

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

Part I

52ND SITTING

2.00 PM

Thursday 3 March 2006

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

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

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

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P.

-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P.

-Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P.

-Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.

-Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.

-Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P.

-Minister of Education

The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P.

-Minister of Finance

The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.

-Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P.

-Minister of Home Affairs; Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands/West Demerara (AOL)

The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P.

-Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.

-Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.

-Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5-Mahaica/Berbice)

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

* Non-Elected Minister

** Elected Member from The United Force

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Members of the Opposition (30)

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

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

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

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

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Ms Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Maurice B. Henry, Head Committees Division

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PRAYERS

The Clerk **reads the Prayer**

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members, leave has been granted to Miss Myrna Peterkin for today's sitting.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET FOR 2005

Assembly resumes the debate on the Motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2005

The first speaker for today is the Honourable Member, Dr Max Hanoman

Dr Carl Max Hanoman: Mr Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I do not commend the Honourable Minister of Finance, the Honourable Saisnarine Kowlessar, for the presentation of the Budget at a time against the odds that he faced.

However, as I perused the document, I had a sense of disappointment I had to lament the contents of the document. It is unimaginative, uncaring, uncompromising. But can you blame the Minister of Finance for this? He can only allocate the money at his disposal. But why is this so? We have a Government that is not aggressive with investment policies

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As has been said by the Honourable Member of this House, Mr Ravindra Dev, this country is liquid. We have money, but there is a fear of risk of investment as a result of their tinkering with socialism. You know why the Soviet Union fell apart. It was on a misconceived notion propagated by Lenin called the dictatorship of the Prolectariat. Simply put, Lenin argued that the man in the street was incapable of thinking, and therefore those in power should think on their behalf. This eventually led to the powerbrokers using the system for their own aggrandisement and forgetting the masses who placed them there. I quote the late President Jagan who said, on numerous occasions:

There can be no development without democracy.

Let us hope that the socialist in power does not traverse the road of Lenin and his followers, to the detriment to the people of this country.

In 1992 you had a good opportunity, because the nation said that they wanted change. Change was welcomed. You rode on the back of the ERP and you did well. The ERP was the brainchild of our former President, the late Desmond Hoyte, and now that you have run out of ideas from the ERP, you are left to think on your own. Members on the Government side have said, if we started on a low, but we went to a high. But we handed you the government on a high, yet what has happened in twelve years? You have destroyed this high and brought us to a lower low.

The PPP/C has written off the projected policies of the ERP. Of course, having a blueprint, you did well initially, but now you have to think for yourselves. Guyana's policies in 1992 were on the right track. We were on the way back. You should know that, because you benefited from the policies of the ERP.

We brought in OMAI and BARAMA and, in the speeches from Members of the Government side, you are now hoping that OMAI and BARAMA will bail you out of the economic mess that we are in. OMAI will have to handle bauxite and BARAMA will have to invest in sawmills

in different areas.

Instead of berating the PNC/R, you should thank them for their policies of attracting foreign investments, but all good things must come to an end. You have exploited the ERP and, as I have said, you have to think for yourself. The nation must assess you on your independent approach.

There is liquidity in the bank. You have no measures to invest same. You cannot attract huge foreign investment. You speak of sustainability, but then there is nothing to sustain. The wages of sin is *debt*. [Laughter] Your economic policies are reflected in the GDP. Imagine, from 2000 to 2004, your growth was in decimals, and for those of you who do not understand decimals, you had fractional growth. The average GDP is 0.5 percent, and that is in the Budget that I have. I have it in front of me and I have extracted these figures. I have not created these figures. How could you, with a straight face, tell the Guyanese nation that you are doing well? The figures are here. Prices are on the increase daily.

A Government must design policies that will benefit the people. A policy that attracts money, pay a living wage, provide good health, education, roads, good drainage and irrigation, water and electricity to all. Are these policies in place? I say no. Instead, the Government intends to stay in power and continue to fool the Guyanese people. I say to you, if you cannot govern adequately for the people, then the other honourable thing to do is to leave governance.

I would have thought that the first measure to be addressed in the Budget was to increase the threshold for workers at the lower end of the scale. This is a disincentive to work, and acts as a burden to business since it limits the worker's ability to meet his or her obligations to his or her family. Sixty percent of the income tax collected, excluding corporate tax, comes from the people from the lower end of the scale. No improvement of the standard of living for the majority of the Guyanese people, and this can be reflected ... you can ask Minister Shadick of the

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amount of beggars and children we have on the street. For example, look at the price people have to pay for electricity.

Mr Speaker, on that note of electricity, I would like to revisit the speech made by the Prime Minister in his presentation. He did not even mention the Memorandum of Understanding between GUYSUCO and GPL concerning the supply of power to be generated by GUYSUCO for sale to GPL. Why the secrecy? Should not such a MOU be brought to Parliament for ventilation? Mr Speaker, I raise this issue because the terms under which GPL can buy power from independent power producers are based on the concept of avoided costs. The PM knows fully well what we are talking about. In other words, the one issue that is beyond any doubt is that, even with cogeneration, power will remain to the consumer a luxury, not a necessity. It is about \$40 per kilowatt hour.

Mr Speaker, may I add that, with the current high prices of petroleum products, the price of electricity will continue to climb. The Government expects a lot from its expansion programme at Skeldon, but the benefits, if any, will not be seen until after 2007 when we, the PNC/R, would have assumed Government. *[Applause]*

I wish again to voice my concern on electricity, this time addressing the question of power to the people at Linden. On Page 25 of the Budget Paragraph 4.9, the Minister of Finance states

Further, once OMAI commences generation of its own power, it would be able to satisfy the electricity needs of the entire community.

It is a known fact that very little was done to collect monies from households at Linden. Incidentally, the same is true for water. However, I am raising this issue again because of the large transfers from the Ministry of Finance to Linmine before the OMAI take-over went to the payment of electricity and water supplied by Linmine, and which has not paid by the community. You can bet that OMAI will not operate under these conditions.

Again one needs to ask, since it is privatisation of Linmine, why

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hasn't the agreement, or agreements been brought to this Honourable House? The PPP/C questioned every privatisation that was done under the PNC/R and brought the agreements to Parliament, and we now demand, in this era of transparency, that all privatisation deals be put before this Honourable House so as to ensure that the resources of this country are not squandered.

Mr Speaker, I wish to address the Prime Minister, whose wisdom in bauxite is well known. I am happy to learn that RUSAL will be investing US\$20 million in bauxite to produce 2.5 million tonnes per year by 2006. There is something amiss in the Minister of Finance's statement on Page 25 Section 4 11, where he speaks of the possible establishment of a US\$1 billion Aluminium Plant. This is not only an illusion of grandeur, but a statement meant to raise the hopes of the Guyanese people, only to have their dreams dashed. I will tell you why. With an investment of US \$1 billion, such a plant would need at least between 1.5 to 1.6 million tonnes high grade bauxite, metallurgical grade, and this would have to be sustained for at least 40 years. However, RUSAL would have taken out between 25 and 30 million tonnes of bauxite over a 10-year period, the time needed to construct a billion dollar dream Aluminium Plant.

Secondly, such a plant would need somewhere in the vicinity of 40 to 50 megawatts of affordable electricity. As I pointed out to this House, with the high cost of petroleum products, which will probably show no sign of decrease, maybe the Honourable Prime Minister will reveal his secret of affordable power.

For any such plant to be a viable one would need to consider the construction of a hydro-power facility. However, this government, with its limited vision in the area of power, is unable to attract, or refuses to see the benefit of hydropower generation. In this entire Budget Presentation two lines are given to other sources of energy, and I would refer to Page 31, Paragraph 4.26.

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to the issue of health. Before

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I touch on the difficulties we face in the entire country in health, let us look at the budgetary allocations and see why there is confusion at the Georgetown Hospital. The allocation for health is about G\$3 billion. The allocations to the RDC areas, which should offset the overcrowding at the Georgetown hospital by providing simple services are, and I will go Region to Region:

- *Region 1* - \$17.4 million for buildings; \$4 million for equipment; \$1.2 million for drugs.
- *Region 2* - \$10 million; \$7.5 million for equipment.
- *Region 3* - \$12.5 million for buildings; \$3.3 million for buildings for equipment; no allocation for drugs.
- *Region 4* - \$10 million for buildings; \$2.5 million for equipment; \$2 million for drugs,
- *Region 5* - \$5 million for buildings; \$4 million for equipment; no allocation for drugs,
- *Region 6* - \$10 million for buildings; \$7 million for equipment; no allocation for drugs.
- *Region 7* - \$9 million buildings; \$2.5 million for equipment; \$2 million for drugs,
- *Region 8* - \$13 million for buildings; \$4 million for equipment; \$2 million for drugs.
- *Region 9* - \$5.9 million for buildings, no allocation for equipment, \$0.5 million for drugs; and
- *Region 10* - no allocation for buildings; no allocation for equipment; \$5 million for drugs.

Sometimes I wonder if that is doxycyclin. Mr Speaker, the bulk of the capital Budget goes to Georgetown Hospital, New Amsterdam Hos-

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pital and the new Linden Hospital. Capital works and equipment for the Regions via the RDC approximate \$127.6 million. I cannot locate any expenditure for equipment in Regions 9 or 10. The system for medical supplies, et cetera, are completely centralized. Through the regional system it is just \$14.5 million, which would account for the stories that regional hospitals and health clinics are always short of drugs, and I can tell you that, knowing it first hand.

At the moment, there is an outbreak of malaria at Kwakwani, and the poor people of Kwakwani have to use their meagre sums of money to come to the city for treatment. I am not aware that any report has been published or circulated about this problem in Kwakwani, and I do hope that these poor people of Kwakwani will have the opportunity to be given the drug, oartum, a good drug, but probably only available at the Georgetown Hospital.

Now I come to Georgetown hospital itself. I do not know if this Honourable House knows about the shortages we have. What is good for the goose must be good for the gander. I say to you that in the department of medicine, we only have one specialist. Attempts were made last year to bring in Indian specialists in medicine to Guyana, but when the young man came and started to work in Guyana, they tried to treat him like a Guyanese and offered him Guyanese salary and after two months he promptly left. It is unfortunate that our people are not given the best of medical help. Whenever members of this Honourable House get sick they run abroad, but the ordinary people do not have... *[Inter-ruption: 'Who tell you so?' ... "Oh, we have a lot of examples on both sides. Jennifer, you too!"]*

At the Georgetown Hospital there are vacancies in many departments. Besides that, we have lots of difficulties at the Georgetown Hospital. You must have known that the Georgetown hospital has been privatized. It is now called the GPHC; prior to that it was called GPH. Now the Auditor General's Report of 31 December 2003 has suggested that since this existed, the existing relationship with the Ministry of Health with the Georgetown Hospital should cease and a subvention should be

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given to the Hospital, but that did not happen. Instead we have all types of practices at Georgetown Hospital, which I am not certain, but I will quote from the Auditor General's Report Page 90, Paragraph 341:

... authorised staffing, as shown in the 2003 Estimates of Expenditure, revealed a vacancy rate of 40 percent.

Paragraph 342:

For the period under review amounts totalling \$19.769 million were refunded as unclaimed salaries.

Paragraph 343:

Up to the time of reporting fifty-four payment vouchers totalling \$6.098 million were not presented for audit examination.

There was a recommendation from the Audit Office:

that the Corporation makes a special effort to locate the vouchers referred to above, along with the supporting documents, and present them for audit examination.

To the time of the report, that was not done. Paragraph 344:

Up to time of the reporting, however, there was no evidence that the balances of these payments were transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

And I speak of bank accounts Nos. 3182 and 3181, totaling \$G139.164 million, which were not transferred to the Consolidated Fund.

With the vacancies at the hospital, there are vacancies in many areas of specialisation in the hospital. We aim for mediocrity, but we have to fill the areas of specialisations so the people of this country can benefit. Only selected specialised people are given vouchers from the NIS to go abroad for treatment, especially for renal failure. At the present

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time I highlighted the deficiencies in medicine, but the Indian radiologist left, and the pathologist will soon be leaving, so even those that look after the dead are fed up with the way they are treated in this country. You should be proactive and vibrant. We just had a disaster where we have seen leptospirosis, and I am sure that, post-flood, we will see infections - hepatitis. Do you not think that it is time enough that we should have budgetary allocations for a viral lab?

Do you not think it is time enough that you respect the University of Guyana? The University that gives you doctors, nurses, technologists, pharmacists, but instead, you berate the University. Money must be spent and put into the University to upgrade our labs. When there is money needed for the Ministry of Health we are called to give our inputs. We make our submissions, but when the money comes we get not a penny of it. A good example of that is the global front. The Minister blatantly stated that the University of Guyana will not get any amount of money. Now this colour in this country I hope would tend to the University of Guyana. Why is this shift from the Government of not accepting? You run the Council of the University, so whatever is there has to have something to do with you. Do not say that it is a PNC/R University, because the dictates of the University come directly from your advice.

Mr Speaker, I would like to bring up another point - CAT scan, an instrument that is used as a tool in making a diagnosis. We have had a cat scan donated to the Georgetown Hospital since November 2002. To date, the Minister has not seen it fit to have that cat scan operational. Right now, we are having our cat scans done at the Woodlands Hospital. I would like to wonder what arrangements we have with the Woodlands Hospital for such a purpose. We have our own, and people have to pay phenomenal sums of money to do investigations, and I do not know where we are going. Now I would like to mention another point. We have just had a flood, and maybe some of you do not understand that 10 percent of people affected by leptospirosis will develop Weil Syndrome. Weil Syndrome is a condition where you get yellow and you end up with renal failure. Yet, and I am telling you because I am concerned, I would not like to see this House depleted. I have seen a lot of

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you walking in the water sharing out food, and I am telling you that, unless you see it fit to start a dialysis centre in this country, it does not have to be necessarily a Government dialysis centre. The correct thing to do is to have a dialysis centre by independent individuals, and which is a non-profit organisation, as was done in Suriname. We have a high incidence of renal failure, and I should know, because I am a practicing physician, and there is a high incidence of renal failure. People are dying in this country and yes, they stand firm and say that it is too costly. Everything that benefits this country is too costly, but let me tell you something: if you start a dialysis foundation, you will get help from all over the world. That is what was done in Suriname. Once it is independent of profit-making. Why can't we think further ahead? Why do we sit back and wait until people die.

I will not go further in the Georgetown Hospital, because I have highlighted the difficulties - the over-crowding, the understaffing, but there is one other problem at the Georgetown hospital. You must be concerned. It must be a sad thing when you go to a hospital and there is not a nurse to attend to you. The incentives given to our nurses are so poor - risk allowances ... and they are migrating day by day. Why don't we open our eyes and see? How can we afford to keep these people? Young graduates from the University of Guyana are going away. Why don't you open your eyes and make more attractive salaries? Why don't you send people for further training in specialisations? You have gotten a programme in Cuba where you send people for the ordinary MBBS Degree, but we have an abundance of people at the time. I am not saying you do not need more, but you are missing a very important area where your peer guides you; specialists in each field; areas where we can improve the University of Guyana Medical School; where training given to the students will be of a better standard. At the present time, we are stretched to our limits in training those students. In training those students we have got international acclaim, because they have done well. But how long can this continue? You must have some vision. You cannot sit back and hope that Guyanese, day in and day out, will be stretched to the limit to produce doctors. Let us increase our intake and put money into the University of Guyana, not only in the medical field, but in the

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fields of pharmacology, technology. It is sad when we hear nothing from the Government with respect to funding within the University.

I come to HIV/AIDS. I think we are losing the battle of HIV/AIDS. Now why are we losing the battle? It is not because the Ministry of Health has not been making attempts. We are losing the battle because we are a poor country. Our economics is bad. People cannot get a job, a living wage. Prostitution is on the increase. We have so many prostitutes in this country that I suggest to you that you should bring legislation to regulate that group, to rehabilitate that group. I see nothing wrong in rehabilitating that group. If you look at every street corner there is prostitution. That is one of the rewards of a highly-indebted nation with no vision, no economic prowess ... that is what we get. You know, health is a good indicator of how well a country is doing. Do you know the rate of our maternal mortality and infant mortality, our rate of anemia? If you see the figures ... they were not stated for the last two years. Why are we hiding the figures? You hear everyday of people dying in the New Amsterdam Hospital, Georgetown Hospital, Bartica Hospital. As a people ... and let us not politick here ... what we should do is to put our heads together and help this nation. Let us think why can't you bring these people now? There must not be a degree within yourself, you cannot try to micro-manage every aspect of health. It is too big a field to micro-manage ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I rise to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Dr Carl Max Hanoman: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Within the Ministry of Health one must be innovative. You have to see that personnel are available in the different areas of specialization so that each and every Guyanese could be afforded the opportunity to be treated properly. W

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only should have to be running abroad for facilities that are not available here. That must be your aspiration.

I look at the pensioners and the elderly. You have stated in your Budget that you have allocated \$50 million for spectacles. I am of the understanding that an arrangement with NIS is already in place. Pensioners get vouchers for their spectacles so that same \$50 million could be used at an institution for the aged where you could use occupational therapy. From the proceeds of occupational therapy, these inmates, or these patients, can benefit. Let us be innovative, let us go about it in a way that has some degree of class. In every country of the world, occupational therapy is a department in every hospital, especially for chronically ill patients and for the aged.

Mr Speaker, we have had a national disaster. The health of the people on the East Coast has been troubled to a great degree. I will not berate the efforts of the Ministry of Health to help these individuals, but I will implore the Minister of Finance to use his good office to help those people, and to compensate them. You cannot sit back and see suffering and have all this liquid money in the bank and not compensate. Use the liquid money to invest it. Take the liquidity and build area centres for development. You could probably use it in the North West where there are abundant fruits. You could make a canning factory so that we could export and give you money, the profits of that can be given to the people. But you just sit back and say, *I do not know when is the next flood.*

In this country a lot of people are going mad. People are hanging themselves. The suicide rate has dropped ... but how many psychiatrists do we have in this country? We have two at the Georgetown Hospital, one in Berbice, and one in private practice, and you know that the Hon Minister of Finance has promised us a supplemental budget. Imagine the number of mad people that we have around now ... With that supplemental budget there will be enormous amounts of mad people and suicide will be on the increase. I implore the Minister of Health to bring in enough psychiatrists in this country to handle this nation when

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the next flood comes and not to dispense doxycyclin in an indiscriminatory manner. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Honourable Member would stand up in this House this afternoon and misrepresent so many things. Virtually about 90 percent of what the Honourable Member, Dr Max Hanoman, said was misrepresentation and he and I know that, because he will sit with me and our colleagues together and he will admit to these things when he is surrounded by his colleagues.

Mr Speaker, colleagues of the National Assembly, I will refuse this afternoon ... *[Interruption: 'You are a churile']**[Noisy]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member Mr Jerome Khan, please refrain from using indecent language in the National Assembly, even if you are sitting down. Please show some respect and bring some dignity to this House.

Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I have sat in this House through many debates, and this is my eighth Budget, and the one thing that all my colleagues on the other side could say is that I have sat here and I have listened without once attempting to heckle or to say anything to any Member of this House, but that is the difference, because I, as a Member of this side of the House, I cherish dignity and respect. We have always demonstrated that to our colleagues, and I will refuse once again this afternoon to do so. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, this is the eighth time that I had the privilege of participating in the approval of a National Budget for our country. I feel very privileged and honoured by this, because this democracy that we are

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building is providing many of us with the opportunity to serve. This is my country. This is our country, and there is no offer in the world that will be more rewarding than the opportunity to serve Guyana. Thus, Mr Speaker, I stand here this afternoon to offer my support for the national Estimates, as presented by my colleague, the Hon Member Minister, Saisnarine Kowlessar. Permit me to also congratulate all the Members of this House who have spoken thus far, and most of them for making painstaking efforts in order to identify weaknesses, to make recommendations. As may be expected, there have been harsh criticisms and, at the same time, commendations, in terms of the Budget that is being presented. This is not unexpected. In preparing a Budget, even for highly developed countries, resources are not limitless, choices must be made, and there is much room for debate in terms of the choices made.

Mr Speaker, as the Minister of Health of Guyana, I cannot stand here to say that I have all of the answers. Unlike my colleague Dr Hanoman, who always seems to have all the answers, I honestly can stand here and face my colleagues in this House and my fellow citizens and say that we have many problems and I do not have all of the answers, but I am willing to work very hard. I am willing to work with everyone who would work with me, with the Ministry of Health, and with the government to find as many answers as possible. *[Applause]*

One of the major criticism that is always made by the Opposition is that the Budget lacks vision, and that it is not based on a comprehensive plan. This criticism has been the underlining theme for the Members on the Opposition side. If I was standing here to defend a Budget that lacks vision that was not formulated according to a national development plan, the privilege of being in this House to debate it and approve it would be meaningless. It would be less than honourable.

Mr Speaker, I sat here and I heard some members from both sides representing small communities, rural communities, members from humble backgrounds but, from whichever side they belong, they spoke with passion. They represented their communities, whether we are dealing with the Honourable Members Mustapha or Heeralall or David or

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Bancroft or Norton, they all spoke with passion, they all represented their communities. The pride and honour in which they passionately spoke for their communities must not be lost to anyone of us. It is the true tradition of the Guyanese democracy that we, on this side of the House, fought for, and that we will defend with all of our strength. [*Applause*]

I stand here, speaking with the same pride, and feeling similarly honoured, and I would not be speaking with such passion if what I do does not reflect our combined passion and vision for the development of our country.

Unlike 2002, 2003, and 2004, the Guyanese people today are benefiting from all their representatives being involved in the richest tradition of a democracy representing their constituents in debating the strengths and weaknesses of the plan of action for Guyana in 2005, and the positioning of Guyana for further development in the years to come. The richness of the debate, the passion with which members represent their constituents, the fearless criticisms levelled at the Budget and at the Government, and the fact that most of Guyana, through the television, radio and newspapers have the opportunity to see, to hear, and to read of their representatives representing the cause, demonstrate that the Parliament of Guyana is fundamental in the consolidation of a participatory democracy - a common vision, and is part of the Guyanese dreams, hopes, and aspirations. I know that it has been a long time for the colleagues on the other side, and I hope that the experience of the debating the Budget reminds our colleagues of their obligation to be present during the Budget Debates and reminds them of how they abdicated their duties as the people's representatives for three years in a row.

