

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

45TH Sitting

Friday, 4TH November, 2016

The Assembly convened at 2.50 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Member, Ms. Africo Selman, for today's sitting.

Parliamentary Forum on Anti-Corruption

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I must tell you that the Parliamentary Forum on Anti-Corruption will be held during the period 9th to 11th November, 2016. The opening ceremony and plenary session will commence on 10th November, 2016.

There have been requests by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to participate in the forum. With this being a forum for Members of Parliament (MPs), I would need to discuss with the Prime Minister whether any requests from persons, other than Members of Parliament, could be accommodated.

Matters pertaining to Private Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we started somewhat late this afternoon. I neglected to offer an explanation for our lateness. There was a matter which claimed the attention of the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Whips of this House and the Clerk of the National Assembly. We were able to resolve that matter and there was an agreement that, at the next Sitting of the National Assembly, matters pertaining to Private Members, in this instance the Opposition, will have precedence in the House.

I thank you for your forbearance.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following papers and reports were laid:

1. Minutes of Proceedings of the 5th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Thursday, 27th October, 2016. [*The Speaker of the National Assembly, Chairman of Committee of Selection*]
2. Annual Report of the Public Debt of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the year 2015. [*The Minister of Finance*]

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me a few minutes to say something about this report. The first thing I would like to say is that the report is not required under any law, regulation, constitution or otherwise, but in keeping with the Government's pledge to provide greater transparency and accountability in Government and to make, as wide as possible, information available to the public, we, on our own accord, has decided to produce this report and to make it available to public. Thus, it is the first attempt in this regard.

In keeping with international best practice recommendations for public debt management, as articulated by the World Bank's Debt Management Performance Assessment (DeMPA) tool, we have prepared a Public Debt Annual Report for this Cooperative Republic of Guyana spanning the period 2011 to 2015.

The Government, through the Minister of Finance, is responsible for managing and accounting for the public debt and contingent liabilities. The Ministry of Finance, therefore, is responsible

for public debt management through our principal agency - the Debt Management Division. While annual financial statements are presented to the National Assembly and there is information on debt contained in the annual budget statement, there is no detail reporting to the National Assembly on debt management activities. Information on the public debt is sparse with very limited data provided on portfolio costs and risk exposures. Thus, the rationale for reporting to the National Assembly on the debt management operations and activities is to ensure that the Government is accountable for its debt management operations and detail information is provided to the public, which approach promises transparency in debt management and good governance. The compilation of this inaugural Public Debt Annual Report represents an important step in enshrining institutional transparency and accountability. The report presents a review of the country's external and domestic debt portfolios and risk analysis for the period 2011 to 2015. It also includes data on public guarantees, lending loans and the results of a debt sustainability analysis. Institutional developments of public debt management are also discussed in this report.

Mr. Speaker, I hope and our Government hope that, by producing this report, we will have a better informed commentary on the public debt and less of the uninformed information that we see emanating from sources which we once thought were credible, but which now seem to be in the realm of the incredulous.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

3. The Labour (National Minimum Wage) Order 2016 –No. 15 of 2016 [*The Minister of Social Protection*]

ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I received two oral questions, one from the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony, and the other from the Hon. Member, Ms. Gail Teixeira, Opposition Chief Whip.

I now invite the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony, to read his question.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister of Communities, the Hon. Ronald Bulkan, confirm with this House whether Antinfek or Polyhexanide is being used for the

purification of drinking water in Guyana? If this is so, could the Minister inform this House as to:

- A. Who authorised the use of Antinfek for the purification of drinking water in Guyana?
- B. When was this decision taken to use Antinfek instead of chlorine?
- C. Identify which water wells were or are using Antinfek, the locations and the amount of people served by these wells?
- D. How long have the residents of these communities been exposed to Antinfek in their drinking water?
- E. Which international agencies, World Health Organisation/Pan-American Health Organisation (WHO/PAHO) or others have certified the use of Antinfek in water intended for human consumption?
- F. Which countries use Antinfek to purify drinking water for human consumption?
- G. What are the side effects of Antinfek on human beings, after prolong consumption?
- H. What surveillance system, if any, has been put in place to monitor the side effects on the population using Antinfek? If not, why not?
- I. Were the identified communities informed of the change in water purification methods?
- J. How much Antinfek was bought by the GWI and at what cost?
- K. What was the method used to procure this substance and how many companies participated in the bidding?
- L. What company was finally awarded the contract to supply Antinfek?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the questions which he has posed. They are questions that are, indeed, very important concerning important issues relating to public policy, public health, transparency and good governance. All issues which this Administration is deeply concerned about, as we heard a moment ago from the Hon. Minister of Finance.

The questions that we have just heard consist of 12 parts. [Ms. Ally: Twelve questions] Twelve questions. While I am aware that the Standing Orders provide for questions to be posed in this manner, I am also advised that the Standing Orders are not designed, if you will, to serve as an ambush on any Member or on a Minister of this honourable House. [Interruption]

If I may be allow to respond without the noise from the other side. I learnt of these questions by way of notification from the Hon. Clerk of the National Assembly at approximately 11.56 a.m. today, a mere two hours ago. I think that the Hon. Members on the other side are aware of the convention of this House. Whilst, I am not in a position to give full and complete answers to the 12 questions that were posed, I will try to provide some preliminary answers for the benefit of all Members of this honourable House and, in particular, to the Member who has posed the questions.

I would first like to begin by saying that the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) had written to the Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) following reports in the media about the purported use of this particular chemical that goes under the trade name Antinfek or Polyhexanide, seeking clarifications and expressing certain concerns. Earlier today, the management of GWI met with the Public Utilities Commission and I am advised that complete answers were provided to all of the queries and concerns that were posed by the Public Utilities Commission. It is my expectation and understanding that this information would reach its way into the public domain.

3.05 p.m.

I would like to assure the Hon. Member, who has posed these questions, that the particular chemical is not being used at any of the locations for which treated water is provided by GWI. It is the case that, at all of the locations, Chlorine is the sole disinfectant that is being used. In addition to Chlorine, at some of these plants, lime is being used. In the few plants that utilise their source of water from surface sources, I think it is well-known by many Members on the other side that, alum is being used. So, this particular chemical is not being used for purification at any of the water treatment plants.

Some of the information that is being provided to me, which I am pleased to relate to this honourable House at this stage, is that the particular chemical in question has been proclaimed as a safe product for various applications in areas mainly relating to human hygiene, private and

public health areas of veterinary, hygiene, food, feed areas, canned preservatives, as well as drinking water.

In addition, Poly (Hexamethylene Biguanide) Hydrochloride (PHMB) is safe in clinical and well-tolerated use, topically on skin, eyes, areas of the nose, and on wounds. In relation to the particular questions, I would like to say to the Hon. Member and other Members of this honourable House that, Antinfek was used in Guyana, prior to the current consideration of its use by the GWI, and that the agent for this particular product was granted permission to import and distribute same in Guyana by the Pesticides and the Toxic Chemicals Control Board (PTCCB).

I would also like to say to the Hon. Member that, no decision has been taken to use Antinfek instead of Chlorine. As I have just said a moment ago, Chlorine is presently being used, together with the other chemicals, which I have listed, in all of the company's treatment plants and that there has been no decrease in the order for supplies by GWI. Antinfek is not being used at any of GWI's locations. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

I would just like to quickly refer to some technical and scientific literature by quoting from some of the technical specifications relating to this product, from a consumer product to the anti-septic agent. I would like to say that Polyhexanide, PHMB, had been synthesised in the 50s in search for new malaria drugs for the first time and was so characterised. It quickly became apparent that it was not very effective against malaria, but that it had very good antimicrobial activity against a broad section of germs. Included among the applications for the product PHMB are the disinfection of swimming pools and bathing water. I would be happy to provide this literature to all Members of this honourable House.

I will now quickly refer to some brief extracts from the British Journal of Environmental Sciences, Vol.4, No.1 February of 2016 – A journal as published by the European Centre for Research Training and Development (ECRTD) in the United Kingdom (UK). I will quote in relation to concerns of safety and for the use of PHMB as a disinfectant. From this journal it states:

“It has been proclaimed a safe product for the various application areas, mainly human hygiene, public and private health areas...

And the other references that I had given a short moment ago. It also states that:

“...it is noncorrosive and nontoxic to both humans and animals because it is an environmentally friendly product. Its performance and extremely low toxicity makes it the best option in biosafety for slaughterhouses, livestock farming, chicken houses, feed stocks, food and feed storage facilities, transport vehicles, food processing units, kitchens and so on. In addition it can work at low concentrations very fast with a broad spectrum of action...”

I will quickly go on and quote from a brief extract from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, from a study of epigenetic properties of PHMB where it states and I quote, from the conclusions of the extract of this journal:

“The observed rodent tumours occurred only at high dosages in drinking water wells above those to which humans will ever be exposed. However, until the mechanism for PHMB, induce tumours has been elucidated, their relevancy to human risk assessment cannot be determined - research to this end is currently underway.”

I will continue to quote from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the USA, again on the product PHMB and from the Federal Register, documents which will be made available to the honourable House. Under the caption “Dietary - Drinking Water Exposure” it states:

“The uses of PHMB are not expected to significantly contaminate drinking water sources. As provided in the PHMB Reregistration Eligibility Document, ‘none of the uses associated with PHMB are expected to impact either surface or ground water resources.’ Therefore, the PHMB contributions for drinking water exposure are considered to be negligible and are not quantified.”

It goes on to state in relation to PHMB “exemption from the requirement of a tolerance” that it is exempted from the requirement of a tolerance “from residues of the antimicrobial in or on all food commodities, when the residues are the result of the lawful application of a food surface sanitizer containing PHMB...”

So, as I have said, this particular chemical is not being used to purify drinking water at any of the plants for which GWI supplies treated water. Chlorine is still the only chemical that is being used in addition to lime and alum in locations where they are relevant. I am happy to provide these preliminary answers for the benefit of the Hon. Member and all other Hon. Members of this honourable House. As I said, fuller and more complete answers can and will be provided, subsequently, for the satisfaction of the Members of the House. And to also state, once again, that the Public Utilities Commission was comprehensively briefed, earlier today, in relation to the concerns that they have expressed in relation to articles that appeared in the public media.

Thank you, Hon. Speaker and Members. [*Applause*]

Dr. Anthony: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for his response. However, some of the questions that I did pose, I did not receive answers. I just would like to repeat them. How much Antinfek was bought by GWI and at what cost? If it is not being used instead of chlorine then why is it that GWI has purchased Antinfek? We would like to get a very clear answer on that. What method was used to procure Antinfek, whether it went to tender, *et cetera*? Let us get what was the process and which company was awarded the contract?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, what number of the questions are you referring to?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Speaker, (J), (K) and (L). These were not answered. Also (E), which international agencies have certified the use of Antinfek in water intended for human consumption? Which countries are using Antinfek that is question (f)? What are the side effects of Antinfek on human beings, after prolong consumption? There are six questions that were put which were not answered.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, I did state quite clearly that the answers that I sought to provide were meant to be preliminary. I did commit that more fuller and complete answers to the questions would be provided, either in writing prior to the next Sitting or certainly early at the time of the next Sitting of the National Assembly.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Hon. Minister say why GWI bought Antinfek? This is because it is a microcide, a virucide...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, which number is that question?

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Speaker, I am allowed two supplementary questions. [Ms. Ally: You asked already.] I did not ask any supplementary questions. I asked my questions and they were not answered. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: One of which you have used already Hon. Member.

Dr. Anthony: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Then you have one more question.

Dr. Antony: I am asking that question first and I will wait on the response.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please let us not do this so early. If you have some questions to ask then ask them.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Speaker, again I would like to ask the Hon. Minister why is it that GWI bought Antinfek? What were the quantities they bought and what are they using Antinfek for?

Mr. Bulkan: One hundred 100 litres of the product was bought and it was procured for testing purposes.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Hon. Minister say where was this product tested and on whom?

Mr. Bulkan: The information that has been provided to me is that some of the products that were procured were used for the purification of some of the water supply lines in limited locations.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Dr. Anthony, I do not know whether I will go down that line and ignore the fact that you have already used up your two supplementary questions. But you would know that you have used up your two supplementary questions. I am asking a question of you Hon. Member.

Dr. Anthony: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: But if you have, then should the Speaker tell you that? If we have the rules that guide us, we should stay with the rules. The rules permit two additional questions. By my

recollection, you have used, at least, three additional questions. I cannot allow you with another question. We all agree it is important, but that is not why we should break the rules, please.

3.20 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, the question that I have tabled for oral reply without notice is also to the Minister of Communities, Housing and Water. Noting that, on 8th August, 2016, the National Assembly approved the name of the Parliamentary nominee to the Local Government Commission. Noting that, the three nominees by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, to the said Commission had already been submitted formally in a correspondence dated 6th July, to the Hon. Minister, Mr. Bulkan. Could the Hon. Minister of Communities, Housing and Water inform this House as to the reasons for the delay in the naming of the four Government appointed nominees to the Local Government Commission? Could the Minister state when would the Government swear in all the Members of this constitutional commission?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for the questions which have been posed to me. For the sake of the records and to provide some clarity, I believe that the Hon. Member is aware that there is no Ministry of Housing and Water and, hence, there can be no Minister of Housing and Water. There is a Ministry of Communities, a Ministry to which I have the honour to be the subject Minister, at this point in time.

The preamble to the question refers to the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) being:

“The only party in the Parliamentary Opposition”

[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, I did not hear the Hon. Member use those words.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to the question, it refers to the Peoples Progressive Party being the only party in the Parliamentary Opposition to...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, you must have the un-amended version.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that correction. The first question refers to the reasons for the delay in the naming of the four Government appointed nominees. The Local Government Commission Act, Act No. 18 of 2013, states at section 1:

“This Act may be cited as the Local Government Commission Act, 2013 and shall come into operation on a date appointed by order of the Minister.”

The language is quite explicit and means that it is entirely at the discretion of the Administration or of the Minister. The question is not quite accurate. There is no delay. The Administration, at this stage, is not in a position to name that date which is required by the legislation.

By way of further clarification, I would like to say that consultations are being conducted with the required amount of due diligence. Again, with reference to the Act, at section 4 (2), it requires that:

“All appointments shall be made from among persons of unquestioned integrity and with extensive knowledge, where practicable, in local government matters, administration, finance, Amerindian Affairs, industry or law.”

The Administration is being exceedingly careful that its nominees could meet the test of the legislation. Accordingly, the second part of the question asks when the Government will swear in all of the members of the constitutional commission. Of course, given the fact, as I have just mentioned, that the Administration is not in a position to name their members to this particular commission, the answer to that question would be self-evident that, all of the information is not complete at this stage or is not at hand.

I would like to add, in relation to the nominees that have been submitted by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, by way of a letter dated 6th July, from the Hon. Member, the Opposition Chief Whip, a letter that I had received on the 12th July, where I did acknowledge receipt of that correspondence with the nominees that were identified. However, subsequent to that, by way of a letter dated 30th July, I once again wrote to the Hon. Member, Mdm. Gail Teixeira, in which I sought clarification and it states:

“You are hereby requested to confirm that, as required under Section 4 (1) (b) of the Act, there was consultation with other parliamentary parties leading to the submission of the three nominees by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo...”

It went on to state:

“...that you are further asked to provide the relevant details of such consultation and please be advised that provision of the above details is a prerequisite for consideration by the President for persons to serve on the Local Government Commission.

Looking forward to your reply.

Yours Truly”

I have not had a response from either the Leader of the Opposition or from the Hon. Member. So, that also contributes to the current state that we are in. I hope that those answers can satisfy the Hon. Member.

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

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member talks about the Commencement Order for the Local Government Commission Act. I believe that the Hon. Member may wish to go back and check the records that the Commencement Order was already signed, prior to the 2015 elections.

Secondly Sir, is the Hon. Member saying that the Committee on Appointments, headed by the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) Minister, Dr. Norton, made the whole Committee a fool, by having the Committee nominate a representative for the Local Government Commission? It appears that this House was made further a fool by having passed, on 8th August, a nominee from the Committee on Appointments and the House approved that nominee to the Local Government Commission.

So, why did the Hon. Member not stop the Committee on Appointments and, on 8th August, stop the motion from going forward, when he is saying that there is no Commencement Order? But Sir, there is a Commencement Order. Could the Hon. Member please clarify this because he has now made the nine Members of the Committee on Appointments a bunch of fools and the House as well? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, we must watch our language.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you help me with another word other than “fool”?

Mr. Speaker: I beg your pardon, Hon. Member? The language is not permitted in this Chamber. I await your change of language and the withdrawal of that word, to have it removed.

Ms. Teixeira: I will change the word “fool” to the fact that the Hon. Member appears to have confused utterly, totally and irreversibly, the Members of the Committee on Appointments and the National Assembly.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member said that the Commencement Order for the operationalization of this Commission has been issued. To that I will say that, I am entirely unaware of the existence of any such Commencement Order, and I will be pleased to receive a copy of this Order from the Hon. Member. The obvious question is, if that Commencement Order had been issued prior to May, 2015, why then was the Commission not operationalized and what would have been the purpose of the issue of any such Order? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

So, I look forward to receiving the relevant information from the Hon. Member.

With regard to the member that has been identified by the Committee of Selection, that would only be one of eight members. It would be imprudent and, indeed, impractical for His Excellency, the President, to swear in one member. When the time comes for the operationalization of the Commission, at that stage, all eight members of the Commission will be sworn in at the same time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, this is your last question.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. These revelations are astonishing. First of all, is the Minister denying that on 19th August, 2016, his Office received and signed for the response from the Leader of the Opposition Office, which was publicised in the media?

Secondly, is the Minister denying that his Office received the letter on 19th August, signed by his Secretary, responding to his letter questioning the Leader of the Opposition’s prerogative to

name his representatives according to the Local Government Act? Is he denying that because we had published in the newspapers the signature and the letter? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister would you have a reply to that question?

Mr. Bulkan: Yes. I have no knowledge of the correspondence to which the Hon. Member is referring. I wrote to the Hon. Member a letter dated 30th July, 2016 to which I have not received a response.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READINGS

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

ANIMAL WELFARE BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 21/2016

A Bill Intituled:

“An Act to deal with the welfare of animals; to provide for their protection and health; and connected matters.” *[Minister of Agriculture]*

FOOD SAFETY BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 22/2016

A Bill Intituled:

“An Act to prevent the spread of food borne diseases through the control of the production, preparation, handling, storage and the transportation of food and provide for connected matters.” *[Minister of Agriculture]*

3.35 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

APPROVAL OF GOVERNMENT’S POLICIES IN PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS

WHEREAS His Excellency the President, Brigadier David A. Granger, M.S.S., addressed the Parliament of Guyana on October 13, 2016;

AND WHEREAS His Excellency eruditely adumbrated the challenges faced by, and the policies and plans to be implemented by His Government in the year ahead;

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly expresses its appreciation to His Excellency the President for his address on October 13, 2016, on the occasion of the resumption of the business of the National Assembly following the annual recess, and approves the policies and plans adumbrated therein.”

[First Vice-President and Prime Minister]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you recall the statement I made in relation to the agreement which was reached between the Government Chip Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip, in relation to matters which are before the House today and other matters in relation to the next sitting. Matters which fall under Private Members’ Business will not be taken today, but will be taken at a next sitting of the National Assembly.

Hon. Members, I invite the Prime Minister to move a motion. Hon. Members, I have given consent in accordance with Standing Order 28 (2) for the following motion to be proceeded with at this sitting.

Ms. Teixeira: With regard to what you just said, to deal with Standing Order 28 (2) and your consent to allow the motion to be proceeding with, we are stating that while we are prepared to debate this motion, that we also recognise a compromise was received today, that this motion was put on November 1st, and that as of November 1st there was no Government Business on the Order Paper, whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I am sure that it did not contribute to anything which we agreed in my Chamber. I wish that Hon. Member will treat matters, which we have discussed, with less levity and more seriousness.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity of moving this motion in my name headed “Approval of Government policies in President’s address.” The motion reads:

“Whereas His Excellency the President, Brigadier David A. Granger, M.S.S., addressed the Parliament of Guyana on October 13, 2016;

And Whereas His Excellency eruditely adumbrated the challenges faced by, and the policies and plans to be implemented by His Government in the year ahead;

Be it resolved:

That this National Assembly expresses its appreciation to His Excellency the President for his address on October 13, 2016, on the occasion of the resumption of the business of the National Assembly following the annual recess, and approves the policies and plans adumbrated therein.”

It has been asked whether His Excellency the President of Guyana should routinely address this National Assembly. To be able to clear all doubts on this issue, I wish to say that under the Constitution, specifically article 51, the President and the National Assembly comprise the Parliament of Guyana, hence the appearance of the President in the National Assembly as a Member of Parliament. His Excellency President David Granger appeared before the National Assembly in this Parliament during June 2015, July 2015, October 2015, January 2016, May 2016 and October, on the last occasion. It must be historic for Guyana to have recorded in the annals of parliamentary proceedings that the sitting President would address the Parliament on six different occasions within a period of 17 months.

The fact of the appearance of the President in these hallowed halls shows the respect which this coalition Government has for the National Assembly and the Parliament of Guyana and would periodically, through the President, bring to this National Assembly Government policies, national priorities and, in the last six of these addresses, matters of national sovereignty, national development and national unity. These are undoubtedly the preoccupation of all patriots of Guyana to say that we can effectively defend our sovereignty, we can pursue national

development for all of our people and that we can achieve our goal of national unity as a sovereign nation.

Of course, in these addresses, as in the last address, subject of this motion, there have been references to the past. I want to submit that I have seen comments that the President ought not to visit the past. I wish to disagree, because, we have in the presentation of the narrative of the challenges we face with regard to our sovereignty, the security of our borders, both from the east and the west, a necessity to recount and to re-enter the past to place even as a fact and as a matter of a law, that Guyana's boundary, as regards the neighbour of the west, has been settled under law irrevocably and unalterably. Therefore a return to the past for the purposes of placing the records, the narrative regarding our sovereignty, is very important and cannot be wished away.

On October 22nd, 2015, I remember both the challenge from the east as well as the west had been mentioned within the context of Guyana's effort internationally and here to mobilise support and solidarity for Guyana's case. The support has not been found wanting.

In January 2016 and May 2016, President Granger came to this Parliament and he spoke to the issue of our independence. One could not speak to our independence without reflecting on how we achieved our independence, without acknowledging the state Guyana was in at the time of independence and the effort that was made thereafter to move our country forward as a sovereign nation. However, as I said, the issue of national unity has always surfaced as a matter of policy, but not a matter of wish or of expectation, but that we should in fact make our country united so that we can face the challenges, not only of the defence of our sovereignty, but that we can undertake the task of nation building and national development.

On June 10th, His Excellency referred to the issue of national unity. I want to, as part of the presentation on the October 13th address, use this as the backdrop of a continuum of policy rather than isolated policies from time to time.

On June 10th 2015, he said:

“We shall, in pursuit of the common good, build bridges across chasms. We therefore renew our invitation to the People's Progressive Party to join A Partnership for National Unity and the Alliance For Change in this honourable House to serve the people.

Thousands of Guyanese, a month ago, believed that they elected us to craft a collaborative approach to confront the challenges facing our country”.

3.50 p.m.

He went on to say:

“We are guided by a ‘One Nation’ policy that would bring enormous benefits to Guyana. We envisage the elimination of one-party domination of the government; the enhancement of local, municipal and parliamentary democracy; the elimination of ethnic insecurity; the expansion of economic enterprise; the enrichment of cultural life and the deepening of national consciousness... We now therefore, reaffirm our determination to continue the task of working towards achieving national unity and towards making Guyana ‘One Nation’”.

In that address, Your Honour, His Excellency spoke to the issue of the autonomy of the National Assembly. By the time he addressed us on 13th October, 2016, we could say, in this House that we have reaffirmed the autonomy of the National Assembly, not only in relation to its political autonomy and its autonomy under the Constitution, but of its financial autonomy. It was also a fulfilment of that promise, which was made, that we saw that the Parliament Office was voted a lump sum for its own functioning. That for us is a fulfilment of a policy adumbrated by this Government to be able to make our National Assembly fully autonomous.

Also, we had said that we were pursuing the position that all constitutional agencies should be financially independent. We saw that through the determination and the grit of this Government we succeeded in making the judiciary in the form of the Supreme Court, a number of commissions, a number of bodies, including the Guyana Elections Commission and Ombudsman, to become constitutional agencies. It is part of the policy that had been adumbrated before, that we have seen, while we were also in the Opposition and then Government, that we have pursued that policy to fruition. When His Excellency came on the last occasion to address us, he was doing so on the eve of budgets being prepared for the constitutional agencies and for them to be free from the day to day and periodic intervention by politicians, and even intimidation and compromise of their independent functions.

Therefore, Sir, these addresses to the National Assembly are not in a vacuum from what the Government pursues and implements periodically and regularly. I come back to what I have said that going back into the past, making reflections into what have been are very important in the context of situating policies. I believed that it is not only that a sitting Government should be judged by what it has promised before it has entered into office, but it has to be judged also by what it experienced when it assumed office, the condition of life upon assumption of office. Therefore we could only deliver as against what we inherited.

His Excellency made references to some important aspect of Guyana's life before we came to office. He made references to death squad and extrajudicial killings. He also made references to a period when even police ranks were executed and police stations had to be barricaded because there were drug lords running around this country and portraying themselves as defenders of the nation.

Before we came to office it was necessary, in the context of looking at a policy to deal with crime in Guyana, that we look at what we inherited. When we deal, Your Honour, with the issue of what would be unfolding in the sugar industry, what the Government's policy is towards the sugar industry, it was necessary to go back to a period when the sugar industry had been bankrupted. The sugar industry had been placed into a debt of \$89 billion by virtue of incompetence, inefficiency and political manipulation. It was necessary to go back to situate as to what should be done to save the sugar workers from pauperisation that had been caused by past mistakes. When a situation is looked at in which budgetary allocation, in the last five years, amounted to \$37 billion had been spent to bail out the sugar industry from the troubles that had been plaguing it, due to bad governance and management, it was necessary to go back to say why, what had happened.

An address by His Excellency to this National Assembly has to be seen in the context of what we inherited. When His Excellency spoke to the issue of the "good life", he was speaking to the issue of a context that we are faced with very great challenges in being able to realise the "good life" for all. In his address, His Excellency spoke not only of things that had happened in the past, which I do not wish to repeat and place in the records of the Parliament, but he also spoke to, in his last address, 13th October, 2016, the issue of the quality of life of citizens. Today, Sir, I

could say with confidence that incrementally the quality of life has been improving since the change of administration in Guyana.

I have here the fact on public servants, the issue of salary increases and you would see very clearly the incremental improvement in the lot of public servants that the President had alluded to and had referred to in his address, that said that the minimum wage was increased from \$39,520 in May to \$55,000 in January 2016. It is an increase of 39.2% in a matter of seven months. Therefore when one speaks to the issue of policies, one must as well recognise the achievement and the fulfilment of those policies, which is how you judge good governance.

