

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE FIRST SESSION (2001-2002) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

Part I

23RD SITTING

2.00 PM

Wednesday 27th March, 2002

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S. C., M. P. - *Speaker of the National Assembly*

Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

- The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P. - *Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications*
- The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P. - *Minister of Parliamentary Affairs*
- The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P. - *Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation (Abs)*
- The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P. - *Minister of Local Government and Regional Development*
- The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P. - *Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*
- The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P. - *Minister of Education*
- The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P. - *Minister of Finance*
- The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P. - *Minister of Housing and Water*
- The Hon. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P. - *Minister of Agriculture (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)*
- The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P. - *Minister of Home Affairs (Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)*
- The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, MP- *Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security*

- The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P. - *Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development*
- The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P. - *Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock*
(Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
- *The Hon.S.Rudolph Insanally, O.R, C.C.H, M.P. - *Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs*
- *The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P. - *Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*
- The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P. - *Minister of the Public Service*
- The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P. - *Minister of Transport and Hydraulics*
- The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P. - *Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security*
(Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
- **The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P. - *Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce*
- The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P. - *Minister of Amerindian Affairs*
- The Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P. - *Minister of Health*
- Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P. - *Chief Whip*
- Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. - (Region No. 4 - Demerara/ Mahaica)
- Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.
Mr Husman Alli, M.P. - (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
- Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P. - (Region No.4 - Demerara/ Mahaica) (AOL)
- Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.
Mr Heeralall Mohan, M.P. - (Region No.2 -Pomeroon/ Supenaam)
- Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P. - (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Mr Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P.
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. - (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
- Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H, J.P, M.P. - *Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water*
- Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P. - (Region No.1 - Barima/Waini)

* *Non-Elected Minister*

** *Elected Member from The United Force*

Members of the Opposition (30)

(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition (Absent)</i>
Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (Absent)</i>
Mr E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip (Absent)</i>
Mr Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam)(Absent)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)(Absent)</i>
Mr. Andy Goveia, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Dr Dalglish Joseph, M.D.,M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Miss Anna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.5-Mahaica/Berbice)(Absent)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on leave)</i>
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)(Absent)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P	- <i>(Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara)(Absent-on leave)</i>
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/ Mahaica)(Absent)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)(Absent-on leave)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.1-Barima/Waini)(Absent)</i>
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.8 - Potaro/Siparuni)(Absent)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.6 -East Berbice/Corentyne)(Absent-on leave)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)(Absent)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)(Absent on leave)</i>

(ii) Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance Party (2)

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

(iii) Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, *Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly*
(Performing the functions of Clerk of the National Assembly)

Mrs Lilawtie Coonjah, *Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance)*
(Performing the functions of Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly.)

PRAYER

The Clerk read the Prayer

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

(i) Leave

Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Members Mr Bernard De Santos, Mr Desmond Hoyte, Mrs Volda Lawrence and Mr Stanley Ming from today's sitting.

(ii) Death of Mr C.B. Cadogan, M.S., Former Sergeant-At-Arms

Hon. Members, I have been informed that Mr Charles Benjamin Cadogan, M.S., a former Sergeant-At-Arms, died on Monday, 25th March, at the age of eighty two years.

Mr Cadogan was born in Berbice and attended the All Saints Anglican School, the Cumberland Methodist School and the Berbice High School.

After leaving school, Mr Cadogan joined the British Guiana Police Force where he spent approximately three years. He then gave Service, during World war II, as a signaller in the Trinidad Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, as an infantryman in the Army in the United States of America, Italy and Egypt and obtained the Italian Star, Defence Medal and the War Medal from the First Battalion Caribbean Regiment.

In 1950, he joined the British Guiana Volunteer Force and was a Sergeant. He was later appointed an Orderly at the Governor's Office.

He joined the Parliament Office Staff in 1953 as a Marshal, a

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position which was re-designated Sergeant-At-Arms from the time of our independence in 1966. Mr Cadogan held that Office for twenty-three years and proceeded into retirement in 1976.

As a Marshal and Sergeant-At-Arms, Mr Cadogan performed a number of duties, including those of mace bearer. His duties also included the preparation of the Parliament Chamber for Sittings of the National Assembly and the circulation of Parliamentary Papers in the Chamber.

Mr Cadogan was an efficient and dedicated officer, one who was meticulous and had high standards. He carried the mace with dignity.

On the occasion of the first awards of National Honours, when Guyana became a Republic, Mr Cadogan received a Medal of Service with exceptional dedication in the Parliament of Guyana. Mr Cadogan has left to mourn his loss a widow and eight children. I am sure that Members of the Assembly would wish us to place on record our regret at his passing and to extend our sympathy to his bereaved family.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

1. BUDGET FOR 2002 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2002

Assembly resumes the debate on the Motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2002.

The Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2002. The first Speaker is the Minister of Education.

14:05H

[As the Minister of Education rose, the Members of the People's National Congress and Mrs Sheila Holder of the Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance withdraw from the Chamber]

Hon. Dr Henry B. Jeffrey: Mr Speaker, notwithstanding difficult conditions, the Government has once again committed itself to education. We all agree that education is important to the process of development, nevertheless, development can only be initiated with current conditions regardless of what those conditions are. As such, much more important than education is a committed and visionary leadership capable of focusing the creativity of all the people. This is difficult to attain in normal political conditions. In our bifurcated society, it appears impossible.

Mr Speaker, this session of Parliament is a fitting example of the difficulty of which I speak. On all sides, there is a feeling that the current dialogue between the President and Mr Hoyte has brought discourse, substantial action, peace and the level of development. Yet, we are at a stage where the People's National Congress Reform has suspended the dialogue, absented itself from Parliament and generally creating conditions that are likely to affect our country adversely.

Mr Speaker, if the PNC/R's position is that little of the process initiated by the dialogue has been substantially concluded then it is correct. However, in putting the problem in that fashion, the Party clouds two important issues.

Firstly, it makes too little of the substantial work that has gone into the process so far, and secondly, perhaps more importantly, it hides its real motive.

Mr Speaker, in his Press Conference on the 20th March, the President outlined the work done in the Committees and yesterday, the Hon. Minister Rohee using that same document provided us with snippets of the substantial amount of work that has been done

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so far. What those presentation show, is that although a great deal of work had been done, conclusions on many issues had not been reached largely because of constitutional requirements and bureaucratic delays.

In a few cases, matters had to be referred to Parliamentary Commissions that simply did not exist. In the case of the National Security Committee, that had to be referred to the Foreign Affairs' Sector Committee. This can hardly be defined as foot-dragging, as an attempt not to move forward.

Indeed the Teaching Service Commission, which is so important to my sector - the Education Sector - has not been appointed and this is causing some difficulty for the sector. I hope that the Teachers' Union or for that matter the teachers themselves are not accusing me of foot-dragging.

I also have experience of two types. I have personally been working with Minister Shaik Baksh on the issue of the housing policy and draft documents have changed many times, but the attempt has always been for us to make the document better but timely. The document should meet the Parliament at the end of this month, but it might well be a few weeks late, but in all my dealings with that document, I found no attempt whatsoever at foot-dragging or an attempt to delay.

Mr Speaker, I was informed that the issue of the Buxton School was also brought up as a matter of non-completion. If anything, I have to be blamed for the non-completion. We have a contractor who has three schools to build. He was not performing so we decided to take away two of those schools from him, but we left him with the Buxton school where more substantial work was done and he is still not performing. We then decided to remove that contract from him. Members of the PNC/R themselves requested that we go easy on it, the Headmistress of the school herself requested that we go easy on it, members of the community the selves requested that we

go easy on it. We are a government and we work in consonance with the people's wishes. We took into consideration all these demands and we decided that we will work with them, not dismiss them and today we are actually working almost day to day with that contractor to get that work done in another three weeks. I would not call this foot-dragging or an attempt not to complete the school, not to provide the children with better school. I will call this a caring government making every effort to work with community and people.
[Applause]

Mr Speaker, if that is so, if as I have argued that there has been no foot-dragging or no attempt to delay, what is the real motive of the PNC/R? The motive is to pressure the PPP/C to succumb, in my view, to its unreasonable demands in relation to appointment of the Parliamentary Committees. Given the size of our representation in Parliament, it appears to me totally unreasonable to argue that almost a dozen of our Members must not sit on these Committees. Indeed, I would argue that to have such Ministerial representation on Committees, would add at least a dimensional, if not a qualitative aspect to the discourse of the Committees.

Mr Speaker, while the attempt to put pressure in negotiations is normal given our history, if it is our intention to attract people to do business in this country, we must be more balanced in our actions. In 1997, notwithstanding what all the observers said, that we won the elections, in the interest of peace, stability and development, we gave up two years of our term.

Again after 2001, notwithstanding what every observer said, internal/external, from wherever they came, we again decided to join the process of dialogue and we have been working consciously and diligently with that process. But, Mr Speaker, it is unreasonable, we cannot simply always bend to the will of the PNC/R.

The Hon. Member, Mr Dev was correct when he said that we should look deeper into our problems and try to find the solutions.

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Where I part company with him, is in his approach. It is my view that his approach can easily lead to the institutionalisation of racism in our society. I recognise that racial divisions exist, but the existence of division is qualitatively different from its institutionalisation, from its legislation in our society. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we must create a partnership of diversity otherwise all our efforts, education and otherwise will be worthless.

Speaking of education, Mr Speaker, the Minister of Finance has allocated some 8.5 percent of the GDP to education. That, according to my figure, is higher than in any other CARICOM country. It accounts for some 17.2 percent of the national Budget.

I will take this opportunity, of course to support his presentation and also to say a few things, not to be too long-winded, but to say a few things of how these resources are and will be expended for the national good.

Mr Speaker, as stated in last year's presentation, the Ministry has developed a strategic plan. The plan which we have been making much of, has eighteen strategic areas which focus on functional illiteracy or literacy and the importance of unity and diversity. Of course, since we have been making so much of our plans, the Opposition has been saying, (Hon. Members, Mr Bernard has been saying) that I have heard from Mr Hoyte that our plan is no good.

Mr Speaker, we have travelled the length and breadth of this country not once, not twice but three times in developing this plan. We have put together national experts of all sorts in putting together this plan. We have employed internationally recognised experts in devising this plan and we are told the plan is not good. Mr Speaker, if all of these people are wrong and Mr Hoyte and Mr Bernard are right, well I am planning to go to church and praise them.

We all know, Mr Speaker, the problem of functional illiteracy goes beyond the school system. A significant proportion of our

population of working age is already in that state. We need to and we are addressing this issue. We have already appointed a national director for functional illiteracy and soon we will be appointing an international director for functional literacy. Mr Speaker, we hope that the programmes put forward by these experts and ourselves will help Guyana to solve its problems.

I said before that we need to be able to find a solution to these constant political problems, but even if we do so, if all our people are to be involved in the process of development, if they are not to become a burden and perhaps a danger to our society, parents and guardians must ensure that their children attend school regularly, punctually and prepare to learn.

Our truancy programme is being institutionalised as a normal school welfare programme, to help poor families who are finding it difficult to clothe and feed school aged children. The Government has rationalised the School Feeding Programme. All nursery and primary schools in the hinterland will be covered because the hinterland is considered the poorest area in Guyana and the fifteen percent coverage will take place on the coast. We have increased funding for school - feeding by over one hundred percent from about \$75 million to \$156 million today.

Resources for school uniforms have increased by over three hundred percent, some \$31 million today. This we hope would help the poorest children attend and successfully participate in school.

Honourable Members, we simply disagree with those who attempt to make little of the improved physical environment we have provided nationwide. Mr Bernard, sometimes, says that such an environment is not so important and that you can hold schools under a tree. The way the infrastructure was in 1992, it appears like that was precisely what he was planning to do. *[Applause]*

I suppose that, however, if push comes to shove (as the boys

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would say) you could indeed hold school under a tree. However, it is now universally accepted that the physical conditions under which teaching takes place have a significant impact on teaching itself and on learning.

Our Government has built and refurbished hundreds of schools. In the first phase of the BEAMS Project, which will begin in July, we will build another eight schools and upgrade and refurbish another eight.

Mr Speaker, as you know, maintenance has for some decade been the bug-bear of public administration. At our last Cabinet Retreat, it was decided to give priority to maintenance, not only in education but the whole gamut of social services. At 2.5 percent of the current value, the education sector requires recurrent maintenance financing of about \$800 million per annum, some \$600 million allocated in this Budget. We hope to arrive at and sustain our target by 2004.

Mr Speaker, again if all our people are to become involved in this process of development, an important issue particularly at this historic juncture, is the large number of persons who are leaving school with proper secondary education. Today, there are about 40,000 such people; half of this number in 1992.

We need about thirty new schools and classroom re-organisation. We have already begun the process of upgrading, intending to see that all secondary schools, that means, primary tops to community high, teach to the CXC by 2003. However, quality education is the requirement and our work on quality continues. The curricula for nursery, primary and secondary are set but continue to evolve. I again heard the PNC saying that the curriculum is outdated. Well, Mr Speaker, we lived in modern times and in the old days we used to say, if it works don't fix it; in modern times we say, if it works it is obsolete. So I suppose everything in this room is outdated. Our intention as we say, is to continue to seek evolving standards. School

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materials are being reviewed, learning outcomes for English language are completed and we are continuing to work on those for the other course subjects. The National third form examination was conducted for the first time in 2001. It is a diagnostic test that gives schools the indication of where they are in the general scheme of things and help them to prepare for CXC. This test has given clear indication as in other parts of the world, of course, that boys are not doing too well in school. That is an issue that we will have to deal with.

Of course I say all these things and all these things are being done, but one of the major problems facing the school system has to do with the seeping down of these curricula, these reports to the actual school level. We recognise that one of the objectives of secondary education is to equip each child to competently deal with its technological environment. The technical and vocational curriculum of the school is being reformed to achieve this goal, but also to do another revolutionary thing. It will provide all of those children whether or not they are going for CXC, whether or not they drop out, wheresoever in the system, it will provide every single child with a workable technical efficiency. A dozen years after it was first conceived, the technical and Vocational Education and Training Bill which was introduced into this need to be re-considered before representation. Times have caught up with it, changes in management theory and style have caught up with it and therefore we need to modernise it before bringing it here.

We have developed technical and vocational institutions at Essequibo and we are also about to do so at Corriverton. As the Budget shows, we have always been consistently trying to operate our existing facilities. In 2001, a major TEVED revision was done and we are presently in the scores with the IDB, and the Caribbean Development Bank for a \$2 billion loan to deal with the TEVED Centre to modernise it.

Mr Speaker, teacher quality and educational quality are intertwined. In 2001, we graduated some six hundred teachers, more

than any other single year in Guyana. *[Applause]*

However, our capacity to retain teachers is severely limited. This is a simple, yet very complicated issue. Its simplicity rests in the fact that we cannot compete in the international marketplace. We cannot keep those teachers searching for substantial rewards. We are prepared to work and we are happy working with the Teacher's Union on teachers incentives. Last year salary increases for teachers ranged between seventeen and six percent, much above the national average. We continue to work on hinterland allowances, pay for additional qualification, houseslot distribution, recognising all graduates as a category of graduate teachers. However, we will not fool ourselves, we do not believe that these will be a significant impression on those bent on leaving, and we are also on guard against the use of the current situation to leverage policies that will not substantially solve the problem. We are devising a proposal. Some say, who have heard of it, that it's controversial. We will shortly be making it public.

Mr Speaker, Technological Developments and Resource Shortage, require that our major tertiary institutions seriously rethink their past. With the help of CIDA, we have developed an in-service teacher's certificate programme equivalent to that which is presently provided at the Cyril Potter College of Education. Simple economics dictate that the future of our teacher education and training will be in-service. Information technology will be utilized more generally in the delivery of courses, managerial expertise and as teaching aides.

The University of Guyana has had its subvention increased by some twenty percent. I have been told that notwithstanding fee paying, the Government still annually subsidises each university student more than ten times the cost of a coastal primary school child. This is not of course an unusual situation but resources are scarce. Priority setting becomes more stringent. From discussions with the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, I am impressed: they too recognise that fundamental changes are required and possible. They

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too have concluded that the new technology is challenging us to strike out a new and exciting direction. This year, I intend to work with them on new priorities and begin the reform.

Mr Speaker, The Ministry of Education has a tremendous responsibility that its team will endeavour to carry out to the best of its ability. Our vision and our mission essentially are to equip all Guyanese to achieve the good life. It is our hope that as they achieve, Guyana will benefit and prosper. Therefore, we call upon all stakeholders, upon the Opposition, upon all NGOs to work with us and help create conditions that will make all our efforts worthwhile. I thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: The Minister in the Public Service.

Hon. Dr Jennifer R.A. Westford: Mr Speaker, allow me to endorse congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar for his eloquent presentation of the 2002 Budget, a Budget that seeks to ensure that social equity is maintained. Mr Speaker, increasingly global, political, economic and social changes are having a direct negative impact on small economies such as Guyana. The continuing globalisation of the market-driven world economy has resulted in the way policies are formulated and currently managed.

According to last year's economic analysis, these policies formulated and implemented by the Government have borne fruits.

Mr Speaker, the last few years have seen rapid changes worldwide with interest focused on new management approaches. Given added momentum by the growing expectations of the public for more transparency and higher standards of services, societies everywhere have become demanding notwithstanding the current economic realities.

Mr Speaker, because this Government is committed to the continuous improvement of the socio economic status of the citizens of this country, it has placed more emphasis in this year's Budget on

the issues of employment creation and improvement in Public Service delivery. Thus, Mr Speaker, it has embarked on the initial phase on the much anticipated Public Sector Reform. Mr Speaker, during this initial stage, there is going to be intensive stakeholder participation in diagnosing and chartering the course of events. The aim of this broad-spectrum of involvement of stakeholders is to ensure that they have a sense of commitment to and ownership of the process.

Human Resource Development at all levels will be a prominent feature of the reform process and to reaffirm its commitment the Government has allocated a total of \$102 million to provide scholarships and other training opportunities for our employees and potential employees. We must bear in mind that if professionally equipped the Public Service is the corner stone for development and change of any society. The pace of change of the Public Service driven by the commitment of this Government seeking to respond to a rapidly shifting economic environment will not slacken. Change, Mr Speaker, is ultimately about improving the quality of our people's lives.

Mr Speaker, in order to ensure that quality and transparency are hallmarks of the Public Service, this Government has intensified its anti-corruption drive. It is a fact that corruption in varying degrees is a reality in the Public Sector. While perceptions of its nature and extent vary, it provides strong impetus for reform initiatives. Over the past year, Mr Speaker, a number of Public Sector employees have been dismissed and others are pending legal prosecutions for their involvement in corrupt practices and transactions.

Over the past ten years, this Government has given the workers increases in salaries, which have today placed them in a better position in terms of real wages. In this 2002 Budget, there was a significant shift from the traditional announcement of wage increase figures. As mentioned by the Minister of Finance, the Government is inviting the principal stakeholder, the Guyana Public Service Union to sit with the Public Service Ministry and to negotiate an acceptable multi-

year wages package.

Mr Speaker, it is significant to note that this country had no disruptive industrial action during the year 2001. *[Applause]* This did not happen by chance. At this point, Mr Speaker, let me congratulate the President of Guyana Public Service Union, Mr Patrick Yarde and his executive body for their display and maturity, professionalism and commitment to a harmonious industrial climate. Mr Speaker, like all negotiations, there were and still are areas of non-consensus between us, but like responsible Guyanese, we will endeavour to continue our interface in a cordial non-confrontational manner. *[Applause]*

This should serve as an example for the bi-partisan dialogue, which is now at a standstill because of non-consensus on the principal issue of how Parliamentary Committees should be constituted. Mr Speaker, we cannot dispute the fact that these dialogues were useful and ensured a climate of peace and calm. A climate that all Guyana prayed for and are still hoping that it continues. Based on these dialogues this Government has made lots of compromises, but this must not be seen as a weakness on the Government's part, but merely as a strategic intervention in the interest of national stability. Let it be known that this Government will not allow itself to be bullied or terrorized into relinquishing its constitutional rights to govern this country. *[Applause]* Let me reiterate once again this year that efforts to beat each other into submission have not been successful in the past and will not be in the future. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, without a doubt, the time has come for us as leaders of this nation to stop concentrating on 'confusionism' and partisan politics but work together on matters of importance for national development.