Contrary to the views being posited by members on the other side, the national Estimates, as presented by the PPP/C Government, have always been based on a vision and on a comprehensive development plan. Indeed, the 2005 Estimates are very explicit in their reflection of the PPP/C government's vision for Guyana. The 2005 Estimates are consistent with the hopes and aspirations of our people. It is

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crafted by taking into consideration both the National Development Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The hallmark of the PPP/C Government is that we always work from a vision and from planned programmes. This is contrary to the PNC when it was in Government. I will read from a report from the Pan American World Organisation, World Health Organisation entitled *Regional Plan for Investment in Environment and Health* published in 1993. Page 43 reads as follows:

What is important is that, since the end of the 1966/1972 planning period, Guyana has engaged in no long-term planning, nor did a formulation of a comprehensive national long-term plan appear to be considered as a priority

This is what my colleagues on the other side are used to working with. We are used to working with a vision and a plan.

Unless we forget, Mr Speaker, I shall remind our colleagues that the PPP/C Government received a mandate to implement a manifesto that was presented to our people at the 2001 elections. A Manifesto is a promise to the people as Parties seek the people's mandate through election. Upon receiving that mandate, the Manifesto becomes a contract with the people. Thus, Mr Speaker, we are always cognisant of the fact that we have our contract with the people, and the 2005 Estimates are consistent with this recognition.

The PPP/C government has always remained consistent in its quest for social justice, even as we struggle in the challenging global environment, and in the face of the uncertainty caused by changing natural conditions and weather patterns, to sustain and to accelerate economic development. We are determined never to deviate from our goals of human development and the social upliftment of our people. This is a fundamental characteristic of all national Budgets presented by the PPP/C Civic Government. This is our vision. This is our plan,

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Mr Speaker, I quoted, in my address at the 2002 Budget Debate, and I would like to repeat here this vision, as presented by no other than our great former President, Dr Cheddi Jagan, at the 109th annual conference of the GTU. This is what he said:

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

Mr Speaker, this is brilliantly captured also in the Guadalajara Declaration, which says:

We shall spare no effort to free our people from the scourge of misery. In pursuit of this objective, we shall seek general access to basic services in the areas of health, nutrition, housing, education and social security in accordance set with the UN International Strategies for development.

In the PPP/C Government's vision, we would like to add to that list water and sanitation. Indeed, Mr Speaker, the health budget has, for some time now, reflected this vision. The crafting of the health budgets for some time has always been reflective of a comprehensive plan that is being aggressively implemented.

The Health Plan is consistent with the general strategies outlined in the NDS and the PRSP. They are consistent with the Millennium Development Goals and Caribbean Charter for Health, to which we are signatories. It is within this context that I reiterate the overall goals of the National Health Plan.

Mr Speaker, we want to reduce excess mortality and morbidity of mothers and infants, vital indicators of performance and achievement in the health sector. I will deal with this in a little more detail to show the misrepresentation of our colleagues.

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We want to reduce communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria, and Dengue. We have plans for the elimination of Hansen's disease and lymphatic filariasis. We have targeted typhoid. We want to curtail non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart diseases. We want to manage mental disorders. Many persons need help. They are not mad people, and I am shocked that a physician would come to this House and call people mad people. They are not mad people walking around. They are people who need help. I am shocked that a physician would stand up in this House and call everyone standing at the street corners prostitutes.

Mr Speaker, our National Health Plan would like to enhance rehabilitation services. It would ensure optimal collaboration with other sectors such as water, the environment, education, housing, sanitation, transportation, and food safety.

We cannot accomplish these goals unless there is consistent and adequate investment in the sector. All of us understand that we live in a poor country and that its limited resources must be utilised prudently and the proper priorities established.

Has the 2005 Budget provided for all the requests we made to the Ministry of Finance? Absolutely not! It should not be a secret that we, in the health sector, would have liked to have a larger allocation but, like my other colleagues in the Cabinet, we know that we have a limited amount of financial resources.

One member of the Opposition bemoaned the fact that the allocation for her region is not equivalent to the amount requested. I think it was the Honourable Member, Miss David. I empathise and I sympathise, because we all would like more money. This is natural in a setting where the funds are limited, but the health sector budget for 2005 represents in excess of 4.5 percent of the GDP. In terms of the current expenditure that represents more than 9½ percent of the national current accounts. The health Budget has always benefited from the PPP/C Government's adherence to investment in the social development of the

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people. In this respect, we see the increasing investment in the social sector since 1992. In the 2005 Budget social sector expenditure amounts to almost 25 percent of the GDP; in terms of current expenditure almost 50 percent of the Budget is allocated to the social sector. This is consistent with the goals of the National Development Strategy. It is consistent with the objectives of the PRSP, and it is consistent with the millennium development goals. It is also consistent with our contract with the Guyanese people, which has been made explicit in the PPP/C Manifesto *Let Progress Continue*.

Mr Speaker, the social sector spending has increased every year since 1992. Last year it was approximately 45 percent. Compare this record with the PNC when it was in government. These are the hard, cold facts. In 1992, the last budget presented by the People's National Congress, the total social sector spending was a mere shameful 8 percent of the total Budget. This is the fact compared to the 2005 allocation to the social sector of approximately 50 percent. It means that the 2005 Budget, in comparison, is devoting more than six times the percentage of the budget that the PNC government had allocated to the social sector, given the fact that the overall budget is also larger and the GDP is more than double since 1992. The present Budget for the social sector is more than 13 times the social sector allocation of the last PNC government's budget. This is the difference of who cares, and this is the history that people are trying to rewrite as they come to this House, but people can be fooled sometimes, all of the people cannot be fooled all of the time. One could argue that this is an incremental approach, and that each year, since independence, we have been increasing our expenditure on the social sector side, but if you look back in times, Mr Speaker, you will realise that this is not the real story. We will realise the PNC inherited from the PPP government an example of budgetary allocation that always allocated sizeable portions of the Budget to the social sector. For instance, in 1964, the allocation to the social sector was 30 percent of the current expenditure. Over almost three decades, the amount eventually deteriorated to 8 percent in 1992. This is the big difference in our approach to development. The PPP/C is determined to invest in the social capital and the social development of our people. The PNC squan-

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dered those opportunities to invest in our people. Indeed, let us look at how they squandered it. The per capita health expenditure in 1964 was US\$16. By 1992 this has deteriorated to less than US\$9. In 2005 the per capita expenditure for health is greater than US\$51. The total health sector budget for 2005 amounts to more than \$8.5 billion. This includes an investment of more than \$300 million from the Basic Needs Trust Fund, which is part of the \$1.5 billion capital investment in the sector.

Mr Speaker, the Basic Needs Trust Fund Projects include:

- Port Kaituma Hospital;
- Lethem Hospital;
- Mabaruma Health Facilities;
- Hackney Health Centre;
- Jawalla Health Centre;
- Lower Bonasika;
- Ptolemy Reid Rehabilitation Centre;
- Bamboo Creek; and the
- Port Mourant Hospital.

There are other infrastructural works that are covered by the \$1.5 billion capital allocation to the Ministry of Health.

Mr Speaker, this year we observe World Health Day on April 7, with the Theme *Every Mother Counts, Every Child Counts*. This is an appropriate theme for this year, in the Guyanese context, since our work plan for 2005, in keeping with the priorities established in the National Health Plan includes strategies to reduce both maternal and infant mortalities. Both of these priorities represent important goals in the Millennium Development Goals, in the PRSP, and also in the NDS

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In terms of child health, one of the priorities is not only to sustain our currently high coverage rate for immunisation, but to ensure that every child is immunised appropriately. In 2004, we had national coverage rates of between 91 to 94 percent for each vaccine. Guyana has always had an impressive immunisation coverage rate. It was one of the first countries that introduced the polio vaccine in the Americas in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Between 1960's and 1990, mainly under the PNC government, the coverage rate varied between 50 and 75 percent. Since the early 1990s to now the number of vaccines in our protective arsenal has increased and now includes every relevant available vaccine, and coverage for each vaccine is now greater than 90 percent. This is indeed an impressive record, and it is consistent with ensuring that every child counts. However, the programme recognises that there are some inequities in the system. On the one hand, Regions 2, 3 and 5 have coverage rates between 94 and 98 percent for each vaccine. We offer our congratulations to these regions for achieving rates of coverage that are among the highest in the world, but in Region 1 coverage is lagging between 62 and 89 percent. On the East Bank of Demerara coverage rates are between 86 and 88 percent, while on the East Coast Demerara the coverage rates are between 83 and 93 percent. In Georgetown between 88 and 94 percent, and in Region 7 between 89 and 92 percent. These are also impressive coverage rates and are far superior to those accomplished in most countries of the world. But, in the Guyanese context, it means that some of our children are in pockets that are not being reached.

We have identified several problems as we search for explanation and as we seek to ensure that every child is immunized. One of the problems identified ... [Interruption: 'What about Regions 9 and 8?'] Regions 9 and 8 are doing fine, Dr Joseph. Region 9 has rates between 89 and 94 percent, and Region 8 has rates between 88 and 94 percent. [Applause] Dr Joseph, you had your chance and I listened to you, so listen now. We have identified several problems, Mr Speaker. One of the problems identified is the lack of a cold chain or rather an inadequate cold chain, this year we are investing more than \$25 million

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to improve the cold chain and thus to reduce or remove one of the barriers to improved immunization. Our goal this year is that no Region will call for any of the vaccine under 80 percent coverage. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: I rise to move that the Hon Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Thank you, Mr Speaker and Minister Persaud. We are currently in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organisation and the WHO. We are conducting a study at the Georgetown Public Hospital to establish the prevalence of rotavirus induced gastro enteritis, which remains a major factor in morbidity and in mortality in children all over the world, especially in the developing countries. It is believed that rotavirus is a major reason for this. Scientists have been working hard to develop a vaccine against this virus. It has been projected that this would be the next major vaccine for children around the world. This vaccine has now become commercially available and Mexico has become the first country in the world to introduce it into that country's immunisation programme. Because Guyana has been doing its clinical surveillance for rotavirus it is possible that Guyana would be among the first countries that would be able to meet prerequisite conditions and therefore be in a position to include the rotavirus vaccine as one of the parts of the protective arsenal against yet another vaccine preventable disease.

This would not be the first time that we would have been in a position to be amount the first countries to introduce such powerful tools, such powerful vaccines, as we seek to provide a protective barrier against diseases for our children. We did it previously and Guyana remains today as one of the preferred countries for the distribution of the pentavalent vaccine, the five in one vaccine. The supply chain for this

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combination vaccine around the world is still limited. There are not enough to go around. However, because Guyana had the vision, because Guyana did the hard work, and because Guyana had an early start, Guyana is guaranteed to have the first call on available pentavalent vaccines.

This is the kind of achievement that Guyana and Guyanese, all of us, ought to be proud of, and it is the kind of achievement that the PPP/C Government brings to the table each year that we come here. But it vividly brings out the clear vision, and it demonstrates that there is a plan that we work with. There is a vision that drives us. It is initiative such as these that explain why we have accomplished so much in such a short time as we seek to attain the millennium of reducing infant mortality.

In 1990 the infant mortality rate, as reported by the then Ministry of Health, was 53 per 1000, and UNICEF estimated significant under-reporting and estimated the real infant mortality rate was 70 per 1000. In 2000, the rate was 23 per 1000, a reduction of the mortality rate greater than 50 percent. This is what we mean by every child counts. The prevalence of low birth weight rates in our babies in 1991 was 19.7 percent; in 2004 we recorded a low birth weight rate of under 10 percent. Indeed, our concern for children starts from the womb.

Although we have made tremendous progress and significant inroads, anaemia continues to be major public health problem. Women and young children are especially vulnerable. Prevalent rate varied between 50 to 75 percent before 1992. In 2004, these are reported as between 25 and 35 percent, and these are not figures that any one of us ought to be proud of, but the story is that it is improving each year. Interventions are expanding each year so that we could remove anaemia as a public health problem. This issue engages our ongoing attention. One of the several interventions in 2004 was the basic nutrition programme - a five-year \$1.2 billion programme. This is an IDB supported programme. In 2005 we will spend approximately \$300 million to implement it. This programme will provide micro-nutrient supplements to children under 24 years - these sachet type of supplement, and it will also provide micro-nutrient supplements to pregnant and lactating

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women. Mr Speaker, it will also provide for vouchers of approximately \$1,000 per month to those families with children under one year old in those health centres that are part of the programme. The micro-nutrient programme is targeting fifteen thousand women and thirty thousand children and we hope to expand this as we access more funds. But if every child counts, then our vision must also underline the fact that every mother counts. One of the tragedies of Guyana over several decades is that too many of our mothers die in childbirth. One of our priorities in the health sector must be to ensure safe delivery, safe motherhood. This is one of the most important goals of NHP, and is one of Guyana's obligation under the Millennium Development Goals.

In 1990 one of the saddest and one of the national disgraces in Guyana was the fact that the maternal mortality rate was 49 per 1,000 births. The Honourable Member, Dr Joseph, misrepresented this by saying that the rate was 0.49 per 1000 births. The true figure for 1990 was 49 per 1,000 births. Today, it is approximately 10 - an amazing achievement for the health sector and a tribute for the health care workers of Guyana.

Mr Speaker, Dr Joseph and others bemoaned the fact that the health care professionals are migrating and that the sector is plagued by the lack of human resources. Indeed, today the Honourable Member Dr Hanoman mentioned the same thing. But in both cases they know certain things and they did not say them, so I will say them this afternoon. Indeed, we are challenged by shortages of health care professionals in many areas, including doctors and nurses. But this is not a new problem and the sector faced these problems prior to 1992. The PAHO/WHO completed a regional plan for investment in the environment and health in 1994. It is instructive to refer to pages 26 and 27 of this report, which summarises the situation pre 1992 in Guyana. This is how the report summarises the situation:

The quality of services and care provided is poor and the coverage of services and care offered is limited. Two examples make the point for us - the national hospital no

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longer offers preventive health care and nutritional education and second, preventive dental care is no longer emphasized. The reasons for the poor quality and limited coverage of services provided are many. Among the most important ones are, and these are instructed:

1. shortage of skilled personnel conditioned by unrealistically low salaries, poor working conditions, emigration and insufficient training facilities;
2. meagre budgetary allocations;
3. the ministry's inability to plan and programme activities in the sector;
4. persistent shortages of drugs and critical supplies;
5. inadequate facilities; and
6. the lack of responsive management.

This is among the list that they found.

The facts are that:

- even with our shortages, today we have more health workers than were present in the system in 1992, and Minister Westford will give those numbers;
- we have enormously increased budgetary allocations to the sector;
- we do have a national health plan;
- we have programmes of activities that are built around a National Health Plan, a National Development Strategy, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Caribbean Charter for Health;

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- we have fewer shortages of drugs and medical supplies and, each year, we are making shortages a thing of the past;
- we have been rehabilitating and reconstructing old facilities and constructing new ones;
- we are improving management systems as part of the reforms.

Yet the system still suffers from the shortages in personnel. We need more doctors, we need more nurses and, at all levels, we need more medexes, we need more community health workers, we need more laboratory technicians, we need more radiographers, we need more multi-purpose technicians, we need more rehabilitation technicians, we need more pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians. This was so in the 1980's and is still so now. *[Interruption: 'We need more health ministers.'* "I am sure that we need more health ministers, but I can tell you, too, that some people could never be ministers of health and they are sitting right over there."] But there is now a human resource plan being implemented, and that is the difference. I said earlier that we do have a plan that we are implementing. What we had, prior to 1992, was an *ad hoc* approach. In 1989, PAHO reported on Health and Manpower Development in Guyana. This is how it was described:

Allied health programmes are often more responsive to individual interest of potential students and teachers, than to population needs with programmes created and changed in length, or discontinued without a thorough consideration of its effect on the labour force, or the economic repercussions on the health system

In another report, Dr Harold Drayton said this:

Efforts of systematic health manpower management and planning dating back to the 1970s were never sustained, despite episodic initiatives at some levels.

Last year, after several years of crafting a manpower development

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plan, a policy paper was adopted by Cabinet, approving a minimum set of services that must be available at each health care level, and a manpower plan was designed to support this publicly-guaranteed package of services.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon I do not have time to go through all of it, but I would list some. In terms of medexes, it is in this respect that a new class of twenty-six students began last year as medexes. This year another class of a minimum of thirty students will begin their training, and another class of fifty students will begin training in 2006.

Mr Speaker, in terms of nurses, effective nursing care in any country is delivered by various levels of nursing personnel. The various levels in Guyana are not different than in any other country. Dr Joseph knows this and Dr Hanoman also, and Mr Speaker, this Government never introduced a policy whereby the work of one level of nursing would be replaced by a lower level of nursing. It is true that nursing, as was the case at other times in our history, is plagued by a shortage. We have not only provided expanded opportunities for our young people to start a career in nursing by becoming patient-care assistants or nurse aids, but we have expanded the class size of the nursing assistants and professional nursing programmes. This year we will have two intakes of students for the three nursing schools in Georgetown, New Amsterdam and Linden. We intend to offer places to 500 students, and the first batch will be in April. We are faced with mighty challenges. Canada has just announced the recruitment of nurses from abroad. The US has done so, and the UK has also done so. Other developing countries are also doing this. For example, it is estimated that, by 2015, Canada may be recruiting more than 282,000 from abroad, and the UK and the US even more. Guyana is not the only country that faces this challenge. All developing countries are similarly facing these challenges. No Caribbean country finds itself exempted. We are all working to find a sustainable way of meeting our local demands. The fact is that the loss of just 300 nurses from the Caribbean area costs the CARICOM Governments approximately \$US15 million on an annual basis in training costs. In other words, countries like Guyana are subsidising destination coun-

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tries at a level of \$5,300 per nurse. Guyana is urging that developed countries play a greater role in defraying the enormous cost of training healthcare professionals in developing countries.

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: I rise to move that the Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude this speech.

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. When countries must fund the cost of replacing professionals and developed countries recruit, an unfair burden is placed on undeveloped countries such as Guyana, and the inevitable consequence is that the healthcare services are adversely affected.

The packages that we have to provide in order to compete with the developed world are simply unattainable. The world is not a level playing field. It is time that the international community recognise this. There is another kind of unfair trading practice. In our training programmes we are also now pursuing post-graduate training programmes. The University of Guyana introduced a Bachelors of Science training programme for nurses, and the Ministry has completed arrangement for the training of anaesthetic nurses. In addition, the Ministry is working with PAHO and WHO to complete arrangements for the post-graduate training programme in paediatric and psychiatric nursing. More than 150 Guyanese youths are now studying medicine in Cuba. In addition, starting in the 2005 school year, the Government will sponsor students at the University of Guyana School of Medicine and Minister Westford and Minister Jeffery are working on this programme. Minister Westford will deal with the details.

As I said, the Ministry of Education is going to work to ensure this programme starts in September 2005. These will be students who will

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be recruited to serve in certain communities after they would have completed their studies and training. Thus we are ensuring that the number of doctors to each 10,000 population is more than doubled by 2008. However, we need more doctors in our services now and we cannot wait until the local manpower is fully developed. It is because of this that we are also recruiting doctors who have already received their training. We are looking to expand our present technical cooperation programmes with Cuba, China, Brazil, India, Russia and Nigeria. We have been recruiting consultant level doctors, and several are in Guyana at present. But we are also establishing post-graduate programmes. The Ministry of Health, the Georgetown Public Hospital, and the University of Guyana are together working out an arrangement for Guyana's first post-graduate programme in surgery. This would be done in collaboration with the University of Toronto and the Canadian society for surgery. In addition several post-graduate training programmes are being developed with Israel and with Brazil. Mr Speaker, these are just some of the things we are doing in a massive training programme that we have already have underway. It is unfair to dismiss the efforts of the Ministry and to give the impression that we are trying to substitute lower-level professionals.

Mr Speaker, our infrastructural development this year will include the starting of the construction as part of our modernisation of the Linden hospital - a new hospital complex - at a cost of approximately US\$7.8 million and, even as I speak, the tender-board is going through the architectural plans. The Georgetown Public Hospital will have a new in-patient facility. We have just completed the construction of the New Amsterdam Hospital and we are about to tender for contractors for the new Lethem Hospital. This year we will begin the design of a new Mabaruma Hospital and we will begin planning for a new Skeldon Hospital. We will extend the blood bank at the Georgetown Public Hospital and we will build a new blood bank at the New Amsterdam hospital. We are going to start this year... We have just approved the blood bank contract. This year we also start the construction... In a few weeks, we will start tendering for the new public health lab and a new toxicology laboratory.

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Members ought to find out about these things. They meet me and they talk about all kinds of things, but they do not talk about these things, yet they come here and pretend that they do not know any of these facts.

We are in the midst of modernising our health legislation because we have legislation that goes back to the 1950s and 1930s and, in some cases, the 1800s. We are now modernising these. We have already introduced a Ministry of Health Bill. We have introduced in this House a Regional Health Authority Bill. We are about to open up a consultation on a Paramedical Professional Bill. We are also doing a Health Facilities Bill. We are also doing a new Public Health Bill. We are piloting all of these things through.