We could also refer to the tax threshold that had been raised from \$600,000 in May, 2015 to \$660,000 by January, 2016. There was the removal of income tax from workers' contributions to the National Insurance Scheme and a fix tax free payment of \$50,000 to all workers earning less than \$500,000 in December, last year. These are some of the matters that have been referred to in the President's address to this National Assembly. All Members, who are here, listened to the address, who saw the address outside, would have followed the President's address.

What is the focus of the prospective views of His Excellency? The prospective view was that we should be able to have a full parliamentary agenda. From the parliamentary agenda we have seen before, in his previous address, we could now say that what he had said would happen did in fact happen, apart from protecting the autonomy of the National Assembly. We were able to amend the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act to allow, as I said, for other constitutional agencies to be recognised. We were able to bring to the National Assembly and to approve the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Finance of Terrorism Act. As the Attorney General has reminded us, that we are walking away from the constraints that had been held *ad terrorem* over the head of the nation, being mounted by Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF). We are in the process of walking away from that atmosphere, the dark clouds, that we were told that you could not receive a \$100 for granny from Western Union because we are all under the shadow of a blacklisting, which turned out to be massive hoax to frighten the Guyanese people, in the throes of an election.

We have approved the telecommunications Bill. We have approved the Public Utility Commission (Amendment) Bill to allow equal treatment to all investors in the

Telecommunications sector and to ensure better service quality to all consumers. We were able to bring to fruition all the other parts of the Local Government (Amendment) Bill to allow local government elections to be held for the first time in 17 years and that had been realised in March of this year.

In this new presentation to the National Assembly, His Excellency had alluded to what is to come. Since Members of the National Assembly have claimed that they have all read this address and they all would be participating in this address in the aspects that had been adumbrated, then I would not go into the details except to say that we have, for this period ahead, a full menu of measures that would occupy the legislative programme of this National Assembly. We would be kept busy. I am sure, as we have been kept busy making history sitting into the wee hours of the morning. We had 44 sittings, matching a period of 11 months; previous to that, when we had no Parliament at all. The Parliament was dead between July 2014 and May 2015. The Parliament was placed in a state of comatose.

4.05 p.m.

It was in a state of coma and we resurrected it and breathed life into it. We had 44 sittings of this National Assembly since then. We intend to go down the road of securing the affairs of this nation, even in terms of constitutional reform. His Excellency has announced that there will be a consultative Constitutional Reform Commission in 2017. This will be, I hope, an issue that will be discussed broadly and have the total, if I may be so presumptuous, the total involvement of the Opposition, as it is very critical to our nation that we perfect our Constitution.

We also have committed ourselves to holding regular local government elections, having historically fulfilled a promise in March of this year. Also we want to be able to press forward with policies through consultation to bring about greater inclusiveness. There would be other Members of this side of the House who would contribute to this debate. I am hoping that they would deal individually in his or her sector to bring forward some amplification of the plans.

For now, it is with great honour, it is with great privilege on my part, to move the motion in my name and for us to express our deep appreciation to His Excellency the President for his address to this National Assembly. I so move. [*Applause*]

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: We, in the People's Progressive Party (PPP), wish to thank the President for his address to the National Assembly. We have just listened to the Prime Minister. I want to say here today that if anything is comatose, it is this Government.

A throne speech, speech by the President on policies, speech by any Head of State to the National Assembly or to the Parliament, must be taken seriously. In most jurisdictions around the world there is a particular approach to these speeches. They are given adequate time to be debated and there is a protocol following that debate. What we find particularly egregious is the way this speech, and the motion to debate the last speech of the President, is brought to the National Assembly. It has been hurriedly placed on the agenda which led to the discussions in your office, Mr. Speaker. It breached the procedure for the debate of a normal motion. We think that given what the President said in his speech about the nature of the National Assembly, the importance of the National Assembly and how we must conduct ourselves in a cooperative manner, that this is an insult to what he said in the National Assembly.

Most of our speakers came here today prepared to debate certain motions that are on the Order Paper. They were told that this is the day for the Opposition and then suddenly we have the President's speech to the National Assembly to debate. I am sure that most of the speakers on our side will participate in the debate, but have not prepared themselves in a manner that befits a full-fledged debate on the policies that the President announced.

We heard from the Prime Minister. In fact, I was not sure which one of the President's speeches to the National Assembly we were debating. Although the motion states we are to debate the speech delivered on Thursday, 13th October, 2016, I heard references to all the speeches that were made by the President to this chamber.

The Prime Minister rightfully pointed out that there are six such speeches. Speeches by themselves to the National Assembly are not a sign of a functioning democracy. It is not the barometer of a functioning democracy. How many times you address the National Assembly does not really matter. It is the content of what you say in the speech matters. In fact, I see it as an imposition on the National Assembly that in such a short period this has become a routine, what is reserved for sparing occasions. There must be some weight, some gravity behind the

address of a Head of State to the National Assembly. It is not every time there is a policy issue the National Assembly has to suspend itself to listen.

The Prime Minister took tremendous latitude in dealing with all sorts of things, things that are not in the speech that are subject to the motion that we are debating. I might want to visit those issues myself, given that he has raised them. The Prime Minister said that there was a view in the public that we ought not, in the President's speech to the National Assembly, to revisit the past, and he strongly defended that. We can never put limitations on what the President says in the National Assembly. We will not have a problem if there is any revisiting of the past to provide proper context for debate of policies, but there is an obligation in revisiting the past. It is that you have to be truthful and accurately reflect the past.

I saw that the Minister of Finance presented us with this document here today (held up the Public Debt Annual Report 2015) and he said this is not required by law, but given the commitment of the Government to transparency, it has decided to present to the National Assembly a report on the public debt. The President said, in his speech, that they inherited a mountain of debt. Now, first of all, I am happy that this document was prepared and it reflected the debt situation, the stock of debt, and its evolution from 2011 to 2015. You will see a trend here, Mr. Speaker. The trend has been for a reduction in the debt from 2011 to 2015 in the reporting period. If you go back a bit further, you will see a mountain where the mountain was, because the stock of debt in 2015 was \$1.1 billion. It was close to \$2 billion when the People's Progressive Party took office. I am happy that this document was prepared and it vindicates what the PPP is saying. We are also happy that the Minister of Finance could have found figures from 2011. When we assumed office in 1992, we could not find figures to prepare a document such as this. We could not. The context is vital. When the President says we inherited a mountain of debt, the context was not appropriate. It was not clear.

The Prime Minister spoke about FATF, again he spoke of the past and distorted that past. The Prime Minister refused to say to the National Assembly, and to this nation, that twice the People's Progressive Party came to the National Assembly with proposals that would have ensured that we were never placed on that list under review. Twice, in a partisan manner, those who are now in Government, then in Opposition with the majority here voted, rejected those amendments in a move that was anti-national that put this country at risk. He left out that. They

took the glory for the restoration of the situation. They took the glory and did not say that the contributory cause, in fact the primary cause for us being on that list, was the action of those who were in the Opposition at that time.

I am glad that the Prime Minister again mentioned sovereignty. The question of territorial integrity and sovereignty, I think is a question where in Guyana, where there are probably a few public differences between the Government and the Opposition. We do have views, and on five of those occasions – this is the sixth one – where the President addressed the National Assembly, we were hoping to express those views here in this democracy, the new democracy that the Prime Minister has provided for us, but the Government did not present an opportunity for us to share our views on those features. We do have strong views. We have strong views about approaches, not about the sovereignty of the country and about our territorial integrity, but about how best we safeguard this country. We, in the People’s Progressive Party, have been in office for 23 years and we have ensured, in those 23 years, that our borders remained safe. In fact, after a long period historically, we have had a maritime boundary settled because of actions that we took.

4.20 p.m.

Again, the Prime Minister spoke about the Address that the President made here to the Parliament on the 50th anniversary. Again, we too have views on this matter. I thought that it would have been fitting for this National Assembly to debate the President’s speech to the Parliament so that we too would have been able to share our perspectives on the 50th anniversary, our challenges in the past and the way forward for the country. That opportunity was never provided here.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said, again, “Do not judge us based on our promises; never mind all we said on the campaign trail because, when we got into Government, we found a different situation”. I am going to come a bit to that because I see the act of excusing underperformance gaining ascendancy from the Government. Our economy is underperforming because of an inept set of policies and approaches by the Government. It has to be that the “narco money is not flowing through the economy anymore” thus the incompetence of the Government.

They said that they do not have money to pay the public servants more or to give pensioners more because the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) left them this mountain of debt. But they do have money to take huge salary increases for themselves; they do have money to waste on the Durban Park – over \$400 million; they do have money to spend on the (drug) bond; they do have money to go on these fancy trips where an ultimate act of cronyism that they love to talk about, extended family members now travelling with Ministers of the Government... Let me leave it there. They did have money to present, after less than a year in office, the biggest Budget in the history of our country - \$230 billion. They did have money to do that after less than a year in office but they do not have money because the PPP/C left them with a mountain of debt. They said that they cannot fulfil their promises because of the big bad PPP/C and what it left them with. We have heard this.

The President said, in his speech, that they inherited:

“a parlous economic situation”.

This is very far from the truth. Guyana's economy, for the past 10 years, has experienced positive growth. In fact, it was the fastest growing economy in the Caribbean, if you look over the period and you average it.

In terms of debt stock, there are only two Caribbean countries that have a lower debt stock to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) than Guyana. They are Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. When we assumed office, it had the worst debt stock in the Caribbean. Now, we are using less than 5% of revenue to service debt. That leaves 95% of the \$165 billion we collected in current revenue to spend back in this country.

There was a time when almost 100% of our revenue went to service debt. The investments and opportunities this country was booming which are all dying off now.

Let us talk about the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. Qualfon Inc. came here under the PPP and hired a ton of people. Teleperformance Guyana came under the People's Progressive Party and hired a ton of young people; Teleperformance Guyana is expanding now. The Exxon Mobil Corporation came here under the People's Progressive Party and found oil. The two new gold mines that started to work and are now producing all the growth

in the economy came here under the People's Progressive Party. We had Santa Fe Mega Farm that the President visited and he spoke about. Santa Fe Mega Farm came here under the People's Progressive Party.

This Government has not attracted a single large-scale investment of any worth, despite tons of promotion trips abroad. The Government did not inherit a parlous economy, but inherited a thriving economy. My point is that you do have to be truthful in the context.

The quality of life we spoke about - I do not want to depart from because I think the Prime Minister did a disservice to the President when he departed from the speech made to the Parliament. His comments were extraneous to the motion.

Mr. Speaker, may I come back now to speak about the policy speech of the President that was made to the Parliament on 13th October, 2016? I believe that the policy statement of the Government, the Executive - because I do not only see it as just the President's speech - hopelessly lacks vision. It is dominated by binary thinking and binary philosophy. That is the nature of the speech. It has failed to define a viable framework for the pursuance of the objectives that the Government set itself – those of ensuring a good life for people and better governance than that of the People's Progressive Party. It has failed to set a framework to achieve those goals. It hopelessly lacks specifics. Broad declarative statements... It makes it very hard to debate a policy speech that has very little policies. The few attempts at defining broad areas for the future leave more questions than answers. It leads us into a murky path. We do not have clarity because sometimes it is very contradictory. I will get to those in a moment. I will explain how.

I spoke already about the excuses for poor performance. Almost half of the speech was focused on excusing poor performance and blaming the People's Progressive Party. The speech takes previous policies and unabashedly presents them as new thinking and claims them as its own. For our Hon. Vice-President Greenidge, there is nothing wrong with continuity; there is nothing wrong with adopting policies that were practiced in the past. We will willingly give you the positive legacy but you should at least attribute where it came from and not present it as new thinking. It distorts history and reality in an unbelievable fashion with confidence about our history and our reality that is basically a revision of all that we stand for. It does not tell us about

how people will get more jobs; it does not tell us in specific terms about how they will be more secured in their homes; it does not tell us about the 500 workers at Barama Company Limited who will lose their income soon or the 1,972 young Amerindians who have lost their income; it does not define a future for the rice industry that will keep it growing, people employed and money flowing through the economy; it does not tell us except blaming the PPP and the sugar industry; it does not craft a way forward for the sugar industry. This is supposed to be a policy speech.

It does not tell us about how they will address the depressing situation in the forestry sector. Those are the things that people in the markets...sales have now dropped by 50% - the vendors out there are anxiously waiting to hear, from a policy speech, about where this country will be going, how they will improve jobs and create more income and wealth for the country, money for the Treasury and more taxes. It fails miserably from that perspective.

Those are the broad characterisation. That is the way I see the speech. These are the broad things.

Maybe we can talk a little bit more about the specifics. The President spent a significant deal of time speaking about the troubles of the past as what he characterised as the “dark days”. He said that the “troubles will be remembered as the darkest hour in our history”. He said that it was a time of deception and cynical rejection of £4.9 million of the United Kingdom Security Sector Reform Action Plan.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the President has a right to talk about any period in our history and he has given his perspective on that period but there are other views on that period that he defined as a period of the troubles. Maybe we should talk a bit about the other views. Let us get a view from someone who is not from the People’s Progressive Party but someone who was, in fact, a leading Member of one of the parties in this Government. He wrote in his book, *The Morning After*, by Mr. Eusi Kwayana (which I can submit later for the *Hansard*). Here is another view of the period “the troubles” and who were the source of “the troubles”, who were the contributory cause of the “troubles”. We are talking here about the senseless killings of large numbers of Guyanese - policemen, ordinary people, babies and a whole range of people.

4.35 p.m.

This was done under the guise of revolution.

And so he said on page 65:

“When Mr. Hoyte went to Buxton publicly on October 10, 2002, the purpose of the visit was to reassure the gunmen and their supporters that not all the well-known African Guyanese of the country were opposed to them. The most prominent of them was selected for the job. He was hailed by his stronghold constituents. In his speech, he did three remarkable things: i) he denounced those who were writing long letters against the actions of the gunmen, even though the writers could not find Buxton on the map; (ii) he attacked those who claimed that Buxton had become an encampment for the escaped prisoners and criminal suspects; (iii) he expressed the full solidarity of the People’s National Congress (PNC) with the struggle being waged by the fighters.”

Mr. Speaker, if this is not an indictment when a former President, the leader of a party, goes to Buxton and makes this speech and he claims the gunmen - because I can go on and read more... He said that Buxton/Friendship is not harbouring the prisoners but they were there. The police said so; Mr. Felix said so; he knew that.

There is another view of which party was the source of the troubles that led to the slaughter of many Guyanese. So all I am saying is that there was one view we heard on the 13th October, 2016, in this Parliament, but there are many other views. A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) or PNC does not come out well in the review by many others. In fact, they were a contributory cause for the trouble. And we have heard of a “mother of all inquiries”. The Government has a serious proclivity to doing inquiries. So, we should do the mother of all inquiries and then examine the role of individuals in that period.

In much of that period, when he spoke about the demoralisation, two Members who were former chiefs of staff are now with APNU. They were heading the Army in much of the period of the trouble and one was our dear Friend. He is sleeping; I think he finds me boring. But our dear Friend, the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Felix, was also the Commissioner of Police in the Guyana Police Force. And if there was any doubt about involvement, maybe we should really do that mother of all inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the second part of what was said: “It was a time of deception and cynical rejection of the £4.9 million.” I have here a speech published in the *Stabroek News* on 1st December, 2009. In fact, it was also in the *Guyana Review*. This article was by no other than President David Granger. He said, speaking about our People’s Progressive Party Administration:

“The administration also initiated various consultative measures – including establishing the Steering Committee of the National Consultation on Crime, the Border and National Security Committee and the Disciplined Forces Commission – to seek solutions to the unfolding national security crisis.

The administration then approached the British government for security assistance. President Jagdeo visited London in May 2002 and personally met with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to seek support for his counter-crime campaign. The following year, 2003, a UK Defence Advisory Team visited the country and produced a report on ways in which the capability of the Police Force could be enhanced. The next year, in October 2004, another Defence Advisory Team visited, as did a group of instructors to train members of the Police Force’s Tactical Service Unit to become the core of a Special Weapons and Tactics strike force.”

So, British people came here to train them.

“The next year, an eight-member team of officials from the Scottish Police Service and the English Police Service came to study the functioning of the Police Force. A Security Sector Defence Advisory Team visited and issued another report in November.”

And then on the following page, he says:

“For most of the past seven years, the Guyana Government has been receiving British Government assistance to reform the security sector and to support the improvement of the Police Force’s capability.”

Here we have the current President saying we took serious measures, including seeking external help, to address the crime situation. But what went wrong if we were working with the British all along? What went wrong with this particular project that was cancelled?

There were two reasons. The first is we believe that it had to do with ownership. The British suggested a structure that would have led to grave problems with domestic ownership of this programme and we had a major problem. And I know, in this mood now to sell out the whole interest of the country and farm things out... We are replacing Guyanese management at the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) with a team that we are paying \$1.8 billion to 14 people abroad to take over that. And for every little thing under the sun we are bringing in...

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have been speaking for 35 minutes and 31 seconds. You will have to...

Mr. Jagdeo: Yes, sure.

Mr. Speaker, another convention – I looked it up too – is that, in speeches, where one is responding to the Head of State, I saw that, in other Parliaments, there are no limitations on the Leader of the Opposition, but it is up to your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have exceeded the 30 minutes which you are obliged. I drew to your attention where you are in that regard.

Mr. Jagdeo: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We rarely get a chance to do this and so I thank you very much for the opportunity.

We have just decided on the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) that we want to do the 'green agenda'. So we again farmed it out to consultants not to develop it indigenously. I can understand the mood; when I said that we wanted local ownership, I cannot understand why some people would be so concerned.

The second reason was widely reported at that time, Mr. Speaker. If you go back and read the newspapers, then you will see that the British Government had asked us to do live firing close to an Amerindian community from their special forces next to the western borders with Venezuela and Brazil, and I said, "No." You can see that because, in the 50th year of our anniversary, we are still having differences of views on this matter when a sitting President seeks to protect the sovereignty of this country, its image, so that we do not look like we are a stooge.

The President spoke about the cancellation of this programme but what they did not say is that, in today's fight against crime, the biggest programme in the budget in the Ministry of Public Security is a programme for \$3.2 billion that the People's Progressive Party negotiated and left. So, they mentioned the one that got cancelled but did not mention that the Citizens' Security Programme is the biggest initiative this Government has going for its anaemic crime fighting position now.

Mr. Speaker, I move on. The President said several things. He said that the environmental policy...

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I know we have a difficulty. We are debating the policy and not an individual. We also have a difficulty because of our Standing Orders which states a certain thing. All of us have to bear that in mind when we are speaking. So, if we are discussing the policy, we should stick...

Mr. Jagdeo: I am making direct reference to the speech because that is what we are debating here. So, Mr. Speaker, I am quoting the speech here.

The President's speech states:

“The environmental policy will be remembered, forever, but not fondly for the administration's responsibility for the most destructive environmental disaster in Guyana's history - the catastrophic 2005 flood.”

So, we are being blamed for the 2005 flood – the great flood. Mr. Speaker, I am willing to accept responsibility for this if this Government, between now and anytime in the future, if there is a flood, does so; this Government must accept responsibility for it, too, as caused by it. If this is the logic, then that should be the logic to apply to this Government.

The President then went on to say, in his speech:

“The exaggerated emphasis on narrow elements of the Low Carbon Development Strategy obscured the absence of strategic thought and action. Guyana's rich

biodiversity, wildlife, wetlands, coastal zone, rivers were not adequately protected against the ravages of lawless logging, mining and solid waste mismanagement.”

The Wildlife Bill that came here that was passed by this National Assembly was substantially drafted by the PPP. On shore zone management, we had an entire programme called Shore Zone Management. We had a €4.2 million programme for mangrove regeneration with the European Union. We passed the Protected Areas Act, a comprehensive legislation which established two protected areas in Guyana. So, it is not true to say that the LCDS did not have a broad view. But even if that is the case, we go on to hear the President say:

“Guyana’s ‘green agenda’ is a comprehensive, multi-sectorial development programme. It is not limited narrowly to low carbon initiatives...

Guyana’s ‘green agenda’ will promote ‘green economic’ sectors such as the development of climate resilient agriculture, ecotourism and information communications technology and promote renewable energy generation.”

4.50 p.m.

On page 20 of a document that is on the Government’s website, *Transforming Guyana’s economy while combating climate change*, speaks to 2009-2013, starting the transition to a new economy. Let us look at renewable energy, Amerindian development, Amerindian land titling, expanding the digital economy and avoiding a digital divide, support for medium and small-scale enterprises and centre for biodiversity studies. The President said that Iwokrama is the centrepiece of the Government’s policy on the environment. But even the Act to bring Iwokrama to reality, the pledge made by then President Hoyte in 1989, was passed in 1996 under the People’s Progressive Party (PPP). Iwokrama has been a cost to the Treasury. We have had to put money into Iwokrama. Here we are making Iwokrama the centrepiece; we are setting up a centre for biodiversity studies, presented as new, and yet it is one of the major projects in our LCDS.

The Government talks about the other mega farms. Mega farms are here too and that is why we established Santa Fe. We spoke publicly about it. In fact, I remember addresses made when we said that, in the intermediate and Rupununi Savannahs, we were going to look at soya bean and rice cultivation. We had proposals for plantation forest which would add biomass so we could

get carbon credits from it. We had proposals for palm oil. We had proposals for a mixed type of cropping in the areas. These were real proposals. Sante Fe started it off. We also said that the savannah eco system was a fragile one, particularly as it relates to water, and that any large-scale farm would have to go through rigorous testing so that the fragile savannah ecosystem would not be destroyed.

Every single project the President mentioned as part of the green agenda, as part of new thinking – ICT, mega farms, centre for biodiversity studies, renewable energy – is in a document produced by the People’s Progressive Party. Should we not get some credit for that? Then, to cap it all, we hear that our LCDS lacked strategic thought and thinking. Then the green strategy of the Government is not being developed by the Government, like we did; it is being developed by consultants from abroad. That is egregious to our souls; farming out all of these things and the wholesale pontification from policies which are already here.

I move on. The President said:

“The undermining of public infrastructure by the encouragement of cronyism led to serious, costly, serial scandals as seen in the construction of the Kato Secondary School, the Hope Canal bridge, the river-front revetment at Kumaka, Barabina road and Moruka bridge, Supenaam Stelling and the still unusable Ministry of Social Protection building right here in High Street, Georgetown.”

The President said these were serial acts of cronyism and basically corruption. I concede that every single one of these projects the President mentioned has problems with quality and with underperformance. But one thing I can say is that every single one of these projects was tendered publicly. There was a public contractor and a public supervision firm which were hired to look after Government’s interest. If the bridge across the Hope Canal developed a problem because it was not properly designed – and you will come to that at some point in time – even though we hired the best skills to design and to supervise it, if you start blaming the Executive Members of the Cabinet, then we can go down that path. The President mentioned this matter and it is fair, but, in our response, we will say at least we publicly tendered the projects. Contrast this with the approach – and that is why I said it is so unfair – that was taken to rent the bond. The bond is \$14.5 million a month when VAT is added. There was absolutely no tender - a cover-up. That is

\$174 million a year. In three years of the contract, it would be \$522 million. We know where the office for this company is located. That would be \$522 million for three years for 6,000 square feet, a space that is smaller than this building. Assuming the Kato School has an amortisation of just 10 years and we compare it with the bond at \$174 million per year. If we multiply that by 10, that would be \$1.7 billion we would have spent on renting a piece of real estate this small. How do you compare the two? You complain about corruption and cronyism but you do not see that.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes more.

Mr. Jagdeo: It is the same with the Hope Canal. The Government spent \$400 million without any tender to do the Durban Park, a white elephant. It is malodorous. You are pontificating; you have these brazen acts of heist of the Treasury and malodorous contracts; and no public tender. Yet, there is talk about cronyism. Do the comparatives. How can you stand with a straight face and talk about these things for which we tendered. [*Interruption*] I have five more minutes but it is hard to speak.

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

We have heard that the Government inherited a large number of liabilities, including a list of judgements.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we must allow a Member to speak. Please proceed.

Mr. Jagdeo: Under this large number of liabilities which the President stated they inherited are Rudisa Beverage and Juices, BK International Inc. and several other judgements. He said that we inherited a settlement for \$1.4 billion with BK International Inc. I am contending that there was never any settlement. The Government could not inherit what was not there. Being truthful again, twice the Caribbean Court of Justice adjourned its proceedings and the (RUDISA) Company gave an undertaking that, if we amended the law, they would withdraw the case so there would have been no liability on the Rudisa matter. We came here to the National Assembly twice, and the Members in Opposition, now Government, voted against that amendment and exposed us to that liability. Even so, the Company admitted on the stand that it had under-invoiced and we asked that an offset be done with its tax liabilities but the Government has not done this. All these settlements pale into insignificance when one considers what was done with

the Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL) matter. We have settled the matter surreptitiously, with no public information, which would expose the Treasury to about \$80 billion of liability. If the Minister of Finance disputes that, then let him bring the figure. There was \$80 billion of liabilities which would make these judgements pale into insignificance, but we do not hear a word about how that would impair revenue and expenditure in the future and our ability to provide social services.

We heard about the National Insurance Scheme (NIS). The President said that we are obliged to provide another \$5.4 billion in bailout to NIS. What we have in escrow is the sale of the land from the Caribbean Resources Limited (CRL) which brought in about US\$20 million and about another \$13 million escrowed from Bosai. That is over \$30 billion dollars. That money is sitting there. It is more than the money we have made or provided to NIS. It is sitting in a bank account to come into CLICO's books later to clear liabilities. If the President had said that we had to make an advance while we are sorting out those issues, then it would have been fair. To deem it a bailout is totally erroneous.

We heard of \$4 billion subsidies to the rice industry. This National Assembly never approved \$4 billion of subsidies to the rice industry. Where did that come from? I saw a wonderful quote just last week in the *Kaieteur News* from the Chairman of the Board of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) who spoke about the great performance of Skeldon, the colossal failure that was described, colossal in gigantic magnitude and proportion. I saw the Chairman of the Board stated that this place had never functioned that well since it had been built. He stated that there was an output of 260 tons of cane per hour and that the punt dumper was fixed and it is running efficiently. Somebody needs to clear the message. We heard about the 2,000 acres of land which would be sold at \$30 million per acre, which will give us \$60 billion to clear liabilities. A lot of these liabilities are to State agencies; GuySuCo has liabilities which have been beneficial to State agencies like the Wartsila Plant which was bought and placed on GuySuCo's books to benefit the people here. There are a lot of issues. The story is not black and white. That is why I said that this narrative has been dominated by binary thinking, black and white.

5.05 p.m.

The situation is more complex than just approaching it in that manner. I think I would end there. I do not know if you are aware, Mr. Speaker, but, on the last occasion, when we did not come to the National Assembly, we were threatened by one Member that we would be subjected to enhanced prosecutions. Now the gloves are off because we did not come and listen to the President speak in the Parliament.

We believe in working together. We would support this Government's legislative agenda; we would support its public policy, if it brings benefits to our people. We want to work to enhance the collaboration between the Government and the Opposition. However, the speech dedicated about three lines towards working together, as if it were an afterthought, and four pages to criticism of the People's Progressive Party. The actions have to match the rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute remaining.