Like all developing countries, the scourge of poverty continues to be a constant in our communities. To this end, the Government has made substantial allocations in this year's Budget to continue or

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sustain our poverty reduction programme, which was so ably described by most of the speakers before me. To expedite the process of tangible and sustained progress away from this nerve-racking situation, all of us will have to endorse our meaningful contributions.

Mr Speaker, my colleagues on the opposite side of this House are always talking about how interested they are in the welfare of a particular group which they term the socially under-privileged. I therefore urge them to stop paying lip service and stop 'talking the talk' and endeavour as a unified force to 'walk the walk' of this Herculean journey ahead of us. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, our society is also a victim of unacceptably high levels of crime. Notwithstanding the sometimes, unreasonable criticisms from all quarters, intense training of our policemen and women to raise their levels of efficiency and professionalism is continuing. At the same time, it is clear that we need to increase the strength of the police service, better its working conditions, improve the logistical base as well as continue to attend to the critical matter of ensuring good relations between the police and the community they serve. This must form part of a new patriotism, which should inspire and motivate all of our peoples especially the Hon. Members of this House to unite and rally around a common perspective whose vibrant core must be the building of a safer Guyana.

In closing, Mr Speaker, I would like to remind the Hon. Members of this House that we must bear in mind that the future of this country would be determined by our actions of the present. Let us then leave for our future generations a legacy of peace and prosperity, not mayhem and destruction. May God grant us wisdom, understanding and knowledge that will enable us to efficiently conduct the business of this House in peace and harmony. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: The Minister in the Office of the President with specific responsibility for Foreign Affairs.

Hon. S. Rudy Insanally: Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, although there might be some debate as the Hon. Prime Minister had suggested yesterday, as to whether the Budget presentation by the Hon. Minister of Finance was political, ministerial or managerial, I would like to think that it is fair to say that it is magisterial [*Applause*] and this is probably derived from the fact that in your previous incarnation, you were professorially inclined.

Let me say also that since some of my friends on this side of the table have jokingly remarked that many of our colleagues have already spoken on many issues on Foreign Affairs that in fact I have very little to say and indeed that is so.

While I certainly do not think that there is more than one Minister of Foreign Affairs, I would like to say that the common feeling reveals the consensus that needs to obtain in any House in terms of the nation's foreign policy, because invariably our partners in the developed world want to accuse us of speaking with more than one voice and in that process tried to put us one against the other. So I am happy to see in this House that there is unanimity in the use of Foreign Affairs and that we draw the same lessons from the speech of the Hon. Minister of Finance, because indeed there are important lessons in what we had to say. One of those is that the future of our national economy depends to a large measure on external factors that are in many cases well beyond our control. We cannot, therefore, be insensitive to these influences and must take account of them as he suggests in our economic planning and in our budget provisions.

15:07H

Presided over by Mr Komal Chand

[While the Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs was speaking on the Motion, the Speaker withdrew from the Chamber and Mr Komal Chand presided during his temporary absence.]

Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally: More than one speaker has averted to the events of September 11, 2001, and indeed we cannot underestimate the effects that that tragic event has had and will have on our economy. For one thing in the political domain, it will be demand of us, to make a sacrifice of our agenda for the development to the agenda for peace. This is not to say that the agenda for peace is unimportant because without peace there cannot be development, but a time of very scarce and limited resources to be asked to invest on these limited funding in terms of harnessing our security forces, setting up protection measures, ensuring that there is *accordaire sanitaire* from the impact of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms trafficking. All of these obligations will, to a great extent, diminish our capacity to service our development needs, because all of these measures have a cost and in many cases we have no alternative. They derived from Security Council's obligations that are mandatory on Member States. To that extent we cannot obviate them, and we must therefore provide for them.

Naturally the economic impact will be devastating - there is likely to be globally diminishing investor confidence, diminishing investment in the financial markets and therefore a diminishing in our growth or in our prospects. Many countries are now experiencing unemployment and we are likely, perhaps, to be exposed to the effects of counter-agents from other countries that are suffering even further south in Argentina and elsewhere.

In any case one can anticipate what the Minister said, a general slow down in everything, in the circulation of our trade and in our economy as a whole. While we have not been as unfortunate as our brethren in the Caribbean to the degree that we are not dependent as they are on tourism, we are nevertheless, going to feel the impact. In the effort to develop our eco-tourism, I am sure the repercussions will be there in terms of arrival, in terms of our markets, but even if we have not suffered as much as they have, I gather that we will feel an impact on the level of remittances from the Guyanese diaspora who contributes significantly to the development and resources of

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our economy. Again to that degree, we are bound to suffer but it is admirable I think, that others have pointed out that notwithstanding these contrary indicative factors that we have managed to display a reasonable growth rate. I think that attested to the fact that our financial management has respected the sound principles that are now required globally, regionally and nationally.

In every major international conference we have had on the agenda for development in the Millennium Summit, in all of these conferences these benchmarks have been set and I shall come to them now:

For one, I think, we have accepted that we need to limit the damage that will be meted out of our economy, that the Budget will seek to stimulate growth and very importantly to ensure our economic survival.

What I can say, is having attended the Conference of Financing for Development in Mount Ere that we cannot expect too much from the International Community at this stage. While we reached a consensus on the vision or strategy for development in terms of the actual contribution to the Overseas Development Assistance, in fact, the sum will be negligible. So the Mount Ere consensus is more promissory than anything. Admittedly the major donors like the United States and the EU have announced their intentions to increase their assistance in relative terms, but this assistance, to our mind, and we said this publicly, will be, perhaps, too little and perhaps come too late.

Moreover, its disbursement is likely to be subject to a vast array of conditionalities to developing countries and therefore cannot be counted on to deliver any predictability. So in recognition of these constraints and uncertainties, I think it is well that the Minister of Finance has emphasized the need for:

First of all, mobilising our domestic financial resources, because

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ultimately this is where we will have the first draw for investment in our economy.

Moreover, he has called our attention to assuring the efficacy, coherence and consistence of macro economic policy which is essential to developing a meaningful development strategy.

Thirdly, to define an appropriate role for government in a market oriented economy, for it is clear to all, even to the more passionate advocates of the market, that the market cannot and will not do all and that ultimately the State has to provide the environment for stable development.

The third aim would be to secure investments in basic economic and social infrastructural services. Again, we have to realise that while there is investment abroad, that investment is very selective and very concentrated, perhaps, bypassing countries like ours, so that we will have to go an extra mile to encourage and attract investment. To that direction, we will also have to develop the domestic financial sector to respond to the needs that have been outlined.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in many respects the development of human capacity to manage and administer our economy, because, I think, with the best of planning, unless we have the people who can manage the economy, our efforts are very likely to come to nought.

So, Mr Speaker, at this stage I would like to merely avert to the role which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can play as an auxillary to the implementation of the Budget, to support the policy thrust that has been contained in the Budget, for, essentially, the task of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to make the international environment more congenial to our needs. The international environment is there and we, as small States, have to make it a little bit more pliable to our concerns and as we have not hesitated to say at the many

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conferences that the President has attended, to say to the international community and more particularly to the developed countries that while we may be getting more marketable access, this is like getting a key to a door that we cannot reach, because market access in itself and by itself will not allow countries like Guyana to develop. Because with our contention and investment in the fundamentals of infrastructure and attraction of investment, small economies are not likely to go anywhere, but to be further marginalised from the global economy. So one of our purposes is to sensitise the international community to the plight and to the situation of all the developing countries but more particularly to Guyana and its vulnerability. To that extent, the President and our whole diplomacy have sought to take advantage of these various meetings, more recently with the Prime Minister of Canada, the Prime Minister of United Kingdom and the Commonwealth Summit in Australia to sensitise them to the needs of Guyana and to cultivate their sympathy and support of our developmental prospects.

Mr Speaker, I can say that we have seen in the management of our international affairs positive encouragement to think that we can convert some obstacles into helps to our economy.

At the bilateral level and looking close around us, we have managed to come to significant agreements with our neighbours, with whom, in one case, it is Suriname, we have a dispute in terms of our limits both maritime, land and sea. In terms of Venezuela, a controversy which resulted in a claim of a large portion of our territory

...

In the first instance of Suriname, we have managed to reach an encouraging agreement where we have undertaken to work on the issue of joint exploration pending the definitive solution of the problem whereby both countries can explore these resources for their common benefit. In the case of Venezuela, we have been able to successfully negotiate the agreement, which again will hold out, not only a promise of participating in the Caracas Energy Accord,

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but perhaps co-operating in a variety of other areas.

Again, in terms of Brazil, where we have a settled frontier, we are fast developing relations that are bound to impact positively on our economic prospects. As some have said perhaps Brazil can do for Guyana, what the United States have done for Canada and there may be some truth in that analysis.

Let me say on the question of Brazil and the development of our interior - the road connections - that I take to heart the comments made by the representative, the Hon. Shirley Melville and that as we pursue our frontiers' policy, we will be sensitive to the concerns that she has expressed in her presentation.

Mr Speaker, I would like to say that we must not, like some people, see Foreign Affairs as a drain on our national resources. Foreign Affairs is the other side of our national Policy and must be seen as a complement to our domestic objective. We are very happy to know that we have an increase in the Budget for next year, albeit, limited one, forty-nine percent, I think it is, but we shall make the best of it cutting our suite according to the cloth, to make sure that Foreign Affairs is supportive of our national thrust.

But let me say, finally, Mr Speaker, that no amount of effort will be truthful without a dialogue in this House. This Parliament is premised on dialogue and there has to be an interchange. There has been a dialogue in the highest level between the President and the Leader of the Opposition in which we have tried to work out our differences. I hope this will be translated in this House because dialogue is essential to the peaceful resolution of all disputes and in the area of foreign policy, it is sad to say that now, we have a national border reform, where we have clearly identified measures that we can implement, but we cannot do so because the joint Parliamentary Committee has not been agreed upon and to that extent, we are therefore ploughing the sea. We cannot implement any of the measures, because in foreign policy it sends the wrong signal to all

abroad that we are not united at home.

So I close, Mr Speaker, by making a final appeal that in this House, we should satisfy the purpose for which we were created, that is to say, to have a proper dialogue among the political parties so that we show to the world outside that a House united will, in fact, stand against the obstacles it has to face. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Presiding Member: Thank you very much, Hon. Member.

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs.

Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues: Mr Speaker, I rise like my colleagues before me to lend support for Budget 2002, as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, ever since this Government took office in 1992, the population looks forward to what is in the Budget for them. This is primarily because the Budget always brings something for them. This I must say, is a significant achievement of this Government since the days of being fearful of what the Budget may take away from you are all gone. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, it is therefore not unusual when expectations are raised too high and the budget cannot accommodate all that is expected that there are utterances of the government not doing its work. I am confident that considering the circumstances locally and internationally, the Budget has brought something for everyone.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has as its Mission Statement:

To enhance the quality of life, to promote social and economic opportunities and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the rights and assets of the indigenous people of Guyana through a highly skilled and motivated staff in delivering quality, social, economic and

community services.

Mr Speaker, this is a tall order, but of course it is always good to set high goals. The fact that many of these communities are remotely located makes it difficult to deliver goods and services in a timely and efficient way.

However, we must recognize the contributions the indigenous people have made in this country. Some form of security on our borders is one that comes to mind immediately. It is in recognition of these contributions and the mere fact that they form part of this beautiful country that the Government of Guyana is committed to ensure that they benefit in an acceptable and equitable way.

Mr Speaker, due to the peculiarity and wide mandate of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the importance of collaboration and advocacy with other Agencies and Ministries goes without saying. This is because almost every other Ministry operates in these communities, however, most of the issues that affect these communities are directed to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and rightfully so.

Mr Speaker, over the last few years, food security in Amerindian Communities appeared to be compromised. Apart from the unpredictable weather conditions according to most of the communities, the infestation of acouchi ants played a very important role in destroying their farms. Using the collaborative approach together with the Ministry of Fisheries, Crops and Livestock, we were able to commence in October, 2001, a \$10 million programme for the control of acouchi ants in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. Just one week ago, we were also able to commence a \$7 million programme for Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Again, this was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries, Crops and Livestock, SIMAP and local NGOs.

Mr Speaker, this year's Budget includes further resources to

complete this exercise throughout the country. I am told this programme is overdue by almost twenty years. *[Applause]* For those areas where treatment is ongoing, I am happy to report that the feedback from the communities is very positive.

Mr Speaker, the importance of this exercise cannot be underestimated since the issue of food security is of paramount importance. A study will soon be conducted, with assistance from the FAO, in Regions that are most often affected to determine what can be done to negate the shortage of food on a regular basis.

Mr Speaker, again in keeping with the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs whereby economic opportunities should be provided, I would like to say that every possible avenue would be explored to uplift the economic standard of indigenous people. Together with expertise of the Ministries of Fisheries, Crops and Livestock, Local Government, GO-INVEST and a private investor, discussions were held with regard to the replanting of manicole in Région 1.

Mr Speaker, just in case you don't know what manicole is, it is a palm that grows primarily in the swampy areas and the heart of this palm is used as cabbage. For the most part it is exported to Europe. The residents of the Waini, Baramani, Aruka and Barima Rivers in Region 1 rely heavily on the sale of this type of cabbage to a French based Company which is located on the Barima River. Mr Speaker, after harvesting for more than eight years, residents have to travel further and further and the possibility exists that there can be widespread depletion.

In addition, families are disrupted because of the absence of the male party for long periods. It is in this light that the project was born and an experiment was carried out to confirm whether the palm can be grown on abandoned farms and also the estimated time of maturity. This experiment was successful. *[Applause]*

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Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that a proposal was made and has received positive attention from the UNDP. The details are presently being finalised and once this project gets off the ground, positive results can be seen as early as three years. Residents will no longer have to travel long distances and the market is already secured.
[Applause]

Mr Speaker, the Government also recognises that the access to credit is very important. It was only on Sunday that I read in the Stabroek News of how micro credit can help ordinary people especially women. Queen Rania Al Abdulla of Jordan who was on her way to the United Nations Meeting on Trade, Development and Finance and who is a champion of micro credit was speaking of the merits of this facility. She said, and I quote:

Micro finance has such credible history as a tool to empower people especially women and to close the gap between the haves and the have-nots, that is becoming high on the official agenda for development.

She also went on to say:

The self-renewing nature of micro finance means that money contributed by government and individuals alike becomes an endowment because it is renewable. Repaid loans are re-cycled back in communities to create more jobs and more businesses. Across the world the experience of micro finance is that of a ninety-seven percent repayment rate, something that would make a conventional banker envious.

Mr Speaker, the Amerindian communities face a problem in accessing larger credit primarily because communal lands cannot be used as collateral. However, this should not prevent experiments in the area of micro credit. It was considering these factors that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and UNDP started a credit scheme in

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the North Rupununi almost two years ago and the Institute of Private Enterprise Development was hired to manage the operations of the programme. Mr Speaker, for the most part, this programme is successful and I am happy to report today that as of February 2002, the Institute of Private Enterprise Development has handed over the operations of the North Rupununi with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in a supervisory role. We are hoping to repeat this in other Amerindian communities. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I know the Minister of Education spoke of education in terms of the entire country. However, I would like to emphasize the Government's position with regard to education of Amerindians. Apart from the training of teachers and construction of schools and dormitories, the Government has made it a priority to have opportunities for training in other areas provided to Amerindian students. We are working towards having at least ten Amerindian students included in the first batch of students under the Cuban Scholarship Programme. *[Applause]*

In addition, the Government has also announced that persons who have graduated from the University of Guyana and who are interested in working in a hinterland community which for the most part is populated with Amerindians would have write-offs on their student loans. *[Applause]* This is to encourage delivery of quality education to these communities.

Mr Speaker, of course there is still a lot to be done in this area as is the case throughout Guyana, but the commitment of the Government is firm.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned before the primary role of the Minister of Amerindian Affairs is that of collaboration and advocacy. This would not be achieved in a meaningful way if adequate and accurate information were absent on what is being done and is expected to be done in these communities. We know that along with the Regional Administration and other Ministries, there are

several NGOs working in these communities. We are not sure, however, that the assistance or attention is being given to the Communities which are most in need, given the fact that they are all at different levels of development.

In addition, we would very much like to play a part in influencing decisions or policies in the other Ministries and Organisations as it pertains to Amerindian development, but we are constrained by the lack of information which is requested on a regular basis.

Mr Speaker, we are not allowing this situation to continue, we are doing something about it. I am happy to inform this House that a contract has been signed, about a month ago, with a local consultancy firm which will be working in collaboration with the community to do assessment of Amerindian communities throughout the entire country. This will not only provide us with the data we require but also suggest strategies for improving the existing situations. At the end of this exercise, we would have a database of information pertaining to all of the Amerindian communities in this country and we will be better able to target the most needy.

Mr Speaker, I know the Hon Member, Mrs Shirley Melville is probably wondering why I have not yet provided answers to some of the issues she raised. I would like to do so at this time.

The Hon. Member spoke of training for village council and the lack of it resulting in uninformed decisions. I cannot agree more with her on this matter. Mr Speaker, I know many of the Amerindian village councils have tremendous potentials to manage the affairs of their villages in an efficient way, but moreover *potential* means *it hasn't been done yet*. Despite a few of them received different levels of training from various agencies and for specific purposes or project, the majority is in dire need of training. Basic accounting is a problem, so is reporting. However, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs recognized this efficiency with work to the detriment to the communities and has prepared a very detailed proposal for the training

of Amerindian village councils throughout Guyana. Mr Speaker, I am happy to announce today that this proposal has received favourable consideration by the Caribbean Development Bank and we are optimistic that training would begin by June of this year. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member, Mrs Melville also alluded to the exclusion of party politics in village elections. I would like to inform the Hon. Member that the existing system of local government in these communities is not designed to include party politics. This does not prevent them, however, from choosing someone who is known to be affiliated with a specific political party. The choice after all will be that of the majority of members who would have voted in the elections. *[Applause]*

The Hon. Member also spoke of the need to revise the Amerindian Act. Mr Speaker, I am pleased to say in this Honourable House that Cabinet has decided that this should be treated with urgency and a consultation process has been developed. I am also happy to note that the three major Amerindian Organisations are in concurrence with the process. A technical committee is being finalised to conduct the consultations. I invite the Hon. Member to make her submissions when the consultations are being held in her Region. Arrangements are presently being made for copies of the existing Act to be circulated to all of the communities. Copies of studies done on the Act would also be disseminated. I hope that we would be able to bring before this House a revised Amerindian Act in the not too distant future. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the Hon. Member spoke about the issue of Amerindian lands. If I can remember well, she questioned why demarcations are being done now and when extensions are addressed the process would have to be repeated. I would like to advise the Hon. Member that logically one could not extend an area when he does not know the size of the existing one. There is also inaccuracies in the descriptive titles as stated in the Act and this can only be

corrected after the land is surveyed. Of course we are aware that some communities are not even located within the boundaries as specified in the laws. But again, we can only confirm the extent to this when the lands are demarcated.

She referred to two communities having conflict over boundaries and she indicated that this was not the situation prior to the demarcation exercise. I can only imagine that the communities were not totally informed about what demarcation is expected to achieve and we would be working hard to disseminate information on this issue as far as possible.

