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In reports via the electronic and print media on the 20th February, 2008, statements relating to the conduct of lawyers are attributed to two senators. In one case the Honourable Senator Deosaran is reported to have said that "there are scoundrels in the Legal Profession" and that "there are scamps who must be dealt with". He is also reported to have said that the Law Association was "half asleep" to wrong doings committed by Lawyers practising in this country.

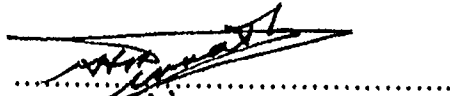
In the other case, the Honourable Dana Seetahal is reported to have said that "there are practicing Attorneys in Trinidad and Tobago with criminal charges against them," and that "the Law Association, in hearings to do with these offences, seemed, perhaps, to be not strict enough in imposing punishment".

To the ⁿuninformed, these are serious indictments against the governing body of the Law Association and the body charged with the disciplining of lawyers.

If indeed there are scoundrels and scamps in the Legal Profession, there is no dispute that they must be dealt with. To allege, however, that the Law Association was half asleep to wrongdoings committed by lawyers is not only false and misleading, but demonstrates a lack of awareness of the functions and functioning of the Law Association. Further, the Honourable Senator, though not a lawyer, and indeed as is in the case with every citizen, has a duty to bring to the attention of the law enforcement agencies or other relevant authorities, any evidence of dishonest or scampish conduct on the part of lawyers.

While the Council of the Law Association is the body charged with the management of the affairs of the Association, and therefore is concerned with maintaining and improving the standards of conduct of the Legal Profession, the disciplining functions with respect to lawyers is exercised by a separate and distinct body called the Disciplinary Committee. This latter body, though consisting of lawyers, is appointed by the Chief Justice, and save for the power of revocation of the appointment of any member with the approval of the Chief Justice, the Council of the Law Association has no control over the Disciplinary Committee.

Contrary to the opinion expressed by some persons who ought to know better, the Disciplinary Committee has been doing an excellent job, and I pay tribute to those lawyers who have rendered and continue to render invaluable service to their profession and to members of the public by serving on the Disciplinary Committee.



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HRM SEUNATH
Chairman of the
Disciplinary Committee.