Mr. Jagdeo: The Government cannot say that it is for empowering local communities and doing political consultations and do what it is doing – not naming the Local Government Commission and making frivolous excuses for not putting it in place or imposing people on the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) which were tied. The rhetoric must match action. What we have seen from this comatose Government is no action and all rhetoric. If talk was valued anything and used to change lives, this Government would have gotten the prize for it.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now take the suspension for one hour. We would return at 6 o'clock. I want to remind Hon. Members that the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC) will meet right after we leave here.

Sitting suspended at 5.07 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 7.01 p.m.

Minister of Social Cohesion [Ms. Ally]: Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of this House, I stand here as a proud member of this Coalition. I would like to express appreciation to His Excellency, President David Arthur Granger, for his Address to the Parliament on Thursday, 13th October, 2016 and I take great pleasure in endorsing the contents adumbrated therein.

I wish to refer to a statement, which was made by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, in which he said that the President had an imposition on the Parliament. I want to say this: The President of this country has every right to come to this august body and to adumbrate Government's policies. It was not by accident that the Leader of the Opposition made such an analysis because that was expected. The Leader of the Opposition and the Members of the Opposition displayed total disrespect for the President when they walked out of the Parliament during his Address to this body.

I want to place on record that His Excellency will always come to this Parliament to adumbrate Government's policies, something that the PPP never did.

I want to also refer to a statement, which the Leader of the Opposition made, in which he said that the D'urban Park Development Project is a waste. I want to say to all the Hon. Members in the Opposition that, during their tenure, there was a forest. They are ashamed that we have turned that forest into something that the people of Guyana are proud of.

This Coalition Government has an abiding interest in the quality of life of every Guyanese, in public trust and in good governance in Guyana. I said, earlier, that I stand here as a proud member; a proud member because for us, 18 months old, a young Government, we have done remarkably well in all of the sectors, despite the state in which we inherited this country.

If we examine, carefully, our performance, we would see that what we have achieved in 18 months had not been achieved in 23 years. The fact that we are building public trust, I can say that we are on the road to good governance.

The President's Address pointed to what we had inherited as a Government, more specifically to the rice industry, the sugar industry, outstanding judgments to be borne by this Government, bailouts of enormous magnitudes, *un-investigated* assassinations, among others. I refer Members to pages 1, 2 and 3 of the President's speech.

It also focused on achieving a higher quality of life and a green path – a green agenda. I can proudly say that Guyana is moving forward under the David Granger Administration.

I want to focus on my remit, social cohesion. In his Address, His Excellency, President David Granger, said on page 8:

“We aim at the development of a cohesive society in which confrontation is replaced by cooperation. The removal of inequalities based on geography and ethnicity will lay the foundation for a better ‘quality of life’ for everyone. We will work to reduce prejudice and violence. We will fashion a multicultural society characterised by tolerance and mutual respect.”

We, as a Government, are cognisant that there are gaps which exist within our society among cultures, ethnicities and religions, as well as along other social, economic and political lines. Thus, bridging those gaps is imperative for peace, stability and sustainable development in this great nation of ours. The President’s statement reinforces how critical social cohesion is to the development of our nation as a whole. It is because when societies are socially cohesive, there are strengthened social relations, interactions and ties at community and national levels. There is a sense of trust, belonging, participation, respect and inclusion among citizens. [Mr. Ali: It is imagination.] You had better listen and learn. Stop the grazing. There are positive attitudes and behaviour toward diversity and there is evidence of peaceful co-existence among citizens. In cohesive societies, there are opportunities for upward mobility for all and, most of all, there is greater potential contribution for nation building.

The Ministry of Social Cohesion is in the process of working to realise these objectives, through a series of sensitisation and consultations in all 10 Administrative Regions throughout Guyana. These consultations are based on work which began at the Social Cohesion Round Table, which was held in September, 2015, towards preparing a five-year strategic plan 2017-2021 for promoting and enhancing social cohesion in Guyana.

These consultations have been conducted through an inclusionary democratic approach, in accordance with Article 13 of the *Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*, which stipulates that the principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens and their organisations in the management and decision making processes of the state, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision making that directly affect their well-being.

7.13 p.m.

We have engaged municipal leaders, regional leaders, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, Community Development Councils, private sectors, religious organisations, youth groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and many others. These sensitisation and consultation process entails two sessions, where persons are sensitised on the work of the Ministry to ensure that they have clarity on the social cohesion process, while the second session entails strategic consultation.

The methodology seeks to ensure that the socio-geographic diversity of Guyana is well represented and the critical mass of citizens from all regions is duly consulted, while ensuring that other ordinary citizens are able to share their ideas, expectations and contributions to the social cohesion strategic plan based on five thematic areas.

Just to educate some who do not seem to be able to grasp what I am saying, it is that supporting what the President has said in his speech on 13th October, 2016, I am merely indicating some of the things that we are doing towards achieving that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are on the floor.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir, in keeping with Your Honour's rulings consistently over the last 17 months ...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you rising on a Point of Order?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Could you quote from the relevant Standing Order and then you tell me what it is?

Ms. Manickchand: I believe it is Standing Order 40 (a), but I could be corrected by Your Honour.

Mr. Speaker: Are you rising on Standing Order 40 (a)?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Minister of Social Cohesion is referring to Members of this House as being incapable of understanding what she is saying. I am asking Your Honour to rule on that.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you. Hon. Member, please proceed.

Ms. Ally: I was at the point of outlining the five thematic areas focused on.

- economic equity and opportunities
- citizen safety and security
- social inclusion and tolerance
- inclusive and participatory governance, and
- harmonious ethnic and racial relations.

The first consultation commence in Region 10, Linden, on the 12th August. The staff of the Ministry of Social Cohesion has been strategically engaged with stakeholders over the past months in all ten administrative regions through sensitisation and consultation processes. These consultations have been extremely successful. I repeat that. These consultations have been extremely successful, Hon. Leader of the Opposition, in terms of the engagement of Members within the various communities to the process. These regional consultations have enabled us to gather valuable information directly from our constituencies on the implementable actions that could foster social cohesion in Guyana.

We are aware that some would have diverse views, including cultural perspective; some would have economic perspective, social and others. However, we would like to reassure the public that all perspectives are valuable and equally important to our strategic planning process. As we consolidate inputs for the strategic plan, we have been receiving both financial as well as technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the assistance of UNDP. We have recently established the social cohesion peer group. Most persons within this group was involved in our social cohesion roundtable and played instrumental roles in facilitating that process. These persons have volunteered to return to further facilitate in the formulation of our five-year strategic plan. This group has been facilitating in designing and

guiding the citizen consultation process for our social cohesion five-year strategic plan. Members of this group have been contributing their technical knowledge and experience...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it is an enquiry. I say that the motion is "Approval of Government policies in the President's address". I simply thought that I should remind you of that. Please, proceed.

Ms. Ally: I am merely explaining what are the policies and the activities that are supporting these policies by the Government.

Our five-year strategic plan is expected to complete before 2016. It is our hope that the formulation of our strategic plan on social cohesion would create an enabling environment, where diversities would be embraced, conflict resolved, networks and collaboration with stakeholder are strengthened equity promoted and decision making process resulting in equal opportunities and benefits for all.

Guyana is on the cusp of a new era as it relates to working for a unified society. All must be committed to the cause of national development. For this to be realised, it has to begin with the will to make social interaction, integration and harmony possible within and across diverse groups in our nation. Our Ministry has begun to initiate programmes to facilitate this, in an effort to work to reduce prejudice and violence and to shape Guyana into a multicultural society characterised by tolerance and mutual respect. The Ministry is putting in place effective processes to develop a community of shared values. We have begun to facilitate citizen working and learning together and promoting social interactions and integration. We will concentrate on national reconciliation and unity aimed at building a cohesive Guyana.

In this regard, in October, the Ministry of Social Cohesion commences its diversity education and inclusion of regional training workshops in Regions 3 and 4 and today workshops have concluded - take the names of the places - Diamond, Grove, Timehri, Kuru Kururu, Wales and Uitvlugt. A total of 22 workshops are expected to complete in all ten administrative regions by mid-December, 2016. Leader of the Opposition, do not look too worried.

This is the commencement of the first level of training for constituencies. They would continue as an integral aspect of our programmes. Specialised aspects of training, conflict management,

negotiation skills and training of trainer would be undertaken in the next round of training. The overall purpose of the training is for all participants to explore the negative internalised attitude, beliefs and stereotype that impact the ways in which they perceive themselves and others to develop opportunities for cross community understanding.

In addition to that, we had a series of discourses and sensitisation programmes with the Muslim, Christian and Hindus communities. As a result, core groups have been established and the Ministry is collectively working along with these groups to seek implementable programmes that could foster social cohesion in Guyana.

Sir, the evidence is clear. We, as a Ministry, are working tediously to realise our vision of a unified Guyana, a cohesive Guyana, where diversities are embraced; conflicts are resolved; equity is promoted and decision making processes result in equal opportunities and benefits for all.

Guyana is a beautiful multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation. It is imperative that our unique difference must be embraced by all. We must agree to break down walls that have been created, walls by virtue of categories we place ourselves and each other in. I urge you today to let us put aside all these negative attitudes that will impede the development and progress of our nation and agree to work to develop our nation. [Ms. Teixeira: Give us our day.]

You should stop talking about “give us our day”, because we have conceded to give you a day on the 21st of November, 2016, which you are not entitled to.

We as a nation must be willing to try new ideas and new reforms based, not ideology or political belief, ethnicity or cultural diversity, on what work gives us the best possible chance to lay the foundation to create a better quality of life for all.

7.28 p.m.

Social cohesion is the pillar for progress. It is the pillar for development. It is the pillar which will allow our country to grow. This coalition Government will continue to drive in this wonderful vehicle, the vehicle that will give all of us that “good life”.

Let me once again thank His Excellency for that stirring address which points the way forward for a positive green approach to a better life.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: I would request all other Members, who would make an intervention, to try to avoid the creativity which goes with the beginning of the policy of Government and using that to speak about their respective Ministries and then to come back at the end to close with the reference to the President's speech. It is possible that every Member in this House can do that, but let us restrain ourselves.

Mr. G. Persaud: I rise to make my contribution to this debate on the motion moved by the Hon. Prime Minister. I can assure you, Sir, that I will not be distracted by what was stated by the person who spoke before me, the Hon. Minister. I think that she took us down a lane and I am so happy that you have brought us back on plane. The talk is good, but it becomes bad when the talk is compared with the walk. That lane, which we went down, about social cohesion and the inclusionary approach to democracy, can be better answered if the Hon. Minister would tell this House sometime what would have been the attendance, the number of persons who attended those consultation workshops, and what the ethnic composition was of the attendees at those workshops. How many meals and drinks had to be distributed to the homes nearby?

The Hon. Member spoke to disrespect by the Members of the Opposition when they caused themselves to be absent from the address of His Excellency in this House. Respect is earned. I must say that the Members of the Opposition had every good ground to take the action that they took. On Wednesday last, the actions of the Members on this side of the House was vindicated. As I said, if the talk does not match the walk then there definitely will be a disconnect. Somebody will be crippled someway along the line. If you really want to benefit from the talk then you have to make sure that the walk is in sync with that talk.

Also, we are told here that, what was taken over, repeatedly said by the Hon. Prime Minister, repeated by the Hon. Minister Ally, the economy was bad which they took over. One would have accepted and one would have embraced such a statement. Sir, if you have taken over something bad and then the first big action was that six weeks down the road you put your hand deep down into that kitty, which you know was bad, you would have made it worse, then that is irresponsible leadership. That is not thinking about the people of this nation. That is thinking about you. I

hope that after that response, we would stop hearing about this bad economy. That was a statement that was made too in His Excellency's speech.

Both the Hon. Prime Minister and the Hon. Minister Ally spoke about the "good life" in Guyana and that Guyanese are better today. I think that the word "some" is missing. The word 'few' is better because the good life is for a few people who have paid themselves twice what those before them were getting. We were told [Mr. Greenidge: You should know about that.] Whatever you say will not distract me, Sir. I think to just get on,

Let me just close off my response to some of the things that the Hon. Minister Ally would have shared with us. I think she summarised her entire discourse by this statement that their constituencies are benefiting and they are happy. I think that would have encapsulated the entire definition for social cohesion, A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) style. I think the Hon. Minister has made it very clear and I must commend her for being sincere... [An Hon. Member (Opposition): ...and honest] ...and honest.

For the President's speech proper, there is this statement: "Your Government is committed to good governance". That is taken directly as a quote. This governance at the local government level has seen hand-picked Regional Executive Officers (REOs), appointed people, selected by a mechanism that conflicted with the advertisement put out by the Ministry of Communities, qualification requirements. These Regional Executive Officers are exercising powers and authority that are not vested in them and are crippling the work of the democratically elected people to serve at the Regional Democratic Council. We had an incident at the last sitting here, in which it was clear, that coming to this House for a supplementary provision, the Regional Democratic Council was unaware. This is the kind of governance we are talking about, where one individual, who is called Regional Executive Officer hamstrung the role of development of the Regional Democratic Councils. This is not applicable to all ten councils, I should add. It is for only seven of those councils. Regions 4, 7 and 10 do not have such a difficulty.

We talked about good governance mechanism and enabling and empowering the local arms of Government to function adequately. There are overseers who have been appointed and hand-picked in the same style. There are overseers who are being directed as to what course of action to take, conflicting with Chapter 28:03. That is what is happening in the local government arena.

This is the good governance that we talk about here, and supporting the local government organs. We talk about it, and it was only yesterday the Chairman of a Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), that is Kilcoy/Hampshire, had to put in public space a letter in the dailies stating that it got \$4 million subvention from the Ministry of Communities. It has submitted its programme and it was approved by the Ministry of Communities in September of this year. When it attempted to implement its programme, having received the approval from the Regional Democratic Council Region 6, the Deputy REO wrote and stated to them that the money has already been awarded by tender for works that it they were unaware of.

That is the kind of governance that we have here, with your Government committed to good governance. This is the wonderful governance that we are getting. With this statement, “Public policy will be undergirded by an inclusionary political process. The empowering of local communities through the holding of historic local government elections...” yes, these elections were held, but have they been completed? The answer is no. They are still pending out there six local authority area which have not got the will of their people because the Minister superimposed the chairperson and, in one case, a Mayor on the local authority areas. This is the kind of local government elections that we would have held. This is the kind of local government elections that His Excellency referred to. He said, “The derailment of public policy, marked by the previous administration’s bizarre determination not to conduct local government elections...” This statement cannot go unchallenged.

Local government elections were held in 1994, after a 25 years absence by many of the people seated over there - 25 years! In 1994 it was held. It was constitutionally due again in 1997. The laws of our country allow that the general and regional elections take precedence over those elections. Sir, you were a member of the commission when the local government elections were held in August of 1994. You were there still I think, when local government elections were due in 1997. Those elections had to be postponed to give way for general and regional elections. We know the aftermath of the 1997 General and Regional Elections. We know what happened on the streets of Guyana. We know what happened in Georgetown. We know about all that happened there.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you taking us down another lane?

Mr. G. Persaud: No Sir. I am responding to this statement. Let me quote again, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to be sure.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Sir. I am responding to this statement by His Excellency as in the *Hansard* here:

“The derailment of public policy, marked the previous administration’s bizarre determination not to conduct local government elections...”

That is what I am responding to, Sir. I am saying that after that aftermath of the 1997 General and Regional Elections there was a whole host of destruction in this country. Then came the Herdmanston Accord. It is that accord that prevented the holding of local government elections until it was held. It was that accord that allowed for the bringing into being of a bipartisan local government task force. I sat on that task force, and the Hon. Attorney General Mr. Basil Williams also sat on that task force and.

7.43 p.m.

We were there when the task force was declared deadlocked in 2009. The Constitution clearly stated that the next time Local Government Elections are held, they must be held under a new electoral system. The system did not come out from the bi-partisan task force until a deadlock was declared. On 13th September, 2010, His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo approved and assented to the new electoral system. We went ahead to have those elections. The then Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Corbin, stated that his party will not contest in those elections if we go ahead, unless all the other local government pieces of legislation were put together. It was for that reason that Local Government Elections were not held. We have to set the records straight repeatedly because, as the Hon. Minister Amna Ally stated, “Some of us apparently listen but we do not hear”. Some things may be above the heads of some of us so we cannot understand it and that is the reason we repeat what we are repeating.

We are hearing about the Local Government Commission. We are talking about local democracy and we are talking about holding the elections. The Hon. Prime Minister loudly and maybe proudly boasted, “We held Local Government Elections.” We are holding up the Local Government Commission and we are talking about good governance and empowering the people

on the grounds. **[Hon. Member:** I have not seen you do it.] You will continue to sit there and say why we have not done it. You are sitting in the chair of Government. **[Ms. Hughes:** That is why you are standing.] I am happy standing here; I am not dissatisfied. Think about yourself.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ganga Persaud.

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: You will speak to the Chair. If I must remind you again, I may ask you to take your seat.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Sir. I like your consistency. As I was saying, the talk sounds good. We can all come here and we can theorise; bring all sorts of theories here; pick up anything; Google what sounds good. When we analyse what is happening, all that we are hearing about are plans. Every time we get an Address from His Excellency, he shares with us six times six renewed visions; reminded visions and still thinking about what they will do. The Hon. Prime Minister has said very clearly to this House, “Do not hold us to promises.” I do not know whether these visions that are shared with this House are promises. If they are promises, God be with all of us here. The strategic plans that we hear that are being developed are being strategically prepared and we will get them at some strategic time. I do not know then how much of His Excellency’s speech are promises and should be disregarded. I only hope that, when the Hon. Prime Minister concludes his discourse, he will help me to understand what in the speech given by His Excellency are promises, should be disregarded and no one should be held accountable for, and what are actual policies and give us a time frame and timeline as to when these policies will bear fruit. There are a lot of statements that we have heard in this National Assembly over the six speeches coming from His Excellency. We are still waiting and hearing that these plans will be implemented and activated. The big issue is “when”.

My final point here this evening is one with regard to the local government system in our country. **[Ms. Ally:** Which part of the speech is that?] I have it here; search for it; it is the same page where you get your speech from.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

I am so sorry, Sir. I erred again; have my humble apology. Thank you, Sir.

In concluding, the local government sector in our country is really crying for help. There are a lot of manipulations in the local government system. When you put *lil* boy to do big man's job, you expect to get that kind of thing. When you do that, you expect to get all sorts of things. What we are getting is the local government system being destroyed on a daily basis. Governance is lacking in the local government sector. All these window dressings that we have, all these fancy terminologies that we use, are just being used while thinking that we are winning people out there. The people out there in local government are hurting. They are accustomed to good governance because they got that from the People's Progressive Party/Civic. What they are getting now is something that is really creating terror in their minds. They cannot manage; they cannot control; they cannot make decisions for local government development because there are persons who are determining things by their own will and way, guided by the Ministry of Communities, and are working in ways which are counterproductive to the plans and Budget. I say this: Sir, we are getting into budget and we will find that many of the statements that are made here by our questions will be vindicated. A lot of the programmes that are being approved and would have been approved by this National Assembly are not being implemented in the budget. They are being neglected and other projects are being implemented instead. I say to my Friends on the other side of this House that, if you really want to talk about good governance, then you have to practice it and start practising it from the top. Do not send your bills to be paid by the Regional Administration when you travel to the hinterland. You must pay those bills from your Ministries. We have recorded documentation where one Regional Chairman had to write His Excellency, pointing out that he is having serious difficulties getting his Council to meet because of expenditure that would have been taken out from his Region's budget to meet the costs of Ministers travel. Those are not story-telling. When we get to the budget, we will find it too. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

Vice-President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All Members of this august House, it is indeed a great pleasure for me to be part of this debate because I see it as a very important step in the right direction for good governance and a good life ahead.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, Ganga Persaud, a well-organised misleader...

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, let us try to avoid imputing improper motives to Members. Perhaps you may use another description, for example 'Hon. Member'.

Mr. Allcock: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw. I would like to move forward because we are on serious business here. I prefer to focus on this. As always, it is an honour to stand in this Assembly in furtherance of the Government's agenda.

We have in Guyana, today, a new culture of the President reporting to the Parliament. We no longer have to guess what Government plans to do for the year ahead.

Unfortunately, when the President made his presentation, all of us, as leaders and developers of this country, were not here in this Parliament. Our people out there expect that we would lead and lead respectfully. His Excellency briefly outlined for us the troubles which we endured and the price we paid for our troubles.

The alarming rate of murders and armed robberies over a short period of 10 years robbed Guyana of valuable human resources and caused much pain and suffering to families everywhere. Twenty-three million dollars bailout for GuySuCo in 18 months added to \$11 billion in liabilities due to Court judgements against the Government of Guyana and out of Court settlements denied communities of major developmental interventions. If this approximately \$3.4 billion had been divided among the 10 regions, things that need to be done within these various regions for the benefit of the people could have been done.

Despite these setbacks, we were able to get on with the development of our Guyana. We were able to raise the national minimum wage by 39.2% in seven months. We were able to raise the income tax threshold and increase the old age pension. Thank you, Hon. Minister of Finance Mr. Jordan, for your prudent stewardship of our economy. We are getting to know you more and it is making us even more proud.

Environmental Policy

In His Excellency's Address to us on the question of Government's Environmental Policy of particular importance to hinterland and Indigenous peoples are the issues of biodiversity and protected areas management. There would be at least one protected area in each of the 10 administrative regions, which is something to be really proud of.

7.58 p.m.

There is tremendous value in having protected areas because the more we could protect these areas, the better we would have a better life in this green economy; a better life for all and including mostly the Indigenous peoples who have been able to be there to ensure that real life exists and continues to exist.

President Granger is following in the footsteps of another visionary President, the late Hugh Desmond Hoyte. Iwokrama is God's gift to Guyana and Guyana's gift to the world, courtesy of President Hoyte. Mr Speaker, it is a well-known and generally accepted fact that the Indigenous peoples of Guyana have, for generations, been the keepers of the earth's lungs. It is well known that our Indigenous citizens have, over decades, helped to increase the world's population of scientists by providing traditional knowledge based on information that we have continued to live off of. And this has been given to students who have come here from all over the world. Iwokrama, as a biological laboratory at the service of the world, is indeed a tribute to such holders and sharers of Indigenous traditional knowledge to the world over the decades. It is strategically situated in the Guyana shield. And the Guyana shield, as we all know, is very important to that life of the many ecosystems that we have. The President's commitment to establish an international institute for biodiversity at Iwokrama is a tribute to those who have preserved our environment from time immemorial.

Public Infrastructure

As Government intensifies its improvement of aerodromes, bridges, roads and stellings, a number of targets will be achieved from the perspective of hinterland and Indigenous peoples. Ease of travels, communication improvement, agricultural development, education and healthcare delivery and ecotourism expansion, among other things, will be accomplished over time. Of course, this will have to be in partnership with all concerned and the more we could be able to gather and help the information flow from both sides of the House and others, we will be

able to overcome and make a better living for all those who live within the hinterland and Guyana as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, as simple as it may seem, this Government, by virtue of its attention to public infrastructure in the hinterland, will be tackling head-on the question of connection of hinterland and rural Guyana to coastal Guyana. We need that sort of interaction. We need to bridge the gap that has caused us to be divided for so long.

Farms will be connected to markets. People will be better connected to each other and better able to access goods and services. We will be addressing food security issues and improved delivery of essential Government services while, at the same time, boosting the village economies through ecotourism possibilities. The process of developing small business ventures, whether they be agro based, tourism based or traditional cottage industries, will require cheap energy. Government's emphasis on clean, renewable energy will bring to hinterland communities and villages the opportunity and resources to harness energy from natural sources. We can develop and we can exploit the natural resources without too much harm: getting seeds, tourism and things without destroying the natural resources.

For the mega farm, there needs to be continuous discussions, scientific information and a willingness to find the right way forward in these operations. These environmentally friendly and cost-effective energy supply sources guarantee our hinterland base and Indigenous peoples population equal opportunity in the areas of job creation, income earning, economic stability and access to information, among others.

A bridge across the Essequibo River by itself will be a tourism boost. It will also bring some relief to travellers via trail from Georgetown to Lethem and Brazil. This is what is meant by positioning people along the lines of self-determination. This is preparing the pathway to economic independence for hinterland based peoples and Indigenous peoples. It is this type of development which was studiously avoided between October, 1992 and May, 2015. While others say that the idea was there before, nothing was done to put it into reality and that is what we are going to be doing. Development which could make the Indigenous Guyanese peoples economically independent was believed to be a bad thing. Administering bribes - if that is the right word to use - was the preferred approach. This control mechanism, which was employed

for more than 20 years, has hurt our Indigenous peoples. The battering of a people into political submission is inhuman. We are all, at this moment, working towards changing this.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism offers a world of opportunity for hinterland based and Indigenous peoples. Already, several Indigenous peoples villages are moving successfully in the direction of establishing ecotourism ventures. The latest venture was a fishing expedition made possible through partnership efforts involving a foreign based tour operator, the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, the Protected Areas Commission and the Village Council and people of Masakenyari in Guyana's Deep South. No fish was removed from the village. The visitors killed not a single fish or wild animal. At the end of the expedition, the villagers earned. The visitors learned and had fun having broken some world record for catching the largest Himarah in the world and the environment was left as it was found. This is catch and release: you catch, weigh, photograph and you return it into the wild so that the fish is still there. It is a special art in fly fishing and I think a lot of persons might know.

There are a number of communities that are now in operation. Annai, Rewa, Yupukari, Warapoka, Fair View, Karasabai and Surama are among the villages which are capitalising on ecotourism as a sustainable economic and environmentally friendly business operation. This is why we need to allow our people to gain access to badly needed funds and to be able to protect the environment while doing so.

Indigenous leaders have gone so far as to seek professional assistance to draft legislation which is intended to govern how sport fishing is regulated. It is clear that hinterland residents and Indigenous peoples repose tremendous confidence in this Administration. They are seeing themselves as important to the process of community development which would in turn help to drive national development. No more should people say or question what it is that the Indigenous or hinterland peoples are doing for national development. We have always protected the environment and we would like to be a part of this whole process of national development by bringing the hinterland to the coast in terms of relations in the various operations.

More and more, Indigenous Guyanese are moving towards self-determination and economic independence. One sees clearly that Government's policies, as outlined by His Excellency, are

geared to motivate citizens into action in their own best interests. The improvements of our hinterland public infrastructural facilities can and will only help to expand this sector, bring economic benefits to villages and improve the quality of life of our Indigenous peoples, and, to do this, we all have to focus on the way we do this together. And I think each and every one of us here wishes to have a good life. And to have that good life, we have to understand that Government and the President are for all Guyanese and not a section of Guyanese.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that we all look towards this green economy; look for this life that we so badly need, and we could all do it together. We had a chance for 23 years that was only catering for a few, leaving our people being intimidated and divided in communities. Let us now come together to bring our people back together to work towards enjoying that good life.

Thank you, very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Charlie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members in this august House.

I too rise to make my contributions on this debate but, before I proceed right into the subject, I would just like to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs for a fine report to the House. Better could have been done in that report.