Mr Speaker, I would therefore like to urge the Hon. Member to lend support for this exercise to move forward. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, initially the Government's policy requires all seventy-six communities to be demarcated before extensions on new communities were considered. Demarcations in Regions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 have been completed while there is only one more community in Region 2 to bring that Region to completion. The other Regions are at different stages. Recognising that it is not fair to those Regions which have completed their demarcations to be waiting on those which have not made a decision, the Government has just recently decided to treat the matter in a Regional way. In other words, if a particular Region is completed, the next stage will be entertained. I would like to inform the Hon. Member Mrs Melville that Region 9 has seven more communities to be demarcated. Once this is completed, extensions on new communities would be addressed. She, of course, can play an important role in her Region in moving this process forward. We are also hoping that the Indigenous People's Commission will play an important role in all of this.

Mr Speaker, you will agree that the Ministry could only do as much as its capacity permits. It is in this light that ten Community Development Officers are now employed and located in the various Regions of this country. This is not meant to duplicate the efforts of

the Regional Administrations, but to create a direct link with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and also to work parallel to the Regional Administration. In this way, we are hoping that we can address the issues affecting these communities in a timelier manner. Mr Speaker, but more than that, we have just advertised for six professional persons to be employed by the Ministry. This would increase the capacity of the Ministry and certainly deliver a better service to the people whom we represent. All of this is being done because of the importance attached to the indigenous people by the PPP/Civic Government. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I have said a lot of what is being done and what is expected to be done in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, but I would like to conclude by saying that even though indigenous communities are located in the interior parts of Guyana, whatever happens on the coast has some impact on them. I am saying this because I feel that unity at all levels is essential for any country improve its status. As part of the PPP/C Government, I know we are trying our best to move our country forward. It is a bit sad today that our colleagues on the other side of the House are not here to debate the Budget and perhaps offer some constructive criticisms. As the youngest person in this House, I hope that we can move beyond whatever differences are present so that we can attract other young people to leadership positions. *[Applause]*

As I conclude, I would like to quote the second to last paragraph in the Speech of the Minister of Finance where he said:

Let us therefore, rededicate ourselves to the task at hand and work together to build this nation. Whatever our beliefs, we must be conscious of one thing, that is, that we have been blessed with the gift of a beautiful country - a country with enormous potential, a blend of the world's best cultures, an enhancing climate of diversity that is healthy and rich. Even as the wider world suffers from natural and man-made disasters such as earthquakes, wars

and famines, we are blessed with relative peace and stability.

Mr Speaker, let us be thankful for a country free of natural disasters and try to stay away from creating man-made ones. After all it would only be us and those to come after us who would suffer the consequences. Thank you.

The Presiding Member: The Hon. Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon. C. Anthony Xavier: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Colleague Ministers, Hon. Members on this side of the House and the only two Hon. Members of the Opposition who have seriously committed themselves to the oath they took on entering this Honourable House which, in part, says:

I will faithfully execute the Office of Member of Parliament without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

Quite unlike the others . . . And the value of participating, especially in a serious subject like the Budget, for a given year, was seen quite clearly when my colleague was able to answer all of the questions that were asked by the Hon. Member Mrs Melville in her presentation yesterday. So there is value in participating.

Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure and optimism that I rise today to add my congratulations to the Minister of Finance and his hardworking staff for this year's Budget. Last year's theme was *Moving Guyana Forward Together*. This year we are attempting to solidify the gains by adding momentum to the process so that development nationwide will continue to grow. This is what the thrust of creating conditions and environment for greater prosperity in Guyana is emphasizing and embracing. Mr Speaker, Guyana is definitely on the move and those who do not want to move with us will be left behind. But, it is my hope that together we will rise to

the challenges which now confront us. As you are aware we are operating in a globalised environment and we need to put in place mechanisms for Guyana to play a meaningful role and to be able to benefit in a substantial way. The thrust of this year's Budget is an attempt by us to deal with the demands placed upon us by globalisation and to plan for it thus ensuring our country does not lag behind. This calls for vision on the part of the crafters of the Budget, and boldness on the part of the Government which, in the interest of its people and their development, continued and will continue to lead by example.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Works embraced the concept of togetherness last year and we have been playing a pivotal role in facilitating the process for our forward thrust. I am therefore pleased to report that we have done much given the many constraints. I will now attempt to give a brief review of the year 2001 and our projections for 2002.

Roads And Bridges Programme

Under our *Roads and Bridges Programme*, Mr Speaker, even though we only had five months to perform herculean task, I am happy to state that of the sixty-eight (68) roads under our Miscellaneous Road Programme which were embarked upon Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, sixty-six (66) of those projects were successfully completed at a cost of \$354 million. *[Applause]* Also, seven (7) bridges in Region 4 and one (1) each in Regions 5 and 7 were completed at a cost of \$34 million. In respect of urban roads we did manage to complete five (5) streets in the City of Georgetown and three roads were constructed in the Joint Services Housing Scheme.

Sea Defences

Mr Speaker, in the area of *Sea Defences*, 911 metres of sea defences were completed in Regions 3, 4, 5. Those in Regions 3

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and 4 include the completion of Works at Cornelia Ida, Mon Repos, Hague and Stanleytown. While in Region 5 those completed were Braun to No. 40 and Trafalgar Pumping Station. With respect to the works being done at No. 4 to No. 7 only 733 metres of the 2,200-metre project at Bel Air/Mon Chosi have been completed or were completed at the end of the year. The rest will be completed very shortly. Sixty-seven (67) percent of the Emergency Works projects were completed and major breaches at Buxton and Vigilance were sealed.

Transport and Harbours Department

Mr Speaker, under the *Transport and Harbours Department*, I am happy to report that repairs were undertaken to the dredge that we have, Steve N, and the Lady Northcote. The engines of the Makouria and Torani were successfully maintained and Torani was successfully dry-docked during the period.

The Bartica Stelling was completely rehabilitated while remedial works were undertaken at Vreed-en-Hoop, Georgetown and Parika Stellings, and new gantry chains were installed at the New Amsterdam Stelling.

Dredging

Dredging was also successfully executed at Vreed-en-Hoop and the Demerara Ship Channels while hydrographic survey was done on the ship's channel, and buoys and beacons were installed and maintained.

I must, however, report that the process toward the separation of the regulatory arm from the shipping administration did not materialise in 2001 as was programmed.

Demerara Harbour Bridge

Mr Speaker, the *Demerara Harbour Bridge* continued its programme of maintenance. Eighteen (18) unifloats and twenty-four (24) scowends were rehabilitated and the pairs supporting the two high level spans were changed. Structural repairs were also done to the retractor span. Closure to traffic was limited to the planned maintenance programme except for a brief period between July and August when the traffic had to be contained between certain times during the day. We have some more work to be done on the Bridge and it is my hope that this year we will be able to complete them thus ensuring that the Bridge is safe for commuters to travel on. The instruments to set up the new corporation was not finalised in 2001 as was programmed. This is in place and will be completed shortly.

Air Transport

Mr Speaker, under *Air Transport*, the major accomplishments were in the areas of institutional and organisational reforms. The following has been accomplished:

- a) The new Civil Aviation Regulation of 2001.
- b) The new Aviation Licencing Regulations are now in force.
- c) The Rules of Air Regulation are being finalised and are with the Chief Parliamentary Council.

Guyana Civil Aviation Authority

I am happy to report also that the *Guyana Civil Aviation Authority* is no longer a dream but exists and the staffing of this Authority is now on the way. The training needs of personnel are being addressed also. The leasing of the Ogle Aerodrome Facility has been completed with the signing of an agreement last year with the Ogle Airport Inc. As a result of this the necessary infrastructural

improvements to bring the Aerodrome into compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organisation are being addressed and the environmental impact assessment is being attended to.

Canawaima Ferry Service

The Molsen Creek area, I must say that we are moving away from renting accommodations for the staff who have to work in that area and have completed building another house for them. We are moving in our efforts toward acquiring more land to put down an administration building and build two more houses. The contract to install a pure water supply system was signed late in 2001 and the work will commence very shortly.

Although we have lights, electricity has been connected, as the Stelling has to be re-wired and that will be done later this month.

Projections for 2002

Under ***Road and Bridges***, I am happy to report that, Lot 1 of the Bridges' projects which includes the putting down of sixty-two (62) of the most critical bridges that need to be removed and new bridges installed, construction will start in August of this year. The work on the design for the remaining two (2) structures has started already and should be completed in July 2002 paving the way for us to have a possible contractor on board by early 2003 for the remaining sixty-five (65) bridges to be completed from Timehri to Rosignol.

Mr Speaker in the area of ***Road Safety Engineering***, our Road safety study and Data Collection Project is fifty-four (54) percent completed at this stage. The studies for the installation of traffic lights from Buxton to Georgetown which has been identified as the worst corridor in our country and in around Georgetown will be completed in April, while the bid documents for the supply and installation of the components will be out shortly. This will see the installation of fifty-one (51) traffic lights. The installation of signs,

reflectors and road markings will begin in June of this year, while we are also examining the possibility of placing small roundabouts at certain locations. This effort on the part of the Ministry is a reflection on our commitment to road safety and road safety engineering and it is expected to help prevent accidents on our roads. I must take this opportunity to say that we have been receiving very good co-operation from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Traffic Police.

The contracts for the design of the Georgetown-to-Parika and the Demerara Harbour Bridge-to-Potentia Roads have already been signed. The bids for supervision were opened the day before yesterday. For the Mahaica/Rosignol Road construction is expected to start very shortly too. In a short while the feasibility for the New Amsterdam-to-Moleson Creek road and the new southern entrance to Georgetown will also begin. That is expected to take about three (3) months to complete. Rehabilitation works will continue to the Georgetown/Timehri and Soesdyke/Linden Roads and the other main thoroughfares throughout the country.

Mr Speaker, the *Works Services Group* which embraces the roads and bridges has now finally come into effect from January of this year and it is up to running and performing very well. At a later stage, I am hoping to have the sea and river defences become a part of this group.

In *Sea Defences*, Mr Speaker, under the Lome A 48 EDF, the detailed design and preparation of tender documents for works supply and supervision contracts for the rehabilitation of sea defences at Somerset and Berks, Essequibo; Belmont, Mahaica; the Great Diamond, Demerara River; Bartica, Essequibo River; Regions 2, 3, 4, and 7, will be finalised this year. The rehabilitation of five (5) kilometres of sea defences at Capoey/Columbia, Essequibo Coast; Hague; De Kinderen; Met-en-Meerzorg; Tuschen; Regions 2 and 3 will commence in September of this year. Also the institutional capacity building activities which include the preparation of tender documents, the establishment of the Shore Zone Management

System, will commence and will be concluded.

This will ensure that we have a better monitoring system to be able to measure and deal with the effects of global warming and rising sea levels.

Mr Speaker, also the Inter-American Development Bank Programme for the 310 metres of Vergenoegen rehabilitation works will conclude very shortly as well as the works being done at Bel Air/Mon Chosi, as I reported earlier.

Our **Emergency Works Programme** will continue and we will be doing 3,273 feet of revetment works in Regions 2, 3 and 4 and 200,000 linear feet of raising of sea dams in Regions 2, 4 and 5. Also, it is planned that additional revetment, embankment and slope protection works will be undertaken in Regions 2 to 6.

The **Transport and Harbours Department**. For 2002, I am hoping that the process for the separating of the Harbours Department from the Ferry Operations will be done this year to actually get the Guyana Maritime Authority off and running. This will be made possible through the implementation of appropriate regulations to give full effect to the Shipping Act of 1998. Already a building has been identified and preparations for the separation have commenced.

It is important to note, Mr Speaker, that **Guyana's Shipping Industry** is becoming more vibrant with the expansion of international linkages. It is also worth mentioning that for the first time since its establishment, some 32 years ago, the Caribbean Shipping Association, in May of this year, will be hosting its Annual Conference in Guyana. This meeting will be attended by senior shipping functionaries from throughout the Region as well as international representatives and it is certainly an opportunity for Guyana to showcase its potential.

Guyana, Mr Speaker, has demonstrated its commitment to improving maritime transport by acceding to seventeen (17) Maritime

Conventions including Solas, Marpol, STCW, Load Lines, et cetera. Regulations regarding the full implementation of the STCW Convention will be completed shortly thereby paving the way for a more structured training facility in Guyana through assistance from the Caribbean Maritime Institute in Jamaica. This will allow for the accreditation and training of our local seamen and will enable us to standardise and improve the level of training that will be done locally.

Of course, our dredging equipment will be refurbished as usual, to assist the main dredge, Steve N to maintain the ship channels in the Essequibo and Demerara Rivers.

The stollings at Parika, Leguan and Wakenaam will be maintained while the usual vessels, the Bonasika, Baramani, Makouria, Malali and Kimbia will all be docked and repaired.

Training to further develop the human resources of the Maritime Authority will be intensified at the level of marine and mechanical apprenticeship as well as the Government Technical Institute and the University levels.

Air Transportation. Mr Speaker, the key positions of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority and the Cheddi Jagan International Airport Corporation will be in place this year as will be the required institutional and organisational requirements. Also, the airport facilities will be upgraded. In this regard the GCAA and the CJIA will be fully operational with the full complement of staff. The new regulations for the Authority will be fully implemented and the Air Transport Sector in Guyana will be fully compliant with ICAO. Also CJIA's business plan will be in operation. Ogle aerodrome will be in compliance with ICAO and the Airfield Certification Programme will be implemented.

We are also expecting to do the following:

a) The rehabilitation of the arrivals' area is expected to begin this year.

- b) The rehabilitation of our main runway pavement and the installation of new lights.
- c) Acquire a new CNN/ATM Redditch System.
- d) Replace the non-functional VOR.
- e) Upgrade the sewage system and install a Sewage Treatment Plant.
- f) Upgrade the power distribution service.

Mr Speaker, I must say that I am very proud of the accomplishments during the last year and those have gone a far way in moving Guyana forward. I also must say that our Government is not a Government which is satisfied with such modest accomplishments, but one which is concerned with intensifying the process thereby creating greater and better opportunities for all Guyanese.

We have come a long way, but there are still many hurdles to cross. This Budget, in my mind, is an attempt in that direction and thus is deserving of the support of all of us if Guyana is going to realise the benefits from all its visionary plans. As the Prime Minister said in his presentation, this is not a time for squabbling, but a time to intensify dialogue and forge greater cooperation. Let us continue to pave the way forward in a spirit of togetherness and brotherhood that future generations can be proud of. I urge you my colleagues and the two Hon. Members of the Opposition to put the interest of Guyana and Guyanese first and let us work together for our common goal. Let the forward thrust continue.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Presiding Member: The Minister of Housing and Water.

Hon. Shaik K. Z. Baksh: Mr Speaker, the theme of this year's

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Budget is *Promoting Economic Growth: Accelerating Social Gains* and there is ample evidence in this Budget to that effect. We want to have a sound economy, a healthy economy and at the same time we want to ensure that we take care of the social welfare of the people of this country. Budgetary measures, Mr Speaker, must flow down to the population, not trickle down, it must flow down. And when you hear the figures I will give you for the social sector, you will see what a great flow it is to the benefit of all the people. But the Budgetary measures can only be adequate if there is sound management of the economy. Again, here the statistics say a lot. Apart from the growth rate which we had in 2001, in difficult local and international circumstances, we have maintained a stable exchange rate and we have kept inflation at an all-time low of 2.6 percent. At the same time we have managed the debts well and the debt servicing charge (and this is very important) has been reduced from US \$92 million in the year 2000 to \$51 million in the year 2001. What that means in effect is that we have millions of millions of US dollars to be able to execute programmes for the benefit of the people of this country. In doing all of this we have maintained the international reserves. As a matter of fact the international reserves have increased.

15: 55H

[Speaker returned to the Chair]

Mr Speaker, in the area of *Education*, in 1997 expenditure as a percentage of the Budget was 6.8 percent and this moved in the year 2001 to 16.5 percent.

In *Health*, in the year 2000 expenditure as a percentage of the Budget was 5.7 percent and this moved in the year 2001 to 7 percent.

In *Housing and Water*, in 1997, Capital Expenditure for projects and programmes was just under \$900 million and this moved to a phenomenal \$2.5 billion in the year 2001. [Applause]

In addition to this, we have the *Poverty Programmes*, which in the year 2002, will expend another \$2 billion for the social benefits of the people of this country.

In the specific area of *Housing Development*, Mr Speaker, we have a six-pronged approach. Which has been to divest state and government land to distribute house lots. From 1992 to the year 2000, we have distributed over 50,000 house lots. In doing so, we are now making efforts to ensure the occupancy of those lots. If you go all around this country - I challenge the Opposition to go all around this country - and you will see the hundreds upon hundreds of houses going up. And I predict that within another two to three years there will be a ...

Prior to 1992, there was a trickle of titles coming out of the Deeds Registry. Last year alone over 2,000 titles came through the Deeds Registry. *[Applause]* This year over 5,000 titles will be coming out. Let them say that we are discriminating. Mr Speaker, this is the new talk of the PNC/R. They are no longer saying that we are not giving out house lots, they are no longer saying that we are not building infrastructure, they are not saying that we are not giving out titles, the new bogie term is that we are discriminating. But only one month ago, I was in Sophia and we gave out over 145 titles to the largest squatter settlement in this country. *[Applause]* We have set a goal, a target of 2,000 titles for Sophia alone in the year 2002. *[Applause]* It is sending shivers down the PNC/R because they did not give one title to the 5,000 residents in the area known as Sophia. Mr Speaker, in the area of titles, to ensure that we expedite and accelerate the programme, we have shifted from the Deeds Registry Act to the Land Registry Act. That is a simpler system and will facilitate faster processing of titles through the Deeds Registry. The Hon. Attorney General has already alluded to the significant changes, of which I am satisfied, that have taken place at the Deeds Registry.

The Third approach, Mr Speaker, is to *regularise all the squatter settlements* in this country. We are moving apace. We have completed

the regularisation of sixty-two (62) and this year we are adding a further twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) squatter settlements to be regularised. So in the five-year period that we are in office, we should eliminate the back-log of squatter settlements to be regularised. *[Applause]* These are difficult challenges, but we are confronting them and moving in all the Regions to ensure that we convert the squatter settlements to sound housing areas. This is our goal. A lofty goal, indeed.

The fourth approach, Mr Speaker, is *building infrastructure*. In the year 2001, the Ministry of Housing and Water spent over \$1 billion to put in roads, drainage and water in our housing schemes and squatter settlements.

The PNC/R went around and said that we were discriminating, we have done nothing for Sophia. We have spent \$250 million in Sophia - the complete drainage network and drainage structure. Right now we are building a road at Section B, Pattensen. This is what we are doing, but more has to be done in infrastructure. We have a policy of incremental development of our infrastructure. Because when you look at the large number of squatter settlements and housing schemes, we cannot complete infrastructure in any one scheme at an early date. We have set our targets for two/three years.

Also, in Sophia we are building a school which is near completion - one of the largest primary schools in this country - to the tune of \$110 million. *[Applause]* This is, in addition to the \$250 million. They are comparing Sophia with a small squatter settlement known as Martyrs Ville where the people, by their own effort, pooled their money and put in electricity. They did self-help work and put in water. We, at the Ministry, built four roads to the tune of \$20 million. That is what we have done. And we have moved across this country in all the squatter settlements and have been putting roads and drainage. Last year, we successfully completed a project financed by the Government of Guyana and the World Bank to the tune of

US \$1 million in which we put in water supply systems, and when I say systems, I mean a complete distribution, not stand pipes.

This was done in places like Tuschen North, Zeelugt North, Ocean Gardens, Caneville, Goedverwagting, Sparendaam, Belvedere, Williamsburg, Block 22 in Linden. Nineteen areas benefitted. And they were successfully completed to the extent that the World Bank stated they will give another US\$1 million to continue that work [Applause] because 30,000 persons benefitted from that programme. So we are on the go. This year in the Budget, you will see the allocation there, \$500 million allocated to the Ministry of Housing and Water for infrastructural works in the housing and squatter areas. This is what we are doing all over this country. I do not have to go into details because it is visible enough as you go along the coastal belt and see the transformation that is taking place in the lives of people because they are now being provided with adequate shelter and settlements.