HIV/AIDS - This is something that we should also speak with one voice on, and I am happy that Dr Hanoman took a step back and admitted that we are working very, very hard on this area, and that we were able to mobilise the necessary funds. This year we will spend more than \$1 billion on our HIV/AIDS programme. In addition, our partners will be spending over \$1 billion in the battle against HIV/AIDS and TB ... And we are winning the battle, unlike what Dr Hanoman says. For example, pre-1997, we had a prevalence rate of more than 7 percent in the antenatal population; at the end of 2004, we had a prevalence rate of 2.4 percent. That is the kind of success story. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in large countries where they are still trying to access drugs ... *[Interruption 'That is not nationwide.']*

The Speaker: Why are you quarrelling, Honourable Member? You will get a chance to speak. The noise is meant for a bit of heckling, which the speaker does not hear. It is not meant for rowing in the Parliament.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: I am not rowing.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, while many countries, including sister countries right here in the Caribbean, are trying to access

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drugs we are providing universal treatment to all of our HIV infected patients. Mr Speaker, we are providing PMPCT programmes to all of our antenatal population by the end of this year, more than 60 PMPCT sites will be available. We are opening PCT centres across our country as well as testing facilities. In addition, we have a surveillance system that we have now developed. It is this surveillance system that permitted us to do such a good job during the disaster and prevented hundreds of deaths, and my colleagues on the other side know how well it worked.

Mr Speaker, as I said before, this year we will be devoting much of our attention to the elimination of much of our public health problems such as filariasis, Hanson's disease, and a number of things which have been spoken of here.

The Honourable Member, Dr Hanoman, talked about the global fund. We all worked hard and we ensured that Guyana is able to access, over the next two years, more than \$9 million from the Global Fund. Dr Hanoman knows well that funds are now available for the University and for other organisations to develop programmes, that if the University will sit and be lazy and not develop their plan they will have no money. You cannot sit there and want money to be given to you. It will not be given to you. The University is part of the team that is sitting there, and every time they come they are being told to develop their programme if they want their lab they have to develop the programme, come to us with a proposal, and not sit there and bemoan the fact that you are not getting money. I guarantee that they will get no money if they do not do their work.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member talked about the cat scan which was brought into this country by a private investor and then through the work of the Georgetown hospital, we were able to access a gift from the United Kingdom which arrived, not in 2002, but in 2004. The Central Tender board approved the contract to hire a bio-engineer from the United Kingdom. This contract was approved in November 2004 and the engineer could not find time to come, but he is going to be here next week. That is the time he has given to us. I remember those days when

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Dr Hanoman used to be a better friend and he used to invite me at times like 7 o'clock in the night - he and his pals Dr Sagala, and all of them, at the Lamaha Street Office and he used to offer me beer, and I could not keep up with my friend in those days, and I still cannot. We used to talk about the dialysis foundation, and there were many, many promises by people, and those same people come here and talk about when we are going to put up a dialysis foundation. It is this ministry, when I became minister, which has been working with private investors so that they could set up a private dialysis centre, and two of them started to work last year, and Dr Hanoman knows some of them, because he is working with some of them, and they are having some difficulties setting it up but, before long, Guyana is going to have its first dialysis centre.

We talk about encouraging the private sector, and it is this Government that is promoting the private/public mix and took those initiatives that we now have a private MRI at the St Joseph's Mercy Hospital. And the Members know these things. They know it. They come here and pretend and misrepresent. They sit there and try to fool people, but we cannot be fooled, because you know why. The truth is known and people know what we are trying to do. Mr Speaker, for sure, there are things we have to do better, and certainly no Guyanese, including my friends on the other side, could say one thing about this Minister of Health - that he is not working hard to ensure everyday that we have a better system. I will say this to you - that Minister Teixeira did a much better job than her predecessor, and Dr Jeffery, as the Minister of Health, in the proud tradition of the PPP, built on the Ministry and I say to you today that I stand proud that I have done an excellent job as Minister of Health. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Hon Member.

Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the Hon Minister be given ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question was put and agreed to

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The Speaker: Proceed, Hon Member.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, we have all worked hard. We worked together sometimes. My colleagues on the other side know because they have worked well with me and, in spite of the public posturing, they know that they can work with me. They know that we can work and we can do better for our country. As I stand here this afternoon, I appeal to my comrades that we can do better for our country. We can do better for our country. Not just Minister of Health, or Leslie Ramsammy, or Minister Nadir. We all together, after we may have scored our political points, at the end of the day, we have to work for our country. This is our country. This is where we live and, even if we leave one day, this is the country that we will pass on to generations to come - to boys and girls who are living out there and who have their dreams of becoming doctors or becoming lawyers, being the best they can be; dreams of perhaps becoming a President, becoming a Minister, dreams of, perhaps, becoming the Opposition Leader. We all have dreams. We have dreams in this country and we must dare to dream, and we must give the freedom to every child in this country that they can dream. We have the vision to make them dream, and we can provide them with the empowering environment to make those dreams come through. We can do so, and we can do so together, united, to build this country into a better country for all of our people. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. [Applause]

The Speaker: Honourable Member, Mrs Backer.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, I rise to join in this Debate of the 2005 Budget and perhaps at the risk of offending the male Members of Parliament, I would want to suggest, humbly, that the female Members of Parliament who have gone before me did a fair job in trying to raise the level of debate. There was no ranting; there was no raving by any of the female Ministers. Although it may mean that I have to come out of context and step out of my usual box, I will try to maintain that standard, so I will not be like Dr Ramsammy talking and abusing and so on. I will try to maintain a minimum level of presence.

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Mr Speaker, having said that, there must be a little come-back. My good friend, the Honourable Minister Carolyn Rodrigues, spoke about the Amerindian Act, and I genuinely thought that there was acceptance of this Act. There were some minor hitches, but there were few disgusting people – some Deborah Backers, around the place, running around making trouble and I happened also to go not too much into the past. I am going to 13 February 2005 and this is the Stabroek News Page 19:

Five indigenous rights groups reject draft Amerindian Act

and my research suggests that there are only five indigenous rights groups, so it meant that there is a 100 percent rejection of this Act, and this is what they said, and I am quoting from the very article:

Overall, the draft is insupportable in its present form, as it is regressive and fails to adequately address, or address at all the major issues ...

blah blah blah, and again, on Tuesday 22 February of this year, the Stabroek News, Page 2,

Indigenous Rights Groups ratted up their bid to forge revision of some new provisions

And this is an interesting quote attributed to my good friend the Minister, *Every day I meddle ...* This is the Minister ... *Every day I meddle because you have complaints coming from the village*, the minister told the meeting after one participant questioned whether the amount of power vested in the Minister constituted meddling, and then she said, *Yes, I meddle every day*. So, Mr Speaker, I just want to put that straight, that when there is this impression that most of the Indigenous people are in favour - five out of five, they represent the people. You say that you represent the people. Well, they represent the Amerindians. You cannot have your cake and want to eat it too. So that is my good friend, the Hon Member Carolyn Rodrigues. But, by and large, a good presentation. And then my even better friend, I almost said Minis-

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ter, Mrs Indra Chandarpal spoke about what the PPP did with women's rights, and we cannot argue, because we are both women ... but I just want to remind her that I know it was a slip, the removal of discrimination of Children Born Out of Wedlock Bill was passed under the PNC/Reform, and the trinity of Acts that they call them, and this is not a movie - meaning the Equal Rights Act, the Family and Dependents Act, and Married Persons Property Amendment Act were all passed in 1990 by the PNC/Reform. She gave the impression that all these things happened under the PPP/C. It is true that the PPP/C enacted the

Termination of Pregnancy Act. It depends on how you look at it, some are against and some are for it and, very importantly, the Domestic Violence Act in 1996. But, of course, we will come to that in terms of the effectiveness, but they must be complimented for passing them. I, as a woman, cannot stand here and not compliment that; I will be doing a disservice.

Mr Speaker, all my friends in the House are not females, at least I do not think that they are. Minister Collymore ... in fact, Sir, let me withdraw that. I am confident that he is not female. Minister Collymore, my good friend, after my learned friend Mr Alexander spoke about pumps disappearing and so on; he said that *if pumps are disappearing I will find them*. Mr Speaker, I have found a pump, I have found this ... *[she displays a pump]* *[Laughter]* I do not know if this is one of the pumps from the flood, but I just want to say that, if in case it is one I am prepared to give him that. *[Laughter]* I am showing that the PNC/R is willing to be helpful. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I do not want to cramp your style, but there are rules about displaying objects in Parliament.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I will be guided, Sir. Mr Speaker, having awakened the House a bit, let me now go to my remit, which is crime and security. In Page 45 of the 2005 Budget, Paragraph 4.61 under the heading Crime and Security, the Minister said:

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Mr Speaker, economic and social advancement of the country would be slowed, or even retarded, if an atmosphere of peace and security does not prevail. This why security is a top priority for the Government, and as the President declared recently, no resource will be spared in ensuring that it is maintained.

So there is the recognition that we share, that advancement of our country could be slowed, or even retarded, if peace and security do not prevail.

Mr Speaker, what has been our security/crime situation? I do not want to go back into the 1950s and the 1960s. I want to start in 2003. I do not even want to go back to the jailbreak.

In 2003, after months of agitation, after months of protests, after months of peoples from all walks of life, all groupings, all ethnicities, the Disciplined Forces Commission was finally established. I dare anyone on the other side to suggest that the PNC/R was not pivotal in the creation of that Disciplined Forces Commission. It is to our credit, and we must rightly be proud of it. The PPP/C, like a reluctant mother who was perhaps on her eighth or ninth childbirth, resisted going into the labour room up to the very last moment. She had to be brought kicking and screaming. The PPP/C had to be brought kicking and screaming to the realisation that a commission was a good thing for the country - not for the PNC or the PPP, but for the country, to give the country the opportunity to sit back and look at our four Disciplined Forces to see whether we were happy with them. Mr Speaker, a special select committee has been set up, the House would know, a final report would be presented to the National Assembly, a committee was set up. The Committee has held, so far, one meeting and that meeting was almost a ceremonial meeting when the Chairperson was nominated and, if my memory serves me correct, because it was such a long time ago, the chairperson is the Honourable Member, Mr Bernard De Santos, SC. What is instructive, and that is why I started by complimenting women is because, on that very day, I think it was during November of last year, and I see my friend

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the Hon Bibi Shadick nodding her head in agreement, the Special Select Committee on the Trafficking in Persons Bill also had their first meeting on the same day and they elected the Hon Minister Shadick to chair that meeting. I accept that it is not a special committee that would be as involved as the Disciplined Forces Commission, but that committee met six or seven times, the Hon Minister Nadir is a member, the Honourable Mrs Chandarpal and my friend from Berbice, but there are about seven of us, we met on six occasions and our report has already gone back to the House and has been approved and, as I speak, the Special Select Committee on the Disciplined Forces Commission has only had one ceremonial meeting, and that, as I said, was to elect a chairperson. That does not send the right signal to the Guyanese people, and I urge the chairperson to summon that meeting as a matter of urgency.

Mr Speaker, of course 2004 opened with death squad allegations. They were swirling. They were twirling. They threatened to engulf us and no one was comfortable. I know that I have had many rulings against me, and I do not want to be ruled against again, but the facts are there ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, please do not proceed any further about what we all know, and what we all do not know, and making hints about the outcome about this. You are a lawyer, Honourable Member, and you know that you should not do these things. Please desist from any reference to any sub judice matter, including the current inquiry because, once allowed, Members will jump into the fray and make opinions and comments. Once I allowed it ... but it seems as if I should not allow any reference whatsoever. We had a long problem with Mr Sharma. Several members referred to this. I stopped each of them and still you are persisting with this.

Mrs Deborah J. Backer: As it pleases you, Mr Speaker. A few good things happened in Guyana in 2004. It was good for the Guyana Police Force. On February 16, 2004, the now Commissioner Felix was sworn in, and it is our opinion that that swearing in did Guyana Police Force well, and I would go on to speak about that later.

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The other good thing that happened was that Minister Gail Texiera was appointed to act as the Minister of Home Affairs. I think that was a good day for the Ministry of Home Affairs and, more particularly, the Guyana Police Force. So good things happened in 2004 and I think that we, on this side, breathed a sigh of relief. We need to ask ourselves, where is our Police Force now, now being March 2005? How is it doing? What are the interests that the Guyana Police Force are mandated to look after. They include:

- security of persons,
- security of homes - property generally,
- security of our society from drugs, money laundering, any kind of crimes; and
- security of our vulnerable citizens, particularly children and women.

What are the things that threatened these securities?

- desperate and brutal crimes;
- murders;
- excessive policing;
- possibility of Guyana becoming a narco state;
- achieving narco statehood;
- large amount of firearms;
- domestic violence and violence against women and children generally;
- poverty;

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- marginalization;
- breakdown of societal norms; and

a very frightening trend that is beginning to emerge, but not necessarily begin., we are hearing more about it, most probably was around quite long

- young people being involved in crime.

So we have the threats, murders, excessive policing, a lot of drugs, domestic violence, young people in crime and, on the other hand, the police being tasked to protect those interests, to secure us. The question we have to ask ourselves, very frankly, is who is winning? Are the interests winning, or are the threats winning?

I would want to submit that the threats to our security are winning. Mr Speaker, every day, and this is without exception, I go through the Stabroek News, every single day for 2004, and for 2005, it took me a long while, there is no day when there was not crime reported, much less crime unreported - many are petty, trunking, you know? Different things being snatched from people - gold chains. We are saying that it is minor, but for somebody to whom it happened, it might be major, then you have, of course, the murders, the things that grab the front page, but every day we have crimes in Guyana:

Stabroek News, Wednesday, 18 August 2004

- *Shopkeeper hacked to death*

1 September 2004

- *East Coast exodus still on;*

this was on the heels of the inhumane and insensitive murder of the nine-year-old Christine Sukra. I think everyone in the House would remember that, and what followed thereon was a spree:

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- Nigel Amsterdam;
- Ramesh Sewsankar;
- Anthony Parsram; and
- *the host of people was killed.*

So murders are with us. Excessive Policing.

There is a report that just came out; it was in the papers about two days ago ... if I could refer to it, Mr Speaker. Please bear with me a minute ... *[Laughter]* Yes ... where they lambaste the Police about brutality and the conditions in the prisons. This is not Guyanese speaking. This is an UN report.

Mr Speaker, firearms is a problem. The Crime Chief himself spoke about firearms, and this is in Stabroek News, Friday 26 November 2004 on Page 16, and this is what he said, but I do not agree with him, and I would share the statistics as to why I do not agree:

Murder down dramatically -Firearms are now our greatest threat.

This was in the Stabroek News. He now goes on to give comparisons, and I know that the Minister would find it a lot easier to get statistics than I can get, but he said that *there were 109 murders recorded from 1 January to 31 October*, the first ten months, and in the year before it was 175. Well, you do not know what happened between November and December, but I know that there were several murders. But the point about it is that the Crime Chief Assistant, Henry Green, spoke about an increase in guns and, in fact, in a question written to the Minister, a question she replied to in writing. This is the acting Minister, and the learned Minister Miss Teixeira spoke about guns. She was asked by Mr Rapheal Trotman and I will read:

No. 122 (O 59 Opp 58)

QUESTION

TOTAL NUMBER OF FIREARM LICENCES

Mr Raphael Trotman to ask the Minister of Home Affairs (Ag.) the following question:

What is the total number of firearm licences issued for the years 2003 and 2004?

In 2003 were 2,154 and up to November last year were 732

There was a marked decrease, and that is good but, at the same time, the Crime Chief is saying, that we have an increase, and that firearms are the problem, in terms of robberies. One could logically conclude that the majority of these firearms involved in crime are unlawful firearms. We have a problem with unlawful firearms and, in fact, as one peruses older reports on crime, you will see a proliferation of the use of firearms. So we have a problem. I am, like other Members of the House, and the entire country, eager to hear from the Acting Minister, and it is our hope that she continues to act for a long time to come. What the Government is doing about the smuggling of illegal firearms. If I could anticipate the Minister ... In fact, she has answered the question in a kind of a way. Mr Trotman asked her the question: *What measures will the Government introduce to prevent the smuggling of illegal firearms into Guyana?* And she answered, *this is quite a difficult question. The borders are wide open and it is suspected that illegal firearms are entering Guyana by that medium.* And she spoke about the weaknesses in the borders and the Atlantic coast. So the Minister accepts the problem, but I want to respectfully submit that she goes further. The Honourable Minister must go further and tell us what she is going to do. Do not only accept that there is a problem. That is good, but go the second step and tell us what she is going to do; what the Government going to do, and what part, if any, other stakeholders can play?

Mr Speaker, narco trade was prevalent in 2004, and I want to go

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back to these drugs.: Wednesday 3 March 2005, Page 1

Drug traffickers have Guyana in their sights, warns the US State Department.

The US State Department has concluded, they are not now re-searching, has concluded - that *Guyana is a prime target for money laundering and drug-trafficking, given weak laws, corrupt law enforcement, and the continuing political stalemate* and it went on to say ... This came from the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2003. I am quoting at all times from the Stabroek News. Then one moves to:

5 March 2004, Page 3.

New York/Guyana drug Ring smashed. 13 detained

8 April 2004

Names released in New York Drug bust

13 April 2004, again all the time from the Stabroek News

US Authorities have little confidence in our local police

Saturday 1 May 2004

Queens home said to be hub ...

This is not Her Royal Highness, Queen Elisabeth, this is Queens, New York

... for laundering coke money

And again, this is not the black coke, this is the white coke. Then the fish started ... Minister, my good friend ... he is another one of my good friends ... Minister Sawh spoke about all the exports of fish and so on, but he did not tell us of the exports of fish plus and the reason he

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did not is because he knows nothing about it. But the reality, Sir, is that it did happen.

Monday 17 May 2004, Stabroek News

Fishy bust nets US \$5 million ... cocaine Gray snapper stuffed and stitched up

Friday 16 July 2004. Well, that was a molasses find.

US \$38 million cocaine found in Guyanese molasses ... the Dutch connection

19 July 2004. I am in 2004 all the time. I am not going back

Guyana major transit point for Canada cocaine

This is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. My Honourable friend and sister ... I am sure she knows about that ... she has lived there for a while. She knows about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and they have said that Guyana and Jamaica have been named as the top two transit points for cocaine to Canada. That is the 2003 report.

Mr Speaker, this is not all, because if I was to bring all, I would be here all night.

13 August 2004:

Guyanese man charged with importing US \$10 million cocaine into US. Had to be fished out of Boston Harbour after chase

So again, there is a connection to fish. He had to be fished out.

18 September 2004

Two held for cocaine in fish

3 October 2004

More cocaine found in shipment of fish

Not dolphins

10 October 2004

Airport Security not yet up to scratch

And they are speaking of the fact - how we do not seem to be doing as much as we could. Although we are getting these catches, there are many small amounts that are passing through - smaller fish that are passing through, and what the House must realise is that these catches are not happening here. They are happening at the point of destination, or at least out of Guyana, whether it is Rotterdam, whether it is England, whether it is America or Canada.

Monday, 11 October 2004

High tech aids to net cocaine big fish

And then, of course, we had the biggest keep in the past towards the end of the year, towards the Christmas Season came

Cocaine in coconuts. Shipments came from Guyana ... Largest ever seizure.

And I wondered, when we heard of the net export, if this had anything to do with it. I used those examples, and Mr Speaker and Members of the House, they are mere examples of what has been going on. The question that we have to ask ourselves if Guyana is becoming a narco state. Are we in danger of becoming a narco state? These are some of the indicators that are used around the world in deciding whether a country, not Guyana, any country, is becoming, or is in danger of becoming a narco state, and these are the ten-point test.

- The extent to which the country is a major producer or exporter

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of one or more major narcotic substances. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Before you go to the ten points, your time is up, Honourable Member.

Mrs Clarissa S Riehl: I rise to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue her presentation

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Thank you, Mr Speaker

- the degree to which the laundering of illegal drug money has distorted and corrupted the financial markets of the institutions;
- the extent to which the operations of drug organizations have corrupted the effectiveness of the law enforcement agencies;
- the extent to which crimes, which are related to drug trafficking, such as illegal the firearms trade and people smuggling, have grown;

and you remember that the Crime Chief said that guns are a problem and, based on the answer that the Hon Texeira gave, licensed guns are down ... so it follows, as night follows day, unlicensed guns, firearms are up.

- the degree to which the crime and the internal security situation has deteriorated as a result of the penetration of drug traffickers;
- the extent to which operations of drug traffickers and the related violence and insecurity has affected political stability;

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- the extent of which, in some civil authority and institutions, both public and political officers are corrupted by connections with the narco trade;
- the degree to which the state offers protection to the operation of drug producers and traffickers,
- the degree to which, despite the declaration of war on drugs, the drug trade operates without significant detection or prosecution;
- the extent to which operations and connections of known drug lords affect public policy.

Mr Speaker, no one in their sensible mind in Guyana, and there are seventy odd people here, all sensible people, wants Guyana to become a narco state. I raised this to flag it, because if you wish, Mr Speaker, we are on the verge of becoming some of these things, if we have not yet become. In other words, we fit into some of these categories. Some of these things happen. And I just want to flag it, and I am sure that the Minister will give us some assurance when she gets up as to what is being done, and what are the plans of the Government to ensure that this does not happen. The *Stabroek News* Editorial for the 13 December 2004, Page 6, is headed:

WHAT NEXT

Though large shipments have been intercepted in timber, rice, molasses, fish, wild life, airline cargo and now coconuts, it would be logical to assume that an even larger amount is still getting to buyers.

They spoke about these drug lords. They strived and found more and more influence and are expended in ways that corrupt many persons and therefore institutional integrity and it go. So the *Stabroek News* again, a good Editorial flagging the problem, and that is what I am doing; flagging this problem and saying *let us do something together before*

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we find Guyana becoming a narco state.

Mr Speaker, throughout the year we say things like high-tech guns being seized by the police in raids and all of that. A pretty big one was in September 3, 2004. It was reported on Friday September 3 of this year - *high tech guns seized in Bel Air, air raid*, so I just flag that. Then there is a very flattering picture of Minister Teixeira, *efforts being made to tackle gun running, but it is a huge task*, a very nice picture of her in a hat. Most likely at the hat show, even Ministers are entitled to some free time.