The Minister alluded to healthcare for the Indigenous peoples in the hinterland. But I want to remind the Hon. Minister, have you recently visited the Lethem Public Hospital and checked the pharmacy and health centres? I recently learned that you were in Deep South and handed out some drugs with one...

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, approval of Government's policies in the President's Address is what we are dealing with.

8.13 p.m.

Every Hon. Member has sought to extend the boundaries because you can twist it to let it be Government's policies while you proceed - I will borrow Hon. Ganga Persaud's term - down a lane. We are all doing that; it does not matter how innocent we look. I will ask Hon. Members to use restraint and focus on the issue before the House.

Hon. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am making reference to a good life that the President alluded to in his speech made on 13th October, 2016 in this august House. Let me go back to my region.

In his report on this debate, the Hon. Minister did not allude to the good life when he distributed old all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) to a sub-district in Region 9.

I have read the Address of His Excellency to the National Assembly and concluded on a perspective that it is crystal clear that the speech was a polished one with text book policies. More so, the Government of the day has the responsibility to execute the very Government policy and ensure it is applied and works. But it is frightening with the non-relevant outbursts and comical actions. In some cases, they are in breach of process and abuse of power but they are speaking about good governance.

His Excellency, in his Address, alluded to the quality of life, good governance, national unity and social cohesion. It is a fact that every leader expects the good. What we are having today from this Government is the opposite. The execution is opposite. To justify this, the Government is speaking of transparency and accountability when every passing day the laws are breached. The Government today speaks of value for dollar when the Commissions of Inquiry (COIs) are paid and recommendations are made and disregarded. The Government speaks of the rule of law when the Executive is doing the work of the Judiciary by setting up prosecution teams. Is this good governance? The Government speaks of independent and autonomous constitutional bodies, but, recently, the budget of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) was cut. How can GECOM function? Where is the good governance?

The Government speaks of a better life for the working class in this country when it increases and brings on new taxes. Do you not know that the masses are hurt by this? Chasing vendors out of work and taking away the livelihood of farmers in our country: are those acts a good life for our people? Where is the vision? Where is the national drive? Where is the creativity for young people, innovative ideas and jobs? You can tell me that the Hinterland Employment Youth Service (HEYS) Programme is on but I must say that it is a limp duck at this time again. I have

not heard anything alluding to the HEYS from the Hon. Minister - I do not want to give the details until the appropriate time - and, more so, the will power to action.

It is clear that the Government has a phobia of failure and the masses are saying this. It is a fact that the Hon. Minister of Social Cohesion alluded to cohesion meetings across the country, but the meetings are held with just party members.

We heard of the 100-day plan. I have the document here. It speaks of good governance. To date, the 100-day plan cannot be fulfilled. The masses are the judges on the good life. I would like to remind the Government that *self-praise is no recommendation*. In the same breath, I urge the Government, *as you talk the talk, you walk the walk*. The writing is on the wall - the writing of failure and the writing of incompetence. The masses are seeing it.

In closing, I would like to urge the Government to *practise what it preaches*. With this, I close my case. Once again, I urge the Government to *practise what it preaches* for the betterment of our people, and to deliver its promises to the masses of this country.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a list of 22 speakers. Of that number, so far, six have spoken. The time is 8.20 p.m. We have a half of an hour break between now and 9.00 p.m. Our regular Sitting should end at 10.00 p.m. It is in the hands of Hon. Members.

The next speaker is the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been brought forward. It is absolutely not a problem at all.

We welcome this opportunity to debate this motion which has been brought by the Hon. Prime Minister as it relates to the speech to this National Assembly by his Excellency the President on 13th October, 2016. Sir, you would agree with me that a speech that is given by the President to the House, which was supposed to have enlightened us as it relates to the policy direction which the Government is going or plans to go, is a speech which should be treated, and a debate of it which should be treated with great regard and respect, particularly by giving notice so that Members of the House could properly prepare for such a debate.

I sat here this afternoon and listened to the Hon. Minister of Communities who was actually saying that he was ambushed by a question that was put to him, as it relates to the Order Paper, under the heading, Oral Questions Without Notice. He said he did not have enough time. When we were expecting to debate this at some other time, we were given a day's notice. Even with a day's notice, we are ready, willing and able to debate this matter.

While my Colleagues will contribute to different aspects, I want to speak specifically to the very limited reference of the President to the question of social cohesion:

“We aim at the development of a cohesive society, one in which confrontation is replaced by cooperation. The removal of inequalities based on geography and ethnicity will lay the foundation for a better quality of life for everyone. We will work to reduce prejudice and violence. We will fashion a multicultural society characterised by tolerance and by mutual respect.”

Those are the words of the President on page 9 of his speech.

There are a number of things I want to speak about or say here tonight. I think it was the late Dr. Miles Munroe who said, in his book, that, if you do not know where you are going, any road takes you there. In reading this presentation, I asked myself some specific questions. What did it really say? Where are we going as a country? What is the legislative agenda that will get us there? What are the actions which will be taken on the part of the Government to get us to that destination?

8.28 p.m.

I have searched this document to find answers to these questions. I listened very attentively to the Minister of Social Cohesion, who brought a progress report on the work of her Ministry, as it relates to achieving this cohesive society.

I did say in this House before, in my budget debate in August, 2015, that it is my considered belief that the Ministry of Social Cohesion is a re-creation of the Ministry of National Mobilisation. What it is doing around the country is political work using state funds.

[Mr. Patterson: What did you do with the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC?)] I will tell you now.

In 1997, which was referred to as the decade of troubles, when we had all of the troubles in this country as it related to the political outcome, which people were not happy with, there was the Herdmanston Accord. That led to constitutional reform which recognised that part of the problem in our country was the differences that existed amongst our people and that a constitutional arrangement should be put in place to ensure equal opportunity and equal access for all Guyanese.

When we talk about social cohesion, we have to talk about shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities. When there is a situation in which, after the elections of 25th May, 2015, our country is more divided than it has ever been and that division is being felt in the barber shops, the hairdressing salon, the marketplace among the vendors, and even among the middle class, we must ask ourselves if, in this policy framework, our people really feel as though they belong. I know who feels as if they belong. It is that particular class of people who are enjoying what my good friend, who should have spoken before me, the Hon. Member Mr. Joseph Harmon, described as the “gravy train”. Where is the sense of belonging?

If we are going to talk about social cohesion, we must talk about social inclusion. In Guyana, what we are experiencing, right now, is social exclusion. If there is going to be social cohesion and we are going to have a cohesive society, which has been spoken about here by the President and has been embellished by the Minister of Social Cohesion, we must have participation by all people, from all sectors and from all aspects of society. It is not by a special group or a special segment of the society. We must have a recognition that represents all of the people. We will have a problem, on this side of the House. One of the first decisions of an executive Government was a policy signed to remove from employment 1,972 Amerindians. How could we be talking about social cohesion when such an action took place? How could we talk about social cohesion when people are being removed from their jobs on the mere perception of political affiliation, when the Constitution guarantees freedom of association? [*Interruption from the Members of the Government.*] I am fully aware that in a debate like this, people get uncomfortable when things are being spoken. I am not surprised.

Since the question of what I did when I was at the ERC was asked, I would tell you what I did. It is in the reports in the Parliament which I had handed over to the then Speaker. We investigated

– the reports are there – economic opportunities. We checked to see if there was discrimination as it related to economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I do not think that a Member is called upon to shout above the voices of his colleagues to be heard. We really have to have control. There is a line which Martin Carter said, “All are involved, all are consumed”. I would say that all have sinned and come short in respect of that. Let us simply allow each Member, according to the Standing Orders, to speak.

Bishop Edghill: If we are going to have social cohesion, we must ensure that all Guyanese have access to goods and services that are being provided. There is a report in this Parliament, which Hon. Members could read if they did not read, as it relates to an investigation and what was done as it relates to the award of economic opportunities. The research was done as it relates to public procurement, with special emphasis on openness and fairness. I will speak on public procurement just now.

There was a third report, which I handed over to this House, as it relates to opportunities for land distribution, whether it was for housing, whether it was agricultural purposes, whether it was forestry or whether it was for mining, to see who was having access and if any group was being denied. The findings are there. [Ms. Ally: You wrote the reports.] No Madam. These reports were done by researchers for whom there was public advertisement.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you speaking on the subject that we are on?

Bishop Edghill: I am speaking on the subject, the President’s policy about social cohesion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, my question was rhetorical. I am sure that every Member here would say yes. Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Not only did we look at employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors, but we also examined, and made public to this Parliament, what was happening as it related to academic opportunities, who were getting scholarships, who had the opportunity to go overseas and study. I would ask Hon. Members to read those reports and see what obtained then and let us compare it to what is taking place now.

We are talking about reforming the public service. The President spoke about it. There was the establishment of a Public Service Staff College. It became public who comprise this staff college. Up until now, no Member of Government has answered the public's question: How were the people recruited for the Public Service Staff College? How could the Government talk about social cohesion? How could there be social cohesion when there is such an imbalance, when there is such an ignoring, when there could be no real participation, involvement and engagement with the general society and when it appears as if only one segment of the society, one class of people, or one group of people are benefiting as against all Guyanese? Let us go out there and tell Guyanese that our society is united and that we are having the "good life for all". They would tell you who is having "the good life".

I am happy that there is some thought to us building a cohesive society. Certainly, I am saying that much more needs to be done. If we are going to talk about confrontation being replaced by cooperation, that is very nice language. I agree with that. I agree that we should break down walls and build big bridges, but we must put people who would operate in the letter and the spirit of this document; the letter and the spirit of building bridges and breaking down walls, not people who are creating divisions within communities.

For years in this country, religious groups lived and worked together. As a matter of fact, inter-religious cooperation became a hallmark of achievement in this country. What is happening now? I do not want to reveal all of the things which are discussed at other forums, but I can tell you that in all of the religions in this country, there are now fractures. Groups which came together, putting aside their differences, are being unable to do what they did when the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) was in power. There are big divisions which exist, whether it is in Christianity, whether it is Hinduism, whether it is or Islam. It is because what the Government has done is to mobilise people, politically. It has mobilised people, politically, it has sought to endorse which church is good and which church is not bad. That was said in this House. Which church one must go to and which church one must not go to was said in this House. If we have leaders, in this House, who are dividing people and sanctioning and demonising various faiths, are we talking about social cohesion? That is why at those big fancy activities, which cost thousands if not millions of dollars, when you check the attendance, you would see who is participating. It is a very small group. We were successful as a country. There is a report, in this

Parliament, called the Multi-Stakeholder Forum Report. Sir, if you read that report, you would see what happened throughout the ten administrative regions of this country when we sought to bring people together.

There is a second report, the *Report on the Intra-Community Dialogue* which was done at the community level. You would see, Sir, how our people were coming together. We do not claim that we had overcome all of the difficulties, but there were genuine efforts being made in various communities cross the divide, in the various Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) at the regional levels and there were even political engagements among the political parties to help with social cohesion.

8.43 p.m.

How could the Government's policy, that was made known to us on the 13th April, be taken seriously, if when the 33 elected Members of the Government's side of the House refuse to even allow the parliamentary mechanism for consensus building to work, which is called Special Select Committees. This is where complex matters that come before this House are referred, to have consensus building and to get something that both sides could agree on. What we have seen is reluctance, even with the mechanisms that have been put in place for consensus building at the parliamentary level have been rejected by the Executive. Then we come and talk about social cohesion.

We have to do better and I agree that, in our society, we need to see much more efforts being put into getting our people to work together. But, if our people are going to work together, at the fourth paragraph of the President's speech it is stated that:

“Public trust encourages active citizen participation in society and the economy”.

Sir, we have to get the public and the citizens to trust lawmakers. It means that the explanations that we give about policies must be consistent. Citizens cannot hear one thing today and something else tomorrow, depending on who is speaking. There are times when nothing is being heard at all. When questions are being asked, the response is “I do not have to answer that; I do not have to report to you; that is not your business; it is our time now; a fresh approach”. How could we have public trust? Public trust means that, when elections are finished, people must

have the assurance that the Government that is in power is governing for all of the people. It cannot be “our time now” and “we are looking after our people”.

The President also, in his Address, spoke about public infrastructure and the implementation of planning units. Then he went on and said:

“Public contracts are a key concern. We will seek international support to streamline our procurement systems and methodologies within Ministries and Budget agencies. A Bid Review Committee has been established and has begun work. The Public Procurement Commission will be soon brought into existence to improve the integrity of public procurements”.

It is either that somebody did not advise the President correctly or that something is missing. In the Procurement Act, Article 17 (3) it states:

“When the Public Procurement Commission is established, the responsibilities of the National Board shall be limited to those provided for in subsection (1), and all other responsibilities listed in this section shall be the responsibility of the Public Procurement Commission”.

What this is actually stating is that public procurement will not fall under the purview of a minister. The management, the Administration and the architecture for public procurement would now be placed in the hands of an independent, impartial and constitutional body.

The *Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana* in Article 212 indicates the functions of the Public Procurement Commission. The speech of the President gives the impression that the establishment of a Bid Protest Committee is something of significance and a hallmark achievement. What is needed is not a Bid Protest Committee, but the Public Procurement Commission. Now that we have a Public Procurement Commission, it is not the job of the Government to be streamlining procurement systems. It is that of the Public Procurement Commission. I am saying that, as a policy position, the Government should take their hands out of public procurement in keeping with the Procurement Act. A law that the Government fought for and the amendments that it made that even Cabinet’s no-objections are to be removed. I do not know how, as a policy position, there would be the seeking of international support from the

Government because that is the job of the Public Procurement Commission. We, sincerely, hope that this newly established commission would be allowed to do its work as an independent and autonomous body and not be subjected to the direction and control of any other agency.

Under the rubric of public security, the President had this to say:

“Your Government intends to make Guyana safe for this and future generations. We will do so not only by combatting crime and criminals but in uprooting the causes of crime and their link with transnational crime.”

The President also spoke about the establishment of the National Security Committee and the National Anti-Narcotics Agency (NANA). Nowhere in this policy framework that was set out, we were advised of what is happening with the Citizens Security Programme II, of which the Hon. Member, the Minister of Public Security, told this House that he was putting in the cameras and all the rest of it. The reason why we are asking is because we know, having completed Citizens Security Programme I, which was an US\$18 million Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funded programme, there was a successor programme of which this Government inherited, Citizens Security Programme II, which was designed to deal with crime and criminality even at the community level and to deal with the unemployed youth.

Under the Citizens Security Programme I, there was the establishment of a Crime and Social Observatory, which give reports that comprised several different institutions where there was the determination of crime. I happened to have been a member of that group and had worked extensively with the professionals across agencies. Sir, this dreaming about the narcotic trade as the main contributory factor towards crimes and the mother of all crimes, was not the information that came from the research that was done and the information that came into that lab. We have to deal with what is happening in the communities.

Right now there is a situation where one cannot sleep in one's home. People are afraid to sleep because of the upsurge in crime. One of the things that was clear is that, when there is a lack of economic opportunities in communities, it leads towards an upsurge in crime. With the measures and the economic hardships that have been brought to this country with the kind of management that is taking place in our society, one hears the vendors saying that if they cannot sell then they have to thief; one hears the ordinary barber, who is not getting business because people cannot

afford to go to the barber and the hairdresser, saying that they have to do something else. Just merely having top-heavy interventions, and not dealing with what is happening at the ground, creates serious problems. Sir, I would hope that we hear about what is taking place with the programme that was inherited from the Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government - Citizens' Security Programme II - particularly, with the component that deals with youth and the challenges of youth in the various communities. I would suspect that we could have the cameras to see the thieves, but we must be able to eliminate that desire. We must be able to work on reducing the propensity to go in that direction.

I think that as it relates to this policy, much more needs to be addressed.

When I look at page 2, this is what the President said:

“The evidence of the impact of the man-made criminal crisis is still visible. The damage is most manifest in the demoralisation of the public and security services, the erosion of public trust and the lowering of the ‘quality of life’.”

The people of Guyana, the citizens of the Guyana, want to know what will be done to reduce the fear that exists in our communities and the hardships that people are going through. We want to know specific policy direction that will manifest itself in direct action that would be able to have impact and specific outcomes. One of those things is job creation and not job losses.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have been speaking for 32 minutes and 39 seconds. I will allow you three minutes more to wrap up.

8.58 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you Sir. The issues that need to be addressed in Guyana today are not nice sounding speeches with good sound bites that could catch headlines. The issues that need to be address are the issues that affect people, their families and where they live. In this country, at this time, we need to have a more cooperative approach. I would dare say that Guyana is not the property of any political party and it must not be treated like that. We need to have a process.

Article 13 of our Constitution encourages citizens' participation and we should be working in that direction. Whether it relates to fixing the problems of our economy, casting blame and trying

to make somebody look bad, they do not solve the problems. When I am finished reading this address and I see the litany of woes, it is just considered an excuse for not performing or not delivering. For example, it cannot be done because of all the problems that the PPP left. The Government was the one that had asked for the job and now that it has the job, the people do not want to hear what was not done. The people want to hear what the Government will do to fix it. I will say that this Address to the nation was deficient as it relates to those matters.

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

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Ms. Hastings]: I would like to take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency, President David Granger, on his shrewd and visionary plan to take this country forward, as outlined in his remarks to the National Assembly.

As a Member of Parliament, I think that this policy document that is bestowed upon us by His Excellency clearly outlines the path to prosperity for this nation and should definitely be used as a tool for policymakers in the crafting of stratagems to deliver on the good life that we all yearn for.

Before I begin my presentation in support of this visionary plan, I would first like to avow that I was truly astounded by the Opposition's press briefing, immediately following the boycott of the President's Address to the National Assembly at the reconvening of Parliament. They began pillaring His Excellency's speech without even listening to its content. It is as if they have a crystal ball on the other side of this House that we are not aware of.

I do understand that the first part of this speech did spur resentment, or as some would put it, it did get under their skin, since there is nothing to be proud of given that the worst time in our history was under their tenure. An era characterised by the presence of phantom squads, execution styled killings, narco-trafficking, armed robberies, *et cetera*, a system of Government that ruled with an iron fist.

Unlike the Opposition, the Government remains steadfast and committed to improving the overall well-being of our people and to label the vision, set-out by the President, as unbecoming, hopelessly lacking vision and specifics - as outlined by one of the Members of the Opposition

and failing to define a viable framework. Let me remind this honourable House that the word “policy” is not a tightly defined concept, but a highly flexible one used in different ways on different occasions. It is the procedure(s) that are specific methods employed to express policies in action.

There is nothing unbecoming about this strategic vision set out by the President. For example, one does not have to be an economist to notice the housing bubble that was brewing under the past Administration. Thanks to this Administration, the bursting of the bubble was shunned. Speaking about the economic situation of the past, I would like to make reference to an article published by the *Guyana Times* newspaper on 15th October, 2016 entitled,

“Jagdeo reacts sharply to Granger’s criticism”.

In the article, the Hon. Member sought to discredit the President’s description of there being a parlous economic situation when the Government had changed in 2015. My question is, if the economy was indeed strong as they sought to claim, why was there an increase in non-performance loans as outlined in the Bank of Guyana Annual Report for the year 2015? [Ms. Teixeira: You are getting mixed up.] I am looking at the half-year report for 2015. If we were to look at the aforementioned report, another key indicator that produces similar jittering effects is the decline in private consumption since 2013. According to the report:

“Private consumption expenditure decreased by 2.8% attributed to weaker consumer confidence, coupled with lower income earned from loggers, small miners and private contractors.”

Not to mention that the decline started since 2013. So are these not all signs of a parlous economy? Well, the Bank of Guyana Half-Year Report for 2015 attested to this and painted another gruesome economic picture. According to the report, in comparison to June 2014, forestry activities declined by 24.5%, the mining and quarrying sectors contracted by 17.4%, while total gold declaration decreased by 16.2%. Are these not all substantial claims of a *rickety* economy that was on the verge of collapse?

Allow me to expound on another policy initiative that was outlined by His Excellency in his speech to ensure a good life for all our citizens, known as the Green Pathway. If my memory

serves me well, in the same article published by the *Guyana Times* newspaper, the President's speech was also labelled as being out of touch with reality and having very little relevance to people's lives. How could the Green Pathway, or as some may want to call it the Green Economy, is out of touch with reality or have little relevance to the people's lives? Did the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) not have similar objectives with the Green Economy Initiative, but could not materialised because of the gross level of corruption that was plaguing the programme?

Climate change is everybody's business. Cutting greenhouse gas emissions is a global objective. The implication of climate change is conspicuous and describable around the world. More countries are witnessing record-breaking temperatures.

According to Climate Change Vulnerability Index for the Latin American Region, Guyana is ranked highly vulnerable with its coastland areas being considered as extremely vulnerable. This should be of great priority for the Opposition, since Pradoville is located on the coast.

Even though Guyana has a relatively low carbon footprint, the different benefits of a green economy to our economy, as a whole, will be in the reduction of imports and an increase in the foreign exchange reserve. Currently, our country imports on average US\$506 million worth in fuel and lubricants, according to the 2015 Bank of Guyana Annual Report. In addition, the conservation of our pristine forest will aid in the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions.

So my question again is how could this phenomenon be out of touch with reality? I would like to agree with the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, "If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there". It is that same road that the Guyanese electorate demonstrated that have the Member over there on the other side of the House.

In conclusion, I wish to quote from page 12 of His Excellency's speech:

"The two sides of this House have not always disagreed. They have found common ground in the pursuit of the common good at times. The avenues for compromise and consensus remain open."

It is my hope then, that this National Assembly approves the policies and plans adumbrated by His Excellency.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you Mr. Speaker and good evening to everyone. Mr. Speaker, I have actually prepared a speech to present before the House to deconstruct the President's presentation to our National Assembly. But, after listening to all of what the Government has been reading to us this evening, there is a physiological disease called Psychological Groupthink and I think that is a disease that is pervasive in this Government.

Psychological Groupthink is where a group of people, in their haste to harmonise and to conform, end up making irrational decisions that lead to dysfunctional decision-making. I think that what obtains right now in this Government is a heavy dose of an illness called Psychological Groupthink.

As I move on, and I have a lot to say about what is taking place in this country. But just to sum up all that was said before me in the speeches to our National Assembly, I could surmise that whatever was presented lacked vision; that there were no clear policy initiatives; that the substance that ought to have been derived for the people of Guyana was nowhere in the presentation; that many of the initiatives were glossed over; those initiatives were not pro-poor; that the structural basis of what was presented before us was filled with platitudes; I think that the presentations to our National Assembly were not specific on amelioration initiatives, on measures and even on incentives to move our country forward.

9.13 p.m.

So, for all intents and purposes, I want to join with the many others before me who have, in no uncertain terms, as they have described many times that "this Government is living in a bubble." The Government continues to practice and promote everything else amongst themselves without treating to the citizens of this country.

Let us look at what is taking place with crime. Only this morning, a friend of mine on Facebook posted:

"My friend's father was shot and robbed today outside of a city bank. I cannot *[expletive]* believe this is the life we live here in Guyana.

What the *[expletive]* is Minister of Public Security doing to curb this nonsense?"

This is what is taking place in our country and yet, the Government continues as though all is well. This is what a young businessman stated:

“When them bandits come with them illegal guns and rob you and kill you, beat your family, take your earnings, a person who pay taxes, the Leader is not saying anything but when a licensed firearm holder kills one bandit in his property at 2.00 a.m. in the morning he wants to prevent people with status and qualifications from obtaining a firearm.”

Then he states:

“Smfh”.

I would not explain what that is.

“Only God knows what Guyana is turning out to be.”

This sums up what is taking place in our country.

One of the challenges of this Government is the type of leaders that it has. There is something in politics called *flip flopping*. There was a time when the Leader of this House spoke eloquently on behalf of the Peoples Progressive Party/Civic and now seeks to speak eloquently on behalf of the Government. In 2006, at rallies in Lusignan and Good Hope, this is what the Leader of the House said...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, is this a part of your discussion?

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am relating this to public trust because we have to trust our leaders and the relationship that we have with our leaders. The development of this country is built on public trust.

Mr. Speaker: We have to trust everyone in this House, Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Yes, Sir. So, this is what was said. A son may walk away from the house but he will always return. I refuse to be a *nemackaram*. It further went on to state, based on the vision of this document; the Leader of the House said this regarding the type of people...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I think there is a condition which allows you to refer. If you cannot give the origins of that, it is best that you do not.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Speaker I did say...

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: You would always do the Chair the courtesy of remaining silent when the Chair is speaking. Thank you. Please proceed.

Mr. Dharamlall: This is what was said regarding vision.

“Unlike the PPP that relies on a positive campaign based on its record in Government, the Peoples National Congress (PNC) took the negative road. It revealed a lack of vision and refused to see the bigger picture. They became obstructionist...”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, which publication did you quote that from?

Mr. Dharamlall: This was in a speech that the Hon. Prime Minister made in the 2006, at a rally in Good Hope.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you may paraphrase, but you will not quote.

Mr. Dharamlall: Okay, thank you Mr. Speaker. In that speech also, it spoke about the PNC's performance. It stated that the PNC cannot get rigging out of its psyche because it is part of its nature. It says too, that the shadows of the past have enveloped the PNC to such an extent that it has become insensitive to the feelings of the people. What is taking place in this Government right now because of the “policies” that the Government is pursuing, there is no regards for the feelings of the people of this country.

As I move on from trust, let us look at what the documents states. The document speaks about a good life.

“We aim at the development of a cohesive society in which confrontation is replaced by cooperation. The removal of inequalities based on geography and ethnicity would lay the foundation for a better quality of life for everyone.”

This is not correct. If we feel that the future of this country is only based on the geography and ethnicity of what is before us, that statement is the basis of ethnic division in this country, when one takes it to the logical end.

For me, when the Government speaks about cohesion, it must not limit itself just to ethnicity. Cohesion cannot be built by one group of people or by the words or sermons of some leaders. In my support, that this document lacks vision and that this presentation offers nothing for the people of Guyana, there is also something else, when we speak of a green economy. When one does a venn diagram of what a green economy is, it speaks about sustainable management, the environment, economic development and social development. At the intersection of those, is where the green economy is. But for this Government, and according to the Hon. Minister, Ms. Dawn Hastings, who, just a few moments before me, spoke glowingly of conservation, there is a fundamental difference between conservation and sustainable management of our resources.

If the Government is so focused on conservation, I would like to enlighten Minister Ms. Dawn Hastings, who is from Kako in the Upper Mazaruni and our Hon. Vice-President from the North Rupununi, himself, that it is one of the leading proponents of the LCDS, having sat for quite a number of months or years as a member of the Multi-Stakeholders Steering Committee of the LCDS.

The President, in this document, said that we are going to be putting up two million hectares of land for conservation. That is almost five million acres or more than that of the land in Guyana, of our forest and of our wetlands. Maybe the Minister of Indigenous People’s Affairs is not aware, but where in Guyana is this five million acres or two million hectares going to be? Is it going to encompass our Amerindian villages? Is it going to encompass State lands available for agricultural development? So, that is why I was saying that there is a difference between sustainable management and conservation. The Government, I do not think, understands what that means.