Mr Speaker, the fifth approach is working with communities. We have a very vibrant approach to community development and work with the community development committees in all of these areas because it is important. This year we are launching training programmes for the leaders of these community groups.

The new initiative and the sixth approach in the housing area, very innovative, is the building of houses. We have already started. The construction of one hundred (100) houses has already started. If you go to Cornelia Ida, Diamond, Golden Grove, you will see houses going up there. These are the first one hundred (100) out of the five hundred (500) which we have undertaken to build. So this will stimulate further, Mr Speaker, the housing drive or the housing development in all of our schemes. We have identified seventeen (17) schemes across this country where houses will be built including Glasgow, No. 77 Village and Amelia's Ward in Linden. So, Mr Speaker, overall we have been moving and the Budget figures speak for themselves. Over the next five (5) years we have the IDB

Programme - \$5.4 billion will be spent in putting in infrastructure. We have the list - we are not discriminating - of all those areas which are coming under the IDB. The first fourteen (14) areas include Tuschen, Good Hope, Block X, Diamond, Block Y, Golden Grove, Amelia's Ward, Plantation Best, Charity, Anna Regina, Four Miles, Bartica, Waterloo, Experiment Hope in Region 5. So we have the first fourteen (14) areas to come under the IDB Programme. In addition to that the Budget figures show that another \$1.8 billion will be coming through the EU for infrastructure development in our housing schemes. So, all in all, Mr Speaker, you can see what will be taking place - a revolution in housing in this country. It is of note that none of the Hon Members who are here from the Opposition mentioned anything about housing. So I take it that they are quite satisfied with what is taking place. *[Applause]*

Water - Mr Speaker, in the water sector we are moving apace also. Much more work is to be done. But in Georgetown alone we have concluded the GS&WC Programme I, the Government of Guyana/IDB Programme. Over the last five (5) years we spent \$2.5 billion in improving the water system and rehabilitating the sewage works in Georgetown. We intend to spend another \$5.8 billion in improving water and sanitation in Georgetown. The Budget figures show it: it is here. We will be building two iron removal plants. We will be continuing our programme of replacing transmission lines, trunk mains and distribution systems. In the year 2001, we successfully completed the laying of pipelines in North and South Ruimveldt and Agricola. I challenge the PNC/R, (they might look at this Programme on the TV or they will read about it) to go in those areas and see the pressure at the first floor level. People are bathing and bathing... Clean water! *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, we spent \$200 million in those areas yet there is this cheap talk about discrimination. We are coming to Linden - \$95 million for the improvement of the water supply system. We have taken over, the Guyana Water Authority from the 1st October and we have now formulated a plan - \$95 million for replacing all those old pipelines and upgrading the

water treatment plant at Linden. The system is very deteriorated. So, I ask them to be patient because we are coming their way.

We just signed contracts to the tune of \$2.2 billion to put up major water factories at Eccles, Bartica and LBI. We have already completed the laying of most of those pipelines on the Lower East Coast of Demerara - places like Haslington, Golden Grove, Victoria, Bachelor's Adventure, LBI, Mon Repos and so on. So we are moving.

Regionally, we have completed in Region 2 the main transmission lines from Charity to Supenaam. In Region 3, Leguan and Wakenaam, full distribution. In Region 4, we concentrated on the Lower East Coast. In Region 5, we laid new transmission lines for the whole of De Hoop and up to No. 10. In Region 6 we have done the transmission lines from Adventure to Joppa, from Edinburg to Kortberaad and in Black Bush Polder area for better supply of water to the people of this country.

So, Mr Speaker, we have a plan and a programme. The vision for the water sector is to provide *universal access* to safe water in the next five (5) years. We have not forgotten, (the Hon Member Melville spoke a little bit on Lethem). The system is complete. We have had some technical difficulties in terms of the quality of the water coming out of the well, which should be ironed out. The sulphate content is very high, four times the normal content of the water. We are trying with that but we have activated the entire distribution network at Lethem. We have sunk two wells there bringing much relief to the people there.

I didn't hear the Hon Member mentioning anything about the villages of the Rupununi. We successfully hand dug thirty-three (33) wells and installed them in Region 9 alone. In addition we have done a number of six-inch wells and four-inch wells. And, Mr speaker, six (6) Villages now have new windmill systems to propel water. *[Applause]* We have also installed three solar-based systems. In Matthews Ridge there is a solar based system and we have completed

the water distribution network. In Mahdia, we are having a problem because we drilled two (2) wells and they are low producing. But we intend to tap a creek six (6) miles up in the mountain and bring the water down. We have a planned programme to supply Mahdia with water. At Ituni, we successfully completed the rehabilitation of the water system.

In Region 2, Pomeroun River, we were reasonably successful in our drilling of wells there. But in Region 7 and 8, in particular Bartica, we have not been successful because there is the absence of water bearing aquifers in those areas and the hydro-geological formation seems to militate against getting water. But we are not defeated, we intend to embark on a study, a more systematic study of the hydrology of those areas to see whether we can get water bearing aquifers.

So, Mr Speaker, overall the thrust is there. We are not saying there aren't problems. We have some problems in New Amsterdam. We have ordered two new booster pumps to bring relief. It is almost completed. At Rose Hall 60,000 persons will benefit. The system is completed and is being tested. I have learnt that water is being pressurised in all the villages from Fyrish to Whim. Sixty thousand (60,000) people are benefitting from improved water pressure. And, of course, don't forget the Pouderoyen System in Region 3. So, we have been moving very aggressively and we do have enough resources to carry us through to the next two years, at least.

Mr Speaker, you would have observed that on Tuesday I introduced a Bill called Water and Sewerage Bill 2002. That is setting the stage for the modernisation programme of the water sector in this country. We intend to pass legislation and we will be creating a single utility for the water sector which will be known as Guyana Water Incorporated. This means we are taking over all the other systems including the SILWIF system for water supply. We believe it will bring much benefits for the water sector and will ensure the optimal utilisation of scarce resources in the water sector. So one

utility will be created in the next few months. To support that we have obtained Grant Aid funds to finance a management contract. A performance-based management contract will be in place sometime later this year. This is being funded by the British Government through the Department for International Development. Already we are moving ahead, apace, to merge the two utilities, that is the Guyana Sewerage and Water Commission and the Guyana Water Authority. We have a transition management team and a joint board already meeting. But we still have some challenging tasks ahead to complete the merger of those two utilities.

So, all in all, in the water and housing sectors, we have plans and programmes afoot and there is no doubt about that because the Opposition has not been saying any longer that we are not doing anything. What they are saying is that there is discrimination. But, I invite them, I challenge them to look at the records. We have the records. Don't let the PNC/R Representative, Mr Ming, go to Glasgow and say 'look at No.77 Village they put in four roads and you only get three roads.' this is what they are doing. They went to Caneville and said 'you only have two roads' and compare that with some other area. But he will not say at Caneville where you have one thousand (1,000) residents that we have installed 1,000 house connections - total water distribution for the residents of Caneville. So, Mr Speaker, I urge the Opposition to have discussions with us at the Ministry of Housing. We will provide them with data so that they will be satisfied with what we are doing.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the White Paper on land distribution and house lot allocation is completed. There are several new criteria, systems and procedures which will be presented in that Paper. We are hoping to lay that Paper in this Honourable House very shortly so that we can have a debate on it and, once and for all, take away the stigma that we, at the Ministry of Housing and Water, are discriminating in what we are doing.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

The Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock.

Hon. Satyadeow Sawh: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Sir, I rise to join my colleagues on this side of the House to offer, to add my congratulates to the Hon Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnaraine Kowlessar and his team from the Ministry of Finance for producing a Budget of this quality in excellence. It is my opinion that the Budget has been well crafted and has been well thought out. It shows linkages. And let me refer to Pages 4 and 5 of the Budget Speech, Paragraph 2.2:

Real growth in the global economy, in 2001 was 2.4 percent, just about half of what was achieved in 2000.

Then it goes on to say at Paragraph 2.4:

Closer to home, the slowdown in the world economy had a contagion effect on the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional output grew by a mere 0.5 percent...

With the exception of Guyana and Jamaica, all of the Caricom countries experienced negative growth. Guyana's positive growth rate amidst this sea of economic decline is more remarkable when it is considered that it was achieved in the context of one of the lowest inflation rates recorded in the past three decades.

So, Mr Speaker, while our growth rate for 2001 was not spectacular by any means it certainly is acceptable given the circumstances both externally, regionally and definitely internally. Given the situations we faced during the elections and post elections period it is a Budget well thought out and crafted. Again, we congratulate all those involved in putting out his Budget.

Sir, we have listened to the speakers on the different sectors

giving us an inkling of what we can expect in the future based on the infrastructural works we have set already. But I hasten to add, Sir, that none of this could ever have been achieved if the foundations for democracy were not laid in October 1992. *[Applause]* There can be no development without democracy as there can be no democracy without development. They are, as we say, two sides of the same coin. When we talk about all the infrastructural works that have been carried out, participatory democracy, the peoples involvement in all the plans and projects have contributed significantly to the fact that Guyana's landscape, in many instances, has changed beyond recognition. Sir, this is why it is regrettable once again in this House that the People's National Congress chose not to be here to participate in this debate. They were elected by thousands of Guyanese and, it is my opinion that they have abdicated their responsibility to these Guyanese to come and sensibly discuss the issues whereby together we can chart a course of peace and development in the interest of all Guyanese. Let me again hasten to add, Sir, that the people of this country are taking note and they will act accordingly in due course as to how they perceive their interest is served or not served. This is where again the whole question of dialogue comes in, Mr Speaker. There is a great and pressing need for all sectors of the community for the dialogue process to continue for where there is a will there is a way. History has taught us several important lessons that there is no substitute for dialogue. Merely to think of the consequences is to shudder at what can and may happen. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I submit, respectfully, that we are too small a nation to be fragmented, as we say, into narrow domestic walls. Now is the time for us to seize the opportunities and leave for generations to come a country and a future that everyone can feel secure and proud about.

Mr Speaker, may I quickly add also that this Budget is not only well crafted and timely, but somewhat historic. We have heard all about debt reduction, social infrastructure, no new taxes, people-centered development, the concepts of a New Global Human Order.

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All of this takes place in the month dedicated to the life and times of our late, great, President, Dr Cheddi Jagan. *[Applause]* I think it is a sign to us, it is incumbent upon us, that we continue in the tradition of Dr Cheddi Jagan and others of his ilk to ensure that we work to lay the foundations for more development, more human sustainable development, that our country can eventually break free from this vicious cycle of poverty and march towards sustainable development into a more advanced society for all of us to prosper.

Mr Speaker, may I kindly take you back to Page 7 of the Budget presentation? I quote:

The growth in the domestic economy was due partly to the performance of the agriculture sector...

Paragraph 3.3 says:

Most of the other subsectors also recorded positive growth. Livestock increased by 2.7 percent. Poultry meat increased by 6.1 percent to 12.5 million kilograms, and egg production was 25.7 million units. Fresh milk production was 31.4 million litres. Other agriculture grew by 1 percent. Fishing increased by 1 percent. After experiencing a dramatic decline in 2000, forestry rebounded as output increased by 3 percent to 435,551 cubic metres.

This is a deliberate result of the Government's policy of diversifying our national economy. We have seen, more pronounced of late, the effects to countries, both developing and developed, which are dependent upon a few traditional industries and crops to sustain them. The need to diversify our economy was recognised by this Government and our President and we began to put things in place so that we no longer have to be dependent upon a few selected crops but rather we should spread our wings around so that when if one crop fails there are others we can fall back on. And while it is not anything to throw our hands up and shout, I would like to think, Sir, that we are laying the ground work for other crops, livestock

and other sectors of our national economy to play a more meaningful role, to have our farmers earn more from their efforts, to tap new markets both regionally and in the world so that we can have a more balanced approach to development allowing our Minister more scope to give more so that we can raise our standard of living.

Allow me, Sir, to look at some of the sectors within my portfolio. We will not fail to agree that the Fisheries Sector has really produced consistently over a number of years. Within the Fisheries Sector we are aggressively pursuing a course of diversifying our traditional fisheries sector and a lot of emphasis is being placed on aquaculture or inland fisheries. Diversification in aquaculture production in the year 2001 saw a big increase in new species and marine resources. Inland fishery products increased in 2001 from 900 metric tonnes to 1,000 metric tonnes. Included in this are three hundred (300) pounds of fresh water prawns - the first ever produced in this country. The number of aquaculture farmers in the year 2001 was approximately one hundred (100) and the number of acres under production increased from 2,158 acres to approximately 2,300 acres due mainly to the expansion of fresh water prawns production. May I hasten to add, Mr Speaker, that in 1992 when we took Office there were only about two hundred (200) acres under aquaculture production in this country. During the first six (6) months of the recently commissioned Aquaculture Training Facility at Mon Repos two training courses on red tilapia culture were held and twenty budding farmers were trained. Four thousand (4,000) red tilapia fingerlings were produced and a feed trial has begun to evaluate the performance of the locally made tilapia grower feed.

Mr Speaker, an Aquaculture Bill will be a component of the revised Fisheries Act, which will take effect shortly. The Bill will provide for sustainable development and expansion of aquaculture. A five-year plan for aquaculture development has been prepared to chart the development of the industry on a medium and long-term basis. And while we are deliberately embarking on a course of lessening the traditional dependence on our marine resources in

favour of aquaculture, we are also cognisant of the need to sustainably continue to exploit the resources of our marine fisheries. But with sustainability in mind, Mr Speaker, discussions were held for a closed season in the shrimp industries among the various stakeholders and it is expected that this will be implemented in the last quarter of this year to monitor the sustainability of the marine resources of our country. You are quite aware of our efforts to access the very lucrative markets in the European Union and many of our companies already are gearing themselves for the very near future when we will receive the certification. Officials from the Union have already visited us and things are in train. Very shortly we will be able to seek new markets and add more value to these products, earning more money for those involved and the national economy as a whole.

Mr Speaker, what about our *Non-Traditional Crops*? I am pleased to report to you, Sir, that even though 2001 had its challenges, like so many other sectors, the Non-Traditional Other Crop Sector held its own in these turbulent times. In the year 2000, total exports were three thousand three hundred and six (3,306) metric tonnes. In 2001 it increased to three thousand three hundred and thirty-eight (3,338). It could have been more if some of our traditional commodities like, for example, copra, coffee, the prices did not remain depressed on the world market. This is why my Ministry and this Government is paying premium attention to diversifying our economy, adding more value to some of our products. Within the coconut copra industry (if I may just add a little more on this) things like coconut water, coconut oil, coconut milk and all the other things we can do are engaging our attention.

The *Export of Fresh Fruit and Vegetables to the Caricom Region* more than doubled what it was in the year 2000. Also, interesting, Mr Speaker, is the increase in the range of products that were exported. From a range of three (3) products in 2001, today there are approximately fifteen (15) products that are exported and the list continues to grow. *[Applause]* This has a direct bearing on our central packaging facility that we have engineered, which is part

of the protocol for the CARICOM Region, because we cognisant of the need for the application of standards in our product, because once we secure those markets, you would agree, we would not want to loose them. And we continue in that momentum to seek new markets in the United States of America and other countries. We are very cognisant of the need for safe and reliable transportation. We have had some set backs, as I said. Our national flag carrier went down and freight space became small and this affected the entire trade. But, for this year, it is our intention to increase exports to the regional markets and continue our efforts to identify a more permanent solution to facilitate airfreight to these areas.

Mr Speaker, the *National Agricultural Research Institute* has continued to play a vibrant role in promoting, intensifying our diversification efforts in our non-traditional agriculture. This, of course, involves a very important component, research. It is necessary for us to continue to do research so that when we move one or two or three steps forward we can do so with confidence knowing the trends in the world marketplace. As is evident these days, Mr Speaker, there have been increases in the production of non-traditional crops, fruits, vegetables, roots and tuber crops. NARI has introduced also new crop types to Guyana. These include carrots, cauliflower, broccoli and sweet corn to name a few. And, of course, the primary objective is to reduce the imports of these commodities. This is why plant nurseries continue to be laid and to be upgraded across our country so that our farmers can have easy access to quality planting material so that they can engage in their planting.

Mr Speaker, an *Organic Cocoa Nursery* dedicated to producing organic cocoa plants became fully operational in 2002 in Hosororo, Mabaruma, Region 1. An estimated 15,000 cocoa plants will be produced in 2002 to cater for the expansion of cocoa production in Region 1. An additional nursery facility has been established at St Ignatius, Region 9. My colleague, Mrs Melville was with me there last year when we commenced work on this facility. This facility will be formally opened in April 2002. The focus of this site will be

an organic cashew nut in addition to other crops.

Mr Speaker, organic agriculture has taken on new dimensions. It was only last week that I had the honour of representing Guyana at the important Organic Conference organised by the United Kingdom's government. Allow me, Sir, to read briefly what His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, who was the keynote speaker at this Conference, had to say in regard to Organic Agriculture in Guyana. I quote:

Since my visit two years ago, a small cooperative of twenty-six (26) farmers and their families have been set up in conjunction with the National Agriculture Research Institute of Guyana. I am delighted to be able to announce today that the beans have just been granted organic status by the Dutch certifying body, SCALF. [Applause] By the time they have been fermented, shipped and processed, I hope to be using them in Dutchie Original Chocolates later this year in time for Christmas. I am told, by the way, by those who know, that the quality of the Chocolates from these organic cocoa beans in Guyana is superlative. [Applause]

And His Royal Highness goes on to say, if you will permit me to quote again, Mr Speaker:

The Guyana Sugar Corporation which represents Guyana's biggest national industry has over the past two years set up a trial project to grow organic sugar.

My colleague Minister Chandarpal touched briefly on this in his presentation yesterday.

The Prince said:

The first harvest is due this summer and it could have a significant, long term impact if expanded. I should like to

take this opportunity to congratulate the Guyanese President and Government for seizing this organic initiative with flair and with energy [Applause]

Mr Speaker, apart from cocoa, the heart of palm produced in Region 1 is also marketed organically. Organic sugar production has also commenced, as I indicated, in Uitvlugt. NARI has also embarked on organic fruit and vegetable production and a pilot farm is currently being established at Mon Repos for demonstration and training purposes.

Mr Speaker, we have developed a five year plan for organic agriculture in this country. Crops being targeted are mango, passion fruit, papaw, pineapple and carambola. This is a programme which the Government of Guyana is fully committed to now and in the long term.

Mr Speaker, the *Intermediate Savannah Project*. INSAP is now under the auspices of the National Agricultural Research Institute and to date leases totalling 80,000 acres have been approved. These include forty (40) small farmers primarily in the Wiruni Savannah areas.

Georgia Caribbean International. We would recall, Sir, in last year's debate, the Hon Member Jerome Khan claimed that this Company was no longer interested in the Savannahs and in Guyana. We had to correct this by reading a letter from the principal of this Company. The Company has grown. They have been awarded, as you are aware, a fifteen thousand (15,000) acre lease in the Kimbia Savannahs. An initial establishment of Paulownia trees monitored by NARI has been successful and this activity will intensify this year. [Applause] Maybe that is why my dear friend is not here today.

Mr Speaker, NARI is in the process of establishing a plant propagating facility at Ebini to cater for the needs of the riverain communities as well as for other potential investors in the savannahs.

NARI will also be establishing a fifty (50) acre model farm at Ebini in the year 2002.

