

What's On Your Mind?

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Better discipline is T&T's way forward

IT is clear that the current state of crime in Trinidad and Tobago is beyond the ability of both the PNM and UNC to manage.

The PNM failed miserably when they were in government. The UNC is, currently, floundering terribly, in this area.

A state of emergency has been in effect for almost one year. It was promulgated to deal with gangsters. Gang crimes and murders have lessened and law enforcement deserves some credit for this.

Kudos to law enforcement for their rapid arrest of the alleged murderers of Vishnu Lalla. The fact that one of their own was allegedly involved shows the dimensions of the battle.

Unfortunately, there seems to have been a

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significant escalation of criminal activities against the population, both in Trinidad and Tobago.

Anyone, reading the plethora of crimes being committed every day, against ordinary citizens, would understand that our country is under siege from armed criminals.

Criminals are showing that they are not afraid of law enforcement. One of the possible reasons may be due to criminal attorneys, who swiftly apply for bail once their clients are arrested. Another is the length of time it takes for criminal cases to go through the court system. This allows criminals who are out on bail to continue their nefarious activities.

Efforts made to

enforce harsher bail laws are stymied by the call that it is an "abuse of the rights of the criminals". However, when these criminals are terrorising ordinary civilians, the civilians have no rights. Something is very wrong.

The current Minister of Homeland Security does not engender any confidence that he has the ability to manage the crime situation.

He seemed to have been dead set against wearing a bodycam while he was a serving officer. That speaks volumes.

In 2001, then-minister of education and current Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar pioneered legislation to ban corporal punishment in schools. The law was passed with

support from the PNM opposition.

No disciplinary matrix was, initially, put in place to replace corporal punishment. Schoolchildren were allowed to run wild.

One generation later, God permitted Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar a second term, to deal with the mess she created. One of her solutions was to put police officers in several of our primary and secondary schools.

This is like closing the door after the corbeaux has flown.

Several reports indicate that some students have no respect for the police officers. In September 2025, students at a Central secondary school locked a police officer in a classroom.

Many years ago, when a child was very unruly, the school principal would call the police. The police would come and take the child to the police station to enjoy the sights, sounds and smell of a prison cell.

A very chastened child would then be returned to the school with a lifelong memory. Thereafter, most would walk the straight and narrow road.

A few years ago, a police officer told me that they can no longer do that because children have "rights". Those "rights" have coalesced into a decaying society.

Perhaps, compulsory national service might serve to enhance some level of discipline.

Linus F Didier
Mt Hope

The ironies of politics

THE fervent loyalty to party and leader, which overrides concerns for good governance, the welfare of the majority, and integrity and principle in public life is neither a new phenomenon in T&T nor is it confined to any one party, as seems to be suggested by Simon Wright.

In a recent letter to the media, he states: "There is a dangerous and growing mindset in T&T—one where political loyalty has begun to outweigh national interest."

As regards the UNC supporters (or a majority of them), he notes:

"It's the idea that if you supported the UNC to gain power, you must now support everything it does without question, without dissent, without independent thought. To reject or even question the Government's actions is to be branded a traitor, a coward, or worse."

A similar observation could be made about the PNM party, its leadership and majority following.

In an environment in which tenacious party loyalty is presumed to be a paramount virtue, dissent—however justifiable—is a grave and perilous undertaking with the prospect of vilification, derision and ostracisation. I myself have been the subject of invective and ridicule from the UNC leadership and base, both past and present.

Readers will recall that three of us (Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Ralph Maraj and myself) raised issues about the direction of the party and government; preference and patronage accorded to favoured members of the "parasitic oligarchy"; the condonation of corruption in the Piarco terminal

project (many of those indicted have been found guilty and have served time and paid fines, while others have appeals pending); and violation of the law and sound insurance principles with respect to the operations of CLICO (CLICO and its parent company CL Financial flourished in 2009 and had to be bailed out by the Government. The findings of the commission of enquiry into the collapse of CLICO were sent to the DPP for investigation for possible criminal misconduct).

The then-leader, Basdeo Panday, was contemptuous and dismissive of our concerns and refused to have dialogue. Matters came to a head in 2001 with our dismissal from the government.

At the continued insistence of Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj and against my better judgment, I participated in a meeting that he had agreed to with then-opposition leader Patrick Manning. Subsequently, then-prime minister Basdeo Panday called an election, for which there was no need.

After the election outcome stalemate of 18-18 seats and amid the controversy with respect to the appointment of prime minister, the incumbent Mr Panday met with Mr Patrick Manning at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Port of Spain and agreed that then-president ANR Robinson would select the prime minister.

Mr Robinson selected Patrick Manning, and the rest is history. It is a matter of speculation whether Mr Panday's injudicious actions were responsible for his ouster as prime minister and the UNC from government.

However, the three of us have been vehemently accused by the UNC leadership and followers of "bringing down government". That narrative has endured tenaciously for over two decades.

Only a few weeks ago, I was in a restaurant in Debe when a senior member of the Presbyterian Church in Penal was overheard telling a dining col-

league, "Look at that dog Sudama. He bring down government and nobody want to see him. His name is mud."

In the same breath, Ralph Maraj was praised as a brilliant man for columns in the press attacking the PNM and for his appointment. His part "in bringing down government" was apparently exonerated.

I have viewed these attacks on me with equanimity. My own position is that when you enter politics, you must be prepared for such vicious reactions. Mindless partisan loyalty will always be with us. It is par for the course.

It is immaterial to me whether I am attacked, condemned or ostracised. I believe that I have done my duty according to the oath which I took, which was to do right to all manner of men without fear or favour, affection or ill will.

I do not regret raising the issues which I did, except for being persuaded to meet with Manning. I remain on the outside and have maintained my objectivity, integrity, independence of thought and capacity to speak truth to power.

I may mention that of the three of us who were dismissed in 2001 and accused of bringing down government, I, a founding and foundation member of the UNC, am the only one to be the subject of disfavour and exclusion.

Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj was rehabilitated by Panday and given the Tabaguite seat in 2007. Ralph Maraj has now been made a senior adviser (ambassador) on foreign and Caricom affairs by PM Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

I have also noted that a vociferous opponent of the UNC in its early years is now its leader. Currently, a host of erstwhile office-holders and sympathisers with PNM governments of the past are now in the front-line of a UNC government.

I have come to terms with the fact that politics, like life, is filled with pointed ironies and glaring contradictions.

Trevor Sudama



ONE CARIBBEAN
MEDIA LIMITED

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS

DIVIDEND ANNOUNCEMENT

One Caribbean Media Limited is pleased to advise that at a Board Meeting held on 06th November, 2025, the Directors approved an interim dividend of two cents (TT\$0.02) per share. These dividends are payable to Shareholders on the Register of Members as at 21st November, 2025.

The dividend will be paid to Shareholders on 10th December, 2025.

By Order of the Board

Karlene Ng Tang
Company Secretary
12th November 2025

DEAR LETTER WRITERS:

We appreciate your letters, but please keep them to 850 words maximum, for space considerations.



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