The document also speaks about alternative agriculture. Only recently, a few weeks ago, the Coconut Festival was being celebrated. In the speech that Minister of Business made at the Opening Ceremony of the Coconut Festival, he said that, in support of tourism, the Coconut Festival is adding fun and flavour to this country. How outrageous can we be, when we speak about the future of this country and saying irresponsible things like that?

I was also recently at the launch of the town day in Rose Hall, when one of the Leaders of this Government and State said that we could improve tourism or eco-tourism in the Corentyne, by going up the Canje River, because there are many animals, flora and fauna. That is what this Government is speaking about. We are in Berbice and we are not speaking about rice, sugar, and opportunities for young people, but we are preaching to the Berbicians to go up to the Canje River to view flora and fauna, as part of eco-tourism, the new economy and the new vision for this country.

While we were growing up, our mothers always used to tell us to not break promises. In the Prime Minister's opening remarks on this debate, he basically said, from the outset, that they could not meet many of their promises because, when they came into Government, the situation was not how it was; one has to admit. Why must we allow a leader to send mixed messages to our country? I do not feel that anyone who sends mixed messages to a country should be qualified as a leader.

Moving forward, I would like to, again, endorse the sentiments of the Leader of Opposition Leader that this whole issue of crime and history of crime need to be discussed and have public attention. One of the tricky things about what we have before us is the effort to rewrite history. What we must do, as leaders of this country, is to repel every effort to rewrite the history of Guyana. What are the statistics here and whatever is said here are attempts to rewrite our history. For example, the document speaks eloquently about the alleviation of the debt which two of our agricultural resources, sugar and rice, received from our Government. I am sure others would speak in more detail to this.

How could we, as a Parliament or Government, come before 750,000 people in this country and still deny them an opportunity in Essequibo, on the West Coast of Demerara, on the West Coast of Berbice and on the Corentyne? How can we deny opportunities to our young people? Our

Opposition Leader, earlier, referred to the 1972 young Amerindians whose jobs were terminated within a few weeks of this Government - 500 staff in the field operations at the Barama Company Limited. Every single day people are losing their jobs. People are fearful in this country. People are so fearful that they refuse to even speak to their own families. That is what is taking place in our country and yet, this Government comes to our Parliament and speaks of a good life.

The levels of political discrimination and victimisation in this country now are unprecedented. The young people of this country, 510,000 of them, live in hopelessness. That is what is taking place in this country and that is why I said, this Government is in a bubble. This Government refuses to see beyond the multi-million packages that it has received at the expense of the poor, hardworking people in our country and the jobless young people that are out there, hoping that, one day or sometime during the course of the day, they are going to get an opportunity to make some money.

9.28 p.m.

That is not happening in this country now and this presentation to the Parliament, which we are debating, raised nothing about employment opportunities. It raised nothing about economic opportunities. It spoke nothing about the fiscal space required to promulgate this economy. That is why, from the outset, I said it lacks vision; it lacks substance; it is not pro poor; it has no framework to it, and there is no ameliorative programme inside to alleviate the conditions of the poor people in this country.

This country is not about a Government. It is about the 750,000 plus people outside of this Government - all the time. One of the failures of this Government, a colossal failure, is its refusal to respect the poor hard-working people of this country. I think it was yesterday, or the day before it, was published on an online media that criminals are wreaking havoc, but still yet senior leaders of the Government are threatening the owners, legal owners of fire arms, including Mr. Patterson and myself. Mr. Speaker, do you know what? I have hope that they are going to be dealing with the criminals, because this is what the Hon. Prime Minister said a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, where are we? Are we back to where you were quoting from, something that you are telling this House which took place?

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Speaker, I am paraphrasing.

Mr. Speaker: Let us have your words and not someone else's words.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Speaker, I am paraphrasing someone else's words.

Mr. Speaker: Let us have your words and not someone's words.

Mr. Dharamlall: Words to the effect, someone else from this House said, "If you live by the sword, you must die by the sword". That is how this Government is treating with crime. That is what is taking place in this country.

I was speaking to some youngsters on the break, at the Stabroek Market, and they were telling me that one of the things that they fear about this Government is its inability, its refusal to publish the names of the pardoned criminals, because many of the crimes, which are now committed, are committed by some of those pardoned criminal.

Where are we heading in this country? Where are we heading when a Government refuses to deal with the daily lives of our people? When speeches are made in this National Assembly, when we were elected to be Members of this Parliament, we are here because we want to enhance the lives of our people. We are not here because we want to enhance our own lives alone, but we must ensure that whatever we do we enhance the lives of every poor person in this country.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Ms. Teixeira: I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition and the presentation he made in relation to the address that we are debating today. I would try not to repeat some of the points made by my...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, my apologies, I should point out to Hon. Members that you are entitled to an half of an hour break, but I was wondering everyone seemed very comfortable and satisfied, and the fact that the seats from, time to time, became vacant. I wonder if Hon. Members would wish us to continue or to have the break to which you are entitled.

Hon. Members: Agree to continue.

Mr. Speaker: Everyone wants to continue, very well. I thank you. We will do that.

Ms. Teixeira: I was saying that I would try not to repeat some of the points made by my colleagues on this side of the House. I believe, when we look at the address, that there are some major flaws, in terms of what the Government's vision is for this country, because the President, as the Head of State, reflects what the Government's take is, where the Government is going to be taking this nation. The address is absolutely devoid of any mention of youth, any mention of women, any mention of children, how to reduce poverty and how to stimulate this economy. All it is, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, is a litany of excuses for non-performance.

My dear colleagues on the other side of the House, it is now 17 months since the election, you cannot continue to "*gotay*", as the people say, the same excuses over and over again for non-performance. You are in the Government and the point about a parlous economy and what you inherited is absolutely a fallacy. It is an absolute fallacy.

At the last sitting the Hon. Member Dr. Jagdeo gave us an awakening in relation to fiscal space. Some people thought he was talking about physical space, but he was talking about fiscal space that you inherited from our Government. You have really squandered the level of opportunities, money and resources that was left to a new Government that took over. When there is an address by a President and he comes five times to this House - I think I might be wrong, but Mr. Nagamootoo said six - with each speech there are platitudes.

We, on this side and the people of Guyana, want to hear what your proposals and your solutions are to deal with the crime situation. When we read the address, we heard about the Security Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) of the United Kingdom (UK) and restoring it.

The problem is a number of us have been Ministers of Home Affairs in the violent crime wave and we were part of the discussions with the former Leader of the Opposition and the then President Dr. Jagdeo on how to deal with the crime situation and on how to deal with the diplomatic corps and to get support for Guyana for what was deemed the most violent crime wave. The Security Sector Reform Programme came up. The People's National Congress (PNC) then, which is now APNU/AFC, has whipped the issue and used the UK's Security Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) as its "whipping boy".

The security sector has gone through some radical changes in this country over the years. This concept of the “mother of all crime is narcotics”, you are on the wrong track. If you are going to deal with the crime strategy or anti-crime strategy and you are going back to 2002, which was the mantra, and the mantra which was propagated by external forces in this country to do with narcotics being the mother,...When in fact what we had was a violent crime wave led by, in some cases, psychopaths and sociopaths. I know what they did to people. I know what they did to some of the young people who ended up at New Opportunity Corps (NOC). The former Commissioner of Police, who is not here in the room, Minister Felix, is well aware of the terrible dastardly things that were done to citizens in Buxton and other villages. This view that “narcotics is the mother of all crimes”, you are starting out on the wrong footing completely in your plan, whatever plan you have, that is, if you have a plan.

Again, you are cherry-picking. The problem is that you are cherry-picking. Security and crime fighting demand a comprehensive, all-encompassing, multifaceted and multi-layered approach. The SSRP of the UK was one component of that. When the money was withdrawn...You must find out, on your side of the House, when a foreign Government tells you that it wants to interfere with your national sovereignty and to use your country to do certain things that would exacerbate a neighbouring country, particularly where these is a border issue, I want to know what your answer would be when that time happens, because it is going to happen to you as it did to us. We took a position that we will not endanger our territorial sovereignty. Therefore when the plan was aborted we decided, as a Government, that we will fulfil the priorities and prioritise things themselves. There are about 40 or 50 things we did between 2007 and 2015, including the Citizen Security Plan, I and II, multifaceted, multi-layered, in a prevention of crime, in which various Ministries and NGOs were involved in reducing criminal activities at both interpersonal levels.

The issue of dealing with illegal weapons are not what I have heard today or yesterday, about controlling the weapons of persons who are certified registered arms holders. When you come with that kind of policy which is a reactive knee-jerk policy that you are going to somehow control the persons who have registered legal firearms and instead appear to give the impression... This is what people are talking in the street, today. That, if you are doing this to licensed firearm holders and people are applying for it legally, you are going to make a situation

in which the activity to acquire illegal will go even higher and it may be more expanded than it is today.

This Government has major problems. One, you are living in a time warp. Somehow you have not come out of the 1970s and 1980s. Somehow you are still wandering, waffling in some murky waters of the 1990s, 1970s and 1980s. You have not learned the lessons that some of the things you did in the 1970s and 1980s were disastrous for this country. Are you going to bring them back in this country?

The second problem, there is, is the issue of what you interpret as national trust and trust in confidence building. If you are going to fight crime, you have to be able to build layers of structures, framework, training, equipment and, most of all, you have to have trust in confidence of your security forces. That was one of the big challenges we had in Government. That is the challenge. If people do not trust the police and do not trust the army, who are they to turn to? You can come with the SSRP, we would support if the UK brings it in, but that is only one tiny fraction of what is required to deal with the crime situation. There was the Head of State of this country speaking to the people of this country on 13th October, when the crime in this country is frightening and terrorising the people.

Every day there are robberies and shooting and there is no mention made of it in the address – none, except to go back to the “troubles of the darkest period in our history”. What are you doing by that? I cannot comprehend it. I do not know who writes the President’s speeches, but it is sad that someone seems to want to compare the troubles. Is it a warning that the troubles are coming back to this country? I would pray not.

By using the period of 2002 and 2008, there was a Discipline Forces Commission of Inquiry of the extrajudicial killings. There was a report that came to this House and it went to a Parliamentary Special Select Committee. The 168 recommendations of the 172 recommendations were approved by this House.

The Constitution was amended for the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Security Sector. We are the only country in the entire English speaking Caribbean that has an oversight committee on the security sector. Since the Government has been in 17 months now, the

Minister, only last week, summoned a meeting of the Parliament Oversight Committee on the Security Sector.

Yet crime is really running amok in this country. The criminals are brazen in the day light. They are not waiting for 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning. They are doing it at the traffic lights in the morning. They are doing it in the day time, brazen and bold. Why is that happening? It is because they are not afraid of you. They are not afraid of the police. They feel that they are bold; they can be protected and somewhere along they might get a pardon, somewhere down the line.

9.43 p.m.

Your approach to crime fighting, in this speech, all you are dealing with is the past. On a matter of people's public safety and security, you are dealing with the past. The problem is that when you were in Oppositions promises were made. You promised to bring back the SSRP with the British, and so you are doing it. As you know, it is now nine years later and Guyana has moved on and the criminals have moved on. They have got more sophisticated; they are dealing in a digital world. You are trying to deal with an issue in a very myopic way. It seems as if there is a tunnel vision in relation to some of these challenges that our country faces.

The issue that this Government has not recognised, and I do not believe that the President has either, when he talked about Social Cohesion, cooperation,... For example, page 9:

“We will work to reduce prejudice and violence...The removal of inequalities based on geography and ethnicity will lay the foundation for a better ‘quality of life’ for everyone...“We owe it to future generations to use the remaining months and days of this year to build bridges across the abyss of discord.

The two sides of this House have not always disagreed. They have found common ground in the pursuit of the common good at times. The avenues for compromise and consensus remain open...

Our legislative agenda is evidence of the scope for consensus.”

An address to the nation on 13th October, 2016, must deal with the reality at that time - crime, electricity, power and stimulating the economy. You cannot talk platitudes about

entrepreneurship. When you increased the taxes on small, middle, large enterprises and small people in ways it makes it unaffordable for them. You are bringing 140 taxes and yet you go around talking about youth entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. You say you do not have to support rice because rice is a “private matter”, so we would want entrepreneurs. The whole rice sector is made up of private people who are entrepreneurs and yet they have nothing. They have been denuded of what are some of the subsidies and support that allow them to function, grow and sustain their families, communities and this country.

The challenges, they worry me. I am worried. As a Guyanese, we talked about local government elections, in a speech on 13th October, 2016, yet on 27th October, 2016, the constitutional bodies budgets are brought there. The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) which is the body that runs the elections both local, national and regional put up a budget for \$5 billion to hold a new house-to-house registration in preparation for 2019 Local Government Elections and national elections in the year 2020. This Parliament, the Members agreed to the proposal by the Hon. Minister to cut it to \$2 billion, effectively making GECOM unable to do much of the work it needs to do in preparation for the year 2019. **[An Hon. Member (Opposition):** It is not true.]

You would have your opinion, Madam. The issue is that you cannot talk about local government elections and do not recognise that one is just around the corner, in 2019, and that GECOM has to start preparation two years before. It cannot do what it is supposed to do. You are talking through two sides of your mouth.

When you talked about investment, where in this addressed are you talking about investment? The Leader of the Opposition eloquently listed all the investors we brought in here and which are still here. Some of them, you are trying to chase away. We are so secure as a country, we have so much money as a country, that we could chase away investors? We are behaving as if we are as the United State America! We are Guyana where our country is...

The issue I saw in the address, the talk about minimum wages, the increase in salaries and old age pension, and so on... However, this Government is racking up a track record of having the highest reduction of jobs in the last 30 years. The last time in 1978 - I heard a “steupps” over there, but unfortunately you were not put to speak - with redeployment, which the Hon. Prime Minister would have remembered because he was working with the progressive end of this country and not the retrogressive end of the country, of 4,000 people, which took place in the

public sector, including over a 1,000 bauxite workers. That period, of not only the removal, but the redeployment...Minister Keith Scott is smiling because he knows. I watch Minister Rupert Roopnarine and he also knows because all of us, my dear, were all on the same picket line. Were we not, in 1978, about the removal 4,000 jobs in the public sector?

Today, this Government has removed 1,700 jobs at Wales Sugar Estate. It has reduced almost 1,000 people in the public service who are thought to be PPP supporters, who happened to be the majority of one of two ethnic groups, that is, the Amerindian or Indian. There was also the removal of the workers from the Demerara Timbers Limited. There is also Barama, for example, with 600 workers, and because of what you are doing in the economy the private sector is laying off people too. In 17 months, there is an increase of unemployment of this figure, which was 10% around 2015, before elections, to what is now considered by your own reports to be almost 15%, not even talking about the youth unemployment in this country, not talking about the single women who are unemployed in this country.

You have done more, as a government, to create brain drain. The number of young people, who lost their jobs at the Office of the President, in the Climate Change Unit, had to go and get jobs overseas. By the way, you fired them, today, and in two weeks' time they had jobs in different part of the country and the world. We have lost a huge, humongous investment that was made in this country to train and develop qualified people. The amount of young and highly professional people who lost their jobs in the last 17 months or were made to feel so unwanted or unneeded, they gave up. You have contributed to the brain drain in this country as no other time since the 1980s. I challenge you with the figures because we could sit down and look at the figures.

The economy, how to reduce the poverty of our country? We never said, as a Government, that we had eradicated poverty. We have reduced it because in 1991 the study based on the World Bank states that 61% of the population was below the poverty line. All the figures from Millennium Development Goals show that we had reduced poverty by 35%. Still there is a battle to reduce poverty. What you have done in the last 17 months is... that if we were to do an analysis, which I am sure, knowing the Members on the other side,...

There is now this serious obsession with control of information. I notice that there is now a new board to examine the procurement issues in the Ministry of Health. I thought that it had to do

with the procurement. It has to do with control of information and when you read the draft integrity code of conduct for parliamentarians and Ministers, which has been just circulated last night, the emphasis on it is about shutting your mouth. Do not talk. Is that integrity? That is what we are talking about public life in this country and integrity in public life?

Let us go to social cohesion because I want to add this one: What you understand about social cohesion? No one has told me or defined for me what social cohesion is because it is different from inclusion. Social cohesion, by its own philosophy, is about common people of common backgrounds, common groups holding the *status quo*. It is not an area of diversion of view. Article 13 of the Constitution talks about inclusionary democracy, participatory democracy. What is the distinction being “inclusionary” and social cohesion? [Ms. Ally: inaudible.] You are in the driver seat now dear, you do it. If we did not do it well, then you do it better. The problem is that social cohesion is about conforming to the *status quo*. Social cohesion is not about arena, a philosophy that allows for difference of views. It is about conforming to the *status quo*. The *status quo* is APNU/AFC Government.

The issue of social cohesion came into the international vernacular when there were the riots in Nottingham, in the UK. It was a means to get the different NGOs and civil society to find a way to temper the issues down and to be able to find some way of working. I want to make it clear. When I read in address about social cohesion there is talk about the scope for cooperation. Social cohesion and inclusionary democracy, and participatory, are two different things. Inclusionary governance and inclusionary democracy have to do about sitting down with persons you do not agree with, talking and finding a special opportunity that you can meet an agreement on. It is about compromise and about everybody...

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of noise coming from the Minister of Social Cohesion and this is the point we are making. The Hon. Member has problems listening to different views, but I stand corrected.

The issues of inclusionary democracy, how could we talk about “here is scope in the legislative agenda for cooperation”? Who wrote that, when for the last 17 months one item, one Bill, is going to the Parliamentary Special Select Committee? Although this side had literally asked,

pleaded and begged that the Bills of Cybercrime, Anti-Terrorism and some of the Anti- Money Laundering Bills must go to the Parliamentary Special Select Committees.

Anti-terrorism, you do not even seem to remember. Did you pass the Bill that has 14 death penalties in it? It is the only Bill in this whole country. It is the only statute in this country that has 14 times the death penalty and yet the appeal in this House...You are talking about cooperation, but you do not want the Parliamentary Special Select Committee... It is only now there is a Bill on cybercrime because it is a very complex Bill. I understand why you sent it to the Parliamentary Special Select Committee.

There was the big furore about the Private Members' Day. There is the issue of, eight or nine times, suspending the Standing Orders to allow for Bills to be going through all three stages on one day. You are coming to tell this side of the House that the legislative agenda allows for cooperation? Where are you? You are living in some "*never never*" land. Where - *lala* land? The old people say do not talk through two sides of your month, you are talking through two sides of your month.

9.58 a.m.

You want to convey that you have won consensus but every opportunity, which has been created in this legislative Assembly, in the last 17 months, you have used to smash completely any attempt to have consensus.

When we talked about the Public Procurement Commission (PPC), as what you did to us from 2003 to 2015, its nominees could never come to this House because the Opposition said very clearly that two thirds-majority would not be given unless it was its way. It wanted three names that were its and the PPP had two. Of course, we now see that they have gotten their way in 2016. It is three, I assume.

You cannot talk about social cohesion issues, when people, more and more, in this country are feeling excluded. They are feeling excluded. If you look at the photographs in the papers and you look at what is happening, look at the many activities there are.

The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) came here September 21 to 23. When did we discover it? We discovered it in some website called "Gybuzz.com" which comes

from the Ministry of Information, from the Office of the Prime Minister. Gybuzz.com it is called, which puts out the Organisation of American States (OAS) statement on its visit here. That is how we knew the people were here. No United Nations (UN) or OAS body has ever come to this country under the PPP Government and not met with the Opposition, and not met with the Leader of the Opposition. Do you know why? The Leader of the Opposition is a constitutional position. It is a recognition that that has to have certain levels of respect and recognition in our country.

The IACHR came here, nobody was involved. You did not involve the religious bodies; you did not involve the trade union bodies; you did not involve a whole set of people. It was only a select group. This issue on exclusion is all about selectivity. I believe that the Government's philosophy on social cohesion is this: If you are with them, you are a part of social cohesion. If you are not with them, you cannot be a part of social cohesion. It is exclusion; that is it. If it is perceived, it does not even have to be a person declaring himself or herself... It can be based on religion, on class, on ethnicity, on gender, on religious activities. Look what you have done with the religious activities of Diwali. It is unacceptable.

How could we at this stage, 17 months later, still not have an idea of how does this Government intend to stimulate this economy? How do we not have an idea on how we are going to reduce poverty? How do we have an idea – not we meaning us only, the people of this country? When you take the people from Stabroek Market square and you send them to, so-called temporarily for independence, what you called, 'Parliament View', at the back here, and the city council is talking that it is going to try to see what will happen. It is now nine months later and it is the Head of State who said that they cannot stay permanently at 'Parliament View'. They are going to be moved again. To where? These are ordinary working people making a decent living. They are not criminals. It seems as if the Government seems to have greater latitude to the criminals and the 'bad boys' than ordinary hard-working people who are vendors in this country, taxi drivers, minibus drivers, who are trying to make a living.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member...

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Please resume your seat.

Ms. Teixeira: I beg your pardon.

Mr. Speaker: Please resume your seat. Hon. Prime Minister, I will receive a motion for continuation.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10(1)

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House continue the sitting until this motion is concluded on the revised list of speakers.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

Ms. Teixeira: The speech is replete with contradictions of the reality of the life of the Guyanese. People, I think you are banging to your own platitudes and you are not recognising the contradictions. This Government says that we must work together; we must have cohesion; we must have cooperation and consensus building. What we are seeing are threats, bullying and arrogance on the part of this Government and its leaders. There is a Minister who has threatened to accelerate charging Members for corruption because they did not listen to the President. This is an example of the mentality. [Ms. Lawrence: Where is it?] It was on his facebook wall. It was all over the place. You are living in some *lala* land my dear. It was public knowledge. It was publicly printed. Here is a Minister of Government using the clout of his ministerial portfolio to threaten other people. Now, if he can threaten Members of the Opposition, then imagine what threats they are giving to the people who come into the Ministries. You have the gumption to publicly say that you will deal with the people in Opposition who are not coming to listen to the President, and that you will accelerate all those charges again. If you are doing that to these people here,... We are not afraid of you. We have no reason to be afraid of you. Bring it on. Bring it on just as you did with Carvil Duncan - bring it on.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have been speaking for 31 minutes and 27 seconds.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir.

Mr. Speaker: You have five minutes to complete.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much. [Mr. Nagamootoo: You used to say that about elections. Bring it on.] Let us deal with that. “Bring it on”, as the Prime Minister has opened the door. The address deals with the elections. Let us deal with the issue of elections because of the election petition. An example of how this address talks about the new day, the “good life”, that this Government has brought a new era to Guyana. Yes, you have brought a new era, but it is not a good era. When there is an election petition that has been laid in the courts and up to now cannot be heard... [Ms. Ally: We have no control over that.] Yes, you can, you have a way of controlling. [Ms. Ally: We do not have control.] Yes, I am sure, you do not.

Pertaining to the election’s petition, in any democracy where the count is as small as less than 1% which is what the difference was in this country. Do not sit on your laurels. Do not feel too secure. You are sitting on less than 1%. It is not 1%, it is less than 1%. In fact, you are not even sitting on a full seat. A full seat is over 7,000 votes. The difference is 4,506. Do not feel too secure. Do you know what is ironic? In the Tenth Parliament, with a combined vote of two separate parties with one-seat more than us, there was more dialogue between the Opposition and the Government, between President Ramotar and the then Leader of the Opposition Mr. Granger. I have notes of all those meetings. You think I left those in the Ministry of Presidency? Those are my notes. There were dialogues that took place on the issues that tried to bring us together and find solutions. Even the selection of the Speaker of the House was problematic. What has changed? Up to 2011 and the Ninth Parliament, 140 Bills were passed in this House, over 40 of those Bills went before Special Select Committee and came here and were adopted by this House unanimously. After the Tenth Parliament the geopolitics of this country, class and ethnic politics of the country began to go downwards, because it is all about *bullyism*. You either take it or leave it. This attitude of yours is not going to help this country.

Seventeen months later, we have an address that cannot tell us how you are dealing with crime; how you are dealing with the economy; how you are going to reduce poverty. How are you going to deal with poor women and children? How are you going to deal with the problems of ethnicities?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute remaining.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: I rise to support the motion by the Hon. Prime Minister, endorsing the contents of His Excellency's speech to this Assembly on Thursday, 13th October, 2016. Mr. Speaker, just allow me a brief couple of minutes to ask the previous speaker a couple of questions. When the previous speaker highlighted that it has taken such a long time for their elections petition to be heard by the court, I was sort of astounded. Where was the previous speaker when the AFC brought its motion on election in 2006? It languished before the courts for quite a while, three to four years. Where was the previous speaker's voice when the former Prime Minister was squatting in a seat from the AFC? Where was the previous speaker?

Ms. Teixeira: The court of Guyana ruled that the Prime Minister was rightly in his seat.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, what is the Point of Order? You know what you should do. You have to rise on a Point of Order.

Ms. Teixeira: It is Standing Order 40 (a), Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 40 (a).

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. It is Standing Order, 40 (a). Mr. Speaker, the petition was dismissed in the court. And therefore the Hon. Member trying to convey the impression, as he said that the Prime Minister was illegally occupying his seat, he must withdraw it. It must be withdrawn, Sir. The court ruled on this matter the party never went back to appeal it.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you Mr. Speaker. As I said, I am still in a bit of wonderment where the voice for democracy was during those periods.

Ms. Teixeira: It is about the former Prime Minister squatting in his seat illegally.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, if the statement, just made, cannot be substantiated, the statement you made, then you should withdraw it.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I need clarification of the statement because I never used the word "illegally". [**Hon. Members (Opposition):** Squatting.] Well, it is the word "occupied",

Sir. May I then rephrase? Where was the previous speaker when the former Prime Minister occupied the seat won by the AFC? Where was the voice for democracy then?

In his address, His Excellency President David Arthur Granger raised several important issues relating ...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, are you rising on a Point of Order?

Ms. Teixeira: No. I am waiting to see what else he is going to say, Sir, so I can jump up then.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, if I may...?

Mr. Speaker: Are you rising on a Point of Order?

Mr. Nandlall: It is Standing Order 40 (a).

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: Your Honour asked the Hon. Member to withdraw the statement that the Prime Minister was squatting.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you going to act in accordance to Standing Order 40 (a)?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

10.13 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 40(a) does not allow you to make a speech.

Mr. Nandlall: The Hon. Member is misleading this House when he is saying that they won a seat in Linden.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear the Hon. Member say that, but, if he did say that...

Mr. Nandlall: He just said that - occupying the Alliance For Change (AFC) seat in Linden. There was a petition filed and it was dismissed.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. [*Interruption*] Hon. Members, we have to allow this.

Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Trotman]: As Mr. Nandlall was allowed to speak, may I, Sir, be given that right as well?

Mr. Speaker: Pardon me?

Mr. Trotman: As Mr. Nandlall was allowed to speak on a Point of Order brought by Ms. Teixeira, may I then be allowed to speak?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, of course. Please proceed.

Mr. Trotman: Sir, indeed a petition was filed but was not heard for three years. It was subsequently dismissed on a technicality that the...*[Interruption]* Sir, can I be heard? For three years, indeed, as the learned Hon. Member is saying, there was a seating issue; that is not in doubt. After the petition was dismissed on the grounds of a procedural error, that ended it. The Hon. Member is saying that the previous Speaker stayed silent. That is all that I am saying. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In His Excellency's Address, he raised some important issues relating to the sector which he has entrusted me to overlook.