Mr Speaker, ***Refining and Expanding Farm Certification Programme***, pest-free zones have all been established in coastal and riverain areas. Safeguarding of our national crop production potential from exotic pests and diseases are also part of my Ministry's endeavours. And in facilitating the trade of essential commodities, Sir, all ports of entry and exit were inspected to ensure that the Phyto-sanitary are in order. Seven hundred and eighty-four (784) ships were boarded and one thousand three hundred and fifty-eight (1,358) certificates were issued to allow export of commodities.

Mr Speaker, we have managed to remain free of ***Foot and Mouth Disease*** despite recent outbreaks in some of our neighbouring countries. This has been due mainly to the militancy and vigilance in monitoring of our ports of entry throughout the year and the control of the movements of small ruminants from Rupununi area to the coastland. Also, my Ministry has joined forces with PAHO/WHO and IICA in the execution of surveillance and sensitisation programmes in an effort to combat this dreadful infection. To date I am happy to report, Sir, that there were no major cases.

My colleague, the Hon Minister of Amerindian Affairs earlier on today spoke about the work my Ministry in collaboration with hers and others are doing to control ***acoushi ants***. I would refrain from commenting further save and except to say that I endorse everything she said in this regard. A series of farm tours were conducted, Mr Speaker, in Regions across Guyana aimed at getting farmers to observe better husbandry practices on farms. This is aimed specifically at the development of our crops like cassava and other root crops.

You would recall there was a delegation from neighbouring Brazil that visited our country a few months ago. In areas of the development of ***cassava and the dairy sector***, Mr Speaker, help has

been offered and has been accepted.

In the *poultry sector*, Mr Speaker, a total of 12.5 million kilograms of poultry meat were produced for the year 2001 representing an increase of 6.1 percent. A total of 12.4 million poultry hatching eggs were imported for the year, 12 percent above last year. Approximately 272,000 poultry pullet eggs were imported for the year - an increase of 38 percent above last year. These figures tell the story of the increase in poultry production that is changing the landscape. Contract farmers are being allowed to earn more as we work closer to the day when we will be self-sufficient in poultry production. Indeed, we can even look at exporting poultry meat from this country. [Applause] And it is interesting statistically to note, Sir, that imported poultry meat fell by thirty-seven percent in the year 2001. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, *small ruminants and swine production* has also seen some attention from my Ministry. This programme was initiated to assist farmers in villages along the coast and in interior areas aimed at improving production efficiencies. The same can be said about livestock feed where we continue to support small farmers in our non-traditional sector with a variety of scientifically formulated feeds available to enhance production.

What about our *dairy sector*? Our Mini Milk Pasteurization Plant - the first in this Region - is now up, running and fully operational. I recall during last year's debate, Mr Speaker, the Hon Member of the Opposition queried about what we are doing to help farmers in Region 5 to dispose of their milk. Well, this Government has a consistent plan that we work on. We do not only start grandiose projects and allow them to become white elephants. We deliver the goods. Today, the farmers in Region 5 and surrounding areas are using the milk produced by their cows, taking it for a good price to the plant, pasteurizing it, and three schools in Region 5... on a pilot project. The children of the country, the children of those schools are drinking fresh pasteurized milk because of the Mini Milk

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Pasteurization Plant put in place by the PPP/C Government. [Applause] This plant will be formally handed over to the Mahaica/Mahaicony cattle farmers Association in June, 2002. The farmers, the Cooperative itself, will become the real owners, buying, producing and selling on the market place. The NDDP is also working with the plant to improve on farm practices to produce a good quality of fresh cow's milk.

Our *insemination programme* continues, Mr Speaker. A total of 30,000 inseminations were rendered resulting in an excess of 10,000 offsprings. We are working together with the CDB for the establishment of a modern abattoir which is so essential for our country if we are going to eventually use, (which we hope to do), the fact that we have been certified free of the foot and mouth disease in this country. We are working to add value to our products and it is our hope that before the end of this year, Sir, value added products, for example, yogurt, children's food based on fruits, pasteurized products, cheese made with our milk here in Guyana will grace our supermarket stores. [Applause]

NARI's efforts also in the *duck and sheep programme* have seen benefits, Mr Speaker. NARI's effort in duck, sheep and forage production must be specially mentioned. With the intensification of livestock production since we have been certified free of foot and mouth disease, Sir, NARI has been promoting sheep rearing in a scientific way to boost mutton production. In 2001 sixty-eight (68) breeding rams were distributed to farmers throughout Guyana. Through the improvement of breeding stock, I have no doubt, Mr Speaker, that Guyana can become a net exporter of mutton to the Caribbean Region in a few short years. [Applause]

Continued in Part II

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
FIRST SESSION (2001-2002) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA
UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF
GUYANA

Part II

23RD SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued from Part I

Duck and sheep production generated G\$7.2 million in 2001 from the sale of sixty-eight (68) rams and seventy-seven thousand seven hundred and seventy-two (77,772) ducklings. Duck production, Mr Speaker, will be further boosted with the introduction of a new incubator with the capacity of thirty-five thousand one hundred (35,100) eggs to a hatchery for nine thousand five hundred eggs.

Mr Speaker, the *Forestry Sector* rebounded as output increased by three (3) percent to four hundred and thirty five thousand five hundred and fifty one (445,551) cubic metres. We have put policies in place within the Forestry Sector which we are beginning to see is having a positive impact, redounding positively on the Forestry Sector. The Guyana Forestry Commission has developed its draft national forest plan that pointed out clearly a number of programmes that the GFC is engaged in. The large number of exporters resulted in a broader range of markets in the Caribbean being tapped and a wider spread of foreign exchange earnings in the Sector. This is quite evident in the fact that using products from our forests, adding value, Precision Woodworking Establishment Limited was named the entrepreneur of the year for the fine garden furniture which graces lawns in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. There was also growth in the manufacture and export of non-traditional components of the Sector, including, as I said, furniture and building components.

We have moved ahead with *forest education and social development programmes*. We have gone on a programme of outreach where we visit Amerindian communities, we listen to them and we include them in the process of decision making. Ultimately, Sir, we have a product which is now showing increases and, I think, with forest certification, where we are working with the players and stakeholders in the Sector through the Forest Products Association, forest certification will become a reality, we are hopeful, before the end of this year. As you know, Sir, forest certification assures better access to markets and retention of current markets. It also allows producers to get premium price for products in environmentally conscious markets. We are committed, Mr Speaker, that more forest based products will be exported and we will try to use a wider variety of timber species in the exploitation of these resources. But, equally true, Mr Speaker, is the fact that our Government is committed to ensure that the small stakeholders in the Forestry Sector have adequate land and are supervised to sustainably exploit our resources so that the resources in the Forestry do not remain forever in the domain of a few hands but rather the national patrimony of the country is shared equally and reasonably among all the stakeholders of this country. To this the Guyana Forestry Commission and the Government of Guyana is committed.

Mr Speaker, in concluding I wish to refer you back to the Budget presentation, Page 27 Paragraph 4.19. I quote:

...several priority areas have been identified, including fisheries, other crops, cut flowers and agro-processing. Mechanisms are being put in place to boost the export of fish and fish products to the European Union while a five year plan has been developed for organic agriculture with special emphasis on cocoa, peanut and cashew nut. We will utilise the expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organisation to introduce sustainable cut-flower, honey and integrated fish and crop farming industries. And we intend to take advantage of being certified free of the foot

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and mouth disease to revive the cattle industry. Last year, US\$34.3 million were invested in twelve (12) new projects in the areas of fish processing, poultry farming and processing and wood products. This year, we expect another US\$8.5 million to be invested in aquaculture, cattle farming and fish processing.

Mr Speaker, it is important, if you will forgive me, to spend two minutes more to make this point. A lot of people are in the habit of saying that there are no investments in this country or the investments are not in the magnitude that they ought to be. Here are statistics some of which the Hon Minister Clement Rohee, in his presentation, yesterday, touched on. Please bear with me for a moment as I outline, Mr Speaker *investments in Guyana in 2001.*

Fish Processing - total of US\$21 million, and six hundred (600) new direct jobs were created. Two (2) projects are currently operating and expanding - US\$15 million and three hundred (300) new direct jobs were created!

Three (3) projects are currently operating and expanding - US\$15 million, and one hundred and sixty-six (166) new direct jobs!

Poultry Farming and Processing - total of US\$15 million and one hundred and sixty-six (166) new jobs.

In the *Forestry Sector* - US\$4.3 million, and three hundred and ten (310) new direct jobs.

Aquaculture - US\$1.5 million, and seventy-two (72) new direct jobs. Three (3) projects will start up this year - US\$1.5 million and seventy-two (72) new direct jobs!

Cattle farming - US\$1 million, and twenty (20) new direct jobs.

Mr Speaker, these are cold hard facts. *[Applause]* These are facts that cannot be disputed and those with eyes to see and ears to

hear must take note because we will continue to put emphasis on the productive sector.

Here again, you would recall the *New Guyana Marketing Corporation* with our *Made-in-Guyana Grown-in-Guyana* products taken across this land where we instill in our people, patriotism, the fact that we should buy what is made and grown in Guyana being very much conscious that every time we buy something that has been made and produced in this country, we are helping to sustain and create jobs for the people of this country. We will continue to represent the will, the dreams and aspirations of the people of this country, Mr Speaker, because they deserve nothing less. No amount of boycotting of Parliament, no amount of rhetoric, no amount of deceit, can tarnish what the people of this country have clearly spoken for. The People's Progressive Party has never lost an election in this country. We certainly won the last election. The world knows this and once we continue in this trend, working together in partnership with the people, together in unity, we will climb all the mountains, we will scale all the peaks because our people have said, yes, we believe in you, yes we want progress to continue, so, therefore, go and do your job and bring more prosperity. Long live Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon Members this is an appropriate time to take the suspension for half of an hour.

Suspension of Assembly at 16:53 H

Resumption of Assembly at 17:30 H

The Speaker: The Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wish to extend

to my colleague, the Hon Minister of Finance, warm congratulations on a well crafted and eloquently presented Budget, as I support the motion for the approval of the Estimates of the Public Sector and the Budget for the financial year 2002. The Hon Minister, quite rightly, in my view noted, Mr Speaker, on Page 2 Paragraph 1.5 of the Budget Speech:

Security concerns have leap-frogged the international agenda, overshadowing issues such as poverty alleviation, transfer of resources, globalisation and fair trade. This will have foreboding implications for Guyana, including reduced official development assistance and the postponement of the resumption of more robust growth in our economy. Also, in this new fight to combat terrorism, Guyana will be required to expend scarce resources.

I think, Mr Speaker, it is public knowledge now of the commitment of the Government of Guyana, through His Excellency the President, to the country's fight against terrorism. We have pledged to join forces with the international arena to combat what is becoming a disgraceful scourge. I wish to assure this Hon House and in particular the Minister of Finance that the Ministry of Home Affairs will continue to employ and deploy its scarce resources in support of the Government's efforts, Mr Speaker, as again, stated by the Hon Minister of Finance on Page 3 Paragraph 1.7. I quote:

...transforming Guyana from a low income, agriculture-dependent country to a middle income, semi-industrial one, a country that will boast of a higher per capita income and a better educated population enjoying a better quality of life; where our senior citizens enjoy a comfortable retirement in a safe environment; and where justice, democracy and good governance permeate the entire society.

While there are what may be considered as the run-of-the-mill

crimes such as murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, causing death by dangerous driving and other serious crimes, we just cannot ignore other forms of criminal activities such as production and trafficking in a variety of illegal drugs, illegal manufacturing and smuggling of firearms and ammunition. And, Mr Speaker, for all intents and purposes in the fight against crime and in the maintenance of law and order and preservation of peace, trafficking in narco-related substances and the use of firearms can well be considered siamese twin. So, we have to treat them as a double barrel threat to the security of our society, or country as a whole. Trafficking in women and children for forced labour and sexual exploitation, smuggling of illegal migrants across national borders, money laundering, terrorism, corruption of public officials at all levels and abuse of economic and financial systems all impact negatively on society and threaten national security and social stability. Mr Speaker, it is not difficult to recognise that criminal syndicates exploit modern phenomena such as globalisation, an increasingly border-free world and technological advances to the prejudice and detriment of society. It becomes easy to appreciate that security is the key to stability and together they constitute the cornerstone on which economic growth is constructed. Economic growth will be appreciated, if it provides greater opportunities for employment and enhances the standard of living among other advantages. Security, therefore, must necessarily be continuous. Hence, the need for the establishment of meaningful partnerships within the Disciplined Forces, in particular the Guyana Police Force and the community at large and, of course, the Government. Against this background, Mr Speaker, a careful, unbiased and informed assessment and analysis of this Budget, in the face of global recession and the horrific events and consequential dispensation of September 11 reveals that it is designed to consolidate the national gains achieved up to 2001 and to provide for further economic advancement during this year 2002 and beyond. In the circumstances it is not unreasonable to expect that reasonable, loyal and law abiding Guyanese would support the Government in its pursuit of a policy which seeks, among other things, to address social

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and economic issues that impact on the security, economic vigour and social cohesion of the nation. Mr Speaker, while there are certain expectations by the Government, we appreciate that there are certain legitimate expectations of our people, not least among which are peace, security of person and property, national stability and generally an atmosphere that is conducive to relaxation and economic productivity. The Ministry of Home Affairs has mobilised its energies, resources, and that of its constituent Departments for the maintenance of law and public order, the preservation of peace and ethnic harmony, the security of person and property and the protection of the integrity of the state.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Home Affairs has under its purview the Guyana Fire Service, the Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service, the Registry, that is the General Registry, the Police Complaints Authority apart from the Secretariat and other Departments. Each one of those Divisions has had what might be considered a relatively good year in 2001. They have operated sometimes under serious constraints. Starting with the Guyana Fire Service I wish to crave your indulgence, Mr Speaker, as I publicly thank the Chief Fire Officer, the Officers and other ranks of the Guyana Police Force for their selfless service during the year 2001. *[Applause]* As a result many lives were saved and substantial property prevented from being destroyed. Despite the gallant efforts, despite the risks at which and to which they exposed themselves, unfortunately, we did suffer some loss in terms of our human resources as well as in terms of our material resources.

Mr Speaker, for 2001 the *Fire Service* received one thousand two hundred and seventy-one (1,271) fire calls of which one hundred and six (106) were false alarms. We had three hundred and three (303) electrical fires and four hundred and nine (409) persons rendered homeless. Unfortunately, also, we suffered the loss of ten (10) lives. But apart from fighting fires there are many other services that the Guyana Fire Service provides, sometimes unseen, sometimes unheard of. Among those services are the carrying out of fire

prevention inspections, particularly of buildings. In 2001 they inspected one thousand two hundred and forty-three (1,243) buildings. They examined and approved sixty-nine (69) building plans, issued ninety-five (95) safety certificates and granted three hundred and fifty-three (353) petroleum licences. They have also been conscious of the need in our society for education to prevent fires and by extension prevent the loss of property, the loss of limbs and lives. They have trained three hundred and ten (310) entities as a result of which one thousand two hundred and forty-three (1,243) persons benefitted. The Guyana fire Service, as I said, has operated sometimes under serious constraints. As a Government also we have been building capacity within the Guyana Fire Service so that we can be able to deliver a better quality of service in various populated areas of Guyana. We also sought to improve the working conditions, the environment and living accommodations of our fire officers, Mr Speaker. Toward this objective we have done work to the tune of \$4.263 million on the Campbellville Fire Station. We have also rehabilitated the Fire Station at Corriverton to the tune of \$5.723 million. At Alberttown in Georgetown we have an ongoing rehabilitation project of the Fire Station there. It is 80 percent completed and to date we would have expended in excess of \$3 million. At the Fire Service Headquarters we have also started work in excess of \$6.5 million. The works at the Alberttown Fire Station and the Fire Service Headquarters are ongoing, Mr Speaker. In addition, we have planned for 2002 the acquisition of fire fighting equipment and appliances that would boost the efficacy of the Guyana Fire Service in the almost immediate future.

Mr Speaker, last year I did report to this Honourable House that we had placed an order for some fire fighting equipment and I said that we would be able to get not less than two fire fighting appliances. I am happy to report that we have been able to secure three brand new fire fighting appliances [*Applause*] to the value of in excess of \$131 million. But, you will appreciate, Mr Speaker, that these are not shelf items. While the orders have been placed, I am advised that not later than the third quarter those appliances will be

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in Guyana to join our fighting fleet. We have also, Mr Speaker, a sum of money, about \$3.5 million, for the acquisition of communication equipment including hand held radios. We have mechanical tools and equipment to the sum of \$5 million and for office equipment \$1.2 million. This hopefully, Mr Speaker, will go towards enhancing the conditions of work of the Fire Service and make their performance better and more satisfactory to what, in 2001, had been, generally, a very appreciative public.

With respect to Anna Regina, Mr Speaker, on the last occasion I did report that we were seeking to establish fire fighting capabilities there. I am happy to report to this Honourable House that work on that project is ongoing. We have already constructed the bridge which is over \$6 million and we have \$27 million for the construction of the building. I am advised that the tender had been out and the selection has been made. So, I expect, Mr Speaker, that before long construction work should start on the building.

During this year, with respect to the Fire Service, we expect to take further steps in the establishment of a training school at Leonora, reduce our attrition rate of fire men and women and to intensify training so as to develop our human resources especially in the area of forensic investigation. We have also, Mr Speaker, public education programmes targetting schools, community development groups, NGOs, policing groups and social clubs among others.

With respect to the Guyana Prison Service, Mr Speaker, in 2001 they did commendably. We had the minimum escapes and these escapes took place outside of the prison. Out of those who escaped we have recaptured 85 percent of the escapees. But, I appreciate that the security of the prison has been enhanced as a result of recommendations coming out of a 1999 Board of Enquiry that had been set up by the Hon Minister of Home Affairs as a result of an escape that took place in August of that year. Several recommendations were made. I say, Mr Speaker, without fear of contradiction, that over 90 percent of those recommendations were

implemented. We have been able to secure the perimeter fence. We have been able to establish surveillance cameras. We have been able to establish at least one observation post that is manned for twenty-four (24) hours. Even though it might appear that the observation post is vacant, you will appreciate that it is in the interest of the officer who is in that post to make himself physically scarce lest he be the target of some sharpshooter. But he/she has radio communication with the central station that is located within the prison and there are regular radio checks made to ensure that there is alertness and to verify that what is shown on the camera screen accords with what is observed on the perimeter fence. Pursuant to the recommendations made there we had the spike serviced, the razor wires around the prison perimeter top fence changed, cachement net established, sewage and water system rehabilitated and improved, water system within the prison established (functioning) among others. We had the surveillance centre, we had lights installed. There was one recommendation which, with your leave, Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with very quickly because I see it has graced the front page of some of the print media. It has to do with the recommendation to have snipers placed in those observation posts. We all know the community in which we live. The prison is located within a developed area - pedestrians in and out, vehicular passengers and vehicles all around-- if per chance you were to put a sniper up there what are you going to arm him with if not a rifle? Those of us who have some idea about firearm will know what is the firepower of a rifle and what damage it can do. The ricocheting of bullets can cause untold damage and if in the process one civilian was to be injured by a bullet fired from one of those snipers you know the criticism to which we would be exposed. But, the objective of the recommendations which were given by the Board of Enquiry then was to secure the perimeter fence which was done. And what was done also, although it was for a limited geographical space, in the prison, a ten-foot squared area was taken in by expanding metal and declared a no-go area. I find it rather strange if not surprising that the press would choose to carry and make, what I

consider, a mountain out of a molehill for the sensationalism that is involved. Let us stop for a moment and consider, what would have been the position of the press had snipers been placed there armed with high powered rifles. Who were they put there to shoot? What would the Human Rights have said about it? What would the international organisations, that are now quiet, have said about it? And under what stress and strain would we have been put, let alone the prison officers? Be that as it is, Mr Speaker, we had, earlier this year, an unfortunate incident on 23rd February, 2002, where there was an escape from the Georgetown Prison involving (5) criminals who have been described by no less a person than the Hon Member Corbin as 'dangerous criminals,' and by the Leader of the Opposition as 'vicious criminals' and so on. The Police, all the security forces have come together, have been collaborating - a concerted effort - to recapture those prisoners. Notices have been put in the papers encouraging them to surrender to the police. More recently there has been a monetary reward offered for information leading to the re-arrest and recapture of those criminals, any or all of them. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, in the course of that escape a young prison officer was stabbed to death while another was seriously injured. I invite Members of this Honourable House to join with me in extending to the family of the fallen Officer our condolences and to the Officer under intensive care our prayers for a speedy recovery. *[Applause]* I do not wish to go into the details of the escape on 23rd February because it is public knowledge now that a Board of Enquiry has been set up, chaired by former Chancellor Kennard. They are conducting investigations and I expect to get from them very soon a report of their findings and recommendations. While that is going on we continue, relentlessly, to try and recapture the escaped prisoners.

