the criminal elements. The CPU is also guided by the United Nations conventions specific to the treatment of children who are either victims or in conflict with the law. The Victim and Witness Support Unit of the TTPS may also be consulted. These are some of the responses to this awful illegal activity committed against our children and our minors in Trinidad and Tobago.

But as I sat here—and it is not directed at the Member for Tabaquite who quite rightly brought this Motion here for us to talk about the treatment of minors—I could not help myself but marvel a little bit at the hypocrisy of it coming from the other side in this current environment. I say that for this reason. The Member for Caroni Central could steups, but it is on record that within the last

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48 to 72 hours we have had a main supporter, someone who the Member for Oropouche East as usual is in photographs with, hugging, drinking with, taking a photograph of a young girl, a young girl on a Carnival truck, innocent young girl, and that was what was being used by the UNC to attack the Prime Minister. The same Member for Oropouche East in 2015 hanging banners in his constituency talking about paedophilia, and using that as their political platform to attack the leader of the People's National Movement. But to come here today and to want to talk about the protection of minors.

The protection of minors starts with not having abortion, not having paid for abortions by members of the medical fraternity, and maybe the husband of Members of the Opposition who are paid to carry out abortions. [*Desk thumping*] You want to talk about criminality? And the Member for Oropouche East, funs and is there with Skippy Barrington, encouraging them to take a picture of an innocent young girl, her mother taking a photograph of her and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago with pride. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I stand on 48(6), Madam Speaker, 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Please continue Member.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you. And that is the DNA of those on the other side. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hinds: Correct my friend. That is it.

Hon. S. Young: So do not come here in this Parliament—[*Interruption*] “Yuh see”.

Mr. Hinds: “She is de queen of dat.”

Hon. S. Young: They want to talk about reality. I talk about reality. You in photographs with Skippy.

Mr. Indarsingh: What about children with firearms—[*Inaudible*]?

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Madam Speaker: You want to raise an objection on Standing Order?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I hope “yuh” listening, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: No, Member, Member. Member for Couva South, turn and face me, kindly. I have asked if you want to raise an objection on the Standing Orders.

Mr. Indarsingh: 48(6), Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, with respect to—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Speaker, I seek your protection, please.

Madam Speaker: With respect to what you just accused a Member about being the queen of, I think that is what I heard. If you could withdraw that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Laventille West.

Madam Speaker: It was Laventille West?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Please just stand and apologize for that, and let the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West continue. I heard something about the queen of something.

Mr. Hinds: Well yes, that is all I said. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: You see— No, no, no, just one minute. [*Crosstalk*]

[*Madam Speaker sits*]

[*Madam Speaker stands*]

While all you might have said was that “the queen”, it was said in support of something else that was being said, okay, and therefore—

Mr. Hinds: Madam Speaker, in deference and with humility and respect to you and your Chair, I withdraw it and apologize.

Madam Speaker: While I accept it, I also take a little kind of umbrage.

Mr. Hinds: Yes, Madam Speaker, just for emphasis—

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Madam Speaker: No, no, again, some of us with our demeanour—[*Interruption*]
Please, please. You know, body language kind of inside of here today. Something about body language not going right with me. So I know you can do much better, so I will allow you.

Mr. Hinds: I humbly withdraw even that. That was for emphasis, but I mean absolutely no disrespect to you and your noble Chair, Madam Speaker. I hold you in the highest esteem. Madam Speaker, having only said, the Member is the queen, [*Interruption*] I withdraw that and—

Madam Speaker: No, let us— Do not repeat it. Member for Laventille West, I really, when you said “highest esteem”, I almost felt I was an angel, but I do not want you to repeat it. Just kindly withdraw it and we will let the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West—it seems like your time almost expire—quickly.

Mr. Hinds: I withdraw, Madam Speaker, with great humility.

Madam Speaker: Thank you very much. Member.

Hon. S. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So getting back to the protection of minors—the protection of minors encompasses, as the Member for Tabaquite was rightly expanding, it also encompasses not utilizing social media, photographs of innocent people and innocent children, innocent children, to further the attacks on the Prime Minister. So let us start with that.

Madam Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service through the Child Protection Unit, the Children’s Authority as well as the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister Webster-Roy’s leadership, are working to protect minors in this country, and will continue to do so, including the building of additional safe houses. There are educational programmes for children who are unfortunately abused, and we just recently agreed to continue that in the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. So I join with the Member for Tabaquite if his submission is that we must

do more to protect minors in Trinidad and Tobago, and I do so without reservation.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Social Development and Family Services (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much. I would like to indicate in the adjournment that apart from the continuation of the debate on Motion No. 1 under “Committee Business”, we will also be doing Motion No. 2 that appears under “Government Business” on the Supplemental Order Paper, and we will be doing Bill No. 4 which is an Act to amend the Constitution (Prescribed Matters) Act, Chap. 1:02, the Interpretation Act, Chap. 3:01 and the Judicial and Legal Service Act, Chap. 6:01.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.19 p.m.