Sir, following your ruling, I will relate everything to the policy statement to which I am speaking on. His Excellency first identified the *status quo* in which we - and I am speaking now about the Ministry of Public Infrastructure - took over the sector. Sir, allow me to quote:

“The undermining of public infrastructure by encouragement of cronyism led to serious, costly, serial scandals as seen in the construction of the Kato Secondary School, the Hope Canal Bridge, the river-front revetment at Kumaka, Barabina road and Moruka bridge; the Supenaam stelling and the still unusable Ministry of Social Protection building right here in High Street, Georgetown.”

Mr. Speaker, in defence of these scandals, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition provided the excuse that these projects were awarded via public tender. Just allow me a couple of minutes to examine the depth of this excuse.

Firstly, the Kato Secondary School: Yes, we acknowledge that it was publicly tendered. But like all of the projects that I will examine, this is what happened after the public tender: the previous Administration *turned a blind eye* when 75% of the concrete work of the Kato Secondary School failed. They *turned a blind eye* when the Indigenous brothers and sisters in Region 8 were squandered out and almost conned out of their work.

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Manickchand, what do you rise on?

Ms. Manickchand: I rise on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40(a), or elucidation. The Hon. Member who is presently on...

Mr. Speaker: Are you rising on a Point of Order?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: On what Standing Order?

Ms. Manickchand: I am stating what Standing Order 40(a) is.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Member said that the previous Government *turned a blind eye* when 75% of the concrete work at the Kato Secondary School was not working or failed. The Hon. Member is aware of the fact that there was a consultant whose services were also procured by public tender. [*Interruption*] Your Honour, will I be allowed to make the objection? How can this be laid at the Government's feet? I was the Minister at the time. I am an attorney-at-law and not an engineer. We hired an Engineer. To say that we *turned a blind eye*...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have stated all that needs to be stated and it is left to me.

Ms. Manickchand: Thank you, kindly, Sir.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you, Your Honour. I anticipated all of this. This is the Report, *Construction of Kato Secondary School Complex Final Report, June, 2016*. It was laid in this Parliament. It is public knowledge. I am hearing rebuttals, just as I said, and this is only the first line of my comments. There was adequate time, both publicly and in here, for anyone to rebut the information that is inside this document. No one has done that.

While our good Indigenous brothers and sisters in Region 8 expected to get some sort of employment from this, under that Administration, a contractor was allowed to undermine their abilities. That is okay because, according to the Leader of the Opposition, it was a public tender. According to this Report, Members, including the former President who is sitting here in this Assembly, visited the school and encouraged the contractor to continue his work. The only *proviso* they offered him was for him to ensure that it was completed before Elections because it was important for them. Sir, I have the Report here, but that is okay; as the Leader of the Opposition said, it was public tender. I am still on Kato Secondary School. They allowed a building to be built there when the sanitation block faced the windward side. Some of the Teachers' dormitories in the school are windowless. It is okay, Sir. According to the Leader of the Opposition, it was a public tender.

Next on the list is the Hope Canal Bridge. Once again, we acknowledge that it was publicly tendered. But, once again, the people of Guyana can see the result of this transformative project. They said that it would end all flooding. What they never told the people is that it would break up your cars and drain the public coffers to get it fixed. Millions of dollars have been wasted. That is okay, Sir. It was publicly tendered. This Administration has to spend over \$45 million to rectify that publicly tendered project.

The High Street Building, which now falls under my Minister of Social Protection: once again, that was publicly tendered, as the Leader of the Opposition said. At least they publicly tendered it. It is unusable. Over \$800 million has been sunk into that. The price tag to fix the building far exceeds that \$800 million but, according to the Leader of the Opposition, that is okay because it was publicly tendered.

The Leader of the Opposition, when he spoke, said that the worst thing ever was the money spent because of the agreement with pales in comparison with the money that was foregone.

Sir, let me tell you about another publicly tendered project under the watch of the then President – the Amaila Falls Access Road. It was publicly tendered, yes. It started off at US\$15.4 million. The publicly tendered project is now over \$42 million and counting. This year alone, we spent US\$1 million just to try and fix it. It is not even finished yet - \$8.8 billion. But it is okay because

it was publicly tendered. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and tell you. There are several other things.

I see my good Friend, the Hon. Frank Anthony... The Olympic-size swimming pool was another publicly tendered project.

The Supenaam Wharf: There are one-inch thick plates to stop the trucks and pedestrians from falling through gaping holes. That is okay; that was publicly tendered work.

The Charity Wharf: We could go on...

I even have here the \$1 billion “Clean-up” Project in 2014. It was publicly tendered. We took over a City that was in... [Ms. Lawrence: ...the garbage city.] The “garbage city” it was, as someone has reminded me. That is alright because the Opposition said that it is okay. They can do anything with the money as long as they have publicly tendered.

There was another statement made by the Leader of the Opposition, which I cannot allow to go unchallenged. The Leader of the Opposition claimed that this Administration allowed foreigners to go to the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) to take over local jobs. There is a saying; it is English; it is quite a nice saying. It is when people are ‘out to lunch’. The previous Administration was probably ‘out to lunch’ when they signed the contract which it is now accusing this Administration of doing – sending jobs away.

I have a copy of the contract here. It was signed by Dr. Ashni Singh, Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the other half on behalf of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno. It was signed on 10th October, 2014. I know that the Leader of the Opposition and the rest of the Opposition, when they come back from ‘lunch’, need to see this. It is right here. They are now accusing us.

As the speaker mentioned Durban Park, the Hon. Member, Odinga Lumumba, who I do not want to bring into this conversation, should sometimes remind his Colleagues that, in August, 2007, \$90 million was appropriated to fix Durban Park. In 2009, \$38 million was appropriated to clean up Durban Park. With that \$128 million, I do not know if fertilisers for the jungle were bought because that was what was spent by that Administration on Durban Park.

Mr. Lumumba: The Minister mentioned my name. I just need to know for what cause. I was never empowered with such any amounts. The only thing I know about Durban Park is that I drive past Durban Park. I just want clarification on the matter.

10.28 p.m.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I never insinuated that the Hon. Member was in control of the \$138 million spent by the previous Administration to clear up Durban Park or to germinate Durban Park. All I am saying is maybe if he took time out to explain to his younger Colleagues that they spent \$138 million in that jungle...you should not be speaking.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you rising on a Point of Order?

Mr. Lumumba: Yes, Standing Order 40(a).

Mr. Speaker: What is it, please?

Mr. Lumumba: I am trying to figure out what it is. All I know is that my name is being mentioned.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that is not a Point of Order. Please resume your seat.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, I humbly respect you but my name is being mentioned so I need some clarification.

Mr. Speaker: I am waiting for the Point of Order.

Mr. Lumumba: Standing Order 40 (a): My name is being mentioned by the Hon. Minister about some \$138 million that I know nothing of. I need a clarification in this House tonight.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I must be...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, there is a clarification that you need to give on this.

Mr. Patterson: And I will give it, Sir. I am saying that I have never ascribed any wrongdoings or any re-fertilisation of the jungle that we inherited at Durban Park to the Hon. Member. What I

was asking was, as an *old head*, as a person who has been around awhile, that you should take time to explain to your younger Colleagues who are mouthing off in the corner, who are heckling in the corner...

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

I withdraw the term “mouthing off”, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I now think that we ought to have had that half of an hour break. Language that is not acceptable in the Chamber ought not to be used. So, the Hon. Minister will withdraw that epithet.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, withdrawn unequivocally. I was only trying to implore my Colleague, being a longstanding Member of Parliament, that maybe we could have discourse with the younger Members on things that have transpired previously.

His Excellency highlighted the infrastructural policy for this Government. In 2016, we intend to continue our drive to link our hinterland communities to the coast, opening up their rich potential. We intend to upgrade our aerodromes, bridges, roads and stellingso so that all our people can, at last, enjoy a good life for all. However, to achieve this, we have a lot of work to do.

As I have stated publicly before, we face a capacity problem among our construction industry. And I was honest enough to admit it publicly. It is something which I think was never acknowledged by the previous Administration. We do have a capacity problem in the country to executive all our ambitious projects. And it is something that we have to address. To this end, Sir, I would like to say to you that, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance – I do not see the Minister within the Ministry of Finance, the Hon. Jaipaul Sharma – we will be producing what we call a contractor’s report for 2017, whereby I will provide a report on all the contractors that would have secured jobs under this Administration. It will list their capacity; they would have successfully won jobs and we would be able to state the number of jobs they would have won, the completion rate, and be able to say this is the capacity which we think they have that they can executive projects. This is quite important with the coming of the Public Procurement

Commission, which, as you know, is something that we championed while in Opposition, and I am very pleased to say that we are on the road to implementing it.

I cannot mention the Public Procurement Commission without recalling a very curious occurrence that happened. In 2014, in what is now infamously called the Grey Goose Summit which was on 23rd February, 2014, the then learned Attorney General, who is now in the Opposition, made a very bold statement that the Public Procurement Commission is unconstitutional. That is why this Administration will not implement it. It was an absolute surprise to me to see that, when we voted for it, the learned former Attorney General actually voted 'yes'; I was amazed that an Attorney would vote like that when, one year ago, he said that this is unconstitutional and, a year after, voted 'yes' for something which he deemed unconstitutional. Sir, that just shows you that it goes back to my statement when I said that they were 'out to lunch'; they were 'out to lunch' then as well as now.

In examining our capacity issues, we will be going, this year, with the usual shortlisting of contractors but we will be doing it this time in tier fashion. We will have tier one which I would consider to be the new aspirants to the procurement process. They will be contractors that can undertake work for \$15 million and under. Sir, as I said, when they are 'out to lunch', we will be going at tier two and tier three. The object is to try to promote our local construction industry by empowering our contractors far more so that they can compete for jobs within their own range. Obviously, the larger the pool of contractors that we have doing work will be better for me to executive my mandate.

To achieve our policy direction, we will be holding more procurement seminars for new and old contractors. We will also, as the Members were highlighting, have strict enforcement of the conditions of the contracts for both contractors and consultants so that we will never have a repeat of the Hope Bridge or the Kato Secondary School without penalties.

To achieve all these policy issues, we do have a very packed legislative agenda for the infrastructure side. This year, we will be bringing Bills in the aviation sector – the Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation Bill, and that is in following the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) regulations to ensure that there is a separate distinct unit that will investigate any aircraft incidents. We will be bringing a Bill on the economic regulations of

airports and the aviation sector. We will be revising the regulation of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority and will be bringing an amendment to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) Act.

Sir, I want to make this point: I have already shared some of these Bills, in draft form, that I am going to mention with my counterpart so that, when they do come to the House, no one can claim that they have not had time to examine them. I would hope that they would not claim that they want to send it to a Special Select Committee because I can say that the Aircraft Bill has been with my counterpart for over six months now and not a single comment came. So I do hope that I will see smooth passage.

In the maritime section, we are bringing amendments to the Maritime Boundaries Act to implement insurance on vessels plying on our waterways. This is in response to the issue we have of vessels sinking, like what happened in the Mazaruni, whereby the cost of salvaging will be borne by the insurance company and the inconvenience to the travelling public will be lessened. We will be bringing amendments to the Maritime Boundaries Act to bring us in compliance with the International Maritime Organisation with regard to the oil and gas sector. We will be bringing regulations to the Shipping Act. That is another Bill which, I think, has been with my shadow minister for six months without any comments. So, I do think that it is actually flawless.

On our roadways, we will be bringing amendments to the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act to ensure enforcement for us to remove derelict vehicles on our roadways as well as to implement weight limits on the roads because we can design and build roads to the highest standards but, if road users drive vehicles that exceed the regulatory weight limit, they will obviously destroy those roads faster.

We will be bringing amendments to the Electrical Code of Practice and we will be working with the Bureau of Standards to do building regulations.

My Ministry's base for 2017: As explained by His Excellency, we do have a very packed agenda and I would like to extend right now to *let bygones be bygones*. I would like to say to the Opposition, "Let us work together to ensure that we can deliver some products and buildings

which are to the benefit of all our peoples, despite which side of the political divide they are at.” His Excellency has given us a high target to achieve and I am excited on the prospects ahead.

Sir, with those few words, I would like to endorse this motion and I would like to, once again, invite the Opposition to join me in bringing the directions of His Excellency the President to fruition.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great honour and privilege to speak on this Address by His Excellency. But before I do so, I must respond to a few points raised by the Hon. Minister Patterson, if he may be kind enough to give us his attention. I want to give him some friendly advice.

First of all, he made two very bold statements that I will caution him about. I am an Hon. Member of this House and I am going to repeat what I have said. The Hon. Member made two statements that I am going to caution him about. Those are in relation to his Ministry’s role in setting a three-tier system for procurement, and in conducting procurement training.

10.43 p.m.

I wish to alert the Hon. Minister that we now have a Public Procurement Commission. It might do him well to consult with the Constitution and the Procurement Act of 2003. He will understand his role, the role of the Public Procurement Commission and the role of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. [**Ms. Ally:** He is fully aware.] If he is aware of that, then he would understand that he has no jurisdiction over any of the matters he has mentioned in his address.

In relation to the Durban lands, yes, resources were expended there and those of us who know the area would know that it was swampy. A lot of resources were spent on filling the area, on building up the area. That was a number of years ago.

In relation to the Kato Secondary School and the Ministry building, the Hon. Minister would know that the contract provides for liquidated damages and provides redress for the client to deal

with the contractor. The contractor and the consultant continue to function under this Government. The question is: what measures...

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, a Point of Order, Standing Order No. 40 (a): The last statement that the consultant or even the contractor continues to function under this Government is absolutely incorrect. I would ask that he either provides proof or withdraws it.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Mr. Ali...

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, when we left office, the Kato Secondary School...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Mr. Ali, you heard the Point of Order.

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: And are you addressing it?

Mr. Ali: Yes, sir. When we left office, the Kato Secondary School project was ongoing. The contract, therefore, was ongoing and the parties to that contract were the client – the Government – and the contractor. I do not know where I was wrong. The redress is in the contract and in the terms of the contract. It is up to the client to activate the redress mechanism in the contract. We were not in Government to activate any redress mechanism in any contract. My advice to the Government is to utilise the redress mechanism in the contract and deal with the matter.

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, my Point of Order was extremely specific. He said, "...continues to work with this Administration." That is very specific. He either provides proof or withdraws.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, I was speaking specifically in relation to the Kato Secondary School and in relation to this building.

In relation to the Supenaam Stelling, I would go further to say that the contractor who worked on the Supenaam Stelling...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it seems you did not answer the question.

Mr. Ali: I did, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, Mr. Ali seems to have answered the question.

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir; he has not. Sir, he made a specific claim or accusation that the consultant and the contractor continue to work with this Government, even on the project.

Mr. Speaker: Either they are on the project or they are not.

Mr. Patterson: They are not, so he has to strike it from the record.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, as I said, when we left Government...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Ali, do you have evidence to support the statement that the contractor is still working?

Mr. Ali: I am not speaking about now, Mr. Speaker. I am speaking about when we left Government. I said when we left Government, the contract continued; the contract had parties to the contract; the parties to that contract were the client, who was the Government, and the contractor who was the provider of the service. The contract was alive at that point. We were out of Government. The new Government had the responsibility to take whatever action they wanted in relation to a contract that was alive at that point. That is my point.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member.

Mr. Ali: I will go now to the point which the Hon. Minister wants me to go, the Supenaam Stelling. Yes, that was done under us. It was a Caribbean Development Bank funded project. I ask humbly for the Minister to tell us now whether the contractor who built the Supenaam Stelling is still working for the Government. If the contractor is still working for the Government, how come he has this double standard style of argument? The problem is that we all are acquainted with the issues.

It is important for us to understand the factual basis on which we stand. There are a number of things we have to understand. The Address of His Excellency could be compartmentalised into an issue of economy, an issue of security dealing with crime, in which blame was ascribed, and the issue of politics. It is very important for us to address these issues.

I will start by addressing where we were, what we left, what the state of the economy was when we left because those things were addressed in the report of His Excellency.

Inflation: Prior to the PPP/C assuming office, the inflation rate was 103.1%, averaging 37.1% annually between 1980 and 1992. With the implementation of sound monetary policy, the inflation rate was reduced to less than 1% by 2014. When we left Government, the inflation rate was less than 1%. That is what we left you. That is our legacy.

Economic growth was a similar story. When we assumed Government, we had more than a decade of negative growth. We were regarded as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC). When we left Government, we were on the verge of achieving a middle income status. When we left Government, we left a positive economic growth of close to an average of 4.5% to 5% over a 10-year period. That is what you inherited.

The international reserve, in 1992, when we came into Government, was US\$191.1 million. When we left Government, in 2015, we left US\$621.8 million in the international reserves. When we came to Government, 98 cents on every dollar of revenue earned was used to repay foreign debt. When we left Government, less than 10 cents of every dollar of revenue earned was utilised to repay foreign debt. That is what you inherited. That is what we left you; that is the record. Where are we today?

During the first quarter of 2016, we saw a decline of 68% over the corresponding period last year in the supply of sand, stone and quarrying materials. What are quarrying materials utilised for? It is used for building, home construction, building stores, schools and roads. With the largest public investment that was voted in the history of our country in the National Budget, there was a decline in the quarrying industry. The construction and engineering sector suffered the same fate in the first quarter of 2016.

Sugar output fell by 4.7% or 1,915 tonnes. Rice fell by 56,593 tonnes, 37.3% lower than the corresponding period last year. This is where you took us, in less than two years, from what you inherited. Poultry output was 6.6% or 4,450 tonnes below what it was in the corresponding period last year. Even the production of eggs declined under you within two years.

Beverages, soft drinks and rum production declined. Pharmaceutical production declined, and other manufacturing commodities declined.

The only thing which recorded positive growth was mining, gold, and that was as a result of the two major investors who came in under the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government. We are not going to take the praise for that because we brought them in the interest of Guyana and in the interest of the people of this country. But you must recognise that and build off that. You must use the investment and incentive framework we had to bring large investors in so that we can continue to have greater investment and more investors coming into the country.

I said context is very important. The Address of His Excellency the President can be termed a transition address, moving from one Government to another. I went to research how the transition occurred in 1993.

10.58 p.m.

Here is what the Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, had said in that period. This is in the *Hansard*. He was speaking about Mr. Corbin:

“Mr. Corbin considered to be transparent the fusion of the General Secretary's office, the Party's General Secretary in the Ministry of National Development. We all knew the scandal of a party putting its hands into state coffers. He considered that to be transparent, when, in fact, it has been a violation of the law of the land”.

This is what the Hon. Moses Nagamootoo said about the Government, when it was in the Opposition, and about Mr. Corbin. He said:

“Members of the vanquished People's National Congress on the Opposition benches would have to come to this House with clean hands and not simply seek to judge us by their own standards of public immorality and their own standards of violation of the constitutional provision of this country when they were on this side of the House.”

That is what the Hon. Member, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, thinks of you. This is what he said:

“The Government will not throw away the baby with the bathwater. Whatever positive there has been in the past, we will retain it and those policies.”

This was the enlightened approach of the then Government. It did not throw everything out. The Hon. Moses Nagamootoo was saying that the PPP/C Government would not have thrown out the

baby and the bathwater. It would have retained what was good, what worked and would have continued to enhance it in the interest of the people.

Today, the very Moses Nagamootoo, Hon. Prime Minister, is throwing everything away. This is the double standards that we cannot allow to continue to hamper the political and economic development of this country. The people of this country are tired of this type of double standards. It is time we address these double standards if this country is to move forward and Guyana is to continue on the development trajectory which the PPP/C placed it on.

The Hon. Prime Minister, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, said to the Government then:

“We were to have oil. At one time, they were pumping onshore, then offshore; they were drilling in and out and we were to have oil, but in their dreams, of course.

That is what you said then, Hon. Member. When we left office, we gave the oil to you. We brought the company and the company found oil before we left office. Today, in your double standard position, you would not recognise the very fact that it was under the PPP/C Government that Guyana realised its potential of becoming an oil and gas producing country. You would not recognise that. **[Mr. Nagamootoo: You are misleading this House.]** This is in your speech. **[Mr. Nagamootoo: Are you saying that under the PPP/C you found oil and gas?]** I am saying to you... **[Mr. Nagamootoo: We found the oil].**

Mr. Nagamootoo: Under Standing Order 40 (b), the Hon. Member is trying to mislead the House and the nation by saying that, under the previous Government, Guyana found oil and gas.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, let me move on and address the issue of crime. Addressing the issue of crime, I wish to turn to a series of articles by Mr. Freddie Kissoon of June, 2003, titled, *Theorizing with Freddie Kissoon*. **[Ms. Ally: We are dealing with the President’s speech.]** The President spent extensive time speaking about crime, what cause the crime and linked it to all kinds of means. Mr. Freddie Kissoon wrote:

“Is the Buxton Conspiracy Over?”

He referred to it as the Ocean’s Eleven. Ocean’s Eleven was the combination of the five escapees, joined by six other die hard Buxton-based conspirators who helped to burn down the

house of Mr. Idris Chester and Mr. Melroy Goodman. They normally helped to create confusion by robbing minibuses...

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but are we hearing a speech on the motion?

Mr. Ali: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Could you repeat where the quote is from?

Mr. Ali: It is from: *Theorizing with Freddie Kissoon: The Failure of the Buxton Conspiracy – A series of Articles*, June, 2003.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a publication?

Mr. Ali: Yes. It was published.

Mr. Speaker: There must be some source.

Mr. Ali: This was a series which was published in the *Kaieteur News* newspaper.

Mr. Speaker: You need to state the date and, if possible, the page number.

Mr. Ali: It was in June, 2003. It was a series. I can even share the entire document with all of the Members.

Speaking about the gang, he said:

“They normally help to create confusion by robbing minibuses...Since the February jailbreak, a certain former army officer has been recruiting these youngsters. Never has something like this happened in the world before. And if there is anything readers should know about the Buxton conspiracy it is the frightening merger of criminality and politics.

The incontrovertible fact, remains that a group of seasoned criminals with no scruples or remorse in raping innocent women, robbed and killed people savagely because of their ethnicity.”

Such acts on the Guyanese community were described as legitimate political action.

“I said above that the Buxton conspiracy is a phenomenon that has no parallel in Caribbean history.

The ubiquitous crime spree, which emanated from Buxton, had its genesis in the Mash 2002 jailbreak.

One must bear in mind that the PLM [People’s Liberation Movement that was formed in Buxton] was the accommodating room for the escapees once they reached Buxton. To answer this question, one must understand that from the beginning, there was a fusion between crime and politics in Buxton.

If the Buxtonian killers were social misfits who rape, rob and kill, then why the need to discuss their activities within the sociological theory of political violence?

The night of the morning before he died, Dale Moore and a certain lawyer with aspiration to lead a major political party and who pays not even a cent in taxes was conspicuously sporting on the embankment.

The drugged child soldiers were wild when they killed Indians.

They followed him out of the house and poured more kerosene on him.”

This is Mr. Rasheed.

“Ocean’s Eleven had a particular habit...”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, what year was the publication?

Mr. Ali: It was in 2003.

Mr. Speaker: For what purpose are you reading this as truth?

Mr. Ali: I am reading from a public record.

Mr. Speaker: I am still puzzled by the contribution that makes to our debate.

Mr. Ali: I will link it in a few seconds.

This outlines, clearly, the nature of the criminality that existed during that period. It outlines the nexus of the criminality and politics. If up to today, we, in a unified voice, cannot call this for what it was – brutality, senseless killing and murdering of innocent people - and we are shying away from calling this what it was, then we are doing a great injustice to those who suffered in this country.

To try to wish this away and to make a blanket statement as if drugs were the sole issue which was being dealt with at that time is an injustice and an insult to the victims who would have suffered during that period.

If we are to move forward as a nation, if we are to build this country, if we are to unite and if we are to address the challenges of the future, then we must be willing to take an honest, fact-based account of where we came from. We do not want to repeat the violence of the 1960s. We do not want to repeat the burning of the city of Georgetown, such as what happened after the 1997 Elections. We do not want to continue in this country to build a future in a way in which we are not united. None of us want that. If it is that we understand that our single most important task is to build a country that is united, a country that puts the development of our people in the forefront of everything, we have to find a way to heal the wounds. We have to find a way to create a path, but we cannot do this when the President could come to the Parliament and try to ascribe blame in an unfair manner and deliver such a partisan and divisive address. This is not the way. This is not the answer. This is not the solution.

I appeal to my brothers and sisters in this House. **[Ms. Ally: Start at home.]** Start with me. I have sinned and come short of the glory; for those who are without sin, let them cast the first stone.

11.13 p.m.

I will start it myself. If we want to develop a new culture, to build a new conscience and to build a new structure of politics, we cannot do it this way. We have to find the path and if all of these politicians, on the Government side, who are on the verge of retirement, cannot find the time in their twilight hours and days to lead us down that path, then I am not sure that path will soon come.

I call on the likes of Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine, who would have lived through the worse and is now living through the better part, to let us understand the reality of our country. Let us, tonight, make a solemn pledge, a personal pledge, that can help us collectively to build a Guyana that we can all enjoy and that all Guyanese can enjoy, in the future.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, I rise to endorse the motion in the name of the Hon. Prime Minister, which calls on this House to adopt the policies, plans and programmes as adumbrated, eruditely, I believe the motion states, by His Excellency, the President, on 13th October, 2016.

We have had much by way of debate, much by way of quarrel, much by way of misinformation and much by way of ignorance, if I may put it that way, but at the end of the day, this is our democracy. I believe that the last speaker, as passionate as he was, epitomises the fact and the belief, in a sense, or personalises rather, I would say, the belief that, as different as our democracy is in Guyana, it is our form of democracy.

It was, I believe, Winston Churchill who said that democracy is the worse form of Government, except for all others. So it is, at 11.10 p.m., that we are having a debate about the future of Guyana and rightly so. Perhaps, as had been said before, when the Report on the Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the death of Dr. Walter Rodney was debated, we had said that there should be a catharsis. This nation does need a catharsis.

Many have been given to flights of fancy as to what has happened in the past. For persons like myself, persons like the former Minister and now Member Mr. Ali, we were too young and perhaps not even born during the troubles of the 60s. Indeed, we were around during the troubles of the 2002s. As Minister Ally read from words of Mr. Freddie Kissoon, I heard one Member said that it was Raphael Trotman, the lawyer, who was having beers in Buxton. Oh Mr. Speaker, what a tragedy that would be. I do have a great-grandmother who is buried in Buxton, so I am not ashamed of my Buxton roots, but at no time would I have been drinking beers on the *Line Top*, on any night before anything or any place. Had they read the very series, they would have realised that it was not be the first time that Mr. Kissoon would have singled me out. In that time, it was clarification; more recently, it was apology. It was clarified that, if, at any time, it was believed that it was Mr. Trotman, he wanted to make it clear that it was not Mr. Trotman that he

was speaking about. But I am not here to defend myself; I am here to promote the policies of His Excellency, the President.