We have a problem - murders are unacceptably high, narco statehood shift is a real possibility some may say that we have reached there. I want to say that we are perhaps at the threshold and, hopefully, together we can pull it back.

Domestic violence, violence, violence against women, I see some of the men beginning to squirm, I do not know, I do want to say anything else, but some men are looking distinctively uncomfortable. December 5, 2004, the *Stabroek News* again:

Gender-based violence soars. Seven women and girls murdered in three months.

And this is with Julie Sooklall, whom I spoke about, then there was Abigail Gittens and Tandika Rollins. These were young girls, fourteen and fifteen, who had affairs with men in their twenties and thirties, people being killed over a cell phone and that kind of thing. But there has been an upsurge and one does not have to be a rocket scientist, or even the Minister of Health, to know that there is a causal connection between poverty and some of these crimes. When you look at these girls and you see their backgrounds, you see that they are poor, and this knows no ethnicity. They are from poor backgrounds and they are forced to put up with violence because they have nowhere to go, and I see that Minister Shadick is nodding in approval. Well, not in approval of the violence, but in agreement with the connection. So I am saying this to say

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that poverty is related to crime, and when poverty is related to crime, the first group that is attacked are our vulnerable groups, which are our young women our girls and our elderly that is a fact, It is an unsavoury fact, but that is a fact.

Mr Speaker, you hear about women's hand being chopped off, women's breast being chopped off, parts of bodies that I do not even know being chopped off, but it is a very unsavoury situation. It did not stop in 2004, January 12, 2005, I am not going with the historian I am dealing with the present and the future. In fact, I am more concerned with the future than even with the present:

*Octavia Denheart stabbed by ex-lover in Angoys Avenue.
Berbice*

She was twenty one years old stabbed and died.

25 January 2005

Mutilated body of twenty-year old Dionna Warrick

No relationship to the singer

Found in Le Repentir cemetery.

February 14, 2005

Virginia Kandasammy, 52, fished out of a trench, and she had been seen the day before quarreling with some man or the other.

So, Mr Speaker, these are our concerns. The threats are winning the interests. We are more unsecured than we are secured.

Of course, there are the white-collar crimes. When people speak about crime, they see a man with a high-powered rifle or a man with a dagger going into a house, but millions of dollars are lost every year through white-collar crimes. [Interruption: 'What about Globe Trust?'] We are going to deal with Globe Trust and Odinga at the same time. [Inter-

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ruption: 'White and blue'] I am corrected by the Minister, white and blue colours. She is quite right. We have the:

- remigrant scam,
- passport scam;
- dolphin scam;
- pension book scam;
- scam scam and all types of scam.

But the important thing is that we look to the future. What we need to do is to ensure that our security exceeds our threats. I humbly suggest that what we need to do is to transform our Police Force. We need a transformation. Transformation is multi-faceted. It needs:

- committed leadership;
- proper organization;
- training and education;
- timely and effective intelligence;
- inter-agency co-ordination; and
- international co-ordination.

There are six things. It is multi-faceted. Those are the recommendations. It is good when we can see ... I will first start with ... the Commissioner of Police saying, and this is in the *Stabroek News*, Thursday, 17 October, *we owe it to ourselves to correct our failings*. The Commissioner of Police has accepted that there are failings, and he must be commended. But, of course, that is only Stage 1.

Stage II is that there must be a transformation. Mr Speaker, it may

be a bit too soon, but it seems that in this Commissioner of Police, we have possibly a committed leader. It may be, and only time will tell.

On 23 April 2004, he said, *police must stick to rules, not descend to criminal levels. Felix Tells Officers' Conference*. So we have that committed leadership. As I have already said, it was a good thing when the Honourable Member, Miss Gail Teixeira, took over, although she is acting, it may be a good thing, and that may be part of the committed leadership. I do not know, it may be too early, but it may be so.

On 23 May, Mr Slowe, the Head of the 'A' Division, the biggest Division, Stabroek News said, and this is good for the Police Force to say so, *Slowe admits brutality, corruption in Police Force and promises new dispensation*. So we have committed leadership a potential and once they are not interfering, I suspect that they will do a fairly good job. Proper organization is not difficult.

Training and Education - we have to continue to train them and, in that regard, the Commissioner spoke about changing the name, and I know that when he was on this side of the House, and I see no reason why he would have changed now, the Hon Minister Manzoor Nadir, he was not a minister then, he left for greener pastures with or without snow on top of it, and he agreed with the proposition put by the Simmonds Report in 2000, that perhaps the time has come to change the name of the Guyana Police Force to the Guyana Police Service, because it is providing a service. It is not a force. The new Commissioner of Police said that, and he agreed with that.

Training and education is a must, and we have to be not thrifty. We have to spend money to train our Police. In fact, when you look at the Disciplined Forces Commission ... I do not want to go there, because I do not want to rule myself out of order again, but when we look at the 164 recommendations of the Disciplined Forces Commission, we have the making of a transformation in the Guyana Police Force and, in fact, of the entire four disciplined forces. So we are on that threshold. We

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are on that form. Will the PPP/C take the now-known thing and go back to the old ways, or will they go the new way? I want to be optimistic and say that, because security is so critical ... Don't let us worry about that one boat that comes a year ... everyone will see the need to go that new way. Mr Speaker, we are told that we come and we criticise and did all of that. I have given some of my ideas and how we could transform this very critical arm that takes care of all of those interests.

Mr Speaker, I want to turn, very briefly, in the hour or so left for me [*Laughter*] to speak about traffic. Traffic is not controversial, and I want to challenge the acting Minister ... I do not know how long she will be there so I want to throw out a lot of challenges to her.

Start a traffic campaign. Traffic is not a controversial area, so speak with the relevant people. I am in favour, because this is not necessarily a PNC/R's position, because we do not know; we have not discussed it with the Leader. I am in favour of completely banning music in mini-buses. If not, you are going to have a lot of court cases with decibels, whether it is too loud or not too loud. Some people do not hear good like me and Dr Ramsammy, who speaks so loud. We do not know if it is loud; or maybe it is too loud or not loud.

We started with the seat belts and most people do it. Do an ongoing campaign. It cannot be a campaign - a plaster of paris operation, or a band-aid as we call it - there are all kinds of strange names, I do not know why.

Traffic lights are now heritage and antique objects, if I may call them that; banning of music. We have to have ongoing campaigns on over-crowding, as well as breathalyzers.

Last year the Minister, I do not want to call his name spoke about most traffic offences ... this was on Pages 30 to 35 ... Anyhow, this was last year's Budget, Tuesday, 15 April where the Minister, then, Mr Gajraj, said:

An analysis has shown that one of the principal causes of road

accidents is speeding, and another cause is driving under the influence of drinks and drugs.

And here I remember the Prime Minister speaking about breathalyzers coming to Guyana. I am saying, let us invest in that, because indeed it is true that in many, many accidents people are either over-crowded, there is loud music that is shaking the bus, or there is either drugs or alcohol. That is not a controversial area. Nobody will be against the Minister for making innovative decisions, and we stand ready to play our part.

Prisons - Again, the prisons are not really controversial, except when there are break-outs, not outbreak, because there are condoms in the prisons so you would not have outbreaks. You would have break-outs.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Chancellor Justice Bernard spoke of the possibility and feasibility of a remand centre ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Before you begin to quote Justice Bernard, you need some extra time.

Mrs Calrissa S Riehl: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So Chancellor Desiree Bernard, on Thursday, 24, as was reported in the *Stabroek News*, agreed that we should have a remand centre, because we who practice, and there are many of us on both sides of the House who have close friends or family in prison, ... I did say on both sides of the House ... we know the deplorable conditions there. We know that the people who are on remand are forced to stay with hardened criminals. So a remand centre is a good thing. Then, of course, during this very week

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the UN Agency lashed out at our prison condition. They said that our prisons conditions are deplorable; so a remand centre is a way that we can have some immediate relief and, of course, more can be done for the prisons. I remember Minister Gajraj saying a couple years ago that they were looking for land; so perhaps he needs to speak to the minister of lands, regarding where he was going to put up a new prison ... so work could be done in the prison.

Lastly, I come again to a non-controversial area, *Fire - Fires! Fires! Fires!* [*Interruption: 'Slow fire! More fire!'*] This is not slow fire. This is raging fire. Mr Speaker, again I am indebted to the *Stabroek News*, and I hope that Mr De Caries is not listening, because I am sure he will charge me something for these extensive quotations. [*Interruption*]

The Speaker: He should pay you for promoting the Stabroek News in the National Assembly.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Well, Mr Speaker, I am sure that with your support, I will collect a hefty sum.

12 September 2004, and this tells the whole story, *five out of six hydrants out of order*. That is a lot of percentage. The Fire Chief, Mr Lawrence David, said that, because there are just a few functioning fire hydrants, firemen are forced to resort to open sources like canals, trenches, and other reservoirs. With this dry season that we have now, we have to really hope that there is no fire.

Mr Speaker, we know about the Metropole fire, and it went across to that unmentionable Channel east of it. Then we had this horrific fire that burnt one of our really genuine Heritage buildings, the Sacred Heart Church, on Christmas Day - a no lesser day when Christians were about worshipping or commemorating the arrival of the Lord Jesus.

What is interesting is that the Permanent Secretary, Ms Claudette Moore, and I hope that this does not cause her to lose her job, because it is in the *Stabroek News* anyhow. Moore said that the Committee had

been awaiting input from the Minister Shaik Baksh, after she submitted a draft report to him in July, 2004 ... She is speaking to the *Stabroek News* in September, two months after, although they are in the same building, she cannot find Minister Baksh. She also said that the slow progress on the report is impinging on work on the Ministry's budget for next year. Moore said that it was co-incidental that, on the day before the fire, the Minister discussed the report with her, and that she expects that it will now be fast-tracked as a result of the fire. It is unfortunate that it had to take a fire, and that is her expectation, and I suspect that her expectation was not met. So, Mr Speaker, we have five out of six fire hydrants out of order.

Then, on 14 November, *Stabroek News* again - a veteran contractor, shoddy wiring may be causing electrical fires that see millions of dollars ... I know that the Honourable Minister ... most probably her paper of choice is the *Chronicle*, and she may not see the *Stabroek News*, but I am prepared to share with her, because it is very interesting ... This is a man, I have never heard about him, Cyril Walker, not Cyril Belgrave, and he is speaking about the fact that, in central Georgetown, how old electrical wiring and connections are, and he is saying that this is a real cause of fires when we have the resurgence of continuous electricity. The Honourable Prime Minister spoke about continuous electricity. But I prefer to believe Walker who said that, when we have blackouts and the lights come back on with the surge, many times there could be electrical fires. They would say Backer did not say so, Cyril Walker said so.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, our disciplined forces minus the GDF ... I am not speaking on the GDF present challenges, but these challenges are not insurmountable. The one that concerns us most, and I must end with it, is the Guyana Police Force, because it impacts on all of them. Even as we speak today, I forgot to mention that, in the last week, there has been an upsurge in crime in Region 6 so much so that I think, a Mr Wills has been sent there for six months. Wills is taking over from Whittaker. Wills and Whittaker - two Ws. So they are replacing each other as they try to get Region 6 under control. So the threat is there,

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and I want to say that, for me and for us, security is not merely the absence of fear, it is the presence of well-being of both body and mind. I hope, as I take my leave, that my comments would be received in the spirit in which it was given, and that the Government will see it fit to look at some of these proposals. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, despite your frequent robust comments on the speeches of other Members, and on your own explanation of your record of being interrupted by the Speaker, I noticed that the Members on the other side obviously felt that your presentation was very thoughtful, because they listened very quietly and attentively.

Honourable Members, it is now two minutes before our regular time for suspension, so I would recommend that we take the suspension now and resume in twenty minutes.

16:58H – SUSPENSION OF SITTING

17:50H – RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Speaker: My apologies for the delay, Honourable Members.

The Honourable Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker. I rise to support the Budget 2005, as presented by my colleague, Minister Kowlessar, and the theme of the Budget **CONFRONTING CHALLENGES - SUSTAINING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**, which I think is very appropriate for us as a developing country. Guyana is not an island. It is not a planet somewhere else. We are part of planet Earth; we are part of the whole global context in which we operate. Sometimes, when we look at how we operate as a country, and the challenges we are confronted with, we sometimes forget and sometimes treat ourselves, as a country, as if the problems we face are unknown, or elsewhere, and that sometimes we are the only ones in this world who:

seem to have this problem; and

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seem to not be able to get it right.

I think we have to be fair to ourselves as Guyanese. Sometimes I think there is a kind of Guyanese psyche in which we like to beat-up ourselves and to really always be putting ourselves down more than what I think is normal. But I think it would be fair, in the context of the Budget discussion, to say what are some of the challenges that were made, and I appreciate the earlier speaker, Honourable Member, Mrs Deborah Backer, who pointed out to a number of the issues in crime and security. Many of these issues are global issues, as well as serious challenges for us.

I would just like to present to you what I think are some of the challenges, not from this Budget only, but what, as a country, we are going to face over the next several years to come, and some of them will have very serious consequences on us as a people, as well as on our society. When I spoke on the disaster, I referred to the issue of global climate changes and the environmental issues, which are really going to impact on all parts of the world, but also more particularly for us, because we are country that is below the sea level, particularly along our coast.

The second challenge, which is one I believe my colleague, Honourable Minister Clement Rohee, spoke about - the issue of trade liberalisation and globalization, and the impact of changes in the European preferential arrangements with sugar producing countries; the impact on our GDP; and the impact on our ability to be able to sustain some of the old traditional ways in which we operated. The Trade Liberalisation and Globalisation is going to have a major impact, and is having an impact on sustainable development in developing countries. And if you read, from time to time, a number of the articles which come out in Mrs Deborah Backer's favourite newspaper, which is the *Stabroek News* ... the one I tend to refer to more is the *Economist*. But in those magazines and articles that are written internationally and locally in Guyana, the issue of a poor developing country ... the Trade Liberalisation and Globalisation, in fact, has not led to an improvement in the development in developing

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countries, but in fact, in some cases, have worsened - the issues of poverty, socioeconomic conditions, and so on. Because, in fact, developing countries are asked to make quantum leaps in order to make themselves marketable and to compete in an equitable fashion with big countries and industrialised countries. And so a lot of negotiations undertaken at the international level are to try to protect us as developing countries. All of that impacts on our Budget, and on the kind of Budget we are able to present, based on our whole global situation. We also, I think, in fairness to ourselves, have to recognise that we are still an economy that is driven by the cost of our primary products at the international level, and that is going to continue for quite a while. When the prices are good we do better; when the prices are bad we do not do so well. In fact, the problems and the prices of gasoline impact on us in our preparation of Budget, and in our actual cost of living in our country. If you look carefully at the Budget line items you will see, in fact, that the cost of fuel and lubricants are concerned in many of the Budget line items. Obviously, we also, therefore, have to look at our context:

- what context do we operate in;
- where do we sell our products;
- how will we make ourselves more marketable;
- how will we be able to package what we do in a better way

continued in pt. II

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC
BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN**

Part II

52ND SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued fr. Pt 1

There are social challenges at the global level, and these are very, very serious. The Honourable Member, Mrs Backer, referred to the consequences that we are experiencing here, the issue of the increase in crime, the increase in youth violence and so forth, and studies have shown that those consequences are in direct correlation with the growth of consumerism or consumer societies in which we are dealing with monoculture and what is also called Americanism, in terms of a one-culture world. Television and the media tend to reinforce this view, but what it does create is a very materialistic approach to life and the assessment of life and so the concept of a culture of immediate gratification in which, if you want it, you must get it, and then sometimes this impacts on our youth a lot. So some of the older adages which we were taught - the older generation like myself - by my grandparents ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: I would not have thought that you belong to the older generation.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Yes, I do.

The Speaker: You are doing injustice to yourself. *[Laughter]*

Hon Gail Teixeira: Thank you, Mr Speaker, you have been very, very kind, I must say, but I have marched past the fifty-plus club. I have gone over the edge, as they say.

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The culture of immediate gratification impacts on our young people and how they see the value of work and work ethics and so forth. The reason why I am referring to that is because that has an interesting something, like with the narco-industry, in terms of many young people, when they are asked about what their views on their parents' salaries are, they say, *why must I work eight to four ...? And my father had to wait fifteen or ten years to buy a car ... I can get a car tomorrow, much faster by means that are obviously highly questionable*. One of the themes we carry in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport to do with young people is: *If it is too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true*, and so we try to warn them of the dangers of the narco-industry.

The increase in violence and anti-social behaviour is not only a problem for Guyana. It is a global issue where this is becoming a greater and greater concern in the highly-developed countries, even where there is a reduction in poverty, where they do not have the levels of poverty like in our part of the world. At the same time, we are seeing more and more increasing levels of violence, not all related to crime or criminal activity, but to do with violent forms of behaviour between people. The gun-culture is part of that, where I personally believe that the macho-culture of men carrying guns all the time in their back pockets, on their hips, is a kind of peacock culture of showing how they look pretty in the modern world.

But I believe that we are dealing with the epidemic of HIV/AIDS as a developing country, and as are many countries. Therefore, we are also seeking to address the major concern of male-marginalisation. A few years ago, in the Caribbean, we all thought of the issue of male-marginalisation and the absenteeism of males in the home and the bringing-up of our families and our communities because, as a political woman, you want to do something, so you call a meeting nowadays in various parts of Guyana and there are eight women to two men wherever you go. It is always women doing work all the time.

We, in the Caribbean, were sociologically examining it all the time,

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that this was a problem, because we have a high rate of single parents, of women-headed households. The fact is that the newer studies that are coming out of the United States, Canada and so, on male-marginalisation is not specific to poverty, nor is it specific to women-headed households, altogether the percentage may be higher amongst those households. So the social challenges, we are in a world where there are varieties of new kinds of social behavioural-pattern responses that we will have to challenge as we continue.

Poverty obviously is the main thing which we are struggling against, in all its various forms - to improve opportunities and access to services. The latest figures coming out from many of the world bodies - United Nations, UNICEF and so on, are showing that, whilst there have been some slight decrease in certain countries, overall we have not made as much stride as a planet as we should have. In fact, the whole struggle of the Millennium Goals - and to be able to match them - Guyana is one of those countries that is part of that, and also has been working with the international bodies to try and help us to reach those goals, as all of us have agreed to.

The issue of crime and security globally is a major challenge. I thought I would share with this House the Quito Declaration, which was passed in November 2004. It is the Sixth Conference of the Ministers of Defence in Latin America and the Caribbean, of which 32 countries attended, and I was very honoured to represent Guyana as the acting Minister of Home Affairs. It was an important conference, hemispherically, because this is where the ministers of Governments, as well as Generals, Heads of Armies, Heads of Police, coastguards, all those bodies met and tried to look at the issues of crime and security - Hemispheric Security No. 1.

I thought I would share with you a section, which I think is relevant to us. We had discussions over three days - basically I am trying to draft this Declaration, but I will quote for you Page 9 - Clause 3, of the Quito Declaration that says:

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In this era of globalisation, the hemisphere is encountering a rise in diverse complex threats and risks adversely affecting States, societies and persons. Some of them are global and multi-dimensional and require adequate hemispheric co-operation to be addressed, including, as highlighted by the declaration of securities in the Americas, the special threat that drug trafficking, illicit trafficking in persons, and arms and organised crime, among others in the hemisphere.

These new threats, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, illicit trafficking of arms, and other transnational crimes, are a challenge to the region's nations and their security. The proliferation of illicit traffic on being small arms and light weapons fosters greater criminality and violence in the societies. This problem exerts a larger impact on small states which, because of their size, require special assistance to increase their technical and human resources to address them. They encourage the hemisphere's financial institutions to support them in their efforts.

Therefore, it goes on, in all the many clauses, to look at the various areas and how we can co-operate, both at the global level, hemispherically, regionally, and bilaterally in order to be able to deal with what was seen as the number one issue, in terms of security, and that was crime being the major threat and, of course, narco-trafficking.

In the *Economist* of 12 February 2005 ... the Honourable Member, Mrs Backer, has one, I have mine ... there is an article on Page 35, entitled *BATTLES WON, AWARDS TO LOST*, and that is to do with drugs in Latin America, in which the whole issue of the Plan Columbia is discussed. Whilst Plan Columbia may be showing some improvement, what has happened in Columbia itself is that the drug trade has moved into the surrounding countries, for example, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia. One of the cases that is given is that, in November of last year, 700 kilos were found stuffed inside frozen giant squid; other shipments have been found

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in planks of wood, carrots, guano and even votive candles, and this is in relation to Peru. It is also reported that Ecuador has become one of the major transshipment points in Latin America. To quote from this article, it says:

As in Columbia a decade ago, the weakening of the big syndicates in Mexico has merely resulted in them being replaced by scores of smaller, nimbler outfits, which are harder to detect. As always the drug business appears to be one step ahead of its pursuers.

So we are all fighting against a gigantic and mammoth problem globally.

The sixth challenge is one of governance. Governance both within our own country - governance at the local government level, the national level, the regional level, in terms of CARICOM, as well as governance at the international and multilateral levels. As we see, there are many challenges that are facing the United Nations, and how that governance is working, or not working and the many areas of review within the United Nations and the families within the United Nations, such as UNESCO and so on.