Mr Speaker, there are two (2) principal purposes of the Prison. One is the custodial aspect and the other is the rehabilitative or reformation aspect. The custodial aspect I have touched on and I said the prison officers have performed commendably during 2001. With respect to the reformation aspect or the rehabilitation efforts

we have had several programmes, and the interventions in this regard have been multifaceted. In particular we have had motivational mentoring for men. These are personal development programmes, basic literacy; tutoring for CXC Examinations; craft and vocational courses for women; seminar on your right/my right conducted by the Guyana Human Rights Commission; literacy and art workshop; anger and stress management. And with respect to the acquisition of skills, as we do try to have them to be able to refit themselves into society with minimum friction, we have had training in carpentry and joinery, masonry, tailoring, electrical and mechanical engineering, plant and animal husbandry (and I would ask my colleague, Minister of Crops and Livestock, to employ some of them later on), steel pan playing, drama and poetry, and amateur boxing. With regards our cultural activities, Mr Speaker, the prisoners have always, for the past three years, acquitted themselves with distinction. They have, coming out of their works within the Prison, held an exhibition in October 2001, where a wide range of works of art, craft, tools and furniture produced by the inmates, was on display. In addition to that we have what is known as the Prison Reform Incentive Scheme whereby prisoners are engaged gainfully in some contractual obligations with private citizens. The earnings derived from that part goes to their own personal benefit when they would have been discharged from the prison or even during the time they are in prison their relatives are able to benefit from that, and part of it goes toward the administration of the Prison.

Mr Speaker, during 2001 the internal processes of the prison and the engagement of the prison inmates led to a production of 231,500 kilograms of vegetables and meat at a market value of \$15,520,209. *[Applause]* This is in addition to the figures that my colleague, the Hon Minister of Crops and Livestock referred to.

In addition to the matter of security, we have also had the prison communication system improved, the transportation system improved, and we have been able to acquire a launch. As a matter of fact, build a launch, at a cost of approximately \$20 million for the

use of the Mazaruni Prison to transport Prison Officer's families and children to school and more importantly to transport prisoners under safer conditions than existed before. We have also been able to acquire a 26-seater bus that services the Georgetown Prisons, Timehri Prisons and the Lusignan Prisons as well. We have been able to get people trained in medical skills too, Mr Speaker, in as much as we have been able to acquire the services of a doctor to attend to the inmates at the Georgetown Prison. Only in the more severe cases are inmates referred to the Georgetown Hospital.

With respect to staff development, Mr Speaker, we have had officers attend successfully the standard military course that is conducted by the military. Courses in psychology, home economics, social work, agricultural science and, like I said earlier, medical science.

Mr Speaker, the Parole Board has been re-constituted and is being chaired by an eminent Senior Counsel, Mr Moen Mc Doom and comprises statutory members as well as the chairpersons of the various visiting committees from the different prison locations. It is functioning and there are a number of applications for parole that are receiving active consideration by the Parole Board.

Mr Speaker, we have also buildings, constructions, rehabilitations and all of that in New Amsterdam, Lusignan and Timehri. For this year we have a sum to the tune of \$45 million for prison capital projects for the year 2002. Of this sum \$35 million will be spent on the construction, renovation and repairs of buildings. We have ongoing work at the Mazaruni Prisons, which suffered very badly since the 1997 fire. Five million dollars (\$5.0M) is for the improvement of land and water transport. Four million dollars (\$4.0M) is for the provision of security and other technical equipment and one million dollars (\$1.0M) is for the acquisition of agriculture equipment. In addition to the capitilisation, Mr Speaker, steps are afoot, as I said earlier, to examine the possibility of having the Georgetown Prisons relocated to an area that allows for more

meaningful activities by the prisoners. We also have in train the establishment of a halfway house that would prepare prisoners for reintroduction into society under controlled conditions. We have the improvement in efficiency of information management and security surveillance, we have the review of the prison laws, regulations and standing orders et cetera, compilation of a security and standards manual in human resource development. We have received significant encouragement from the Government with respect to the rehabilitation of the prison.

With respect to the Guyana Police Force, Mr Speaker, perhaps there is much justification to the notion that the policeman's lot is not a happy one. They have been subject to severe criticism by what might appear at times to be a hostile and unbridled press which seeks only to sensationalise certain issues, perhaps for economic gains. Be that as it is, Mr Speaker, if we were to look during the course of last year, we had several events and you would have noted, and indeed, I, on behalf of the Commission received much commendation for the number of policemen on the road particularly during the Christmas Season and during other events that we had. You would recall, Mr Speaker, the events leading up to, during and even after the Elections in 2001, what has been the reaction of some people. And the police, even though we have had some undesireables within, by and large they stood their ground, they delivered the goods, and they reassured the public that the Guyana Police Force is there in time to discharge their motto *Service and Protection*. I wish, Mr Speaker, to publicly commend the Commissioner, his Officers and other ranks for the job they have done and to express publicly our appreciation for their sacrifices made and the constraints and arduous conditions under which they sought to discharge their mandate. *[Applause]*

Land and Water Transport - In 2001, Mr Speaker, we spent \$25 million in land and water transport. I am happy to report that for this year we have an additional \$200 million that would go toward the acquisition of land and water transport so as to improve the capability of the police in quick-response, surveillance and all of the

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necessary areas that need boosting in the performance of the Guyana Police Force. We intend to acquire motor vehicles, motor cycles, boats, engines and vehicles for surveillance purposes. In addition to that we had, during the year 2001, the sum of \$31,865,000 to be used for the rehabilitation of the police stations. With that sum I am happy to report that we have been able to build new stations, we have been able to rehabilitate and reconstruct some stations at Orealla, Aishalton, Lethem, Police Headquarters, Brickdam and Chateau Margot. Mr Speaker, I am happy to report, as well, that during the year 2001, we were able to complete the Police Training College now named the Richard Feidtkou Police Training College at Anna Regina, Essequibo. Further, the first batch of graduates from the Richard Feidtkou Police Training College will pass-out on 12th April, 2002. *[Applause]*

During this year also, Mr Speaker, we have forty five building projects that would involve construction, major rehabilitation as well as minor repairs along the coast and in interior locations. We have a sum of \$92 million that has been allocated for this purpose. Mr Speaker, it will be appreciated that we expect the Guyana Police force to deliver high quality Service, and as such, we try to provide as best as we can, having regard to our resources, and all the other demands that are made on our consolidated fund, such as would go toward improving the policeman's lot. The Government is strongly committed and has resolved to reduce crime and the carnage on our road. In pursuit of those objectives we have been able to have a sum of \$31 million which will help us to secure equipment such as high frequency transceivers, directional finder for locating unauthorised transmissions, close circuit TV's, radar guns, crash helmets, traffic light signals, base station radios for motor vehicles, breath analysers, arm and ammunition and other police inventory. Traffic lights to be acquired here would be in addition to what my colleague, the Hon Minister of Public Works, spoke about.

For the year 2001, Mr Speaker, we were able to recruit three hundred and ninety-nine (399) new entrants into the Guyana Police

force. Of that amount we were able to train two hundred and fifty-six (256) here in Georgetown at the Felix Austin Police Training College, twenty-nine (29) at the Richard Fiedtkou Police Training College and fifty-four (54) at the Police Training School at Adventure on the Corentyne.

Mr Speaker, while there have been some achievements there are also some areas of concern, in particular traffic. We had for 2000 one hundred and sixty-five (165) deaths and were able to reduce that number in 2001, even though not significantly, by controlling it at one hundred and sixty-one (161) deaths. For the year 2000, we had ten thousand two hundred and fifteen (10,215) reports of indictable offences whereas in the year 2001, we had nine thousand one hundred and forty (9,140) reports, a significant reduction of about one thousand (1,000).

With respect to the training of our police officers, Mr Speaker, we placed much emphasis on it, equipping them to perform and to deliver where ever they are placed. In this regard, I am happy to report that we have had forty-four (44) officers of the Guyana Police Force trained overseas in countries including Barbados, Antigua, Jamaica, St Kitts, Martinique, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, United States of America, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom. Perhaps it is apposite for me to point out here that during the year 2001, we had four (4) senior officers from the Guyana Police Force undergo a six-week senior management course in the United Kingdom, with a view to having at least one from among that four to assume the Office of the Commissioner. Those matters along with the reports we have had before on the assessment of the Guyana Police Force and the reformation aspect of the Police Force are under consideration. These are not things that can be had overnight. They are being considered by senior officers. It has been discussed at various levels and I expect that very soon - and when I say very soon, Mr Speaker, I would say the first half before this year's ending - an announcement is likely as to who is to succeed as the Commissioner of Police.

Mr Speaker, in addition to that, we have been addressing certain pieces of legislation particularly with respect to traffic. It is known that the amendment to the Traffic Law with respect to the seat belts has already been tabled in this Honourable House.

We continued our enforcement. We continued to fight for crime reduction. We continued to increase our police numbers so that we can have greater police presence around. Mr Speaker, we appreciate the importance of partnership. We appreciate that the police by themselves would be able to deliver very little, hence the need for the involvement of the public out there. As such we have recognised the importance of partnerships and we have determined that that is the way forward. So, we will intensify our work along that line.

As I said, Mr Speaker, our operations will be intelligence-led so we are having much training in those areas. We are acquiring much protective gear for the police. We are intensifying our forensic training as well as our traffic education.

Registrar General's Office - Mr Speaker, with your leave I move on very quickly to the Registrar General's Office. I wish from the onset to say that for the year 2001 the Registrar's Office had issued forty-four thousand six hundred and twenty-three (44,624) certificates of birth, sixty thousand seven hundred (60,700) certificates of death and seventy-two thousand (72,000) certificates of marriage. This is in addition to the other works that the Registrar General's Office is required to perform. There has been a tremendous back-log of work there but we have been able, I am happy to report, to clear much of that and for this year with the allocations we have, we hope to make significant inroads into the backlog.

In addition to that, I wish to report to this Honourable House that pursuant to the decentralisation process that I had spoken about some time earlier, birth certificate and passport matters are now being dealt with at Anna Regina, at the Public Utility Centre that has been established there. We have a building in Region 6 that is being

renovated at the moment for the purpose of accommodating immigration matters and the Registrar and birth matters. We are hoping to identify some place in Region 10 during the course of this year, so that we can do some work there so we can have birth, death and marriage certificates along with immigration matters dealt with. With the passage of time, Mr Speaker, we are hoping to go wider afield.

Mr Speaker, with respect to the Police Complaints Authority, I think it is public knowledge that a Chairman has been appointed. The Office is being beefed-up in order to meet the requirements that the Police complaints Authority is statutorily required to perform. That matter is being actively considered. The Chairman has started working on some issues already that are before the Police Complaints Authority. With the effluxion of time we intend to strengthen the capabilities of the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, as Guyanese, we today enjoy democratic freedoms of talk and expression. There are those who are free to differ on social and economic policy and the programmes which flow from those policies. But on matters which concern security of our lives, our property and our nation, we must be of single mind and of single purpose. We must join forces to make Guyana a virtual crime free society, a society where citizens can travel on our roads and arrive at their destinations without being killed, maimed or traumatised, a society where every citizen is his brother's keeper and his home, his castle, inviolable to criminals.

The menu of measures which will be implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs this year is all designed to lift the level of comfort of our citizens as it relates to security of the person, property and the state.

I wish, as Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Speaker, to give an assurance to our Guyanese public out there and to each and every one of us and visiting friends, that the Government of Guyana stands

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committed to the reduction of crime, if not the annihilation of crime. I said before, Mr Speaker, but I think, perhaps, it is important enough for it to be repeated that the Government does not in any way condone any excesses, any brutality or any (to use what has been a recently coined phrase) extra judicial killings. We comply with the law and wherever there is any such incident that requires a certain legal course to be followed, we would ensure that that course is followed whether it be an inquest or preliminary inquiry or whatever the law requires. In that regard, Mr Speaker, I wish to end my address this afternoon.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Hon Member.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Hon Harripersaud Nokta: Mr Speaker, I too, wish to congratulate the Hon Minister of Finance for having presented to this House a Budget expertly crafted and well-balanced.

Looking at the allocation to the various sectors and taking into consideration the financial resources available, we must all agree that every sector of our country will share a slice of the national cake. For this, we of the PPP/C are proud.

Mr Speaker, in every part of Guyana, one can see development taking place whether through the Public Sector or the Private Sector. This process of change from a country of shortages, collapsing infrastructure, poor health and education, low moral and social decline is influenced by the struggle of the Guyanese people in restoring democracy, and the PPP/C Government's programme in promoting economic growth, accelerating social gains through sound political, economic and social policies.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, gives us and all Guyanese cause to celebrate. It comes at the time when in this month of March when we are celebrating the 1st Anniversary of the victory of the PPP/

Civic Government after the election last year. It is a movement we must all remember, and I think, so will Mr Haslyn Parris who spoke the truth. More than that, Mr Speaker, this is our 10th anniversary Budget. It reflects constant growth and development of our nation's economy - from \$33 billion in 1993 to \$68.9 billion in 2002. At Budget time, we on the Government's side have a responsibility to the Guyanese people and this Parliament to count our achievements, explain our constraints and at the same time, focus our minds on the course of development for the current year.

Mr Speaker, last year, the late approval of the budget resulted in our Regions having to complete a twelve-month programme in less than six (6) months, but despite all of the constraints an average of ninety-six percent for the ten (10) Regions were completed. *[Applause]* This is a significant achievement for the ten (10) Regions and the Ministry as a whole. It reflects team work at all levels and signifies that under pressure of time and other constraints, our Regional Administration can perform to the fullest. *[Applause]* That is why our budgetary allocation for the year 2002 on Capital and Current Expenditure showed increase in funding in all the ten Regions. Thanks to the Minister of Finance.

I now wish to take Members of this Honourable House on an excursion around the ten Regions to have brief glimpses and highlight some of the major projects and achievements realised in the respective Regions for last year (2001).

Region 1 (Barima/Waini)

Mr Speaker, if you will ride along with me, of course, in a boat, we can drive from Manawarin passing through Waramuri, Santa Rosa, Parakese and Kamwatta in the Moruca River. In each of these villages, new schools and health centres have been constructed - Santa Rosa Primary, Santa Rosa Secondary, Parakese Nursery. Kwebanna, Santa

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Cruz and Warapocka all boast new schools, *[Applause]* affording those children of Amerindian communities more comfort and better facilities that are conducive to learning and development. Even in the most remote areas on the Waini sea coast a new school is built at Father's Beach where for the first time, the children of that community are having the opportunity of attending school in a more comfortable atmosphere. *[Applause]* In addition, on the same sea coast, a new school building, teachers' house and health centre is established at Almond Beach. Let me assure you that in areas as far as Chinese Landing and Kokerite in the Barama River school buildings and other facilities have improved.

Travelling from Mabaruma one can see the state of the art school buildings at Mabaruma Township, Hosororo and Wauna. *[Applause]* Buildings like that were never seen before, Mr Speaker. Extension of the secondary school building at Santa Rosa is on-going and dorms at Mabaruma are currently being done, thus providing more space for the children at both secondary schools. In this year's Budget \$21 million is allocated to build new teachers' quarters, improve sanitary facilities and further expansion of space at primary schools.

Our health services were not neglected as some \$8.1 million were allocated for improvement of health services last year. This year \$4 million more have been allocated to establish laboratory and X-Ray facilities at Port Kaituma and Matthews Ridge.

The roads in Region 1 are now rehabilitated and maintained to a point where at Moruca there is asphalted road from the market going towards the public hospital. In Mabaruma sub-district, asphalted road from the airstrip to the township has been completed while construction works is going on from Kumaka to Hosororo. *[Applause]* This year \$18.5 million is set aside for improvement of road network in the three sub-regions. The regional administration is now surveying the possibility of having an access road linking Matthews Ridge to Baramita which, when achieved, will provide a suitable road link to the one thousand five hundred (1,500) residents

of that remote community. Mr Speaker, the construction of the San Jose bridge across the Moruca River to permanently link Kumaka to Kabakalli and other areas when completed will facilitate for the first time in history 4-wheel drive vehicles crossing the Moruca River.

Water and electricity services are being extended. Matthews Ridge now boasts a pure water supply system using solar energy to pump water daily to the residential areas. This very important necessity of life was absent for nearly two decades. The residents of Matthews Ridge are now happy for this service.

Concerning electricity, a new 250 KVA generator set was recently bought by the central government to provide electricity to Port Kaituma. In addition, Barama Company has donated a 350 KVA generating set also for that community. When installation and the distribution systems are completed, residents of Port Kaituma and neighbouring areas, having suffered without electricity for over a year, will now enjoy a more reliable and efficient electricity service. With the growing population at Mabaruma Township and settlements in Barabina, Kumaka, Kwaberino and Hosororo presently the supply of electricity is inadequate. There is Budgetary allocation of \$5.5 million for the purchase of a 500 KVA generator to supply power to the areas mentioned. This will mean improved electricity service in the Mabaruma area, while at the same time Phase II of the expansion programme of electricity service will be undertaken.

What about agricultural development in Region 1? Twenty-two million dollars (\$22,000,000) are allocated. Among the many drains, canals, revetment works, that will be carried out, extension of agriculture service will see the establishment of a plant nursery at Matarkai and upgrading of the present nursery at Hosororo. Our Ministry of Agriculture is fully involved with this.

Mr Speaker that is, in brief, an outline of the PPP/C Government's achievement in Region 1. There is much more we can talk about but we will proceed. The process of development will

continue.

Region 7 (Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr Speaker, prior to 1992, Bartica was like a slum. After ten (10) years of the PPP/C in Government, Bartica is transformed into a tourist area, and attracts thousands every year. The streets are paved, social services improved and now, Bartica looks like a town again. As one disembarks from the steamer or speed boat, taxis are readily available to drive around. Never before was it so easy to travel around Bartica.

With the growing number of passes at Common Entrance Examination, the secondary schools at Bartica and Waramadong became over-crowded. This year \$16 million is allocated to construct more class-rooms and dorms at both locations. Kaikan's new Head-teacher's quarter will be completed while Kartabo Primary School is to be extended.

Phillipai now boasts a state-of-the-art primary school built at a cost of over \$40 million last year. Jawalla in Upper Mazaruni, with a growing school population of over three hundred and thirty- four (334) children is being considered for a new school building. Arrangements are being worked out between the residents, SIMAP Agency and the Regional Administration. That structure may cost over \$34 million.

What about Health Services? Region 7 residents, in all areas, even Middle and Upper Mazaruni are serviced with trained medexes, microscopists and health workers at all the villages. A trained dental technician is now stationed at Kamarang for the first time. This year health services in Upper Mazaruni will be greatly expanded and improved. A new hospital at Kamarang is being constructed and should be completed by this year end. Mr Speaker, these are developments... I have already discussed with the Minister of Health,

Hon Dr Ramsammy, the possibility of a doctor servicing the area on a more frequent arrangement or, if possible, to be stationed at Kamarang, when all facilities are put in place.