On the 13th October, 2016, His Excellency gave us, what I thought, what we on this side of the House thought and what the majority of Guyanese, who support the Government, believed was a fine speech. There are some who believe that this speech should have been the watershed of speeches, setting out every single policy in minute details. Instead, it was meant to fulfil two purposes. Firstly, to bid us welcome, after a well-deserved recess from August to October and secondly, to give us a primer of what was to come later in this month of November in the budget debates, which will be heralded by the Budget Presentation on the 28th November, 2016, I believe, or thereabout.

I am bemused to find out why it is that His Excellency is being pilloried for coming here. Our Constitution, in Article 67, sets out that the President may, at any time, come to the National Assembly. It was the intention of the framers of our Constitution to ensure that the Parliament of Guyana... There are not too many that know this, but this is the National Assembly, that is, in Vlissengen Road, the Executive and when the two meet, it is when there is a sitting of the Parliament. When we are here, we are sitting as a National Assembly. When President is present, there is a sitting of the Parliament. It is important for the Executive and the National Assembly to meet and not to meet casually, not to meet infrequently, but to meet often. This is so that there is consensus on programmes and an understanding of the vision. It used to be, in the past, that a Head of State would come once in the term or the life of a Government and that would be at the opening of the session of the Parliament, first after an election. Now, we have a President who wishes to be nearer to the legislative arm, so that the policies of Government could be understood, where, like now, he could subject his mind and his thoughts, even to ridicule in some instances and even to criticism as we would have heard tonight. That is the good life and the democracy that we are speaking about.

In the past, for whatever reason and I am not going to ascribe a negative or a bad reason, Presidents choose to speak once. Our President is brave enough to come and open himself, even, as I said to ridicule and to criticism. We stand in defence of him, we stand in support of him and we stand resolute to support his vision for Guyana.

The themes that were set out: Public Trust for which we have had much discourse; Economic Policy, he has given us only glimpses and it is for us, the Ministers and Members of Parliament, to give meat or flesh to those ideas and we will do so quite effectively, quite bravely, quite confidently, when we enter into the budget debates. Environmental Policy, Mr. Speaker, you have heard from His Excellency; Public Infrastructure; Public Telecommunications; Public Security; Public Services; Public Policy; a Legislative Agenda, covering some 12 Bills that are to come over the next few months; and yet, we hear that there is no vision and no plan and that if there is no plan, then there is no road that would take one there. Never before, in the history of the nation of Guyana, have we had a President who comes and sets out, for the benefit of the Assembly and for the benefit of the people of Guyana, his plans. These are the plans until we go into recess again next year.

For those who believe that this is all, this is not all. This is only the beginning. The best is yet to come. It is not my desire to go into a rebuttal of all that has been said. As I said, we have had much of much and much of little. However, just to rebut a few comments made about the sector over which I have responsibility.

Contrary to reports that were given, in terms of the gold production, I should add that, as at the last day in October, we were at 545,000 ounces of gold. Of that, the small miners have brought in 362,000 ounces of gold. The two major companies have brought in 183,000 ounces of gold. They are making a contribution, but it is not on their backs or shoulders that this mammoth declaration is being made. The Hon. Minister of Finance's target in his budget for 2016 is 550,000 ounces of gold. I am standing here saying to this House and to the Minister of Finance that we shall make that target of 550,000 ounces of gold. It would be met by the average man and woman involved in mining and that effort would be supplemented by the larger companies and we are grateful to them.

In terms of forestry, yes, there has been a decline. This is because there has been a World Market decline. Indeed, we are not ashamed to say that we have tightened up. We needed to tighten up on the wanton destruction and export. I would say that, however, in 2015, the earnings from the export of logs were US\$40 million. This year we do anticipate a 15% decline. This year we are anticipating delivering to the coffers about US\$37 million to US\$38 million. So this talk about everything being doomed and gloomed...Bauxite has surpassed both the 2014 and 2015 targets. I

should say that gold, for example, in 2014 the target was 385,000 ounces, which was under the previous Administration. In 2015, the target was taken to 456,000 ounces and this year it will be taken to over 600,000 ounces. That is our promise.

To all of the naysayers and to all of those who say that this Government has brought gloom and doom, we say no. We are not here standing saying that there have not been issues and that there are no issues of crime, but many of these babies have grown up, not under this Administration. They have grown up under the previous Administration. We are now inheriting the lawlessness, much of which was allowed to thrive. I do not understand, as a lawyer, what is happening. When I first came to the Bar, a criminal, with respect, was an identifiable person. Now, there are 14-year olds who are killing. They were not born when the APNU/AFC Government took over. They are plundering and decapitating people. One man said that his boss called him to decapitate someone.

Let me say this, His Excellency, the President, does not need to be lectured about security. He is in and of himself a world recognised security expert who has been invited to give lectures, to be a Professor at the Centre for Hemisphere and Defence Studies. He has been consulted. His statements are being, as is normal, deliberately misinterpreted. There are people in this country who carry licences for 10, 15 and 20 firearms. Those are the persons who will be targeted.

11.28 p.m.

This is because the statistics show that the firearms recovered from criminals, many of them, were found to be firearms that were stolen from households and from people who had been given licences and had left their firearms carelessly and they had been lost. Why does one need 16 firearm licences if he/she is one standing person? Why does one need high calibre assault rifles in this country?

We have the military and the Police Force, it is our duty to protect the citizens, but we will not allow private armies to reign in this country. So, we stand with His Excellency, who has a vision.

We may have heard a lot of bluster, today, but what we were short of on the other side were any plans or suggestions. Except for the last speaker who spoke before me, the Hon. Member Irfaan Ali, not another Member offered his or her support, suggestion or recommendation for making

anything better. One Member stood out, the Hon. Member Irfaan Ali, baring in his soul for whatever sins he may have committed. That is between him and his God. We all have sins and we leave him to seek his own salvation. But, every statement on the other side was devoid of one thing and that was working together in consensus.

So, we recommit and reaffirm our desire and willingness to work with the Opposition. Put away the insult of walking out when a Head of State is present; put away the insult of refusing to engage in invitations when a Head of State says “Let us talk”. As I have said before, even in the darkest days of the troubles, when it was that President Jagdeo asked the Opposition to meet and to speak, we always attended, out of respect for the Office. Never did we refuse to speak to the Government. Now, there is a refusal to engage.

And so I end, as the last speaker had ended, with a plea for us to get our act together, to go through whatever process of introspection that we need to go through and to come to a place where we could move this country forward and together. We look forward to meeting again during the budget debates.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the pleasure is mine at this late hour to make my contribution to this debate. The very important debate on His Excellency’s Address to the National Assembly. Sir, unlike my Hon. Friend, I do not share the view that the President should come to the National Assembly, unless there is a momentous occasion. That has been the tradition in the world. A President’s speech to a National Assembly is a sacrosanct exercise. That is why, in England, days are set aside to discuss the Queen’s address. If I may briefly read from *Erskine May’s*, Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament, 12th Edition. It states:

“At the opening of a session, by practice of both houses, the Queen’s speech is moved on the first day and it generally takes precedence over any other business and the debate on the address falls into two parts.”

The first part is used for a review of the Government’s policy, especially in relation to the contents of the Queen’s speech and the second consists of a series of amendments, generally regretting omissions from the Queen’s speech, which are usually moved by leaders of the

opposition and, occasionally, backbenchers. In recent sessions, the House has devoted five or six days to debate the address. Sir that, by itself, should tell us that the President's speech is not a regular occurrence in the Parliamentary business.

Of course, our Constitution states that the President can come at any time. But, obviously, that must be read in context. That is why, when the President comes to the National Assembly, one expects a heavy speech; a speech that is in-depth in content and is very policy-oriented.

Sir, when I look at this speech, I say, with the greatest of respect, that it does not meet the standard or the template of what is expected. For example, in terms of policy, the speech is vacuous. There is a heading in the President's speech titled "Economic Policy" and this is what the President is telling the country of his Government's economic policy: "Your Government entered a depressing financial landscape in 2015". He outlines a landscape that they entered into. "Economic mismanagement was accompanied by huge debts". Then he spoke about the Guyana Sugar Corporation's (GuySuCo's) index; he spoke about the rice farmers and problems with the PetroCaribe Fund; then he spoke about inheriting judgements; obligation to bail out the National Insurance Scheme (NIS); then about public servants benefitting from an increase in threshold taxes and workers' disposal income increasing significantly. That is his economic policy. What kind of policy is that? Is that the economic policy that one wishes for the whole Parliament to debate? This must be vacuous.

My understanding of an economic policy is how it is we will proceed along a path to achieve certain defined objectives economically, quantitative and qualitatively. That is how one outlines an economic policy. So, what is this? This is a recitation of the President's interpretation of a state of affair, which existed in the country not even now, but on some previous occasion. That is what this is, nothing futuristic. Ninety per cent of this document is what the President understands or perceived to have existed before. So, I would like to say that this speech does not meet the threshold.

Even in his recitation, the President sets out a set of facts. If the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana is going to share with the National Assembly, what he understood took place in the country and one has to accept that the President is being *Bona fide* and truthful, one

would expect that the President would list the major things that have happened in the country. What we have here is a litany of negatives.

The President recites about killing fields and about the dark days and all there is a list of problems. The President did not say that new highways were built from New Amsterdam to Crab Wood Creek, the East Coast of Demerara and from Georgetown to Timehri; that new streets and roadways were built right across the length and breadth of this country; that health centres and hospitals were built in every region in this country; that new schools were built in every region in this country; that a new campus of the University of Guyana (UG) was built in Berbice; that over the last 10 years alone over 50,000 house lots were allocated and that the communities were equipped with electricity, road and water; that they were the construction of secondary schools for the first time in the history of Guyana in certain hinterland locations; that new investors are taking over the Bauxite company at both Linden and Kwakwani; that there were call centres that were built in Linden; that over a 1000 small loggers were given forestry concessions in Linden; that a new bridge was built across the Berbice river; that we had constructed a new world-class Stadium at Providence; that we built a world-class Convention Centre at Turkeyen, that we built an Olympic-size swimming pool at Turkeyen; that we built a new modern track and field facility at Lenora; that we built a five-star hotel, the Marriot Hotel, at Kingston; that we brought in two modern roll-on/roll-off ferries to transport people across the Essequibo River and further afield; that we built a bridge across the Takutu River; that we transformed Lethem into a centre of commerce and industry; that we added the Caribbean Court of Appeal as Guyana's final Court; that we addressed and resolved our border issues with Suriname; that tens of thousands of poor people benefitted from the One Laptop per Family (OLPF) programme and my list is not exhausted. The President did not say all or none of these things when he attempted to recite what transpired in this country.

So, when the President comes to the National Assembly, Sir, he has to be objective. If the President wants to win the respect and he wants us to work together, then he must credit us with the accomplishments which we achieved in this country. He must not come here and insult us...

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order. For the Member to say that the President has come to insult this House, he will withdraw that statement. Mr. Speaker, it has to be

withdrawn. The President came to this National Assembly in good faith and for one to say that he came and insulted the House that statement has to be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member, for his intervention. Mr. Nandlall, what is your response to the statement or reference made?

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, what I said is that the President...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I know what you said and the House all heard you. The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman is saying...

Mr. Nandlall: If I honestly feel that the President, in his Address, insulted us...

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, is calling that you should withdraw the statement.

Mr. Nandlall: Unless Your Honour orders me to do so I do not see anything wrong with it.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I order you to do so.

Mr. Nandlall: You order me to do so? Thank you very much. I do so.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, we will not do this tonight. You will withdraw the statement by a statement that you have done so. That is how you must do it.

Mr. Nandlall: I have withdrawn the statement.

11.43 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, please proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much Sir. Sir, let us look at the legislative agenda. The President said this:

“The Justice Administration System will be fortified by the promulgation of three important pieces of legislation. The Witness Protection Bill...

The Protected Disclosures Bill, referred to as the Whistleblowers Bill...

The Deeds and Commercial Registry Authority (Amendment) Bill...”

Sir, the Witness Protection Bill is a Bill that has been there under our Government, drafted and left at the Attorney General’s Chambers. The third Bill, the Deeds and Commercial Registry Authority (Amendment) Bill, the draft of this Bill seeks to give the Minister power over the governing board. That is what the Bill does. This is what will fortify the judicial system of this country? This is what the President is saying will fortify the judicial system. What will fortify the judicial system is for the appointment of Judges. Since the departure of the Chief Justice, Mr. Chang, the Hon. Member, Madame Justice, Yonette Cummings-Edwards, was appointed Chief Justice (a.g.) and, as a result, came to the High Court, leaving the Court of Appeal, a three-person Court with two Judges. Every time the Court of Appeal has to sit, a Judge has to be taken from the High Court and that throws the High Court into chaos. A recommendation has been made by the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) to His Excellency, the President, several months ago for Judges to be appointed, and the names were also submitted to them. That will fortify the judicial system, if those appointments are made. This cosmetic change will have no impact on the judicial system.

Then I come to the statement of the President that we will have good governance. The President commits to good governance in his speech. Well, we have had, over the last 17 months, an incessant battle between the Executive and the constitutional agencies in this country. The doctrine of *Separation of Powers*, upon which our Constitution is constructed, states very clearly that these organs are to operate separately and that the Executive, in particular, must not interfere with constitutional agencies whose responsibility it is to oversight the Executive. What we have seen, in recent times, over the last 17 months, is a series of interventions and inappropriate influences by the Executive with these agencies. I am going to name them. We have the Attorney General interfering with the Judicial Service Commission’s exercise of its constitutional power to appoint the Deputy Registrar of Deeds. Then we have the Hon. Minister of Finance launching a tirade...

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Do you rise on a Point of Order, Attorney General?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Yes, Sir. The Hon. Member...

Mr. Speaker: Would you tell us the Standing Order.

Mr. Williams: Yes please, Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 40 (a).

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Williams: The Point of Order is that the Hon. Member is misrepresenting this honourable House and is imputing improper motive to the Attorney General. Secondly, the matter he is referring to is *sub judice* and I am asking him to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: If the matter is *sub judice* Hon. Member, you know you should not...

Mr. Nandlall: I am not prejudicing the outcome. I am making a reference.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I will remind you that this exchange took place before the recess.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: If it is in the opinion of the Speaker that that is so, then you do not maintain the position. That is what we have in the Standing Orders and that is what I will enforce.

Mr. Nandlall: It was published in the newspapers.

Mr. Speaker: You will withdraw that statement.

Mr. Nandlall: What statement, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: The reference to the Attorney General interfering with the appointment of the Deputy Registrar of Deeds.

Mr. Nandlall: But that is a statement of fact.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I order you to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Nandlall: As you order Sir. You are in control. I am going to withdraw it because you ordered me to withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, you have the Chairman of the Public Service Commission who is also a member of the Police Service Commission and a member of the Judicial Service Commission being invited to the Office of the President and being requested to resign.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, have a seat.

Mr. Williams: On a Point of Order. Again, the Hon. Member is purporting to refer to a matter that is *sub judice*. The said Member has been writing in the newspapers and it is contempt of the court to talk anything about this case and it is also in breach of the Standing Orders. Our Standing Order states that one cannot refer to a matter that is *sub judice*.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, the same situation arises again.

Mr. Nandlall: Again, I maintain that those are statements of fact. The fact that a court matter is filed cannot prohibit me from speaking on this topic.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I order you to withdraw the matter.

Mr. Nandlall: As you order Sir, I will withdraw it. Then we have the unfortunate exchange between the Hon. Minister of Finance and the Auditor General. All the Auditor General is guilty of is commenting, though critically, on the Minister of Finance's use of the Contingency Fund, as the Auditor General is entitled to do. As I pointed out here, in my humble view, the Minister of Finance was violating the Constitution and the Minister of Finance...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, another Member is on his feet.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, under Section 40 (a) of the Standing Orders, the Hon. Member is imputing things to me which he knows nothing about. He has neither quoted a source or any such thing for the tirade and ramblings that he has. He is imputing improper motives to a Hon. Member of this House. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Minister of Finance, you rose on a Point of Order? Improper motives are being imputed to you, in that what?

Mr. Jordan: Yes, Sir, with regard to the statements he is making. He has not quoted a single source of the imputations that he is making. That is what I am saying. If he quotes a source I will then have an opportunity to rebut it.

Mr. Nandlall: I have read in three newspapers: *Stabroek News*, *Kaieteur News* and *Guyana Times* newspapers, what I describe as an unfortunate exchange. [An Hon. Member of the Government: What date.] I do not remember the date. [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it would not affect the veracity of a statement because he does not know the date. The question is whether the statement could be relied on in the context of the sources from which he quotes.

Mr. Nandlall: Was there not an exchange where the Minister was heavily critical of the Auditor General? Let him deny that. The press is running.

Mr. Jordan: Report the source from which you quote.

Mr. Nandlall: The sources are three national newspapers and *Demerara Waves*, *Citizens Report* and *INews*. All those are sources.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Nandlall: Thank you very much Sir.

Mr. Jordan: This will go down in the *Hansard*. I am saying that what the Hon. Member has imputed to me, he does not have a source. I am saying that if he quotes a source, I will be able to rebut the exact source he quotes. He is imputing improper motives to me.

Mr. Nandlall: What improper motive am I imputing?

Mr. Jordan: He is wildly saying newspapers, but he does not have a source.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Ralph Ramkarran wrote an article about it only Sunday.

Mr. Jordan: Well then quote the source. Quote Mr. Ramkarran.

Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I have it here. I have a series of quote sources.

Mr. Jordan: Then quote the sources you have there.

Mr. Nandlall: “Jordan flays Auditor General”, the *Guyana Chronicle*, 18th October, 2016. “Auditor General trashes Finance Minister’s ‘criticism’ of report”, 19th October, 2016. “Jordan refuses Auditor General’s findings...” according to the *Stabroek News*. “Jordan takes a swipe at Auditor General over 2015 report.” 18th October, 2016. These are all sources.

Mr. Jordan: I am not the author of those headlines Sir. In any case, even the headlines that he has just quoted... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, if another Member rises on a Point of Order, you give way.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, but he just cannot rise all the time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the reason why I wanted him to quote the source. This is because there are two things here, one - I am not the writer of those headlines and two - even the headlines that the Hon. Member has just disclosed indicate on one hand what the Auditor General said and on the other hand what I said. So, he cannot conclude that I flayed the Auditor General on the context of the Contingency Fund. It is a lot of hearsay.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the explanation fully satisfies the requirements here. Mr. Nandlall, please continue.

Mr. Nandlall: That type of tension that exists where the constitutional office holders, that ought to treat each other with a certain degree of comity, are swiping at each other, that is not good for our democracy. So, when the Hon. Mr. Trotman says that the President’s Government is committed to good governance, a part of that is to accept scrutiny from the organisations and the constitutional agencies established to scrutinise. So, one does not have to describe the Chancellor of the Judiciary as a dictator. That is the head of the Judiciary. [*Interruption*] I will bring a copy of the *Kaieteur News* Sir where the Chancellor was described as a dictator of the judiciary.

11.58 p.m.

That is the kind of unhealthy relationship that does not conduce to the good government and good governance that the President spoke about.

The President also spoke about a transparent government. The worst example of lack of transparency perhaps that we have had in living memory in this country is the rental of the drug bond in Albouystown. There was \$14.5 million per month in rent, no tendering. There was an alternative proposal that would have offered the Government a world-class facility, air-conditioned bond for... [*Interruption from the Government Members.*] Sir, am I going to get back the time? Those who made the decision to rent the bond had at the time at their disposal an offer from a world-class facility certified by Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO). The proposed rental was \$137 per square foot. They rented a two-storeyed house in Albouystown for \$3,024 per square foot. I do not think up to now there are any drugs being used in the facility.

Worst yet, it was reviewed by the Prime Minister, Minister Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon and Minister Trotman and they have never rescinded the contract. All these things about transparency, it was suspended. The contract today still subsists and it continues to bleed the people of this country. When the President commits his Government to transparency, how is it that we are going to take that commitment seriously when that contract is still extant? I have identified four grounds.

[**Mr. Williams:** Is it unlawful?] Yes. It is unlawful. [**Mr. Williams:** You must show us.] It is unlawful because it is in violation of the entire Procurement Act. Half of the problem that we have is because of the legal advice that comes to the Government. The law states very clearly that any contract above a certain value must be subject of the Procurement Act. It is a mandatory obligation. If they do not know that well then it is in violation of the law. This is like a concrete wall. It is a coconut bursting a coconut, as I saw on facebook.

The President spoke about inheriting judgements and blamed the PPP. The state will always attract liabilities. [**Mr. Williams:** You lost the case...Did you take the blame.] I was only Attorney General for two years in this country, Sir. These cases have been in the system for 20 years, but their time is coming. There is one case filed already, Ansa McAl Trading Limited (Guyana) and the Busta Company. We will see how you will defend it. It is will be four times more than RUDISA Beverage. We will see. The statements are inaccurate. This

Government never inherited a statement from Emile Elias. The judgement was granted while this Government was in power. That was the first thing.

Secondly, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition explained the back ground - I have done it a million times - why and how the judgement of Rudisa Beverage was granted and who was responsible. The B.K. International Limited project, no judgement was ever granted to it under this Government, the Haags Bosch matter. B.K. International Limited, apparently, we learnt, through a mistake and error I believe, from the Hon. Minister of Communities, that it sent - obviously a staged thing - a threatening letter and it got \$1.7 billion. It is not under this Government, under that Government. It is the most potent legal letter ever written.

Mr. Speaker: Have you risen on a Point of Order?

Mr. Williams: Standing Order 40. Again, the Hon. Member is misrepresenting the facts of the matter in this honourable House. First of all, he said that no judgement was ever granted against the last Government. That is wholly inaccurate and erroneous.

Mr. Nandlall: I never said that, Sir. I identified which judgement was granted under us and which was not granted under us. That was what I did.

Mr. Williams: In the Haags Bosch matter the Hon. Member just said that no judgement was ever granted against the last Government and a threatening letter was written to our Government. In both instances, there are erroneous statements and I am asking him to withdraw them.

Mr. Nandlall: There was no judgement honouring the payment of the sum of \$1.7 billion. The information about the threatening letter being sent, I got that from the Hon. Minister, which was reported in the newspaper. I think he told the House that too.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, I think that you will have to give way one more time. Are you rising on a Point of Order, Minister?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Yes. It is on Standing Order 40 (a). The Hon. Member is attributing a statement to me that is wholly and totally erroneous. I am asking if he can withdraw that statement. He is attributing some statement made by me in relation to some settlement with B.K. International Limited in which I purportedly... I am seeking clarifications,

Sir. It is what exactly the Hon. Member is saying. He is attributing some statement to me that is erroneous. In relation to the very settlement that the Hon. Member is speaking about, all of the questions, which were posed in this House in relation to that very issue, were answered by me. The records are there to show. [Ms. Teixeira: The questions were refused to be answered by you.] I did not refuse to answer any question.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. You only said the payee and you could not say who the payee was.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Mr. Nandlall, the Hon. Minister is challenging what you said.

Mr. Nandlall: Well, I can produce a newspaper.

Mr. Speaker: You must substantiate what you are saying.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes. The Minister disclosed publicly that the moneys were paid through a threatening letter sent. I repeat that a million times. I am not going to withdraw that. That was reported in the newspaper. I have the newspaper too because I wrote several articles on it. Not once was it reputed. I am not sure whether it was said in this House. I know it was said. [Mr. Williams: You said that it was said in this House.] I never said that it was said in this House. I said I read it in the newspapers. I cannot recall where it was said, but it was reported in the newspaper. The Hon. Member never denounced it. I repeated that over ten times in the newspapers, and no rebuttal came from the Hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, unless you can substantiate that now, I must ask you to withdraw it and let us move on.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, with the greatest of respect, I want one hour to substantiate it. I am asking you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, do you know what you asked?

Mr. Nandlall: I am going home, Sir, to bring the newspaper. I am asking Your Honour's leave to go home and bring the newspaper.

Mr. Speaker: When you come to the House you must come prepared to whatever you are...

Mr. Nandlall: I am prepared. I do not have my identification card (ID). My name is Mohabir Anil Nandlall. If you are to ask me to substantiate that and I do not have my ID, what do you want me to do? I do not expect Sir, to be asked to prove things that are established.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nandlall, you will withdraw it or take your seat.

Mr. Nandlall: I will take my seat, Sir. I am not withdrawing it.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, you are out of order, and for the rest of the evening you would take no further part in this House.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not intend to, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Then you will leave.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. I am packing.

Members of the Opposition withdrew from the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, if you are leaving, as you choose to do, then you would leave quietly. You run the risk of being held in contempt. Hon. Mr. Ali, you are leaving, then leave without disturbing the House. Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, I see you have your back turn to the Speaker, is that significant?

Mr. Seeraj: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Then if you are leaving then do so.

Mr. Seeraj: I was just making way for my colleague. The Prime Minister is... [*inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: The Prime Minister knows that that is not a practice that should not be allowed here.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on record that we were not suppose or we did not anticipate in discussing this motion tonight, you are very aware of that, therefore, we had to be speaking with very little preparation.

12.13 a.m.

For a number of things we have had to refer to, we have not been able to walk with the document as you would have liked. I just want to go on record, that when a motion is thrown to us with no proper notice this is what happens, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, Gail Teixeira, I heard your comment, but there is...Either I am speaking with you and you are paying attention to me...

Ms. Teixeira: I am just trying to find the notice that you wanted. I am listening, Sir. Do you wish for me to stand up?

Mr. Speaker: I wish for you to give me your attention.

Ms. Teixeira: I am Sir. I am trying to find the date. You asked for evidence and this has just come now.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the matter is of no consequence.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. Then I would not look at it. I am paying attention.

Mr. Speaker: The matter is of no consequence. The person, who is asking the question, is not here. I do not see him here, so it is of no consequence, whatever you want to provide here now. I thank you. Is there something else you wish to say?

Ms. Teixeira: No Sir.

Mr. Williams: I rise to support this motion under the hand of the Hon. Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo which relates to the address by His Excellency the President, on 13th October, 2016, an address titled “The quality of life, public trust and good governance in Guyana”. In particular, I would like to congratulate the President on that presentation to this honourable House.

It was attacked about not speaking to policies and speaking to any future programmes for Guyana and, of course, I reject such a contention out of hand. Now, I might respectfully refer you, Mr. Speaker, and this honourable House, for example, to page 6 of the presentation, I would say the second paragraph from the top. His Excellency the President said this:

“Your Government will reboot the fledging ecotourism sector in 2017. Our unmatched biodiversity is a world-class product which will allow us to create a globally-competitive ecotourism sector”.

“Guyana’s future is linked to renewable energy generation and increased use of energy-efficient technologies. We will graduate our economy increasingly towards greater renewable energy use across all sectors of Guyana. Government buildings will be powered, eventually, by renewable energy sources and will utilize energy-efficient technologies. Incentives will be offered to the private sector to follow the government’s lead.”

This is just one illustration of the President’s vision. This President is one who has been speaking about a “green economy”, a “green state” and about sustainable sources of energy. He even indicated that we were hitherto proceeding on a narrow path in the environmental sector by just specifically relying on Low Carbon development Strategy (LCDS). He has proposed a more all-encompassing approach to have a biodiversity. I wish to register that. There are many other instances, in the presentation, in which the President gives guidance to us to pursue for the future.