I have listened to the presentations from Monday to today, and while I will come to the issue of crime and security, I do want to make some comments on the earlier presentations. For example, the Honourable Member, Mr McAllister, referred to Budget 2005 as pedestrian, lacking vitality, imagination and distinction; no hope for children, the elderly and the poor. I do not want to travel down the avenues of the past but, personally, I do believe that there has been much misrepresentation of history, and that it needs to be corrected. I am also using this platform to appeal to the intellectuals, professionals and historians of our country, that much of our history - modern history of Guyana - in the last years have not been written and the cupboards and shelves are full with lots of documents which can help us to analyse, in our modern history, what has happened, and how we can correct them. But I believe that one of the archival things that I was able to find, which I think that we should look

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at, is that the last budget of the PNC/R - the 1992 Budget - presented by the then Minister of Finance Mr Greenidge on 30 March 1992, and I think that the other side of the House should read the document as much as I have. The theme of that budget is *Keeping Guyana on the Move Forward*, and he referred to the fact that this is the third year of the decade of hope - the Economic Recovery Plan has succeeded initiating the great economic recovery of Guyana. The whole document is premised on a three-year plan to turn Guyana around. My question is: *if you were turning Guyana around, why did you have to turn it around?* And when you read further, you will then begin to understand why there had to be a three-year plan to turn Guyana around. Because there were major issues and major problems and a lot of them had to do with issues of certain international concerns, but it did refer to the Paris Club. The fact that it presented itself in the Budget, with some pleasure that Guyana had finally been able to get a formal IMF agreement, and the Toronto Terms, to be able to achieve draw-downs on loans and grants.

All of us know that the Economic Recovery Plan had some extremely onerous conditions, and the fact that, in 1985, before former President Burnham's demise, that there were great efforts to try to make Guyana credit-worthy. Those efforts to make Guyana credit-worthy had major consequences on the working people of this country. It is in the attempt to bite and swallow, and in sometimes not negotiating hard enough, or roughly enough, that certain things were brought in. For example, the sliding scale of the currency where one morning the dollar was 105, the next day 120, the next day 115, which created havoc with the private sector, with the conditions of life, and also with the ordinary working-class people. Certainly it is a fact that the General-Secretary of the Guyana Trades Union Congress, Mr Pollydore, announced in 1992 that there was a drop of 58 percent of purchasing power of the working class, and that 76 percent of the people were living below the poverty line. When we look at the period around 1964, Guyana had reached one of the higher levels of countries in the Caribbean Region and, by 1992, it was the third poorest - just above Haiti and Bolivia. These are facts, and they are printed in international documents - WHO/PAHO documents, United Nations documents, so these are not fabri-

cations by Gail Teixeira. These are documented data that are there and available for everyone to see. We have to recognise, too, and you can look at the Bureau of Statistics figures of 1992 and 1993, and you will find there that, in the period between 1989 and 1992, the public service dropped from 38,000 people to 24,000 ... [*Interruption: 'That was when backtracks.'*] My colleague here across the House he was a very young man then. He was in short pants. One of the things we have to do, in fairness ... In 1964, even as a colony, Guyana had begun to show signs of a fast-growing little nation but, by 1992, the boat had gone a falls ... In the three years before that the PNC/R had desperately tried to recover the situation. It went on its own path of socialism, and 80 percent of the economy was run by the State, but the issues of governance, financial management, democracy, were issues that we have to be able to analyse ourselves today, and also to see where we started off. In 1992 we started at a disadvantaged position. While my colleague, Mr McAllister, talks about the pedestrian budget, the fact is that the Budget is not pedestrian at all, or maybe it is, from the view of the person who lacks imagination.

The other day we were talking about disasters ... I just want to comment on one thing. In Mr Greenidge's speech, on Page 21, he said the following:

In 1991, with the limit of the available resources, the Government was able to tackle the most critical threats of sea defences, resulting in only four instances of breaches, as compared with forty-four in 1990.

So when we talk sometimes, we should also look at how we try to also ... Do not pretend to be angels. Do not have amnesia, or convenient amnesia, to be able to write off a number of issues.

Inflation: Minister Greenidge said that one of the evils of rampant inflation, on Page 22, had been a mark upsurge in destitution and homelessness. We have to be able to look at what was the situation in 1992. Honourable colleague, Mrs Holder, would say, well, you had 12 years

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of it. It is easier to undermine than to build, as someone said when we were looking at the stadium for the cricket World Cup and, in trying to anticipate everything that is required, and to abide with the ICC requirements, that it is better to try to anticipate and build into it rather than, in a few years time, start breaking down walls and to re-create. It will be much more expensive and much more complex, but the same budget talked about \$19,000,000 allocated for youth and sport. When you see the figures today of what is being contributed to youth and sport ... As an earlier speaker said, we have to be able to also recognise that one of the challenges for this Government is in terms of how we deal with poverty alleviation and improving the quality of life of our people and, at the same time, be able to meet many of the conditionalities in order to borrow money and so forth. Some of the colleagues on the other side of the House seem to ditch the idea that, somehow, we should not be dealing with the international agencies. However, the problem is that, if we are a small developing country, as are all the other third-world countries like ourselves, that we do have to borrow in order to be able to move forward. If we don't, we would be stuck and then start reversing. So we are in a catch 22 position. No matter whether you like it or not, it is a catch 22, and we have to be able to move forward. We have to try, to the best of our ability as a government, to lobby, to negotiate for good conditions and concessions based on the performance of the economy.

Therefore, the whole issue is about having a vision, or about not having a vision. We have to be able to deal with the fact as, if one were probably a political scientist, or whatever, who could analyse the twelve years of the PPP/C Government and the figures show an amazing amount of investments, one can question whether they were right, whether they were wrong, whether they were enough, was it not enough, was the quality good enough? Those are all relevant questions that have to be dealt with but, at the same time, one cannot wish away the fact that health, education, roads, bridges, housing and water, and D and I expended, between 1993 and 2005 Budgets, \$23 billion, in terms of capital investment, to try to do what I call, for whatever it is worth, the first ten years of the PPP/C administration a period of reconstruction. The economy had to be reconstructed. Health, education, roads, had to be

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repaired, rehabilitated, reconstructed, so therefore it was a period of reconstruction and restoration. The period that we are now into is really one in which we are addressing modernisation. In other words, one had to reconstruct, to put things in place, and then be able to really address the question as to what I think is where Guyana will take the quantum leap in the next five to ten years. As a small, poor nation, we lost valuable time in the 1960s, but it is never too late to try to correct. So this is a proud moment for us as a country, because this is the first time in Guyana's history that we have moved from a less developed country (LDC), and we are now in the category of medium developed country (MDC). We are therefore on the level of Barbados and a number of other countries, and whilst we may feel proud of that, it also has its negatives, in that it has become more difficult to access loans and grants when you move from an LDC to an MDC. We have to be able to see that this is a good moment for us, and that we have come of age as a developing country, as a newly independent country. Next year will be our fortieth anniversary as an independent nation and therefore this is the period when our Guyana is going to be positioned. We are talking about positioning our country into a situation where it can take off.

Comments have been made by Members of the other side of the House about Hong Kong, Singapore, China, India, and making comparisons, and some of those comparisons are useful. When you visit China and India, these are countries exceeding energy and dynamism, but these are big countries with also big problems. In fact, in the next ten to twenty years, India and China are going to be the two superpowers of the world. The Chinese do not like to call themselves superpowers, but we mean it not in a pejorative way, but in the fact that these are the two countries - India and China, that are really going to be having a mammoth say in how decisions are taken at the international level, global economy and everything. Obviously, this did not happen overnight. The Chinese went through a revolutionary path and are now into their own philosophy of a human market economy. The Indians have gone into a more social approach to be able to develop their nation. Clearly we have to observe the two paths of development. Therefore, when we look at Guyana... *[Interruption]*

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The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue her speech.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Therefore we have to be able to look at how we try to position ourselves, and what are the new challenges we have to face in order to put Guyana into that kind of position where it can play a very powerful role within our region, and within our hemisphere, because Guyana, ironically, has been treated, for a long time after the 1960s and the whole thought to be not very important in the global politics and so on. Guyana, ironically enough, in this period has become of interest geo-politically, strategically, and its own position, in terms of Latin America from the international point of view, and also from our position, in terms of our linkage with Latin America and South America and the strengthening of those relations are important.

The changes we have to face in governance - the constitutional changes we have made, the issues of the legal reforms, legislative reforms, democracy, how we run the Parliament, how efficient it is and how we are able to recognise that there is a Government and there is an opposition. The Government does have a role to play in whatever we do. It is not like you can wish away the voters who also voted for that Government ... it was done and audited; so you have to deal with that fact. People have to deal with that.

The issue of governance also includes financial accountability, and the financial accountability issues are not only related to the annual Auditor General's Report. The Public Accounts Committee does meet to discuss it, and one of the points was raised by an earlier speaker yesterday, that the Public Accounts Committee Reports are made but nobody listens to them. In fact, on the agenda for this year is the legislative proposals to allow for the findings of the PAC to be dealt with in a

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particular way, from a legal point of view. So there are a number of issues that have been raised to improve accountability and financial issues. I believe that we are moving in the right direction, but there are difficult things to do. There are issues, in terms of legislation, and also in terms of staffing and capacity.

Constitutionally, we have the Ethnic Relations Commission and the Appointive Committee as well ... somebody mentioned the Appointive Committee yesterday. I will not answer that, because the Member who raised it from the Opposition is not a member of the Appointive Committee, except to say that I could ask her colleagues to please give her an idea as to what stage we are, and why we are stuck right now.

Governance also has to do with sound economic planning and management, not only at central Government level, but at all levels of government and governance, and that has to do with your regional bodies, your municipalities, your neighbourhood councils, the village councils and so on. It requires a level of mind change of many of our people that although we are PPP/C, PNC/R, WPA/GAP, TUF, or whatever, at the same time, when one is elected into position, one has to represent all the people there. Therefore, we cannot continue with this old dependency syndrome of pointing the finger and expecting Government to take care of everything. That is not to say that the State is not responsible for many areas and most areas, but we have to develop a culture in this country of rights and responsibilities, rights and duties, and recognising the need for the creation of a new Guyana man and woman, in terms of our attitudes, work ethics, issues of law-abiding behaviour, paying our taxes, and so on. These are normal behavioural responses, acceptable norms in the same countries we quote all the time and compare Guyana against.

One of the colleagues across the House, the Honourable Member, Mr Jerome Khan, talked about voodoo economics, and I was sorely tempted to answer him, in terms of voodoo politics, but I will just say that what he is proposing, if he understands what voodoo is, it is rather an insult to the whole concept of voodooism.

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The issue of when we look dispassionately at our history, one of the challenges that we have to face is the people are elected to positions, not only as ministers and parliamentarians, as RDC members, as members of Boards and Commissions and so on and they have responsibilities. There is no doubt in my mind, and we agreed on that, that the poverty reduction issues of the Government, in terms of services . . . and my colleague, Dr Leslie Ramsammy, referred to the figures that 41 percent of the total budget of 2005 is dedicated to education, health, housing and water; poverty alleviation specifically, is reflected as 21 percent of the GDP. That is one of the highest rates in this Caribbean Region for investments in poverty reduction and improving the quality of life for the people, for our country, as we know, has had some very traumatic and difficult times economically.

The issue of citizenship security - we will have to improve our steps so as to improve the security of our country, not only in terms of just the enforcement of the Police, which I will come to, but also in terms of legislative reforms, some of them in community involvements. In many other countries of the world there is something called neighbourhood watch, which is normally done by housewives keeping an eye on their streets, their neighbourhoods while others are at work, and alerting and calling the police and so on. We cannot tackle many of the problems of our country unless we all buy into it in a variety of ways, and it does not always have to do with the higher-up level, but the involvement of the grassroots level. As an example I refer to the most recent issues associated with the disaster.

We have to re-orient our thinking, and I believe the Budget is merely a tool that assists in one aspect of governance. It is not a total picture of governance, and therefore we have to look at how we go to the next stage over the next few years. Again, you are laying, a foundation, pillar upon pillar to be able to move forward. Rome was not built in a day, my dear Mr Vincent Alexander, nor were many of the countries that you have referred to, and others which you have referred to in your speeches did not take place in five years, ten years, and many times under twenty years. I would love to see us, *[Interruption]* like the Chinese who, in

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Shanghai, which I believe the Honourable Speaker also visited, I am not sure ...

The Speaker: I went with Mr Vincent Alexander.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Oh! Thank you, sir. The Chinese, in ten years in Shanghai, created an entirely new part of the city with the highest skyscrapers and so on in the whole of Asia ... But we are not China, and therefore ten years is still a relatively short period of time. In terms of the next phase we have to go through and, as I said, we have to deal in the context of single market economy, as my colleague Minister Rohee referred to, of the retraining of many of our people, of the type of skills we have to create - technical skills and vocational skills, to make us more competitive and be able to face the challenges of the single market economy.

We have a stock exchange, which is something new. We have never had one before, but we do have to look at having a healthier environment, create a more market-oriented approach, and many people call it a market-oriented approach with a human face, and that is where the issue of the Budget comes in. The 20 percent that went into poverty reduction, social services are parts of the human face. Those are parts of balancing what are some of the very difficult, competitive situations that you will have to face, also balancing it off by making sure the people do not fall through the cracks, or as many people as you can prevent ... the fact that more and more people can have access to houses, or have the hope of building a house; which my colleague Minister Baksh spoke about this widely and the fact that more people have access to water.

No one is saying that everybody in this country has access to potable water. Nobody on this side of the House is saying everybody has been taken care of, but what we can show is a progression that whereas we started out at X percent, we have now moved to X percent. Therefore, it is progress we are looking at, not finite, absolute numbers that say that we have arrived. We have not arrived as yet, but clearly the

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Budget becomes a means through which a vision of a modern Guyana that is able, in the international world, in the arena, to showcase its goods, its products, its fine individuals that it produces. It is a wonderful vision. I think all of us in our hearts believe it and want that more than anything else.

We obviously have to work in many areas. We have to deal with our attitudes to work, because when Guyanese go abroad and have to work in New York and they have to get up at 4.00/5.00 in the morning to get to the American workplace at 8.00 on the dot, or one minute before 8.00, they make sure they do it, but when they are in their own country it is 8.30 or 8.45; they feel that they can walk in when they like. If we want to be competitive internationally, or regionally, we have to change some of these attitudes and those changes, unfortunately, my dear colleagues, are not going to come by persuasion only. We are all going to have to be tough. We are going to have to say, *You do not come in to work one or two or three times, and you keep that up, you may lose your job or you may be suspended*, and therefore, people like Basil Williams, as a lawyer, will now be taking us to court for discrimination and all sorts of things. We have to become more driven and recognise that people do not want to wait three or six months. You do not want to wait and we do not want to wait. The ordinary people out there do not want to wait, and the investors do not want to wait, but we have to go through this and these are not easy things for all of us, on the Government's side, or on the opposition side.

Mr Speaker, in terms of crime and security, because I think you know that I have to speak on Home Affairs, Culture, Youth and Sports, and a number of things. In fact, there is an interesting synergy between Culture, Youth and Sports, and Home Affairs, because culture, youth and sports deal with issues that have to do with maybe prevention, in terms of crime and people having better attitudes and working in a different way and trying to [*Pause*] and home affairs, which is more law enforcement and so on. We have been through a very traumatic period in the last year or two, but we can say that there are changes taking place. We can say that the Disciplined Forces Commission's Report,

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whilst it is waiting for the Special Select Committee, which Honourable Member Mrs Backer referred to, at the same time, it would make this House feel better if the Police, the Army, the Fire, Coast Guards and Prisons have all taken that report and study it and to create the matrix of what they can do over the next few years to be able to deal with many of the issues. So it is not a document that is only for us. Other people already have a stakeholder-ship in it, and I think that it is important that they are not waiting for us to finish with some Special Select Committee to hand it to them; and I think that is a positive move.

The Guyana Police Force - We can say that we have emerged stronger from the last three years of anti-crime activities - better trained and equipped, and more conscious of our duties and responsibilities, and I dare say, more sensitised on how they relate to the citizenry, how they deal with people, and their responsibilities as a police force dealing with people. During the last few months I have acted, I believe firmly that there is a real willingness on the part of the Guyana Police Force, and particularly the new Commissioner of Police, Mr Felix [*Applause*] to really broker a relationship, a partnership, between the communities and the police, but old habits die hard. It takes time, but we are starting with the recognition and the will, and I think that is a good beginning. If it could be nurtured and moved forward, it will make a very big difference in this country.

We have also to deal with the new face of crime. We have the old type of crime, but we also have very sophisticated crime in our country, sophisticated equipment and technology. Three years ago, the bandits had better equipment than the police, not only in terms of weapons, but in terms of technology, communication equipment and so on. We can say that we are beginning to change this around, and I firmly believe that the law enforcement officers of this country are beginning to make major strides in taking back control of the situation, in terms of crime and security. It does not mean that they are on top of it. No one ever promised, anywhere in the world, that theirs would be a crime-free country. When you find one part of the world that is crime-free, tell me. I think that is when I will be there, but there is no part of the world that does not have

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crime. What we have to look at is our ability to premeditate, to be able to prevent, and when it does happen, to be able to ensure that the human lost is as little as possible, but we are dealing with the new face of crime, with new inventions and technology; applications and scientific devices. Therefore the law enforcement agencies have to develop capabilities, when the areas of scientific technology, in order to make them better equipped, to be able, operationally and administratively, to handle the situations.

We are happy to announce, too, that the appointment of the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners, and a promotion of 93 officers and inspectors, have had a beneficial effect on the morale of the police. We also must point out that there is greater discipline and a willingness that, if police officers are found to be corrupt, indisciplined, et cetera, that the Police Force at the top level is willing to take measures to expose these, and to be able to take corrective action.

I think those are the issues by which we have to start measuring progress in all the Caribbean countries. You read that the Jamaicans have been fighting a crime wave for 30 years now. The point is that there is constant battle, because what is outside of the law enforcement areas are many temptations for corruption, and therefore the policemen have many challenges. We know what the salaries are ... many people have talked about the salaries of the police and the law enforcement agencies but, as we are able to improve, we will be able to increase the salaries and, if the truth be known, policemen's salaries have gone up, I think over 100 percent, but my friend, Dr Westford, will, I am sure, give those statistics when she speaks.

One of the on going battles is to do recruitment, and we have been recruiting more young people as police - men and women - and obviously we will wish to continue that, so they will be having more presence in various parts of the country. By a comparative analysis of the crime figures - for 2003 and 2004 we see that there was definitely an increase in the numbers of incidents of murder, kidnapping, robbery with violence

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and robbery with aggravation. However, we do have to say that an overall increase in the serious crimes, outside of those by two percent or 84 more cases than what were in 2003.

We also have to say that there are areas of crime that we are looking at in particular, and speakers before mentioned about them. Clearly we have a social issue and a social problem, in terms of the level of rape in our country, and rape and violence against children and women. So the figures can show it and, where certain particular types of crimes went down, rape went up from 122 cases to 170 cases.

This is something that will require interventions with the women's organisations, with various NGOs, with the Health Sector, with the police, and with the judiciary to try to ensure that we are able to reduce the level of abuse of women and children, in particular the most vile form of it, and that is rape. I also want to say, for the record, that the rape records also include boys and men, and those are the ones that we do not like to talk about, but the level of rapes of young boys is of serious concern. So, therefore, the total figures of crime - I have them from 1999 to 2004, but I would not read them all - for 2003 of the top 13 crimes were 4,577 for 2003, 4,661 for 2004, the main increases being in larceny from the person, and also, as I said, rape, and break and entry. So there have been changes in some areas, but we still have to deal with the number of robberies.

The use of firearms, smuggling of small arms and so on, were of great concern, and I share the concerns of the Honourable Member, Mrs Backer, about what is happening. It is clear that weapons are being trafficked in this country, and they are obviously combined with what is the narco-trade. Greater efforts will have to be made, in terms of general anti-crime measures and inter-agency connections. She was absolutely right when she pointed that out. Improvement in intelligence-sharing and intelligence-gathering, improvement in our equipment and mobility, and the coordination and the collaboration with international and regional agencies, such as Interpol. I believe that the steps that have been taken in this area are correct and will be strengthened.

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When we look at the seizures, I will answer the Honourable Member Mr Raphael Trotman's questions; there were about 22 questions. I think, I have three more answers for you which are outstanding. The disaster got in the way, forgive me.

However, we also have to look at the issue of the possession of cannabis and the possession of cocaine. The figures I gave are figures that are public and are shared in Parliament, and if any of you would like to study those, you can. We have been able to show an increase in the seizures to do with cannabis and the destruction of 41,186 marijuana plants that have been found in various parts of the country, and we have also been able to show an increase in the number of persons who have been placed before the courts for possession of cannabis and trafficking. However, there has clearly been a decline in the number of persons that we were able to apprehend with cocaine, even though there was not a big decrease in the volume of cocaine that was found. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: I move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue her speech.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon Gail Teixeira: The figures are here to share, in terms of cocaine and cannabis. However, regarding the point which was raised, about the UK and the various shipments that went overseas, of timber, fish and so on, clearly those are cases, where, I want to say, the collaboration that takes place internationally and regionally is what is helping us. We have to remember that, in the Caribbean, there has been an agreement by the anti-crime forces to work out better collaboration among the Commissioners of Police, the Ministries of Home Affairs and the other security forces in the region. Therefore there is a much greater sharing of information now between the CARICOM countries and countries in South America. This is going to enhance our capabilities with each other in trying to apprehend and to uncover some of these shipments.

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The investigation has been going on, and is going on, and it has been very interesting what we have discovered.

Deportees - I thought it would be interesting to just say to you that there are 814 persons that were deported in 2004 from 19 countries; 343 came from the United States, of which half of that number of the persons deported were for drug-related crimes in the United States; 256, by the way, were deported from Trinidad and Tobago and, in fact, therefore, the country that is coming in as the second highest for deporting Guyanese, that is Trinidad and Tobago - most of these were persons who were refused entry into Trinidad; from Barbados, 91 were deported and more than 50 percent were refused entry. Therefore, for deportees, the majority cases are not drug-related, the total figure ... [Interruption: 'What about the Guyana bench?'] ... I can give you those figures, but the majority of what we are seeing now is what fellow Caribbean countries are deporting - a lot of our people - right at the immigration, and so these are issues, I am sure, will have to be taken up more and more by the Guyana Government.