Mr Speaker, the residents of Bartica and surrounding areas will no longer have to transport corpses to Georgetown. Bartica Hospital Mortuary will be equipped with a new freezer. Five million dollars (\$5,000,000) are allocated this year for that purpose.

Road and river defence construction will continue at Byderabo, Agatash and Kamarang to Waramadong making access to these areas easier and secured from erosion by the river. Even the Regional Administration building and Guest House are budgeted for rehabilitation this year. Likewise, the Education Department will be provided with a new 4 X 4 double cab vehicle to solve its road transportation problem.

Water - With the signing of the contract by GUYWA the ailing pure water supply system will be totally rehabilitated and extended. Neighbouring areas such as Byderabo, Agatash and Two-Mile, Potaro Road will also benefit.

Mr Speaker, to date much has been done to improve social services in Region 7. The PPP/C Government will continue to do more each year.

Region 8 (Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr Speaker, a brief look at Region 8 - it is the smallest Region in terms of population and most difficult and expensive to administer. From one end to the other this Region is saturated with mountains and valleys, rivers and forest. Transportation from village to village is possible by plane at heavy cost or by walking for days up and down the mountains. Despite constraints and difficulties, Region 8 has seen great strides in social development over the past years. The

main airstrips, nine (9) of them, maintained by the Civil Aviation Department are in good condition throughout the year thus making possible passenger and chartered flights to the various locations.

In each village, there are primary and nursery schools. The new Paramakatoi Secondary School, built recently, is already overcrowded. Another secondary school is now being constructed at Mahdia and will be completed this year. It will help to ease the overcrowding at Paramakatoi. Eighteen million dollars (\$18,000,000) are provided for its completion and to also construct two new dormitories at Paramakatoi. More children will have secondary education in the Region - made possible by the PPP/C Government.
[Applause]

We will continue to improve health services in the Region. Apart from the existing health centres in each village with a trained health worker, more medexes are trained and posted at different locations. To deal with malaria cases, microscopists, equipped with microscopes are stationed in the area. Two dental technicians have now joined the medical team in the North Pakaraimas. Fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000) is allocated this year to construct a cottage hospital at Kato and a nurses' hostel at Mahdia to replace the one that was destroyed by fire. The Ministry of Health ensures that adequate supply of medicine is supplied on a regular basis to all the villages.

Mr Speaker, adverse weather conditions and destruction of crops by pests and wild animals sometimes cause shortage of staples, hence, the need for Government to send in needed supplies of foodstuff on a few occasions. Conscious of the need to encourage the villages to expand and, at the same time, sustain agricultural production and protection of crops, the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, will continue its agricultural expansion services in Region 8. Ten million (10M) dollars are provided for the establishment of plant nurseries at Mahdia and Kato and, at the same time, boost expansion services.

Mr Speaker, recognising the favourable weather conditions and fertile lands for farming, it is the intention of this Government to encourage diversification of crops to satisfy domestic needs and to find markets outside the Region. Already rice cultivation is catching on, the one rice mill at Kato is inadequate, there is need for two more, one at Cheung mouth and another at Orinduik.

Mr Speaker, to transport goods and services, there is need for access roads to link the villages. For over three years, villagers were engaged in upgrading a foot path into a vehicular road. With no technical support and equipment but with just ordinary tools, the access road is now made possible through hard work and labour by villagers. For the very first time, myself and Regional Officials travelled on a tractor-drawn trailer from Maikwak to Paramakatoi, passing through eight villages. With constant maintenance, this road will serve the residents of the North Pakaraimas for all times. The days for walking and fetching load on one's back seem to be over. That access road will continue with funds available this year to link Region 8 and Region 9.

This is indeed, Mr Speaker, a breakthrough on road communication and transportation in the North Pakaraimas and, indeed, a remarkable achievement for the people. The PPP/Civic Government made it possible and Region 8 will continue to prosper.

Region 9 (Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo)

Mr Speaker, Rodeo at Lethem is coming up soon. Those who wish to go with me across the expanse of Region 9 are welcomed. You can ride a horse, bicycle, bullock cart or drive a landrover, wherever you wish.

From Yurong Paru in the South Pakaraimas to Gunn's Strip in the deep south, from Apoteri in the Rupununi River to Sawariwau or Katur on the Brazilian Border, villages large and small scattered

over mountains and across wide open savannahs, 22,647 square miles of territory with fifty-two (52) villages having four (4) tribes and speaking five different languages - how vast and diverse like a country by itself. Only those who know Region 9 in the bad old days of rice flour and guy punishment can compare it to what it is today.

In fact, Mr Speaker, the amount of money spent on Capital works in the past ten years by this Government is more than what was spent in the twenty-eight (28) years prior to 1992. Mud walls, mud floor and thatched-roof Government buildings are now replaced with new structures built with concrete floors, concrete walls and zinc roofing, looking more beautiful with adequate space and to last longer. Schools, health centres and teachers' quarters in all the villages are built in the same way.

The level of education has definitely improved so much that the three secondary schools have to be enlarged and new ones established. The Regional Education Committee of Region 9 is proposing to establish another such school at Sand Creek to serve the growing number of students passing the Common Entrance Examination each year in the South Central villages. Other areas targeted also are Yupukari and Karasabai. The ongoing Teacher Training Programme will provide more trained teachers to serve the various communities. Thirty (30) million dollars will be spent this year to improve education in Region 9. (I hope my colleague over there is listening.) From budgetary allocations this year, health services will improve. A new ambulance will be purchased for the Lethem Hospital. Health centres at Gunn's Strip and Cuyuwini will be completed while new ones will be built in areas such as Cracana, Simona and Churkitanau. Power supply will be improved at Sand Creek. More solar systems will be provided for isolated areas and electricity will be extended to Tabatinga.

Agriculture - Our programme to expand production in crops and livestock will continue. Last year, the Ministry of Agriculture started to establish plant nurseries at Annai and Karasabai. Extension

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services must improve, crop diversification is going to expand, while the cattle industry will be protected by collaborated efforts between the police and cattle ranchers. Now that Guyana is free from foot-and-mouth disease among cattle, a resident vet is stationed at St Ignatius and \$8 million is provided to construct livestock officers' quarters at Gomes, Nig-a-Fook and Saurab crossing. That means closer monitoring of movements of cattle. Drive-in dip facilities will be constructed this year at Annai, Saurab and Kurupukari to prevent the spread of disease and protect the animals from contamination.

Road maintenance and construction of bridges at various points will continue. Thirty-three million five hundred thousand dollars (\$35.5M) more will be spent this year. Extension of the access road to reach Yurong Paru in the South Pakaraimas is targeted. Overall improvement in social services in Region 9 is Government's priority and that is on-going year after year.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of this and the development that is taking place we did not hear any complement from our friend on the other side. Of course, they know. I listened yesterday and I heard thanks to the Brazilian Government, thanks to RAMS, thanks to IICA, and thanks to Rotary. Apparently they forgot to thank the Government of Guyana for all that is happening in Region 9. *[Applause]* I hope that the Hon Member will remember next year when she comes to speak.

Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice)

Mr Speaker, we can now look at Region 10. In three years, 2000, 2001 and 2002, a total of \$286.7 million in capital works would have been spent. Last year \$16.5 million was allocated to construct a students' dormitory at Linden and this year \$38 million is allocated for building and \$4 million more for furniture. This means improved facilities for education delivery. Health centres and nurses'

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quarters got \$12 million and again, this year, \$17 million more is allocated. By year end, health centres will be erected at Calcuni, Riverview, Wisroc, Gold Hill, Kumaka and Hururu. The nurses hostel at Kwakwani will be completed. Also, \$4.6 million is allocated to purchase one ultra-sound machine for the hospital.

Even the Regional Administrative Office building is given attention with \$5 million for its rehabilitation.

To boost and expand agricultural development, the Takama waterfront wharf and bond is budgeted for rehabilitation. Roads and drainage facilities are expected to be maintained and improved so as to provide better access for the community.

Urban development Programme

Mr Speaker, the Urban Development programme comprises two phases and has three major components, namely: Institutional Strengthening, Property Tax Assessment, Reform and Infrastructural Works, in the six (6) municipalities of Guyana.

The Infrastructural component seeks to rehabilitate the municipal infrastructure including roads, drains, town halls, markets, abattoirs, workshop and street lighting.

Mr Speaker, Phase I - Civil Works - include rehabilitation of five markets, two town halls and 6.25 kilometers of roads and drains, details of which are as follows:-

a) Rehabilitation of Cemetery Road and Main Street, Rampoor in Corriverton.

b) West Sideline Road and New Market Street in Rose Hall, and Pitt Street in New Amsterdam, Berbice.

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These five roads in the three (3) municipalities in Berbice were awarded in a single contract at the cost of \$179,000,982. It is anticipated, Mr Speaker, to be completed by June this year. Corriverton Market is being rehabilitated at a cost of \$89 million and is scheduled to be completed by May 10, 2002.

Contract for rehabilitation of Rose Hall Market and Town Hall was signed today at a cost of \$54.7 million.

The New Amsterdam Market is being rehabilitated at a cost of \$109 million. There was some delay in starting but the contractor is pressing on.

Mr Speaker, in the town of Linden the Wismar Market was completed at a cost of \$100 million and is ready for commissioning while rehabilitation of the Mackenzie Market is awaiting the submission of the final report.

Construction of Mora Street and drains, and One Mile Canvas City Road and drains are on going. The contract cost is \$147,252 million and is expected to be completed in June.

What about the Stabroek Market? Rehabilitation of Stabroek Market at a cost of \$150 million is expected to be completed in April. Mr Speaker, included in the rehabilitation of the roof, the sanitary block and the electrical distribution system., By the completion of this programme with the injection of US\$25 million the six municipalities will not only have a face lift on infrastructure development, but will be in a position to strengthen their administration and revenue collection bases so that each municipality will be in a better position to collect enough revenue through rates and taxes to off set their expenses and to provide for economic and social development.

Mr Speaker, I can go on and on in counting our gains for which we, the PPP/Civic Government, are happy. It is, indeed, a success

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story. The Guyanese people have made tremendous strides and we will continue to work for the benefit of all. I appeal to the Members of the Opposition in this House to join with us in developing this country for all Guyana to be proud of.

Mr Speaker, in the five coastal Regions development continues apace. Constraints, both natural and man made continue to visit us but we are not deterred. Changing weather patterns resulting in too long a dry period or too much rainfall brought great demands on our drainage and irrigation system. Guyana's coastal belt is below sea level creating constant challenges on the sea and river defence infrastructure. High tides influenced by global warming are increasingly over-tapping and creating breaches at naturally weak areas. Leguan, Wakenaam, sections of Essequibo Coast, East Coast Demerara and Regions 5 and 6 are under constant pressure, but the various Ministries, Local government Bodies and Agencies are always alert and vigilant, ready to render whatever assistance is necessary should emergencies occur.

Mr Speaker, the Budget of this year as presented by the Hon Minister of Finance is worthy of praise and must be supported not only by us in this part of the House, but even those who have decided not to sit here today, knowing that they will have to give support to national development. They will have to make their decision. The Guyanese people are behind this Government. Our victory last year and victories to come will be assured by the maintenance and sustenance of the democratic process. In this regard, Mr Speaker, I beg to support this Budget and ask all of us to assist in implementing it so that come year end we will be proud of our achievements once more.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

The Minister of Health.

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Hon Dr Leslie Ramsammy: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I would like to offer my support to the 2002 Estimates as presented by my colleague, the Minister of Finance. The Budget reflects the prudent management of Guyana's economy and, at the same time, the PPP/Cs emphasis on social justice. The Budget manages to provide the prudent fiscal environment to sustain and encourage economic growth and, at the same time, accelerate social gains. We provide, Mr Speaker, unequivocal support and congratulate the Minister on the presentation of a Budget that, despite great constraints, further enhances the quest for social development.

Permit me, Mr Speaker, at this time, to join my colleagues in lamenting the fact that the PNC, as has been its legacy from its birth, abandoned Guyana once again by not voicing its concerns in Parliament. By walking away the PNC demonstrated that it was not willing to stand up for Guyana, to put Guyana first. But, the people of Guyana can rest assured that with the PPP/C Government we will always put Guyana first and we will always stand by our people. *[Applause]* By walking away, Mr Speaker, the PNC not only abandoned its supporters, the people who stood by them through thick and thin, through decades of betrayal, through decades of disappointment, through decades of shame, but they exposed their real objective, their only interest, and that is to get power by any means whatsoever.

Let me pause, Mr Speaker, to congratulate the Hon Members, Shirley Melville and Ravi Dev for staying in Parliament and for making their contributions. *[Applause]* I do sympathise with the Hon Member Mrs Melville and her party for the betrayal by her Fellow Member of Parliament, the Hon Member Sheila Holder. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Hon Member, that is a very strong word. Could you find some other word that is less contentious?

Hon. Dr Leslie Ramsammy: Let me rephrase that, Mr Speaker . .

the Hon Member for not finding it possible to stay in Parliament with her colleague. We are not surprised however, because we have always since 1997, held the view that the WPA has become an arm of the PNC. *[Applause]*

The 2002 National Estimate, Mr Speaker, is consistent with the PPP/C's principle of Government. It is consistent with the visions and aspirations of our people. It is furthering the quest for social justice that Dr Cheddi Jagan began more than fifty (50) years ago. It was Dr Cheddi Jagan and his PPP that established the path that Guyana must follow. The path of economic growth must be pursued with human development as the goal. It remains today, Mr Speaker, the PPP/C's contention that unless economic growth leads to the well being of people then the generation of such economic growth is based on injustice. Dr Cheddi Jagan called it growth with a human face. He often said that we need growth with social and economic justice. Essentially we in the PPP/C pursue a path of economic prosperity that brings with it development in education, health, sports, culture, housing, sanitation, a better life for all Guyanese. Let me quote from Dr Cheddi Jagan himself. Speaking at the 109th Annual Conference of the Guyana Teachers Union in 1994, he said:

We see development as people-centered. When some speak of development they see only foreign capital and private investment. We see also social capital and human resources and when we talk about development we mean development with a human face. For us, people come first.

I might add, Mr Speaker, Guyana comes first.

Mr Speaker, we are cognizant of the fact that our emphasis on social development cannot be realistically pursued if we do not have a viable economy with adequate local and foreign investment. Already in his Budget presentation, Minister Kowlessar and other Ministers, such as Ministers Nadir, Chandarpal and Rohee have dealt with the

economic measures. They have shown how Government continues to improve the portfolio of measures to encourage economic growth, and I do not want to repeat those. But, Mr Speaker, the budgets of the 1980s, 1991 and 1992 - I have copies of them with me - they failed to give recognition to the social sector. A word here, a word there, but no emphasis on the social sector. Contrast this with the PPP/C's first budget in 1993 and all the subsequent ones - the social sector dominates in these speeches. Mr Speaker, Members of the Opposition and some of their sponsors would like us to believe that nothing is happening in Guyana. We are not unaware of the fact that we have much room for improvement. We recognise that there are many other things that need to be done. The Minister himself noted that we received much advice but that we can take only some into consideration bearing in mind what Minister Jeffrey said that we are constrained by our resources. But there is a culture of politicization and misinformation that hurts Guyana's image and makes no contribution to our development. The Opposition and their cohorts are worried. Each time there is a period of peace and calm development begins to expand and accelerate and the world begins to have a good feeling about Guyana. Guyana begins to have a good feeling about itself. Witness to this fact is that just this week Minister Nadir informed, and we know, that up the Essequibo there is a cruise ship. In the next few weeks Guyana hosts the CARICOM/UK forum, the US/CARICOM Forum, the Caribbean Health Research Council Annual Meeting, the Annual Meeting of the Region's Chief Medical Officers, the CARICOM Tribute to Sir George Alleyne and a visit from the Director of the UN/AIDS Dr Peter Piot. This worries the Opposition and they have begun a misinformation campaign. I would like to point out to this House that I saw the Leader of the Opposition on TV saying that Guyana's economy is in a crisis. This is an economy that has shown growth of 1.9 percent - one of only two countries in the Region with a positive growth rate. Yet, the Leader of the Opposition sees an economy in crisis. But, Mr Speaker, The Leader of the Opposition was President during the 1980s when Guyana's economy underwent severe constrictions. The economy was

destroyed. Who caused the destruction of our economy? Mr Hoyte and the PNC would want us to think that it was not them. It wasn't me. People seem to be preoccupied with Shaggy's *It wasn't me*. Last year virtually every sector showed increased production. But the Hon Leader of the Opposition says, the country is facing an economic crisis. Let me read some snippets from the 1990 Budget. The then President is now the Hon Leader of the Opposition, Mr Desmond Hoyte. This is from the then Minister of Finance, the Hon Carl Greenidge. He said:

The fact is, however, that the decline which the economy was experiencing is both visible and harsh and each day that it continues makes the prospect of recovery more dim and distant.

The crime rate was increased from 14 percent to 35 percent. As a consequence, interest rates now range from 30 to 41 percent. All three of the countries major exports earned less than targeted. Sugar fell short by 20 percent despite the promising performance in the first half of the year the value of rice export was 39 percent below target. Bauxite was 38 percent short of its target. The disappointing production figures in all our productive factors . . .

And he goes on,

the adverse consequence of the decline, Mr Speaker, is real wages have declined *noticeable, especially in the Public Sector.*

One last snippet,

Output of exporting enterprises fell to unprecedented levels and as a result export revenues fell.

This is from 1990. The President was the Hon Leader of the Opposition and he did not see an economy in crisis. Who destroyed it? *[Applause]* The Hon Leader of the Opposition would want us to

believe *it wasn't me*. The worst thing about all of this, Mr Speaker, is that others joined this opposition in this dastardly act of misinformation. Let me repeat the words of the Hon Prime Minister who wondered in his presentation, why would any good Guyanese with the interest of his nation at heart want to create tension and doubts in people's minds by misinforming them?

Mr Speaker, Mr Ram in an analysis in the *Stabroek News*, questioned why Region 4 was allocated \$1.4 billion as compared with Region 6 which was allocated \$1.7 billion, clearly intending to cast aspersions of discrimination on the part of this Government. But, Mr Ram knows the answer, he is experienced, he is knowledgeable. He knows that the allocation to Georgetown is not included in the sum for Region 4. He knows that the health budget for Region 4 does not include the sum allocated to Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation - \$1.7 billion. He knows that the sum allocated to GS & WC is not included. He knows that the sums allocated to the schools in Georgetown is not included in Region 4's allocation. If this is not barefaced deception, it is utter stupidity. *[Applause]*

And, I am surprised at the statements by Dr Clive Thomas. I am not an economist, but I know enough even from high school economics that a country's GDP is calculated in terms of local currency. It is domestic production, and is measured in domestic currency. *[Applause]* In any case, Mr Speaker, if we were to follow Dr Thomas' inclination then we can pick and choose, and any given year we can choose the weakest currency in the world and always have growth of the economy. *[Applause]* Dr Thomas is an Economist, I am not. Mr Speaker, it is clear what they are trying to do. They are trying to misinform the public. The fact is that our opponents are confused, they cannot find reasonable answers and so they turn to 'jiggery pokery' or as the Hon Gail Teixeira would say, 'they think they could mamma-guy the people' all the time.

Let me just spend a few minutes on this fact that the PNC/R

left, together with the Hon Holder because they believe that the dialogue process is not progressing. But the President in a press conference, the Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr Clement Rohee, the Minister of Education, they all dealt with this in some detail. However, Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity, to remind us all that there was a time when this Parliament was indeed non-inclusive. And it was made non-inclusive by the PNC through rigged elections, rail-roading measures through Parliament and generally nonchalantly ignoring statutory requirements like not submitting the Public Accounts for more than ten (10) years. *[Applause]* We did have a Public Accounts Committee, and I think for many, many years that Committee was headed by the Hon Member Mr Reepu Daman Persaud who was the Chairperson. But, ask him, if he was ever able to examine any accounts in this House. They were never here.