We have been regaled by many presentations in this honourable House. I think it would be remiss of me if I did not address some of those presentations. Now, the Hon. Member referred to the Witness Protection Bill, the Whistle-blower Bill, for example, and he claimed that those Bills were their Bills. I wish to contend that the Whistle-blower Bill, which I met on becoming Minister of Legal Affairs, was one, when I read it, which was easy to conclude that it was designed to prevent anybody blowing a whistle, of whatever kind. It had provided for a whistle-blower to attend at five different stages. At each stage the whistle-blower was required to give all the biodata and all of his or her information - at five separate stages.

As I said, in some other venue, a member of the Red Thread met me at the Arthur Chung Convention Centre and said, “What kind of Witness Protection Bill you all are having?” I said, “What do you mean?” The said thing I have just mentioned, which I had told my staff in the Ministry, that lady told me. It meant then that we had to go back to the drawing board and we had to draft an entirely new Witness Protection Bill. That is why it took some time. You

remember the Hon. Member, Vice-President Khemraj Ramjattan, alluded to the fact that the Bill was delayed. That was the reason. Notwithstanding that we might meet a Bill, of some other matter, that we might have inherited, it does not mean that it is perfect. We had to deal with those things, equally the Whistle-blower Bill and the others.

The question of the appointment of judges, it is a process. In every country, which I know of in the world, in the greatest of democracy... A most popular President, with the mandate, had the opportunity to appoint a member to the Supreme Court of the United States of America. What happened? It was contended that he should have left that for the new President, which was something that was a year or more away, so that the new President would have the opportunity to do that. This question of appointment of judges when a new Government comes into office... Any new Government would want an opportunity to be able to make an appointment to the court of any land. The criterion, which might be used to determine the appointment of judges, for example, we have always contended, even from the Opposition, is that those positions should be advertised. None of those positions had been advertised. We are saying that the process is not right yet. When the time comes we would deal with those situations. This is a new Government and it is a new President. It is the same thing as in the case of setting up the Local Government Commission.

Many other contentions were made in relation to crime, crime waves and all of that. We know that we were talking about the first decade of the twenty-first century. We know that that was a terrible period. Who has to shoulder that blame? It is only one entity could have shouldered such a blame. It is the Government of the day. The Government of the day has to be responsible for law and order. I have regretted to say that during that period Guyana becomes a failed state. There was no rule of law; there was no law and order. In fact, a gangster put an advertisement in the newspaper claiming that he was given a licence by the Government to enforce law and order in Guyana. That was the state that Guyana had arrived at.

We had talked about a situation where there was the killing squad, such as the Black Clothes squad. You would recall the Black Clothes squad. Many times you look at your television, the newspapers, there would have been a father lying in his living room and his child would have been over him with, blood on the floor. Bodies were turning up all over, in roads and trenches. It was a killing field and no other person could be blamed for such atrocities and such a state than

the Government of the day. It is a simple thing. It is a period in which a Minister was killed and there was no inquest or inquiry. Many people were killed and there was no inquest or inquiry.

Applications had to be made to the court to focus on the state to start to holding inquest. No one was saved. Women were killed, Donna McKinnon and Donna Herod. Donna McKinnon was killed protesting in Robb Street, just in front of Freedom House. None of the two were saved. There was public insecurity. As I said, we were fast approaching to be a failed state. We had all kinds of squads. In addition to the Black Clothes squad, there was the Minister's squad; there was the Phantom squad and then there was the Roger Khan squad.

We actually had this case in which that gentleman was actually charged and went to trial, in the United States of America. I would like to refer you, in this honourable House, to this work, the dossier. It was in support of an "International Inquiry into the Grave Human Rights Abuses in Guyana", November 2009, compiled by the joint Opposition parties, which was laid over to with the United Nations body on Human Rights My colleagues, in here, would be familiar with it. Dr. Roopnarine work assiduously on helping to produce this document. On page 18 of the dossier, it refers to Selwyn Vaughn's testimony. I will read quickly.

"The evidence given by prosecution witness Selwyn Vaughn, at the trial of Simels on the 28th to 30th July, 2009, was extremely damaging to the Guyana Government. This self-confessed accomplice of Roger Khan, who became informant for the US Government against Simels, testified under oath that Roger Khan ordered the execution of political activist Ronald Waddell, who was connected to the Buxton gang of prison escapees. Shortly after this execution, Roger Khan contacted Government Minister of Health, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy. He, Selwyn Vaughn, at the time was the lookout man who was tracking Waddell in January, 2006 when he was gunned down.

This witness also testified how Khan ordered the execution of Donald Allison and Devendra Persaud. These three persons were brutally murdered and, up until this testimony, there was no evidence as to who were involved. The Guyana Police Force's investigations were leading nowhere and these crimes were being treated as unsolved."

On page 19:

“There was a witness by the name of Myers. He testified that his firm Smith Myers, UK, made the intercept equipment, which he identified in court.”

12.28 p.m.

“This was as a result of an order to do so being made in the Florida, USA, sales office. As he stated, his equipment was sold to the Government of Guyana with Dr. Leslie Ramsammy being an agent on the Government’s behalf. It is important to note, not only was the prosecution, through this witness saying so. This was also the position of the defence for Simels.”

That very case revealed a lot about what was happening in Guyana during that bloody period. It is in the trial records, for all the world to see, of the United States of America. That period cannot be gainsaid. It cannot be fixed on this new Government, but we refer to this period so that we never have to go back to that period again.

I remember distinctly that was period where young boys were really scapegoated. They were profiled and they were fixed with capital offences, between the ages of 13 and 16, 17. Some were visited with three murder charges. I would never forget their faces when they were brought to court, they came out of the prison van and were bundled into the courtroom. There was a bewildered and bemused look on their faces. How could you ever forget that? How could you ever forgive it? The Government actually set up a system. A brand new magistrate was appointed to go into that area to look after those cases. That magistrate, without let or hindrance, never accepted a no-case submission, that there was no evidence and always committed those young men. They grew up in prison, in their material years. As I vowed, each and every murder charge was dismissed and they did not have to go to the jury, because there was no evidence. In one case, he actually confused the confession statement for one murder case with that of another murder case. How could you forgive that?

I think I should move off from that period because it is a black dot in the history of this country. It is a dark time. Let me fast-forward to the present. If I might respectfully refer you to the third, fourth and last paragraph and the first paragraph on pages 10 and 11, of the address to this honourable House, page 10 speaks to:

“...Government’s legislative agenda, for the next year, is aimed at continuing our efforts to ensure a ‘good life’ for all. We will protect the interests of Guyanese by strengthening Guyana’s legal architecture.”

This is what we campaigned on. We campaigned to restore the rule of law in Guyana and we are on track. If in restoring the rule of law, paradigms have to be shifted and changed, so be it. We have to call a spade a spade. We have had a situation in which we became the only country where the checks and balances in the judiciary were removed and consolidated in only one office. In our country, in this Parliament, a Bill was passed to amend the High Court Act to remove the powers from the Chief Justice and ensconce them in the Office of Chancellor. There was no check and balance anymore. Whereas the Chief Justice supervised the puisne judges of the High Court and the Chancellor presided in the Court of Appeal and supervised magistrates, all of that was now consolidated into the Office of Chancellor. A matter in the magistrate’s court was determined by the Chancellor. If it is appealed, the Chancellor sits on appeal of the case determined by the person that it inherited. These are things that have to be readdressed because we do not need any strong man or strong woman Chancellor or any office in the judiciary. We will address those issues.

The other paragraph states:

“Your government, in this regard, is committed to promoting standards of probity in public office. We will ensure, also, that those who unlawfully expropriate state property are brought to justice. We will pursue the recovery of all stolen State assets”.

Undoubtedly this mischief, His Excellency is addressing, is a situation where public officers seek to extract private wealth from state assets. Any Government, much less a signatory to the international conventions, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACAC), such a Government, must exorcise this cancer. Conventional wisdom tells us that there is an inverse relationship between high corruption and extreme poverty in any country. This APNU/AFC Government triggered, on coming into office, forensic audits. Reports of these audits have been submitted to the Cabinet and on interrogation and inspection they revealed criminal offences. As it happened, the state’s office to deal with prosecution, in Guyana, is the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). There

was an indication that the members of that department were uncomfortable with doing cases such as those, suggesting that they were cases of a political nature and so the Government had to act. The Government has identified that special prosecutors would then be enlisted to prosecute certain matters as they come up.

The engagement of special prosecutors is nothing unusual in our jurisprudence and in our system of justice. Even before I became a lawyer, I read about the giants such as Mr. Rex McKay, the late Mr. Doodnauth Singh, Senior Counsel, Mr. Bernard DeSantos. They were engaged as special prosecutors in different matters from time to time. For them to get that, they would have to get a fiat from the DPP.

Coming to the present, in the case of Mark Benschop for treason, from his preliminary inquiry, young Sanjeev Datadin and Anil Nandlall were given fiats to prosecute that serious matter. It is a capital offence, the highest criminal offence in the land, and they were very inexperienced. After he was committed and the matter went to trial before the High Court, I remember it was tried before the late Justice Winston Moore and a 12-member jury. They, again, were given fiats to prosecute, which was serious political matter. There were a lot of protests and demonstrations involved. He was charged for attempting to lead a crowd into the Office of the President secretariat. People were shot and killed out there, and were injured. The DPP issued fiats to these relatively inexperienced criminal lawyers. They had no experience in criminal law to prosecute the case. It is nothing unusual.

Again, equally in the New Building Society (NBS) case, I think a petition has been laid in this honourable House before you, the DPP recused herself from it and gave fiats to the late Mr. Hookumchand and his children to prosecute. Even now we see the allegations that are made against us. Even in the case of *Pradoville*, it is equally the same thing. She would have to recuse herself and fiats would have to be issued for people to prosecute the case. Now, there is nothing unconstitutional about that. Article 144 of the Constitution guarantees any person charged with a criminal offence in Guyana a fair hearing within a reasonable time before an impartial court. The special prosecutor is only one element in the trial in a courtroom. The most important person in that courtroom is the magistrate or the judge. Anyone charged has a right to defence, has a right to a lawyer of his or her own choice. There are rules of evidence and rules of procedure. The special prosecutor enters; he or she has a heavy burden. The special prosecutors have to

discharge their burden on a standard beyond reasonable doubt. There are rules that they have to follow and the judge or the magistrate presides and directs. Where is the unconstitutionality in the matter? It cannot be said that a Government must operate as a timorous soul and fold its hands and do not have any interest in ensuring one, the recovery of state assets, two, the prevention of the filching and purloining of future state assets.

Governments must have that. We are signatories to anti-corruption conventions, so we have, as a Government, the right to pursue the recovery of state assets and to put people before the courts to account for them, once they have been identified and fingered and the evidence reveals a *prima facie* case against them. The President is quite correct in the words that he has used in this paragraph. I feel that this Government has nothing to be afraid of, in terms of any miscarriage of justice in this regard.

In the last paragraph on page 10, the President speaks to:

“The justice administration system will be fortified by the promulgation of three important pieces of legislation. The *Witness Protection Bill* will give effect to the Caribbean Community’s *Agreement Establishing the Regional Justice Protection Programme (1999)* which came into force in 2006”

What this means, it is that these Bills, the Witness Protection and Whistle-blower Bills complement the Government’s thrust to protect state assets and to recover state assets. The important thing in those cases is to get material witnesses. Therefore it is incumbent, in any successful approach of that nature, that there are people who are willing to come out and give information about corrupt acts that might be occurring around them in the various offices. These are the people we call whistle-blowers. We have to give them an environment within which they will feel comfortable to come and give the kind of evidence that would be sufficient to secure a conviction.

As it is, they have to be secured, so the Witness Protection Bill sets up a regime that would guarantees them their protection until the time comes after which they will give the evidence and they are protected even after they would have given the evidence. These Bills are very important. We have to ensure that we get these Bills out quickly, so that they complement the Government’s thrust in its efforts to recover state assets.

12.43 a.m.

I think the reference to the Deeds and Commercial Registry (Amendment) Bill was misinterpreted earlier. That Bill is intended to widen the number of members on the Board to include other important representatives, for example the Valuation Department, the Ministry of Business, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), *et cetera*. The other one is really to plug a *lacuna* in the legislation to this effect.

Currently, the Deeds and Commercial Registry Act has created the Deeds and Commercial Registry Authority as a corporate entity that is run by a governing Board. It makes provision for the day-to-day running of the Deeds and Commercial Registry by the Registrars of these bodies – Registrar of Deeds Registry and the Registrar of the Commercial Registry. The Board supervises the Registrars.

What is the role of the Minister? The Minister is to give directions which must be obeyed by the Board. We have a situation because we had the interregnum. The Bill is now coming up. The Bill actually has to go before Cabinet and then come here. As a result, the Board has not been re-constituted. What is the position? There is no provision in the legislation to say, if there is no Board, what is the relationship between the Registrars - the day-to-day governance of the Registries - and the Minister?

That is what this amendment seeks to do: where there is no Board, the Minister would assume, as in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary Agricultural Development Authority Act, the temporary role as that of the powers of the Board in relation to the day-to-day running of the Registries by the Registrars. This is what it simply intends to do and not as was suggested here earlier.

Those were some of the things that His Excellency alluded to in relation to our approach to dealing with this cancer of the pilfering of State assets; the whole regime to ensure that we have witnesses who are confident to come out and “blow the whistle” on the perpetrators and then we are able to protect them also.

In addition to that, we have the States Assets Recovery Agency (SARA) Bill. The SARA Bill is a civil approach to assets recovery. As you know, there is supposed to be a Director that is empowered to make certain approaches in this regard. There would be a fund where any assets

seized or forfeited would be deposited into this fund. Some of the proceeds of that fund would fund the operations of SARA. That Bill would also come up shortly in this House but it will be all part and parcel of this regime.

It is apposite to note that it is only today that the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC) addressed appending and impending Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) programmes to deal with anti-corruption. I suspect that you would touch on aspects of assets recovery. In the Caribbean, there is an asset recovery body. Under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) regimes are the assets recovery institutions. State assets recovery is really a global approach that is happening right now and is being engaged in. It is nothing unusual and peculiar to Guyana but is a global approach in dealing with the unlawful conduct of public officers in relation to Government assets.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it might be the right time for me to say that I support this motion and that, if the Members on the other side were here, I would have taken the opportunity to lift up the contentions before the “ayes” and smack them down. They are not here so I do not need to detain this honourable House further. I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Nagamootoo (replying): Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious that we are approaching the hour of 1.00 a.m. Though I would like to say many things in rebuttal, I would probably restrict them to a minimum of what I would like to say at this point.

First of all, I would like to thank Your Honour for the patience with which you presided over these proceedings and also your Parliament staff for going through another gruelling ritual into the morning. On the last occasion, I remarked almost close to the time when the cock would crow. I also thank my Colleagues on the Government benches who have spoken to this motion and did so very responsibly and vindicated the policies and plans enunciated by His Excellency the President in his Address on 13th October, 2016. I also wish to applaud the position taken by Hon. Minister Raphael Trotman, from his experience as former Speaker of the House, in recognising that today characterised perhaps further evidence of our own autochthonous democracy. However, it is our own robust democracy; it is a parliamentary democracy that is alive; that has seen an Opposition boycotting an Address by the Head of State, the Commander

in Chief, on some trivia and then having indulged in its peculiar “cuss down” politics, abuse, vilification and attempts at demeaning Members of the House, particularly the Government, and casting aspersions on the person of the President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana; they walked out.

There is a name that one uses to characterise such behaviour but I would not use that word. It is unparliamentary. When you cannot get your way, you behave bad; you “cuss” up; you “buse down”; you walk out.

There might have been, if I may, Your Honour, merits in what the Hon. Member of the Opposition canvassed, but, as a practising Attorney – (he is back in practice and I am not in practice at the moment) - he ought to know that, when the Speaker rules, the Speaker’s ruling has to be obeyed. There is ample proof in the Courts. I remember the case of *Hadkinson v. Hadkinson* that all lawyers, however rudimentary their knowledge of the law is, would know that an order once made has to be obeyed unless it is discharged. If the Speaker has called on someone to withdraw a remark or to take his or her seat, that is a ruling that has to be obeyed until upon such a time when, on the merit of the case, the Speaker may decide that that ruling can be withdrawn. The excuse for walking out of the Parliament today cannot be condoned by any standard at all, not by people who know the law and who claim to act within the law and by the law. We have heard much of that this evening.

Sir, if you permit me very quickly to say this, when President Granger delivered his speech in the Parliament on 13th October, 2016, I had to remark to him and to some other Colleagues of mine that it was the birthday of my late mother. I had said that had she lived on 13th October, she would have been 100 years old.

Today, when I heard my name being bandied about and I was quoted very extensively, it occurred to me that my mother would have been proud of her little boy who is being immortalised in the *Hansard* and being quoted. I also remember William Shakespeare, as a Teacher teaching the text, *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will*, when he said:

“What the great ones do, the less will prattle of.”

I want to say this because it is important: whatever I said up to the very last hour before I left the People's Progressive Party (PPP), after some 50 years of involvement, I stood and stand by everything that I have said. There is nothing that I consider to be ashamed of. I said many things, including and I refer to the then President's speech of 24th October, 2011.

“I stand by every single word that I had uttered in 2006.”

This is from a letter that I had written to the then General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) Donald Ramotar:

“That the PPP was my home, that we shared a vision for the future based on Cheddi Jagan's core principles which could be summarised in two words – lean and clean. Unfortunately, the leadership has betrayed his promises as well as these values. As much as I love our home, there was just no place for me to help to make it accountable, responsible and free from corruption. The recent awful disclosures by “WikiLeaks” should at least remind the leadership that, Moses had told us so.”

I refer to what I had said, which was not quoted here; and I hope might have been quoted:

“The post-Jagan Party had been riddled by episodes of internal breach in democracy, corrupt practices, security lapses and arrogant autocratic leadership.”

12.58 a.m.

They should have quoted that today because part of the security breaches was when those I considered to have been erstwhile Colleagues had entered into a tryst with drug lords and criminal elements, and had virtually handed over the defence and protection of our people to those in the criminal enterprise. So, I believe that it is self-serving to come here to try to set me up against my Colleagues, who are here on this side of the House, and try to create an impression that the President, in his Address, ought not to have gone to a period when Guyana had faced tremendous peril.

The President did not have to speak from the point of view that he was the leader of a political party; he could have simply referred to what I had said while I had been with that party. And I knew much more, as well as some others still around, of what exactly happened in that period.

But much had been said about that and I believe, as I said, that one needs to go back into the context of where we are and what we are doing to appreciate that we are indeed making headway. I had said that you must not judge us only on the basis of the promises made but what we inherited. But, conveniently, those on the Opposition side who had spoken left out the word “only” and said that I had said to the House that we should not be held culpable for promises made.

The Hon. Member, Irfaan Ali, tried to present to this House an image of not only handing us oil and gas, which he tried to extricate himself from, but that they handed us an economy that was booming, and that we, in 17 months, had wrecked the economy. And so, I want to place on record the World Bank Report, *The Guyana Overview*, which was last updated on 8th September, 2015.

It says here:

“Guyana is a low-income country and the third smallest country in South America after Suriname and Uruguay with about 800,000 inhabitants. It is the third poorest country in the western hemisphere after Haiti and Nicaragua with a per capita GDP of approximately US\$3,763 in 2014.”

This was a reference to 2014. And while the Hon. Member of the Opposition was saying how Guyana had been making 4% to 4.5% GDP growth, the World Bank said that real GDP growth slowed in 2014 to 3.8% reflecting the softening in global commodity prices, including gold and bauxite. Then it states:

“Real GDP growth is projected to fluctuate within the range of 3 percent to 5 percent during 2015 to 2018.”

Here again, in deviance to what the World Bank is saying, we were given figures to project that we were given an economy that was sound, vibrant and prosperous. But this is not reflected here and the figures quoted were erroneous and misleading to the House. And I recall trying to shout to the Member from across the benches to say, ‘Where is your source?’ And so, we are moving along from what we have inherited and we believe that we are moving, perhaps, incrementally, but we are moving upward steadily.

Then we were pilloried by the Leader of the Opposition when he said, initially: “They do have money to waste on D’Urban Park.” This is the seed of spiralling this debate out of what it ought to be into an assault on the Government; not an appreciation of what the Government plans; not suggesting a substitute plan or to say that our plan is not good and he has a superior plan or an alternative plan, but simply an assault to shoot us down in and on anything or everything we have done. And this is being said by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition who decried the fact that President Granger had made six Addresses within 17 months. The record showed that, in his 12 years, he had addressed Parliament only twice – 4th May, 2001 and 28th September, 2006. It is one in every six years. But he came here and he was trying to say that there was a “malodorous contract” in relation to D’Urban Park. And the Minister of Public Infrastructure cited a figure of \$138 million in 2007 to 2009 that had been spent on D’Urban Park by the Government of the Leader of the Opposition, then President, but that is not what I am saying this for. We are pilloried for spending money on D’Urban Park but I want to refer here: *Complex progress, President Bharrat Jagdeo at the site yesterday afternoon*. It was a Winston Oudkerk photograph in the *Guyana Chronicle* of Thursday, 20th October, 2005. *President checks on D’Urban Park Complex...*

That Leader of the Opposition stood up here to talk about waste and this article states:

“Contractor Mr. Rameshwar Ramchand yesterday promised President Bharrat Jagdeo that Phase 1 of the D’Urban Park development project in Georgetown will be completed by the end of next month. President Jagdeo, after inspecting the site on a brief visit yesterday afternoon, urged that work be done round the clock to ensure that the deadline is reached. Phase 1, which covers landfilling and drainage work at the site East of the 1763 Monument Square is being done at an estimated cost of \$45 million.

Once completed, the 1,620 acres Sports Complex will have track and field and cycling areas, four tennis courts, parking space for about 195 vehicles, food stalls and an administrative centre.”

Here was the Leader of the Opposition, then President, who had this grand idea of this D’Urban Park Project. It was good in his time. Suddenly, it becomes a waste in our time. You cannot place any weight on the credibility of such pronouncement, much less the type of leadership that

pronouncement is coming from. And worst yet, there was a follow-up article that stated that the \$45 million contract was taken from the Guyana Lottery Fund to be used to finance the initial phase and the contract went into the drain. It was never completed. The work was left undone and then, when questioned, another \$138 million was spent.

On the 25th October, 2008, Dr. Roger Luncheon was questioned, and this is *Kaieteur News* newspaper: *\$45M go down the drain at D'Urban Park*. That is the headline of this article. It states:

“After spending millions of dollars as part of infrastructural work, the area will now be used as a ‘green pristine jungle’ or ‘green zone,’ Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr. Roger Luncheon, said yesterday.”

This is irrefutable proof that, while we are dealing with criticism of what Government is doing and condemnation of what we do, we have to look at the credibility of those who criticise us because they were indulging in very much the same, and came here and said that nothing is wrong in trying to follow them because they believe in continuum and in continuity. But when we try to continue some of the things we find might be worthwhile, we are pilloried for it. And that includes, also, when we tried to do the Wind Farm Project. We were told that the Wind Farm Project was a waste of time and that it was wasting taxpayers’ money; there was no consultation and bidding for it. But the Wind Farm Project was resuscitated because we thought it was relevant and useful for Guyana. But, actually, the contract for this initial Wind Farm Project was given out by approval to execute a memorandum of understanding for the development of the Hope Beach Wind Farm Project. It was a meeting of the Cabinet held on the 27th May, 2014. It was approximately one year ahead of us being in the Government. A decision was made at Cabinet to enter into this Project with Guyana Wind Farm Inc. And here I have also the details of that Project which shows that the price that was being offered for kilowatt hour of electricity was US\$0.18 per kilowatt hour as compared to US\$0.12 in the new configured arrangement being made with the same company.

We are being criticised for having gone into a project but the Leader of the Opposition has forgotten very clearly that he has gone... [Mr. Patterson: ...out to lunch.] Beyond lunch...he is probably at the ‘*door step of dinner*’ to say that we were at fault to indulge in a

project. Much of what we heard here today is much of the same ‘*old khaki pants of criticism*’, the Opposition at all cost trying to bring down the Government, rather than trying to say things in a way that will be interpreted as being constructive.

Today, as I said, one can say very many things about the debate but it is over. It shows that our Parliament is alive, however boisterous these proceedings are; I empathise with Your Honour because it is not an easy job to control an unruly crowd. I still believe that there is hope. At the end of everything else, we must continue to hold on to our own belief that it is possible that Guyana could have some forms of unity. It is possible for the Government and the Opposition to have some mode of co-existence, some form of cooperation because the people in our country deserve no less than to see that those who are elected to Parliament behave responsibly and that they make the best suggestions to take the country forward. Whether it is to create jobs, to be able to afford to give more to workers in the form of wages or to pensioners in the form of assistance, it should be the responsibility of all of us because we are all in this process of governance of our country. It is not Government and Opposition; it is we, the people, the peoples’ representatives in this National Assembly, who must put our heads and talents together so that we can work for Guyana.

1.13 a.m.

It is with these words that I commend, to this House, the Motion in my name to approve the policies adumbrated by His Excellency, President David Granger, and to express our gratitude to him once again.

Thank you.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there is one item of business still remaining. I have given consent, in accordance with Standing Order No. 28 (2), for the following motion to be proceeded with at this Sitting. The First Vice-President and Prime Minister will move the motion.

HOURS OF SITTING

“WHEREAS Standing Order No. 10(1) provides for every Sitting of the National Assembly to begin at 2.00 p.m. and unless previously adjourned, end at 10.00 p.m. on the same day;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order No. 10(2) provides that the Speaker may at any time suspend the Sitting for a stated period but, unless the Assembly otherwise resolved, the Speaker shall, at 4.00 p.m., suspend the Sitting for one hour, and at 7.00 p.m. suspend the Sitting for half an hour;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order No. 10(3) provides for the Assembly at any time by motion made and carried without amendment or debate suspend or vary the provisions of paragraphs one (1) and two (2) of Standing Order No. 10;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order No. 10(4) provides for the Assembly from time to time, alter, by Resolution, the hours provided by Standing Order No. 10 for the beginning and ending of a Sitting.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 10(1) and (2) be suspended to enable the Assembly to sit during the following hours to complete the debate on the 2017 Budget within the five (5) days allotted for this purpose by Standing Order No. 71(2);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 10(1) and (2) be suspended to enable the Assembly to sit during the following hours to complete the consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2017:

- 10.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon – Sitting
- 12.00 noon. - 1.00 p.m. – Suspension
- 1.00 pm. - 5.00 p.m. – Sitting
- 5.00 p.m. - 6.00 p.m. - Suspension
- 6.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. - Sitting
- 7.30 p.m. - 8.00 p.m. – Suspension

- 8.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. – Sitting

[First Vice-President and Prime Minister]

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move the motion in my name for the suspension of a Standing Order.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this brings to an end our business for today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Your Honour, I beg to move that this House be adjourned to 21st November, 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House stands adjourned to 21st November, 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 1.16 a.m.