As I said, the figures are - the total of 343 from the United States, and one-third (115) of that is related to drug activities; from England only 23 persons were deported and the majority had issues to do with overstaying. Costa Rica also deported, for again, similar issues; Antigua, Anguilla, and so on. I think we need to look at Trinidad, which was the largest - 221 and that 80 percent of all those in Trinidad were refused entry. Most of the other countries are to do with either overstaying, and false documents, and it is basically only United States and Canada where persons have been deported for actual crimes of rape or murder, but they are a minority.

What we have to do is to look at that, in terms of what impact that has on crime. Is there a connection between deportees, as Jamaica sometime said? So we have to examine that, and we have started research on that.

In terms of road traffic accidents, recommendations and sugges-

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tions made by the Honourable Member, Mrs Backer, obviously the issue of a breathalyzer, we are waiting to complete the draft legislation to bring that here. We are also trying to complete the draft legislation to do things which may not be so popular in this House, and those are things like wire tapping and so on, but those are still issues under consideration.

With the road traffic issues, safety belts have helped, in the sense that we have seen a reduction in the number of persons who have lost their lives in accidents. Unfortunately, however, we have also seen an increase in the number of road accidents so, although there are more accidents and less deaths, still they are very serious, and we have to intensify the road safety programmes and the messages out to young people and so on. We also have to ask the cooperation of the public that if policemen are taking bribes and so on, please let us know who they are so that we will be able to deal with those issues.

One of the things that have been announced, and which is in the Budget this year, is the production of *machine readable passports for Guyana*, and this will be a CARICOM/Guyana Passports. Suriname and a number of other countries are moving towards the CARICOM Passport, and we will do so, too. So this will be an issue when we try to harmonise in the international community and the region, our passports to be able to track it and to reduce the level of abuse of passports. As you know, there are several websites that are offering citizenship and so on, and we are actively engaged in investigating what they are all about.

Training for Police - In terms of training for the police, over 525 officers and other ranks were trained both locally and overseas, in the Caribbean, North America and Europe. In addition to that there were training of officers on the new legislative provisions, such as domestic violence and trafficking in persons and money laundering. In fact, we had a special training with the British to train the police force, in terms of use of force, in order to reduce fatal shootings by the police, and so the number of persons who may have died as a result of interchanges with the police

were reduced to 15 from 36 in 2003, so that is a reduction by half.

In the *capital budget for the Ministry of Home Affairs*, we were able to purchase quite a lot of equipment and also do rectification of a number of the police stations - rehabilitation as well as build a brand-new police station at Bartica, which will be opening soon. I hope my friend, Miss Judith David, will be there when we come up. *[Interruption: 'What about Sophia police station?']*

We have started work on Phase I at the Sophia police station, but there is an issue of illegal occupation by some people of the land which we are supposed to use, and so that is now holding up works.

There are questions that Mr Trotman asked on the *Community Policing Groups*, and I tried to answer to the best of my ability, but this will continue in the budget for this year, in terms of the building and the organising of community policing groups, based on the measures which we have clearly adumbrated. We are also thinking of a citizens security unit, which will be the coordinator for the community policing groups, in order to ensure that they are allies of the police and not seen as being in competition with the police and vice versa.

In the *prisons*, certainly there are reports that came out recently relating to the conditions of the prison and, obviously, very serious efforts are being made by the Prisons Service to improve and, generally, I think, that body is headed by people who want to see change. You may be interested in knowing that, for the first time, 721 officers were trained in a variety of ways in 2004, both from internal training, external training, including degrees and diplomas, allowing the professionals in the Prison Service to perform better. We have also tried to improve the facilities and the conditions within a number of the prisons.

The *Fire Service* was also an issue referred to, and again it not only requires, improvement of equipment, which we have purchased, and I must point out that, in 2004, we were able to get \$154 million supplementary from the Government that allowed us to buy additional

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equipment for Police, Fire and Prison, but I thought that for fire the ones you would be most interested in have to do with transport vehicles, as well as the general things that always run out - hoses, but also, for the first time, breathing apparatus and also protective suits for 25 firemen. These are very expensive, but we needed to buy them in order to protect the firemen in our society. There were less fires recorded, however. Obviously every fire brings its own destruction, both in terms of families and their welfare and so on.

I believe that we have to be more stringent, in terms of enforcement of the laws in relation to fire. The inspections and inspectorate have to be able to close places down if they do not abide and have the proper facilities. In fact, the Fire Service reached over 77,000 people, in terms of attempts to have fire prevention and control. There are issues to do with old wiring, what you would call tripping of wires, and those are issues that GPL and the Fire Service are working on. Again, they received a lot of equipment to help them to perform better.

Registry - I just thought under the Registry Organisation, that you may be interested in knowing that the Registry, as Minister Rodrigues pointed out, went to various Regions in the Interior to try to bring people's birth certificates and so on up to date. So we are trying to improve the outreach capacity.

In this year we have had a large number of Christian marriage officers, but we have a rather small amount of Hindu and Muslim marriage officers. We have been able to increase those in this year to ensure that people in the country sides, particularly Muslims and Hindus, will have access to marriage officers for their faith.

The issue of the *Police Complaints Authority* was raised by one of the speakers. The Police Complaints Authority has been taking care of over 200-odd allegations and criticisms. I think Mrs Holder raised that issue of the Police Complaints Authority.

- For 2003, the Police Complaints Authority received 214

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complaints, of which 168 were investigated, and a number of them were abandoned and rejected.

- For 2004, 235 complaints were brought to the PCA and 143 were investigated, just about 80 percent were investigated after a number of them were abandoned or rejected, based on the irrelevance to the specific areas that the Police Complaints Authority can deal with.

You may want to know that 74 disciplinary actions were recommended and taken. So the Police Complaints Authority is trying to be the window of opportunity for people to be able to improve a sense of justice and fair play, in terms of treatment by the law enforcement officers.

As a Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, obviously I cannot say much, because time will go again, but a comment was made yesterday about the *Guyana National Service*. I think it was the Honourable Member, Miss Peterkin, and I do want to refer to it. The GNS corpsmen newspaper, 1998 issue, 25th Anniversary of the GNS, showed a table - and this is not Teixeira's makeup. This was printed, published, and this is a photocopy of it, showing when the down-sizing of the GNS started, starting from 1984 right up to 1992 and so, by 1992, you basically had Kuru Kuru, Cove and John, Sophia and Kimbia. All the other places - Konawaruk, Papaya, Camp Jaguar, Camp Cocos were all closed by then.

In fact, Sophia still continues as a non-residential training programme. Kuru Kuru still continues as a youth entrepreneurial training centre, where over 800 young people apply to enter every year. We have space for 200 and we were looking for funding to expand our facilities to be able to take in more young people. But the youth entrepreneurial training programme reaches all ten regions of Guyana, and we have figures to show that unlike in 1990, overnight, when Papaya was closed and 200 men were told the next day that they did not have a job; or in 1992, when the decision was made to review the GNS's military posture and to remove it, and again 200 men were told the next day that they did not

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have a job; unlike the caring Government that we have, in that we were able to take over all 468 persons from the GNS and to be able to work out their conditions ... Many of them are working with us, others have retired or are working elsewhere.

The *Cultural Programmes* reached over 29,000 persons in dance, music, heritage museums ... [*Interruption: 'You are forgetting the NOC' "I am coming to NOC. I would never forget NOC ... anniversaries, festivals, drama, theatre, and publications and art."*] We reached over 29,000 people in the area of culture, and this is leading up to Mashramani, where we are able to reach over 100,000 people on one day alone.

Youth - In the area of youth I spoke about:

- the issue of a National Youth Commission, which has representatives from each region, named by their RDC as the youth representative on the National Youth Commission.
- the President's Youth Award, Republic of Guyana Programme, which is licensed by the Duke of Edinburgh and over 2,500 young people are involved with that.
- the YEST Programmes I have referred to - Kuru Kuru, Sophia; and the Camp programmes where over 4,000 young people participated during the holiday period.
- the Youth Community Outreach programmes, and that is another 32,000 young people that we are able to reach.

New Opportunity Corps is a very special place and, unfortunately, it is a place that people have put a stigma on. The majority of young people in that place are there because they have gotten into trouble with the law, wandering, truancy, and so on. We have seen an increase in the NOC of kids sent there as students - they are not inmates, they are students, because they have gotten involved in certain types of crime. So the level of rehabilitation work we have to do is serious. We

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also have to recognise that many children are there, and there is a view that only poor working class children go to NOC. That is not true. There are children there from very well taken-care-of, middle-class families, and from areas of the city and schools of the city. So this prejudice that people have that poverty is the main cause of criminal activity is not true. In fact, when you get to know the children ... they change all the time. They are there for three years. The majority of these children are victims of the most appalling and horrific conditions in their family lives of violence, sexual abuse, torture, and all sorts of things which these children go through. The fact is, that they have survived, and nine out of ten of them are able to go back to society and try to continue and to make themselves good leaders of our country and citizens of the future.

NOC, obviously, is an old building; it is a heritage building also. But we have been able to improve some of the facilities, and we have more staff now than we have had in a long time, other than what you would call the soldier types. If you are talking about soldier types, we have less soldier types of GNS. What we have are more qualified people of instructors and obviously we always need more counselors?

There are over 175 children in NOC. The numbers go up and down, depending on what happens. What is important, and what we have to look at, is now working with UNICEF in 2005 to assist us with the Juvenile Offenders Project, which will include a number of agencies, Human Services, Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, Police, et cetera, to be able to improve the issues of how we manage juvenile offenders, and how we are able to reduce relapses among them going into the big prison. As they say, *we are graduating to the big prison* when they come out and get into trouble again.

Sport - Cricket World Cup: Obviously you will see in the Budget that we have some figures for construction. That is not the total figure for construction, but I want to say, under this issue ... because when we come to the line items, we will discuss those in greater detail ... that Cricket World Cup has to do with over 500 people having been consulted in a variety of ways and the preparation for a bid and consulta-

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tions continue, but not consultations in terms of asking for an opinion. We need more people on-board, and I know that the PNC/R is represented on the Guyana World Cup Inc. I chair that, and I have very good representatives from both the PPP/C and the PNC/R. I am very happy, as Chairperson, to work with the political representatives there and also the Private Sector, Guyana Cricket Board, et cetera.

The sport programmes have reached about 9,000 young people, not only the young, but people around the country. The support for special events - these are national as well as commemorative sporting events, Community events is probably in the vicinity of 20,000. In addition to that, we have special programmes. We try to organise for interior sport. These are much more expensive, but we do try to help Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 and, obviously, we have to do more in that area.

Disabled sport - the sport for persons with disabilities. There are special programmes for that, and there is even a special programme for the elderly in sport where we have games for the elderly to try to improve their activities.

We can proudly say, as the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport that we are reaching over 90,000 people in the various areas of our work, omitting Mashramani. We are proud of that, that we have been able to do that in a small way. We do not always have the most exciting news for the press, but when a young person pulls a gun on someone or stabs someone, that is going to get on the front-page of Mrs Backer's favourite newspaper. But if a young person goes on an expedition with 100 other Guyanese from different parts of Guyana, different languages, classes, ethnic groups and religious groups, and treks through this country as Guyanese ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: You time is up, Honourable Member.

Hon Gail Teixeira: ... and there is just a tiny photograph in the paper ... I am closing in another ten minutes.

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in each other. It is a pity that the Honourable Minister of Legal Affairs could not be here this evening. We understand that he may be under the weather, as I am a bit, and so we wish him a speedy recovery. But, that aside, Mr Speaker, it would have been better for him to answer for his stewardship rather than to have someone else represent him.

Mr Speaker, I posit that the essence of justice is the people's belief in its potency. No use beating ourselves on the chest about courtrooms, repairs, and seminars. What should matter most is whether, as a result of things done, the ordinary woman feels that she may, safely and confidently, approach the courts for redress from a vicious and unsympathetic spouse, or that her child will be protected from some sumtesisal monster who tries to prey on her after school.

So, too, with the work at the Ministry of Education, or with the aggrieved policeman who should feel free and unhindered to approach the courts and know that justice, will be given not in fifteen years, but in fifteen months. The essence is the delivery of justice, I repeat, is the peoples' belief in its potency.

In addition to the many consultancies handed out to review the legal affairs of this country, and there have been many. I challenge this Government, if it is brave enough, to commission a survey on the views of the people as to the justice they feel they are getting, or not getting, and what changes or reforms they would like to see.

I pause to comment, for reading, from the World Bank publication, entitled *Voices of the People*, which came out in 2000/2001, in which the World Bank decided it was going to transform (a new word) its operations and its approach to aid to countries by first hearing from the people whom their programmes were intended to benefit, rather than trying to force that bit of medicine down the throats of persons without hearing from them. So I challenge this Government, if it is serious about doing something about the justice system in this country which, I will say, is in serious disarray, to commission a study and listen to the people first

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Now we are going to get some support from UNICEF to be able to deal with non-violent communication, anger management particularly, for young people. We are also, as we said, dealing with a project for youth and violence, and helping young people to become the advocates for change.

Mr Speaker, you have allowed me to speak on two sections. I thank you and my own colleagues here who have asked for extensions. Both areas are critically important, in terms of the vision for the future of Guyana. We cannot just talk rhetoric, we have to be able to translate what is a philosophical outlook into reality, and one aspect of that reality is the Budget that provides the financial wherewithal to be able to put, as they say, meat on the bones. But at the same time, we have to be able, as an emerging democracy ... twelve years is no length in time for an emerging democracy for a new democratic country. The UK took 300/400 years to reach where it is as a democracy; the United States is another - they took 300 years. So I have no apologies or embarrassment in saying that, as a newly-emerging democracy, and as a newly-emerging developing country, we have a wonderfully exciting period ahead of us as a people, and what we need to do is to bring all the best on-board. We have to learn the engagement as to how do we deal with and recognize what is wrong, because if you were on this side of the House, colleagues, you would know that many of the things you are talking about today that you want to fix now are going to take a long time. It is the will to change and the issues of how do we get more and more of our people to be engaged, and to be able to come on-board in a more meaningful way.

I support the Budget before you, and hope you will vote for it. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member, Mr Trotman.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, before I start my presenta-

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tion proper, I would like to refer to a few issues raised by the Honourable Minister in her very, very lengthy presentation. The first I have to do is the oft-repeated reference to Minister Greenidge's budget presentation in 1992, probable being the last budget he presented in this country. We have heard, over the years that I have been here - every year some good member goes into the archives and brings up that very same budget, and we have four or five MP's on that side quoting from it. But without intending in any way, the state of the economy at that time in Guyana, or the good or bad performances of Mr Greenidge and his administration, I believe that this House ought to be aware, and I know it is aware, of the prevailing culture and circumstances within this region and, in fact, the global and political economy at that time, being at the end of the 1980s going into the early 1990s.

I wish to quote from two articles, and I had no intention to do this, the first is an article entitled *Beyond the Washington Consensus* - a phrase which the Honourable Minister of Finance would be very, very familiar with, and so my good the Honourable Member Rohee. *Beyond the Washington Consensus* is an article published in 2003 in the publication *FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*, and it speaks about the era immediately after coming down to end of the decade of the 1980s:

It was in this era of sweeping political change that capitalism appears triumphant and the cold war was almost over. The economist, John Williamson, coined the term Washington Consensus to describe a set of market oriented reforms that the sluggish, state-directed economies of Latin America could adopt to attract private capital back to the region, following the crippling dead crisis of the lost decade of the 1980s.

Mr Speaker, I pause here to say that that was the context in which Guyana operated at that time. That yes, I have no doubt that mistakes were made and bad decisions taken but, all the same, the entire Latin America was described in the 1980s as being part of the lost decade economically. Hence came this concept of the *Washington Consensus*

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to come up with a new set of fiscal directives and macro-economic policies to take those countries out of their dilemma.

I quote from a second article. This one entitled *Fads and Fashions in Economic Reform*, published in *Foreign Policy Magazine* of October 1999, again dealing with the Washington Consensus:

The Washington Consensus also nurtured an implicit and very important change in attitudes about the extent of which a country's economic destiny could be shaped by national policy. For years, external factors, foreign conspiracies, foreign aid, the externally determined price of the main export commodity (cotton, copper coffee oil, et cetera.)...

and in our case, Mr Speaker, you could put in those brackets sugar, bauxite and rice

...or an impenetrable economy, were seen as the main drivers of a developing country's poor economic performance.

I gave those references to point out that yes, bad decisions have been made, but one needs to remember the context in which the budget of 1992 in Guyana was presented, when the region as a whole was coming out of crippling debt, not just Guyana, and when there were foreign conspiracies, foreign aid, external factors, and prices being controlled from abroad.

Mr Speaker, with your leave, I wish to deal with my presentation itself. Today, I have had the opportunity, or do have the opportunity, to say a few words in this everlasting debate. We, as good citizens and so called leaders, gather for this annual ritual to consider and approve the Estimates and Revenues and Expenditure for the year ahead. As part of that ritual, the government proposes and we, in the Opposition, oppose, and the people in Guyana, I daresay, continue to be short-changed.

While we may ask ourselves that, immediately after saying prayers, we launched into vitriolic attacks on each other, and delivered unsolicited lectures on the virtues of our visionaries past, and work done, such

as that given by my good friend, the Honourable Member, Dr Bheri Ramsaran, a few evenings ago. Both Government and Opposition have a role to play, Mr Speaker, but, as one of my colleagues has already pointed out ... yesterday it was the Honourable Member, Mr Alexander ... there had to be something intrinsically wrong with a Government coming with a Budget which they should be proud and boastful about, whereas we are the ones to whom they are responding. It should be that they should get up one by one and articulate their policies for their individual ministries, et cetera, and we, on this side, should critique their work. Now it is that we speak and they rebut us, when it is their budget, and so, Mr Speaker, there has to be something terribly wrong with that train of events. You may hear that it was going like this for twenty-eight years, but I still say that it is wrong. They should come to us with their policies, we critique them and they rebut us, but with that said, I need to say that I am reminded that there is nothing normal or perfect in Guyana. Strange though it may appear, very little will be done, but more pronounced are past victories and accomplishments dating from the 1950s coming forward. At the end of this process, I make bold to say that the people of Guyana are none the wiser in knowing what to expect for the year ahead. One shop-holder yesterday, when I stopped to get some mints, berated me for wasting time in this Assembly, and no disrespect is meant to you, and expressed the view that we are saying nothing enlightening and encouraging to the ordinary man and woman. I know he was referring to both of us the Opposition as well as the Government. The point is that this is an obvious undesirable disconnect between ourselves and the people that we purport to represent. The people need to be told:

- whether the tax burden will increase;
- whether salaries will increase;
- will inflation diminish;
- will unemployment be tempered;
- will facilities be available to obtain basic needs, such as

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housing, water, food and education.

Unfortunately, we have been regaled over the last few days with boastful proclamations of roads paved and schools erected in the 1960s and 1970s. What about today and what about tomorrow? Very little has been learnt about the bread-and-butter issues during this debate. When the Honourable Member Rohee last evening said that the debate has been uninspiring and dull, I could not agree with him more.

Mr Speaker, I propose to address, in the available time, the important and sometimes forgotten or ignored concept of governance, or better put good governance. There are many around us who believe that, because the markets are bustling with activities because multi-storeyed complexes are springing up and rum-shops are doing good business ... later on I will come to another business described in the *Stabroek News* - Brazilian activities ... because all these good business are springing up, that Guyana is on the rise and is going places. This is far from the truth. Just below the surface, and I mean just literally below the surface, there is a growing tumour, not benign, but very malignant. The presence of this tumour tells us that we have, in our system, some grave affliction leading to civil disobedience where no laws are respected at all. These are:

- traffic laws;
- customs;
- taxation;
- construction on premises or buildings;
- the age of consent for sexual activities;
- the trafficking in persons;
- guns and narcotics;

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In fact, you name the law and we in Guyana break it. Yesterday as well I was told by a friend and brother, a rather elderly man that, whilst proceeding along Quamina Street a few days ago, a taxi jumped the major road and forced him off the road into the curb, damaging his vehicle. He came out and spoke to the young taxi driver and asked what was wrong. First of all, the driver said to him, why are you on the road, old man? But don't you see a stop sign? He said that nobody stops at that stop sign any longer. We have new rules. The point, I am making is that every citizen in this country is fast becoming his or her own government, with his or her own administration and methods of survival.

Whither the State of Guyana, when there are more unlicensed guns in the hands of ordinary citizens so that, on a per capita basis, we are one of the most-armed societies in the world and, by extension, one of the most dangerous.

Whither the State of Guyana, where the law courts and the justices expenses are viewed with suspicion, and even open contempt, and not with the fear and reverence they deserve.

Whither the State of Guyana, where the institutions of State are not functioning at all or, if so, just barely.

We have problems, Mr Speaker, and I am not here arguing that the Government alone has brought these problems to our doorsteps, but certainly they are a main ingredient in that problem. In this regard, therefore, there are three special areas I would like to address in this Honourable House:

- the legal system:
- this Parliament, or the National Assembly; and
- the security of the State.

These will immediately recognise, as the Honourable Minister used the word earlier, half synergies and are intrinsically and inextricably bound

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... Does the ordinary man, or the ordinary woman, feel that they will get a fair hearing in court, *fair* meaning, within a reasonable time without prejudice? If they are poor, that the same facility is open to them as to the very rich?

Last year the Honourable Minister, in a very brief presentation to this House, outlined some achievements, pointing extensively to the on-going work at the Deeds Registry. You know, Mr Speaker, that that work continues. I pause to say, again, I did submit ten questions for answering by the Minister since last October. To date only one has been answered, representing some 10 percent of questions submitted for answering. I think that I need to acknowledge the effort of Minister Teixeira in answering most of my questions, and I hope that her colleagues would emulate her, but to have an answer to only one of ten questions after three months is not good enough, but the one answer I got dealt extensively with the works being done at the registry and, to my shock, the values of those works is slated in excess of US \$900,000. Mr Speaker, as a practicing Attorney, I hope that at the end of the day, we get value for money, wherever that money may have gone.