The PPP/C agrees, and we want to have a Management Committee for Parliament, but we have absolutely, unequivocally, no apologies for retaining Government's majority on the Committee *[Applause]* This is not what President Bharrat Jagdeo wants, or what Dr Ramsammy wants, or any one of us here wants. This is what the people of Guyana say they want. *[Applause]* They voted for that in 1992. They voted for that in 1997 and they, certainly, overwhelmingly, did so in 2001 *[Applause]* We will govern this country and governance of Parliament, managing Parliament is part of our Government's mandate. We will not abdicate that responsibility. We will not betray the people of Guyana. We will stand with them and we will manage this *Parliament*.

The dialogue processes have been dealt with. But let me just say that we have unfinished business in this House. We have enabling legislation for constitutional reform to do. We have a Procurement Bill, a Water and Sanitation Bill, a Traffic Bill, a Tourism Authority Bill and we must continue our work. I urge the Leader of the House, I urge this Parliament for us to get on with the business with any Member who will come to this House. Those who want to participate, let us serve the people of this country, let us continue our work.

As I stated at the beginning, Mr Speaker, the Budget Estimates focus not only on economic growth, not only on building the infrastructure but also, significantly, on social gains for the Guyanese people. During the last nine (9) years improvement in education, health, housing, water, sanitation, the environment and social security have been realised. The 2002 Estimates continue the tradition of heavy emphasis on social development. In fact more than \$23 billion have been allotted to the social sector. Education - \$11.4 billion, Health - \$5.9 billion, Housing - \$3.1 billion, Labour, Social Security - \$2.6 billion, Youths, Sports and Culture - \$5 billion and so on. This means that out of Current Expenditure, forty-nine (49) percent is devoted to the social sector. This is a caring government and it carries on the tradition that Dr Cheddi Jagan taught us - development of the individual *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, this laudable emphasis on social gains for our brothers and sisters is not a newfound one. As I said before, it is the premise on which Dr Cheddi Jagan formed the PPP more than fifty (50) years ago. We must not forget that in 1964 when Dr Cheddi Jagan was cheated out of Government, the then PPP Government had allocated thirty (30) percent of Current Expenditure to the Social Sector. This was whittled down to approximately twenty (20) percent by 1985. Then dramatically, further whittled away by the Hoyte's regime and was a disgraceful eight (8) percent in 1992. Why are we able to do this? The answers are simple. We have a better managed and expanding economy. We have had positive growth every year with the exception of one year. We have through debt relief brought down servicing. In 1964, under a PPP Government debt servicing was fifteen (15) percent of revenue. When the PNC was deposed in 1992, debt servicing was a ghastly ninety-four (94) percent of revenue. Today, we have reduced it down and in the 2002, Budget it represents eighteen (18) percent of revenue. That is prudent management *[Applause]*

What about my sector, the **Health Sector**? The Government has been generous to health. Overall the Health Sector has seen an

increase of more than 26 percent this year, going from \$4.5 billion to \$5.7 billion. In terms of Capital investment, allocations amounting to more than \$440 million have been made. Mr Speaker, in 1992, the allocation to health was \$704 million. You can see the emphasis that we are placing on the Health Sector. We are focusing on equity. There are now over 348 health facilities in this country. Just a week ago, we opened Guyana's first Poly-clinic and in a couple of weeks we will open up health centres at Lusignan, Enterprise and Edinburgh, creating access to 60,000 more Guyanese *[Applause]* In the future, we will add other Poly-clinics on the East Bank of Demerara, south of Georgetown and in Parika. Mr Speaker, one of the issues of poverty reduction, one of the issues of equity is the distribution of drugs and supplies. I am extremely elated that this year we have allocated \$1.7 billion for the procurement and distribution of drugs in the Health Sector. *[Applause]* This is a 76 percent increase. We will also ensure this year that facilities are further equipped having X-rays and laboratories in all the Regional Hospital and in some of the District Hospitals like Lethem, Mabaruma, Charity, Fort Wellington, Port Mourant and Skeldon. Also, we are going to complete the Kamarang Hospital as the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development just said. The Georgetown Public Hospital will continue to expand its services and I am not going to go into the details.

HIV/AIDS, Mr Speaker, is a serious health problem in our country. For the first time this Government has been able to procure antiretrovirals so we can have treatment and care for HIV infected patients. In order to do this, we called upon the private sector and they have responded by manufacturing these drugs. Guyana, is one of very few countries, joining Brazil and India, that are doing so. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in the next few weeks we will open up a Burns Centre. A state-of-the-art, most modern facility, in the Caribbean at a cost of more than \$50 million. We did so in collaboration with NGO partners in Canada. Other tertiary services are needed - cardiac centre, dialysis et cetera - but this is a poor country, we have limited

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resources and we cannot provide all these services for free. We invite the Private Sector to join us in developing these services., We will offer them not only the usual concessions, but tax holidays if they will involve themselves in such services.

Mr Speaker, there are many other programmes, but in the next few weeks we can talk about these publicly. It is late and I do not want to get into all of the details, but Guyana has a proud record in improving our Health Sector. We are being recognised regionally and internationally for the work that we are doing to improve the lives and to bring better health to all our people. It is in keeping with our tradition, it is in keeping with our premise for good governance - the development of the individual, human development. Mr Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to support the 2002 Estimates.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I am privileged this evening to support the largest ever Budget in the history of our country.

The Budget reflects that the Hon Minister had broken no record by having an increased budget to the tune of 6.5 per cent *[Applause]* This Budget has a difference in that when it is examined and pursued, one finds valuable details, precise statements as to what the people in the country can expect in the future. It is not simply a budget of statistics, it is not a budget which simply talks about the growth of 1.9 percent, the fall in inflation, the increases in production of sugar and rice, the highest production in gold.

Notwithstanding these undisputed facts and reality, people have the gall to point fingers to say that the country is in crises.

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The Government which preceded the People's Progressive Party Government Civic had the longest ever tenure in the history of this country. The Constitution states that a tenure is five years, but the Government which precede us stayed there for seven years and it was seven year of ruining and wrecking of Guyana.

The People's Progressive Party, the party to which I belong, led the struggle in this country for the restoration of democracy. Dr Cheddi Jagan, the late President of this country, taught us optimism, but more than that, he left with us the mandate that while he has steered the ship successfully to democracy, those of us who are here have got the obligation and mandate from him to sustain that democracy [*Applause*]

One of the most cherished things in the life of any person is the right to think freely, the right to conclude and the right to express his/her voice without any letter or hindrance. Those were rights which were breached in the past, dishonoured and ruthlessly taken away. We have brought this country to a point where there is absolute freedom to speak when you want, how you want and where you want, and the freedom even to come to Parliament, to go away and come back when you want.

But, Mr Speaker, we are ever conscious of the progress and I live to hear with my own ears yesterday, the Hon Member Mr Ravi Dev saying from that corner of the House, that, of course, there is evidence of development, only those who do not have eyes cannot see, or words to that effect.

But even the opponent of this Government cannot deny the fact that there is visible and conspicuous evidence in every corner of this country of progress. Water, housing, roads, drainage and irrigation, and even sea defence. Not to mention, I have all the figures on education and health at my disposal, but my colleagues who preceded me spoke in an informed manner and they spoke with such brilliance and eloquence, which makes my task much easier at this

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point in time. We have a duty to this country, we have a duty to its people. Constitutional Reform did not start with the Herdmanston Accord, or the St Lucian Statement, it started in 1994 by the People's Progressive Party, it is written in our Manifesto and we started the process and have taken it to a far point. In fact the records, evidence and proceedings of the period were made available to the subsequent constitutional Reform Bodies.

I can, without any fear of contradiction, say that the PPP/Civic Government has honoured all the changes in the Constitutional Reform process. There is no evidence, not an iota or tinge of evidence, to show that we have acted in any way to the contrary. I say that with conviction and confidence.

Mr Speaker, we have gone beyond the demand of the Constitutional provisions. Where in the Constitution is it written that Ministers cannot sit on a Committee? Where in the Constitution is it written that Ministers cannot chair Committees? But in the interest of moving the process forward, we have agreed - the PPP/Civic Government - that the Ministers will not chair. More than that, Mr Speaker, we have agreed to rotation of the Chairmanship and the people who are put to chair, they will be back-benchers and I thought that point has not come out as square as it ought to come out. That is the position. Where is this process? There is a lot of fancy talk about Parliament. This Parliament is a Parliament. Prior to 1992, it was not. I stood over there for twenty-eight years and hit my head against the wall to get simple procedures honoured and observed and they were not.

Where was the consultation? And people said that was then, but we have to refer to the past, where we have come from, and we will take credit for it, we must take credit for it - we don't care what they say about what we have done to change the situation. *[Applause]*

We have a lot to be proud about, we have a lot to talk about, we do not have to hide our heads in shame, we can raise it highly

and walk with our chest pushed out, because we are operating democratically. The consultation process which was initiated by the PPP/Civic Government, hitherto did not exist at all - if it did, tell me where and when and by whom? Even this Budget before the Order Paper was sent out, I called the three political parties, I told them the Budget was due on the 15th March. I spoke with the WPA Member myself, I spoke with the PNC Chief Whip myself and a message was left at the ROAR's office because the ROAR Leader was not there, the Order Paper went out. We have discussed Agenda with the Opposition and as far as is possible, we have moved in a consensual manner toward strengthening, building and widening the parameters for coping in the democratic process.

Mr Speaker, we do recognise that stability and peace are vital for development and progress. This Government gives high priority for the construction of a stable atmosphere. This Government has engaged the Leader of the Opposition in meaningful consultation and dialogue throughout. No person can stand out there and argue against the dialogue process which has yielded fantastic results. *[Interruption: "And they are not here."]*

We would like them to be here. I said so on the very first day. I spoke in language which was euphemistic as a source of encouragement and inspiration for them to come and talk. But when you cannot face and you cannot confront, you run. *[Interruption: "That is what they did". "You say what they did". "Not now!, when we get outside". "I can whistle".]* But, Mr Speaker, this government has opened the door where the Opposition Leader sits with the President of the country and discuss all the Opposition's concerns, raising varying issues and matters, and what is more, I am talking about the positivity of the dialogue, the fact that there has been governmental positive response to the Opposition.

Several Committees were set up and what struck me, and what I want to emphasize here this evening, are those Committees. For the first time in the history of this country a Government reporting

both to the President and the Opposition Leader, so I asked myself, *Reep, you are seeing right, you are hearing right?* That is the extent to which we have brought the democratic process - inclusivity, involvement and more than that, in one instance, the report, I think, of the

Housing Committee, was rejected by both the President and the Leader of the Opposition and a new formula was agreed to by the Opposition Leader and the President. But that was not all, there were joint statements. More than that - both leaders sat together same place, same venue at Press briefing and they faced the Press and answered together. That is influencing the emergence of a new political culture in the country for the first time in its history *[Applause]* I am speaking with them so that they can know for sure the steps we have taken, the extent we went and what we have done to engage in a positive and a meaningful way with the Opposition in the process of Government.

Mr Speaker, this process did not bring result? How could this be argued when some fifty-one persons sit on Boards or Commissions?

Mr Speaker, let me make the point - the PNC wants to do what the CRC did not authorise. If the CRC did not want Ministers to sit on the Committee, they would have crafted the legislation that way *[Applause]* But the legislation speaks of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson coming from opposite sides which clearly signals there is no ambiguity in the crafting of the legislation, that if you have a Government Chairman, you have an Opposition Vice-Chairman; if you have an Opposition Chairman, you have a Government Vice - Chairman, and that is about it .

Mr Speaker, we went to the extent in your absence when your Deputy was acting and had a meeting with the Committee of Selection, ready and willing to name all the Committees. I took a list of the names and handed it to him. How could they argue that we

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don't want to appoint the Committees? It is naked falsehood. The meeting was convened, we were ready to name and they were not ready. I say that, that is the truth and that is the fact. I want to say tonight in this National Assembly, we are ready to name the Committees tomorrow if the Opposition agrees, but unless the Opposition gets its way, things are not going right. Things are only going right when they say something and you do as they want. You can't have that at all.

Mr Speaker, with respect to composition and constitution of Committees, I will quote Standing Order No. 72:

Every Select Committee shall be so constituted as to ensure, so far as is possible, that the balance of parties in the Assembly is reflected in the Committee function and it has a quorum for each meeting. [Applause]

Tell me how we are not making the right decision and taking the right action? So what is the objection?

When you talk about India, England, Australia and Canada, you are talking about Parliaments with large numbers of people, many of whom don't have much to do, but in a Parliament of sixty-five, it will be unwise to restrict participation. More than that, these sectoral Committees provide an opportunity for the exchange of information and I think it is to the Committees advantage and the country's advantage that Ministers sit there so they are faced with questions which they must answer. In fact, the Ministers, by going on the Committees are opening themselves to interrogation. So that is my honest and rational position. Why keep them out? So, Mr Speaker, that is the position. We are ready to name the Committees at any moment and at the shortest possible notice.

I want to make this other point - we are ready and willing to talk, the doors are wide open for dialogue at all levels and as far as my information goes, the President has indicated that he is willing to

meet with the Leader of the Opposition. In fact that meeting was put on the dialogue process, that meeting was put on pause by the Central Committee of the People's National Congress. Let them move their fingers from the pause button [*Laughter*] and let Mr Hoyte go and talk. He is matured, he is right to talk and he must talk and we want to talk so that we can break this impasse and this deadlock and move the country forward. [*Applause*]

Mr Speaker, this Parliament is saddled with enormous powers which before it did not have. Right now, the Public Service Commission, the Judicial Service Commission; Members of these Commissions, some of them at least, have to be appointed by the National Assembly, so what? We need an Appointment's Committee pursuant to the relevant Constitutional Amendment. When that Committee is appointed, and that Committee could be appointed because we have the Committee of Selection, it can happen tomorrow once there is agreement and we can put all the Committees in place within the shortest possible time. I give the Government's commitment that we are ready for that . . .

So if the Public Service Commission is not constituted, if the Judicial Service Commission is not constituted, it is because of these delays. In my own humble experience, it would be an error - a mistake - to legislate to create crisis. Legislation, Constitutional changes and Amendments must be such that you don't create a crisis Commission. Now, what is the big fuss about this Parliamentary Management Committee? Believe me, I have been sitting with all the parties, I go to the meetings, I sit with all of them, I talk with all of them and must say that the meetings have been cordial, welcome, rational and reasonably objective. If you agree to the proposal of the Opposition of equal numbers on the Management Committee, five/five, and that Committee takes a position that you cannot bring something to the National Assembly! What Government in any part of the world provides such a situation that it inhibits the accessibility of the Government in the National Assembly ... because they are going to ask you what kind of Government you have? Well, I tell myself, and

I tell my conscience, as the person negotiating, I am not agreeing to that and I said in keeping with what I said just now and in keeping with the general agreement five/six; six/five, just one more. What is the achievement in this new era and this change? We had a situation where there was no Management Committee, the Opposition was not involved in anything, Government could have convened the Parliament, which it can do until that Committee comes into being, which it doesn't do and I want to put the records clean. From nothing, from zero, the Opposition will have five persons of eleven on a Committee. Isn't that a mighty and a powerful voice of an opposition?

Obviously, when these Standing Orders were couched, it took into account all these factors. I have issued releases, I have spoken on some of these matters. Yesterday, my colleague, Mr Clement Rohee dealt with some of them. I have gone through all the Committees and in all such Committees, United States of America, United Kingdom, the Government is in majority. You have got to run a government, we cannot allow ourselves to be in the Government and hand it over to the PNC. Is that they want? That seems to be the problem. Having said all of that I understand from my colleagues that I should not be long. I am asking the Opposition to be reasonable and rational. *[Applause]* I am asking them to re-examine the position on these matters and if they do partially, they can come to no other conclusion than that we have been reasonable and fair.

Mr Speaker, Guyana is moving rapidly towards progress and greater progress. Guyana has reached the point where, in its political culture, it has shown that it is capable of dealing without outside help with complex issues. We have agreed on Terms of Reference, we have agreed on a motion for the setting up of the Management Committee and if the PNC agrees to the simple things and to Honour the Standing Order, we bring the Motion tomorrow and set up the Management Committee.

Mr Speaker, the Appointment's Committee has the Constitutional duty and obligation to appoint all the Commissions

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including the Human Rights Commission, the Ethnic Relations Commission, all the Commissions which were agreed to. I want to put on record the PPP/Civic government is willing and ready to appoint those Commissions. I hope we can persuade the Opposition to appreciate our position and to call upon them to let us meet. I think there is an invitation for the President to meet with the Leader of the Opposition. I want to call on the Opposition to respond to that meeting. If that meeting comes off, I am sure we will be able to look another time at these to that matters with a view of resolving them.

There are two paragraphs in the Budget Speech that are relevant to Committees, but I only want to read one:

At the legislative level the Constitutional Reform process has led to the most innovative change in the balance of power between the three branches of the State Executive, Legislative and Judicial. It is not what it used to be, it is something totally different and in this new Constitutional Reform stage the Opposition has a substantial say. The new provisions expand the role of Parliament and the Parliamentary process in appointment of statutory offices and bodies. There is now strengthened legislative scrutiny and oversight of the executive branch. In addition to the Public Accounts Committee, there are four new Sectoral Committees, also five Commissions for Gender and Equity, Indigenous People, Children, Human Rights, Ethnic Relations. We need to compose and constitute these Committees.

I want to make my last point, Mr Speaker. We have moved with the Constitutional Reform Process. That process is not complete in the sense that in many of the Constitutional changes there will be need for concomitant legislation as you are well aware, as the one who chaired the CRC. The procurement legislation is in the making. Having brought the process this far, I think, it is incumbent upon both the Government and the Opposition to show that it can

administer the process. We should not allow these changes to linger, we should move them forward and we can move them forward. In my own opinion, I don't see any major disagreement and I say so with a high degree of confidence. There are two areas and I think we can sit down, iron them out and see if we can achieve reconciliation.

I want to close with the note that the democratic process has advanced far. The people want to continue along that path. The community, the Guyanese nation welcome the dialogue. The strongest weapon available to civilised humanity is dialogue, and it is one of the weapons and one for the mediums, one of the avenues which should be totally utilised to advance the cause of any country and any people. With that note, I call upon Members of the Opposition to engage in the dialogue process, let us meet and talk and let us advance this beautiful country for, overall, the good and benefit of all the people. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Hon Member.

Hon. Members, this completes the general debate on the Budget, but before we adjourn, we need to consider and dispose of the Report of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply on the allocation of time for the consideration of the 2002 Estimates of Expenditure by the Committee of Supply. We will go into Committee of Supply for this purpose. The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Assembly in Committee

The Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to report that the Assembly is now in Committee of Supply and that the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply met yesterday and considered the allocation of time for the consideration of the 2002 Estimates of Expenditure in the Committee of Supply.

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The Committee passed a resolution on the matter and the copies of the Sub-Committee's Minutes, Resolution and Time Table have been circulated. Will the Hon. Minister of Finance kindly move the necessary Motion?

Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar: Mr Chairman, I now move that the Committee of Supply agree with the Business Sub-Committee in its Resolution.

Question -

that the Committee of Supply agree with the Business Sub-Committee in its Resolution

put and carried.

The Chairman: Hon Members, the Committee of Supply has allocated three days for consideration of the Estimates. Consideration of the Estimates will begin tomorrow and will be in accordance with the resolution of the Business Sub-Committee.

Assembly Resumes

The Speaker: The Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

ADJOURNMENT

On a Motion by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs the National Assembly adjourned to Thursday, March 28, at 14:00H

Adjourned accordingly at 19:49H.