Mr Speaker, little has been said, and continues to be said, about improving the strain of justice in Guyana and, so far, improving the facilities and conditions of those who dispense justice, or ensuring training of professional staff or equipment of much-needed staff for any self-respecting Attorney General's Chambers, just to name a few.

A few weeks ago, and perhaps in anticipation of this very debate, a little advertisement appeared in some of the daily newspapers - it could not have measured three inches by three inches - advertising provisions of Solicitor General for Guyana, Deputy Solicitor General, Senior State Counsels, and a few others. The point I am making is that, only today I happened to come across my budget presentation in 2001, in which I lamented the fact that it has been eight years since we have not had a Solicitor General appointed. We now have to add to those eight years another three or four. What proper country, of our size and significance

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Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Gail Teixeira: So comrades, we appeal to the media as well. Let us have some good stories out on youth, because if you keep reinforcing the bad stories all the time, where is the hope for young people as well. It cannot always be on negativity!

The entities which the taxpayers support and are opened to the public and could be rented:

- National Cultural Centre
- Cliff Anderson Sports Hall
- Yumana Yana
- Gymnasium
- the three museums, and
- the National Archives

reached approximately 50,000 people a year. What we can say, when we come to the line items in the Budget, is that the Cultural Centre, as you know, was damaged and I referred to that during the discussions on the disasters. So I will not repeat that now.

In closing, we have two special programmes that we started experimenting on over the last few years, and we are now getting some financial support. One is the Non-Violent Communication Project, which is working with youth in a variety of communities. We have done it experimentally, where we have been working with 300 persons per annum for the last few years with our own resources on dealing with NVC.

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and regional importance and history of producing sound legal decisions and minds, could operate without a Solicitor General after some ten or twelve years. It is just not good enough. I believe that, when last we spoke, the Hon Attorney-General did say, in the new budgetary allocations, those matters will be taken care off. Mr Speaker, we are now four years on and no, closeness in having the positions of Solicitor General and/or Deputy Solicitor General filled. It is a matter of great concern, and I hope that the Honourable De Santos can answer appropriately because, at one time, he too occupied that very office, and he, too, must have observed the very vacant, empty chair of the Solicitor General. Maybe he can shed some light at to when he is coming back.

Mr Speaker, I believe that this extant Attorney General, like his immediate predecessor, I am not going that far back, have put too much capital on infrastructural development and too little on identifying and fixing the foundational cracks in the justice edifice. Mr Speaker, you would be aware that, last year, I asked these questions and I want, for the benefit of the House, to remind the Members of what some of those questions are that we still cry out for answering:

- When and if modern bankruptcy laws are going to be introduced [*Interruption*]

The Speaker: What law?

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Bankruptcy law, Mr Speaker. Every Monday morning some of us trudge off to a court, called the bail court, only to see many friends and business persons we know going down, judgement being granted against them for the inability to pay high interest rates. There is no mechanism to save and preserve them, or to give them a holding pattern so that they could get themselves out of debt. When will the government introduce and debate a freedom of information bill? When will a Law Revision Commission be appointed?

Again, in 2000, the right Hon Mr Ramson, then Attorney General of Guyana, said that the appointment of a Law Revision Commission

was imminent, he said within a matter of months. We have now found Mr Speaker, that it's a matter of years.

Again, I ask the question ... *[Interruption:]*

The Speaker: There is Law Revision and there is Law Reform, Honourable Member, I do not know if you are including both in one category.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, thank you for that. I was referring to both.

The Speaker: Do you mean both?

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: I was referring to both. We need both urgently. Again, Mr Speaker, I asked the question in last October about the utilisation, or non-utilisation, of the Essequibo High Court, although I hear that it will be utilised shortly.

I asked the question about the raising of penalties for sexual offences in Guyana, which is becoming a very serious matter as domestic violence.

These are some of the questions I asked, and which remain unanswered. Perhaps the Honourable Member knows why he did not put in an appearance. Mr Speaker, the Attorney General of Guyana, and the Ministry he oversees ... I say without the fear of contradiction, and without attempting, in any way, to sound chauvinistic, is perhaps the most important of Ministers, of course excepting the Honourable Prime Minister, whom is with us. I believe that the Attorney General of Guyana is the most important Minister, because he or she is the grand protector of the Constitution, or the laws of Guyana, and, without exaltation of the protection of the rule of law, nothing is of value and nothing else matters. The Attorney General, the Honourable Member, in his budget presentation last year, described his own function and role this way: *to advise the government of Guyana on legal matters and represent the State on matters instituted against the State.*

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Mr Speaker, as we would like to say in court, therein lies the problem. If it is that the Attorney General, for an important nation as ours, sees his role as so circumscribed and limited, only to give advice when sought, and to give representation when asked, well, then, we are in trouble. That is why, perhaps, so many ills are committed on a daily basis and nothing is done about it. What we require, to use the word used by Mrs Backer a few minutes ago, is a profound transformation of the manner in which we approach justice in Guyana.

We require transformation in thought and in action that will enable us to see that that job at the Attorney General's Chambers is to be proactive - to protect citizens rights, to warn Government that its actions are flagrant violations of the Constitution and, just as important, to ensure that the organs and the institutions of the State, especially those that are constitutionally prescribed are established and made to function according to constitutional mandate and expectations.

Two vivid examples immediately spring to mind.

The first has to do with the non-constitution of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. Mr Speaker, Members would know that, since December 2003, this constitutional office tribunal has not been functioning. Many reasons may be given, fingers may be pointing but, at the end of the day, an important part of public servants avenue of redress has been blocked, and I sat in horror one evening when I saw on television, and I hope that I was seeing not correctly, the learned Head of the Presidential Secretariat saying (words to the effect) that there as no need to appoint the Public Service Appellate Tribunal because there were no matters pending before it. There are two things fundamentally wrong with that statement.

Firstly, if I have a court that every given day of every given year no one will file any motions or papers to be heard in it ... for the Secretary to the Cabinet and the Head of the Presidential Secretariat is saying that there are no pending matters so therefore we need not rush to appoint this Tribunal is very difficult for me to understand.

Secondly, I was most concerned about the unconstitutional statement - that here is a person who holds that high office using what, perhaps, could to be described as democratic centralism to decide, from the Office of the President, that a constitutionally required body will not be established because, in his opinion, it was not necessary.

That is a very dangerous precedent and I hope that the Honourable Attorney General would correct it, and that is the reason that he exists, not just to give advice when sought, but to point out some of these flagrant violations of our Constitution.

In 2001, I come to the stage of the second such office, and that is the Office of the humble Ombudsman. Mr Speaker, none of us, including myself, sometimes remember that there is an Office of the Ombudsman in Guyana and, moreso, if we know the person who holds that Office as we do, knowing how humble and simple he is, it is more easy to forget it. He is not the type who races the halls of power, influence-seeking. Well, you know who he is, then I will tell you something about him. Mr Speaker, the learned and the very relied Ombudsman has been without any official instruments for two years. It is this Government, the Hon Mr Sam Hinds, who said that he knows well that he has been appointed to continue to act; his instruments have not been given to him. So again another very vitally important constitutional office has been emasculated, or denuded, and for two years the good gentleman, because of his nature and character, continues to turn up at the building and to hold the Office together, hoping that someday soon the Honourable Prime Minister will remember him and send his letter of appointment so that he may continue.

So these are two examples which I cite, but there are a host of other constitutional commissions which we established - the Indigenous Peoples Commission, Rights of the Child Commission, Human Rights Commission, all of these are prescribed in our Constitution. But, Mr Speaker, you, better than I know how important those commissions are, how the battle, together, for our Constitution was fought and won and now, five years into the process of constitutional reform, we still

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await the constitution and appointment of those important and vitally necessary commissions.

Again, I lament the fact that the Honourable Attorney General is absent, because I would ask him to give an explanation to this House as to why he is not advising the executive as to what the Constitution requires. Why is it that these flagrant breaches continue? The Attorney General of Guyana, I say, needs to do much more.

In the Budget Presentation, Page 46, the Minister of Finance wishes to dedicate, under letter *J - Reform of the Judiciary*, some space, and I would say that this is a 200 percent improvement, because, on the last occasion, when I checked on previous budgets, I believe that justice and security were given a paragraph. We now have almost a page, and he should be commended for that because, obviously, there is a growing recognition of the significance and importance of justice and the rule of law. I wish to add, as he goes about addressing issues of alternative decisions and resolutions of strengthening the Deeds Registry, of refresher courses and seminars, a few other matters, which as well cry out for urgent attention.

Firstly, a decision has to be taken, and taken some time soon, whether or not we abandon altogether the current structure we use as a High Court and construct a modern complex with all modern facilities, perhaps allowing the National Trust to take over that building, but we cannot continue to expend vast sums of our scarce resources in keeping it going.

Secondly, I need to mention something that is probably going to get me into trouble tomorrow morning, but I believe that the time has come for us to review the Legal Practitioners Act. There is too much confusion, I dare say, at times lawlessness, and too many are getting away with too much skulduggery. Again, I believe that these are matters that the Attorney should be addressing.

How in my almost fifteen years of practice . . . and I had the distinc-

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tion of my petition being presented by the Honourable Member DeSantos ... I will never forget that ... On October 5, 1990, a very important day that came a few years after my admission, one of the things that we looked at was the fact that lawyers owed a duty and have, as officers of the court, to honour the laws. But now, I daresay that none of this ... or, to put it this way, there are good lawyers - many of us, and my friend Ms Backer and I found out the other day the 98 percent ... it is that 2 percent that brings us the bad name. But the point is that I have never seen, in my years of practice, a lawyer disciplined for anything. I remember being in Barbados a few years ago when the news reported that, at the end of the year, fifteen lawyers had been struck off the roll, another fourteen suspended, all for violations of the code of ethics or other law. It is time that we review our Legal Practitioners Act to strengthen it.

Also, another burning issue which is coming up is that of the appointment of Senior Counsel. Mr Speaker, you would know that one of our colleagues, who was busy in the Constitutional jurisdiction, has sought to invoke the jurisdiction of the court to challenge the President's right to vest self in the name of any person, and the consequences of his actions being successful are very dire, because I know that there are those among us who suffer. So we may need, just for the sake of tidiness, to bring legislation to prescribe and set out, in clear and unmistakable form, those criteria which would qualify a person to be made Senior Counsel.

Again, I heard the Honourable Member Teixeira speak of the Police Complaints Authority. This is another agency I recommend that the Attorney General, in the capacity as the Minister of Legal Affairs, also pay some attention to, Mr Speaker, with your permission, I wish to say a few words on the Parliament, or the National Assembly.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, your time is up

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask that, with the agreement of the Government, the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I have listened to the debate both now and before, and during the Motion on the flood which came a few days ago. I could not help but wonder what has become of us as a people. The question is whether, as the people's representatives, we are truly advocating and reflecting the people's views, or whether we have, in fact, high-jacked the process and planted our own form of representation on them. This honourable and august Chamber is intended to be the people's forum for discussion and decision-making. I believe that we have relegated this place to the slaughter house, and I mean no disrespect to any of my colleagues here, where reputations are damaged, more grudges settled, and rights vindicated. Just for a moment, let us try to levitate and from above look down on what we have here and we will see a scene of chaos, of some hatred spewing revenge, of no remorse and acknowledgement of wrongs done, or sins committed. This is not a business of Parliament to continue to go to the bottom of the pits to dredge up dirt to hurl at each other. Some may argue that here is the best place to settle our scores, but this may be so in well-organised and regulated societies, and Guyana is nothing near being well-organised and normal. There is simply too much past hurts and hatred as to make any of our encounters in this building wholesome and beneficial. A good friend once reminded me that hurting people hurt, for so long as you continue to feel pain, you will transfer that pain to others. So it was when, last year August, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition proposed, in a very profound and brave manner the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many laughed, but there were no takers, and I believe that, as long as we put off the inevitable, we will continue to have scenes in this place as we do now, and the people's business will not be settled. We need to find a place where we have a catharsis, where we can deal with our issues and move on, so that, when we come here, we can get on with making laws and passing bills and Motions that will benefit the people. This is not the place to settle old scores.

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This Assembly has failed to perform to its expectations. The committees which have come into being, and which I am very excited about, have not delivered. One just has to read the recent report published by Sir Michael Davies to understand that the maladies which affect us are retarding our work here, and thus, I will briefly go through some of Sir Michael's recommendations, or conclusions:

- the lack of independence of the Parliament, and its management and control by the executives
- Members are not sufficiently au fait with their role within the Parliamentary framework;
- the committee system is not properly functioning;
- standing orders need revision;
- the staff is not insufficiently remunerated and otherwise; and
- no awareness of the National Assembly's responsibility to relate to civil society, et cetera.

This is a seminal work, which I recommend to every Member to read and, hopefully, the Committee which we chair will take it on board and in some way dissect it and come up with a working document. So, in my view, this Parliament or the Assembly has to become, an autonomous institution in its own right, not an arm of the Executive. Also, it must be insulated from being treated with disrespect and disdain.

No Member, no party, should be allowed to play with it as he or it feels. I would like to see, as a convention, an annual address by the President of Guyana to this House. I would like to see, as a convention, that whenever a Head of State visits Guyana he or she be given the right to address this Assembly and no one should have the right of objection. Those are conventions which would transcend partisan politics and which will transcend individual personality.

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Lastly, I turn to this list of national security by congratulating, foremost, all the members of our Disciplined Forces who are abroad, who are in Guyana serving at stations and/or at our borders, and wish to say that we thank them and remember them fondly. We remember the hard working Policemen and Fire Service Officers, but our national security transcends far more than the physical manifestation of uniformed ranks:

- If there is a threat to our economic base because of the removal of the guaranteed sugar prices, then our national security is threatened.
- If we are unable to enforce the most miniscule of laws, such as littering and failing to maintain a parapet, then it means that our national security is threatened, because the authority and the legitimacy of the state is also threatened.
- If our courts is compromised, either by politicians or special interest groups, or criminals, then our national security is also threatened.
- If our system of governance keeps us suspended in a state of instability and unrest, then certainly again our national security is threatened.
- If our neighbours to our east or North West began massive programmes of re-capitalisation of their military and stridently deny us the right to develop and exploit what God has bestowed on us, then certainly again our national security is threatened.
- If some sections of our society feel disrespected, dishonoured and discriminated against, then our national security is under threat.

A few nights ago, I sat and listened to the Honourable Member, Dr Norton, speaking about his plight as an Indigenous and first-nation person, and saw tears develop in his eyes. To me, if Dr Norton feels threat-

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ened as a human being, then the State of Guyana is threatened. I believe we need to recognise the suffering that he described. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we need to do ... I wish to offer some recommendations quickly:

- the great budget National Security Committee Report, which you are very familiar with, needs to be brought and discussed and, in some ways, implemented. The best might have overtaken us;
- the Disciplined Forces Commission Report ... again, the work needs to be speeded up;
- the CARICOM Task Force Report on Crime and Security needs to be addressed;
- Our Diplomatic capacity to meet challenges also has to be developed.

Mr Speaker, it would be remiss of me were I not to mention that I was recently in Brussels where I had the opportunity to meet with many of the persons involved in the Administration of the EU, and in the whole issue of trade and sugar, and I will say that the Honourable Member, Mr Rohee, came in for favourable mention in Brussels, and I should let him know that, not only from EU Officials, but from my very good friend, the Ambassador for Trinidad to Brussels, Mr Roseau who also spoke very highly of the Honourable Member, Mr Rohee. *[Applause]* So I thought that I should at least let him know that, outside of Guyana, he is well regarded. I do not know what is happening here. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, in closing, we must accept that Guyana faces many threats and challenges far greater than those which we are aware of. No one party or group can arrogate to itself the authority to be able to decide what is best for us in this regard. There is simply too much at stake, simply too little time, and simply too few resources to do so. We must fortify our sense of nationalism; we must strengthen our resolve to act in

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the best interest of the State and the people of Guyana, and we must hasten our quest to find longer-lasting solutions to our difficulties and problems. Globalisation, ethnic tension, unrelenting criminality and withering institutions, now being described as the anti-social combination, can help or harm us, provided we work together, or work against each other. We must, as a matter of necessity and survivability, strengthen our government institutions - from the Judiciary to the Parliament to our National Security Architecture. It is my sanguine hope that the speaker after me will tell us how we will do so. So we must, as individuals, and as a collective, give the people hope that Guyana can develop peacefully, equitably and democratically. Can we do it? Yes, we can. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member, Mr De Santos.

Mr Bernard C De Santos: Mr Speaker, my colleague has put a heavy yoke on my shoulders, which I do not think that I am capable of discharging fully at this time, but I will do the best I can, because I consider it a great privilege to be able to be given the opportunity to address this Honourable House in support of the 2005 Budget, which was so well presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance, and so ably supported by my colleagues on this side.

Mr Speaker, I want to mention that the Honourable Attorney General is not here, as the Honourable Member Mr Trotman might have alluded to very smartly, not because he did not want to answer any questions. I think that was a very uncharitable remark, because I think my colleague knows that the Honourable Attorney General is, in fact, unwell, and that is why he cannot be here. Like him, however, I think we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Mr Speaker, these are troubling times, times of great travail, both financial and social. There are wars and rumours of wars; there are floods and there are rumours of floods and other natural disasters.

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Our own country has had the vicissitudes during 2004 and, more recently, has had the worst flooding that we have seen in our lifetime. But we are a great people, I really believe that, and we have the resolve to confront the challenges which these tragedies spawned when they occur, and we feel comforted by having a caring government whose President and ministers were seen by most Guyanese as they toiled relentlessly to bring relief to the citizenry of this country.

Who can forget the sight of His Excellency, the President of this country, like a true general, not one that used to dress up with fancy buttons and wading all over, but like a true general leading his troops through the waters, aided by many others, including some members on the other side?

Who can forget, as he stepped in those waters, notwithstanding the dangers which they posed? I wish to pay tribute to all those who went out during that period ... I remember looking at the television on one occasion and I saw Minister Nokta almost drowning, but shouting, *Come and get your hampers!* This is why the theme of this year's Budget *Confronting Challenges* is so apt.

Mr Speaker, at the same time, while we deal with the matters and challenges which we have to meet with, we are required to preserve those gains which we have carefully earned by this Government's hard work. I remember a conversation I had with our departed President, Dr Jagan, and he lamented the damage done by the previous Government and recognised the uphill task we faced, but he never doubted his own ability to harness the creative spirit and hard working qualities of the Guyanese people, and vowed to overcome those severe challenges, which were posed by the damage done over those twenty-eight years, and to reverse the then state of affairs.

Mr Speaker, this is not really a time for recrimination. Despite our recent floods, it is a time for celebration, and this Government has quite a lot to celebrate. *[Applause]* My colleagues have highlighted the very many areas of improvement, development and gains over the years, and

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particularly the highlights of the past year. I wish to publicly concur with those presentations, and to respectfully adopt them.

For me, one of the greatest achievements of this Government is the fact that it has restored the self-respect of the Guyanese people [*Applause*] and the feeling of comfort in their judicial system. A judicial system, Mr Speaker, which I agree with my learned friend still has deficiencies, but deficiencies which this Government is working assiduously to correct. Mr Speaker, a judicial system is the bulwark of any democracy and the buttress of any development. Under prior governments, the courts have been reduced to handmaidens of the government itself. How else could a court value a breach of a citizen's fundamental rights of a hundred dollars - a mere hundred dollars? When a citizen had to resort to the Privy Council in London to get compensation for lands confiscated by the government? Those things are things rooted now in history. Those things are no more. Our citizens know that the halls of justice are open to them, even if the erring party is the Government itself. A survey will show that there have been more actions against this Government in twelve years, perhaps, than there had been in the previous twenty-eight years. A citizen is free to criticize the Government, provided that he keeps within the limits placed by law and, if he does not do so, I do not think my colleague, the Honourable Member, Mr Trotman, will say he ought not to be made to pay the penalty. He did not keep within the law.

Mr Speaker, one of the main complaints of the judicial system has been the slow rate of the delivery of justice ... the learned friend on the other side has just spoken about it. This is in part due to many vacancies for judges, at first instance. I am pleased to say that, at present, this Government has been able to fill for instance all the existing vacancies and there is now a full complement of judges. [*Applause*]

There is another problem which this Government faces. It is the problem of the salaries for judicial officers. I remember, when the first set of officers were recruited, when I had to serve as Attorney General, I knew nothing about their pay until one of the lawyers told me that he

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had a wife and two children. He had studied for five years and he had come back to work. When he left the salary was something like thirty-something thousand dollars per month, and he was then being offered twenty-six thousand dollars a month. I thought it was ridiculous, I am happy to say that, since then, salaries of the law officers have been tremendously increased. *[Applause]*

The Attorney-General himself enjoyed a level of salary which is much greater than all his fellow Ministers. That, of course, was an accident - a PNC accident because, when a certain Chancellor was removed and made Attorney-General, he could not be paid less than his previous salary, and so legislation was passed which made the salary of the Attorney-General equivalent to the Chancellor's salary. I agree absolutely with my brother Trotman, and he is my brother in law, and otherwise, that the Attorney General is perhaps the Prime Minister apart from the most important Minister. He is, because he is at the cutting edge of all that the Government stands for. What I disagree with his is that the Attorney-General must do all these things that he thinks he should do. I must remind him of the very Constitution of which he talks so often, that part of it which, I think it is Article 183, I am not sure, but it says:

There shall be an Attorney-General of Guyana, who shall be in the government's chief legal advisor

That is what it says, and yet my friend, the Honourable Member, Mr Trotman, would want him dithering and dabbling in all sorts of things, only to wait back to have members on that side want to pillory him for interfering in matters that do not concern him. The fact is that the Attorney General's job is principally to advise all the ministers in all the spheres of activity, and the ministry comprises the totality of the entire sphere of human activity that the Government has to deal with. Only recently there was an incident in which the Attorney General intervened, I am not very conversant with it, but I think he tried to intervene in a matter involving a child, and there was a big hullabaloo over what he was doing there. In fact, a lot of people have forgotten a little law stuck somewhere ... I am

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not sure where it is, but I know that it is in the books that the supreme courts, the high court, shall be the supreme guardian of all minor children. Who is to enforce that? Should the judge get off the bench and enforce it? *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: It is in the Infancy Act ...

Mr Bernard C De Santos: Thank you. Well, now that it exists, the fact is that the judge is not going to come down from the bench. What he is going to do is to enforce the rights. In my respectful view, the Attorney-General is entirely and totally right in intervening into that case.

Mr Speaker, having said that, I want to make some general remarks, in relation to the operations of the Attorney-General's Chambers. During my tenure as Attorney General, there was a perennial problem of staffing. Here was I in charge of a department with a Solicitor General, who died shortly after I got there, and whom has never been replaced. I agree with that. He knows, the Honourable Member Mr Trotman knows why there was no Solicitor General, because he would not take the job, at the kind of remuneration offered ... and this is a public service thing ... It is as simple as that. It is difficult to recruit persons of the calibre to fill that position, but I am glad that he did see the advertisement that was posted. I do not think that this is the first time it had been advertised, but there are no takers, as far as I know. This advertisement, which I did see, I hope it may yield the desired results. This not only affects those senior officers. There are six senior vacancies in that place, I think three of them in the Drafting Department. As this House knows, our Chief Draftsman is a retiree. Mr Dhurjon has long retired. This Government facilitated the study for a Master's Degree in drafting to a certain person who had been a member of those

Chambers. She did not function one day as a draftsman. She is now in private practice in Guyana. That was the kind of thing which has hampered the development, but I must give credit to my colleague, the Honourable Attorney General, who has with a set of young lawyers, been moulding a formidable unit. It would take time, but one could see,

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because he goes into court himself more often than I did, because I did not think that it was the duty of the Attorney General to run behind every case that the Government should be faced with, but he now has the staff of young lawyers and, like a good general, a good shepherd, he has his flock going.

There are programmes for the development of those in the chambers as well, and there are two officers right now overseas studying for the Masters programme. There have also been conferences, seminars, workshops, and ongoing education for judges, so we can expect a more efficient judiciary. There are plans, as the Minister has pointed out in his speech, to establish a commercial court. That is a very bold and innovative step, and it recognises that commercial transactions, in which businessmen must get into disputes ... and you need, if you have a developmental process, to proceed. There is need to have a court which speedily dispatches disputes when they arise.

I noticed a comment, which I received from the Attorney General's Chambers, that they feel that their library needs upgrading, and I want to think that the Minister might overlook the fact, because he keeps concentrating on the Supreme Court's library. The Attorney General's library was at one time one of the foremost legal libraries and I think that your Honour knows that. It is now a set of old books. Law books never really get old. They need to be upgraded, so the Minister may keep his eye on that.

I want to make a few observations about some matters which my colleague, the Honourable Member Mrs Backer made, and she did refer to me personally as the Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Disciplined Forces. The truth is that the Committee has not met, Mr Speaker, and it has not met because of a very simple reason. When the meetings were at first planned, there were difficulties in formulating meetings, in terms of the other meetings which were held. As you know, there are several sectoral committees meeting at the same time, virtually. Eventually, however, the rains and the floods ... and then, when we eventually got out of that, we could not arrange the meeting. We ar-

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ranged one for the third of last month, and the other side said that the notice was too short. We then tried to arrange it for the next week, and they said that was inconvenient. They were given two days notice the first time and they said that was too short, so we tried to arrange it for the next week, and they said that some of them would not be available so the meeting could not be held. Then we ran into the Parliamentary sittings, so we had to wait. We cannot keep those meetings whilst the Parliament is sitting, which means that we have to wait until the Budget sitting comes to an end, at which time I have been given by Mr Henry of the Committee's Division, now the acting Assistant Clerk, a schedule of the meetings, and you have to skip between the rain drops now to try and find dates, and then those dates have to be agreeable to the other side. It has not been easy. I am not proud that the Committee has not met. I am very anxious to have it meet. In fact, I have had conversations with Mr Basil Williams and Mrs Backer on these matters and we are hoping to resolve them very, very soon.

Mrs Backer, in her ten signposts ... I think she called them the breakdown of societal norms ... You know, Mrs Backer has a deficiency in her birth date. It is not as far back as mine, or else she would have realised that it is the party that she now supports which destroyed the moral fabric of this country, and destroyed it to such an extent that it is proving a formidable task to rebuild. There was a time when the leader of that Party stood up in front and walked and marched and they did the marching thing again ... and then there was looting and vulgarity ... and then they would come here to talk about the breakdown of societal norms. You stood up and hollered for fire and more fire, and then you come to tell me about societal norms! I will not listen. I refuse to listen, because that is hypocritical and I do not want to listen to a hypocrite.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I do not think that is a fair word, and I will ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Bernard C De Santos: I do, and I apologise to my colleagues.

Now I move from Mrs Backer in front to the Honourable Member Mr Trotman. In relation to the Parliament, there is much to be said that requires commendation, there is much to be said that I am sure will find favour with the more deserving Members, and maybe all the members on this side because, in fact, I have long recognised that some of the sessions of our Parliament do us no credit. What I would wish to say to him ,, I am sure he is a Christian gentleman, and I would like to send him back to the good book ... is that when you are talking about these matters, cast out the mote from your own eye before you can see the mote in your brother's eye. Let him do the house-cleaning on his own side first, and then he will see the response, and the first person he should speak to is his colleague, Mrs Backer. *[Laughter]* When Mr Trotman spoke to that mint seller, I am sure he did not ask him to whom he listened, because the answer might have shocked him. That is why he did not ask, because he might have been very well listening to Members on that side – the mint seller who could not understand anything from what was being said. *[Applause]*

I agree with the Honourable Member Trotman, in that there is, in our country, some amount of civil disobedience, and one can see this in some of the areas that he highlighted, but particularly, when you debase the security forces, and when you keep telling them about kith and kin, and things like that, you cannot get the kind of response from them that you should.

I am glad that Mrs Backer feels that the new Commissioner is going to bring a new dawn to the Police Force, but what we need is not new uniforms. What we need is a new mental attitude. I agree with Mr Trotman on that, but you do not ever try to achieve that, and then you go down the road virtually trampling over the policeman - marching, indulging in all sorts of lawlessness, and then you expect them to respect you and carry out their duties. It cannot happen. We have to show example. We have to lead by example. The lead has to come from the top, not from the bottom. When we show them that we have certain values which we respect, then they will also ... *[Interruption: 'We?' 'I say 'we' because I mean all of us']*

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My colleague spoke about conditions in which justice is dispensed. I think even he will agree that recent efforts have been made to make those conditions a little more bearable. What has happened, for example, is that many of us go and see the Halls of Justice of Trinidad - magnificent building, great facilities, and then we come back home and we see our own and we feel that we can have this transformation overnight. Well, when we find oil, we might be able to put a lot of other things right, but in the mean time, by increments, we will do the best we could with the resources available to us. *[Applause]*

I want to close now, but not before I commend Mr Trotman again, because this must be a wonderful Budget. You know why it must be, because it has managed to get, even from the PNC/R, every now and again, commendations; every now and again - begrudgingly - but they have been saying, *yes, this is good; yes, this is good* and that augers well for us. We do not need the Truth Commission any more if we progress like that. We need that.

And there is one more thing I want to commend him for - that he could visit from Brussels and be magnanimous enough to take about the wonderful job one of the ministers of this government has been doing overseas. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, for that very excellent contribution this evening. I think this is an appropriate time for us to suspend for fifteen minutes.

20:15H – SUSPENSION OF SITTING

20:48H – RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Honourable Member, Mr Nasir Ally.

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Mr Nasir Ally: Mr Speaker and Honourable Members of this National Assembly, I feel very much honoured to make my remarks on this Budget Presentation 2005. However, as I do so, I am very much perturbed. I am perturbed because of the depressed people, the frustrated people I see out there in Region 6. Even a striving progressive community like No.51/Good Hope NDC have declared themselves a depressed community, much less all the communities, so what is happening?

- It seems as if Guyana has gone many years back, and no Budget so far presented is giving an indication of improvement to the social and economic life of Guyanese.
- It seems to me that no innovative thought was put in the preparation of this Budget. It does not take into consideration the many complexities of the world and global and internal changes that are taking place every day.
- It seems like a repetition of other Budgets, with some additions in the finances.

Mr Speaker, I want to begin with the Berbice ferry. I was crossing from Rosignol to New Amsterdam. On arrival at New Amsterdam, I saw a banner depicting *National Quality Week*, and then the boat bounced into the stelling and, subsequently, it took more than twenty minutes before it could have moored up, with a lot of strain, of course. So I asked myself, *is this the quality we are looking for? Is this the quality that the people of Guyana and, in particular, the people of Berbice deserve? So where are we going?* There have been falling standards in every sector of this country. There has been a decline in the rice industry ... I heard some fantastic figures mentioned - you just cannot believe it, in the sugar industry, in logging, in sawmilling, in business, in farming, et cetera. That is why many businesses are closing down and businessmen are leaving for overseas. If there was an open visa everyone would have left this country – their homeland.

As one man said, Guyana used to be called *a land of many wa-*

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ters. Today, Guyana is known as *watery*, not *many waters*. [*Laughter*]

Again, we are witnessing yet another Budget which does not fully tell us how we are going to address and resolve the social and economic problems of Guyana. It does not tell us how we are going to address the many sub-standard works previously done. It does not tell us how we are going to deal with corruption, mismanagement, marginalisation and sufferings of the Guyanese people. Let us be more practical in our approach. Can we say that \$X was spent on a project and that Guyanese received their monies worth? I understand that \$26 million was spent on the East Bank Berbice road in Region 6, but when I went to visit all I saw was two men on a truck spading red loam and throwing them into holes, and a little part was done with chip seal. This is from New Amsterdam to Mara. Two weeks after I went back to the location, and there I saw the potholes were visible once again. Today we may not be wrong in saying that corruption is a way of life.

Does this Budget address the complexities and extent of works to be done in the various communities? Does it address the substandard works that were done in 2004 and previously? The Honourable Member Mr Mustapha on the other side of the House was present - I am sorry he is not here tonight. When the Hogstye/Adventure drainage trench was visited, all we saw there was that the dragline took off two feet from one side of the dam and put it back on the dam and he did not touch the channel at all. He was there, and the Honourable Member promised that remedial works will be done, but to date nothing was done. This can cause Black Bush and Hogstye to be flooded out. Does this Budget address the serious drainage problem at Manchester, Liverpool and Limliar. Even though there is a pump, there is still flooding. Farmers are in serious problems in these areas, as well as other areas. Also the residential areas were flooded out.

On a few occasions, the water overflowing the Berbice River Bank flooded out villages on the East Bank during January and February, 2005. The water was over one foot on the land, causing a loss of crops and

livestock. This matter was reported several times to the administration and still nothing was done. Does this Budget address the construction of a permanent sea defence along the East Bank - Sisters, Cuthbert and other villages? I have not seen it in this Budget, even though this is a problem that has been existing for a very long time.

Together with that, if you take a tour along the East Bank, you will see how many things are happening there that cause a lot of suffering to people. Adequate staffing and drugs at the health centre pose serious problems, and it is more expensive on the residents to take their patients to New Amsterdam.

When will the electricity be given, or will be tackled in this area? Have you ever gone to this area - at a village called Sisters, to see what kind of water the people are using there? They are missing brown water with a lot of floating particles. Is this good for human consumption? When will this problem be tackled? When will the water be purified, and yet we are talking so much about water in the various communities?

Mention was made about Urban Development Programme in the Budget. This money, in some form or the other, will have to be repaid by taxpayers. It is time we stop contractors from doing sub-standard works. Let us take one example, Jackman's Drive in Corriverton. All I see is, they are putting on about two or three inches of tar and stone on the street, which has to carry heavy-duty machines. In fact, this street was to be finished a long time back, and yet there is provision made for it in the 2005 Budget. I cannot see how the Honourable Minister Nokta, who visited the area, accepted such sloppy work - such sub-standard work. No, we have to do better, colleagues!

In the field of *health*, the budget is good, but abuse and misuse are terrible. There are serious structural deficiencies in the New Amsterdam Hospital building, which was recently opened, to which I was not even invited. Nobody had the courtesy to invite me. The paint is loosing off, the roof is leaking, the door is dropping, the hinges are too small for the weight. This Budget must seriously address sub-standard work, cor-

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ruption, and contractors must do over works that are not properly done. To me everything is going un-noticed. Nobody is noticing what is happening, but the taxpayers will have to feel it in the end.

What about the serious shortage of nurses and public health inspectors in Region 6? There were only fifty-five nurses remaining in the region in 2004; eighty-four nurses left. How quickly will a training programme commence? What is being done in terms of keeping the nurses from migrating? Well, all of us know what you have to do. There were only six nurses remaining out of fourteen at the Skeldon Hospital, but probably they knew that this Budget was coming on, so when I went there last Sunday, they had the full complement of fourteen, but only recently they had six. Someone said that if you want a sick person to die, take him/her to the Skeldon Hospital.

One example of the Budget not being fulfilled is the Xray Department at the Skeldon Hospital. If you recall, provisions were made for it in the 2001 Budget, but only in 2005 it was opened, and it was opened because the people from the community built the building. They stood all the expense. I know that personally, and it is uncertain if they have the right staff for that department, and also for the emergency department. I am saying this because it grieves my heart to hear the ambulance passing my house going to New Amsterdam. So what is the purpose of Skeldon Hospital? No, comrades, we have to do better! Only the other day when I went there I saw no male patients on any of the beds, maybe the men are afraid to go there [*Laughter*] and that is why they are not there. What kind of Administration is there? Nurses, on a daily basis, are told where they have to work? There are only two public health inspectors out of nineteen in that Region, and recently they were deciding to appoint two untrained persons. What will be the consequences in public health in the near future? The Budget talks about *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development*. It should have been confronting the many problems, setting up watchdogs to safeguard the properties of the Guyanese people, and further opening opportunities for employment, to secure jobs for many who are now walking the streets.

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Even a village like Port Mourant, if you go there, you will see big men and young people - all they do is they are lying in bed the whole day, and they walk out in the afternoon. I am saying this because I went there. I even spoke to one man at Miss Phoebe, Port Mourant, and you know what he told me? He said *all they are doing is building rehab centres. What we want with rehab centres? We want jobs for our young people. But you know what? If you want to commit suicide now, you have to go and report at the rehab centre. [Laughter]* Yes, these people are wasting time. What about the PNC/R constituencies, if areas like those are in this condition?

Unemployment has risen in Orealla. Well, I am sorry for the Amerindian people in Orealla. Go and see how they live. Many of them are now coming out to Corriverton and Crabwood Creek to live.

Wells comrades, when will the efficiency, dedication and commitment in the Police be improved? One morning, between four/five o'clock, I called the Police Station to tell them that thieves were surrounding a certain comrade's house at the race course. You know what the gentleman told me? He said that there are two of them there, but the other one does not have a coat or a cloak to go and call the sergeant at the back, so they cannot go. It was drizzling slightly the whole day and he did not have a raincoat to go out there. Our people have a serious security problem, which needs to be addressed ... of course you can see it in the newspapers, otherwise there would be a serious blow-up one day.

The standard of *education* has fallen tremendously. More and more money is spent in Region 6 to erect buildings, for example, the technical institute at Corriverton, and little or no attention is paid to what happens inside the buildings. For example, only recently there were two teachers out of eight at the No. 43 Primary School, and one had to go on leave. You tell me, what is going to happen to the education system in Region 6, to which I am referring? Even in the erection of buildings there seems to be marginalisation, because they are not put up in PNC/R constituencies. It means those children will have to spend a lot of money to travel when already income is low.

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The Honourable Minister of Finance made mention of the distribution of 14,000 vouchers for school uniforms to the poor and needy. That is good, but what mechanisms are put in place to determine that the poor and needy receive the vouchers. I hope that it does not happen, as in the past, when they were distributed under a PPP/C member's house at Adventure, and the real poor and needy people from Kildonan, Nurney, Limlair and other villages did not receive any. Let us ensure transparency in the distribution. The PNC/R Member of Parliament was never given the opportunity to be a part of these programmes, or any programme whatsoever. All he was invited for is when they have a cocktail for the President. Anyway, it is commendable that uniform vouchers have been distributed.

Agriculture – Agriculture is so vital in that Region. As one would say, Region 6 is the bread basket for the Caribbean, but the total wages and overhead expenditure in agriculture amounted to \$191,680,000, while in education there is \$933,983,000, and in health there is almost the same amount. So comrades, tell me, are we de-emphasizing agriculture, which is so important to us? We are still a primary producing country, and therefore we should take heed that agriculture is very important and we have to do better in this field. Agriculture is the backbone of the people in that region, but since its decline many farmers are leaving, little or no technical or other assistance is given to the farmers. They are all going to the United States, Canada and all the Caribbean islands.

I will tell you a story. I went to visit a village somewhere between Eversham and the other village. I visited twelve homes, and out of the twelve homes ten men had gone to some Caribbean Island. That means that there was even a shortage of men in the area. *[Laughter]*

Continued in Pt. III

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

Part III

52ND SITTING

2.00 PM

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Continued fr. Pt II

Persons from the Rice Producers' Association are sent on training in aquaculture before sending persons from the Agriculture Department who are already in the field. Comrades, this activity is politicized, rather than improving the skills of professionals in the Ministry of Agriculture, there it is, you are sending people from the RPA to be trained.

Farmers are now highly-indebted and, ultimately, they are leaving. You should go to Region 6 and find out how many vacant houses there are. I have not seen anything tangible in the Budget to assist the already poverty-stricken farmers. It is true that rice farmers receive up to \$1,700 per bag at the last crop, but then it is estimated that it will go down to \$1,500. What will happen to those poor rice farmers, with the overhead of the rising cost of production, and the rising cost of living?

There is no proper programme for rice and other farmers. Let us see the programme. I challenge anybody ... I have not seen any allocation for the Water Users' Association. How are they going to operate and survive? Is it understood that they have to be self-financed? Already farmers have debts up to their necks. They owe other agencies large sums of money, which they cannot repay, because of drought, floods, and the low prices they receive for their produce.

Depleted Infrastructure – No assistance, technical or financial - I was happy when I heard the Honourable Member, Mr Mustapha, say that \$370 million was spent in D and I works in the Region, but I wondered

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where that money has gone? *[Laughter]* Where was it spent? Was it properly spent? This is what the Government should look at. A lot of money was spent on drainage works on the East Bank, yet they are experiencing flooding. Kokers are not functioning, for example the line top koker.

But that is not all, comrades. About G \$18 million was spent in the establishment of offices from Regions 3 to 6. Black Bush Polder, Nos. 52/74 were already formed, that is the Water Users' Association. The first consultation was held at No. 63 on 28 October 2004. The Management Board of Nos. 52/74 Association comprises nine persons, and sixty-five farmers, but they have no clear indication on how they will operate or function. But it was under that €22.5 million, which was received from the European Union for agriculture, to form nine Water Users' Association, but the Budget is now saying €11.6 million. Is this an additional sum? The question is: how will the rice farmers benefit from the €22.5 million? However, I should mention that the first Water Users Association was formed between No. 51 and Lancaster and it was registered, and yet no mention was made of that Association. Further, if a Water Users' Association is formed at Black Bush, how will those front lands benefit? All of this the people want to know, and there is nobody to explain to them what is happening.

Another grant came to rehabilitate all the rice factories, and also for those who want to put up new factories. Is the money going to reach the rice millers directly? This certainly will create a boom. Black Bush Polder submitted a budget for \$33 million and Nos. 52/74 submitted a budget in excess of \$17 million to do dams and irrigation canals. No budget has been approved from the Euro funds. What is the present situation?

There was a lot of infrastructural works done in Region 6, but also there was a lot of sub-standard works done, and they were poorly maintained. Outfall channels are not properly done and maintained. This has resulted in the flooding of Johanna and Yakusari in Black Bush Polde: during the months of February 2005 which has caused a lot of losses

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especially to cash crop farmers. It is commendable that Government is building houses on easy down payment for its citizens, but the question is - why don't you give the people the money to build their own homes? And do not let what happened at Glasgow repeat itself. Houses were built at Glasgow with weak foundations - cracked walls, toilets made it impossible for human beings to live in those houses, and nobody is answering the question of who will pay for those damages. It is better to give the people - the poor people, the money and then you are saying that you want to help the poor people. There is a bigger question in Region 6, that there is poor administration in the Housing Department, and there is need to look into that, because all kinds of things happen at the Housing Department. I do not want to say what those things are. You may want to stop me for talking too much. Because of what happened at Glasgow Housing Scheme, they had to rename the place Cracksville. The Tender-Board has no opposition in it . . . what the Chairman wants to do he does. Now the PPP/C members in Hogstye/Lancaster are searching for members to sit on the procuring committee. No one had the courtesy to inform the public, the NGO's, or even the Opposition. That is bad enough, Comrades. Before I take my seat it will be amiss of me not to mention some of the things the Honourable Member, Mr Mustapha, said. He said that they have created middle-class people in the Region. Comrades, I wonder if this Comrade is living in space.
[Laughter]

I wonder whether he goes to the backyards to see what is going on there - middle-class? I thought they would have used the word *bourgeois*. I cannot understand that this Comrade came to tell this nation that things are good in Region 6, when it is not so, and it has not been so for the past couple of years. What the Honourable Member should say is that there is a decrease in poverty, rather than painting a beautiful picture that sectors in the Region are moving forward. He said that the Region is producing middle-class income persons, which I said is totally wrong. It is not so. I think that he is either making up a nice story, or that he does not know anything about the standard of living of the people of Region 6. I advised him to visit the backyards, and especially the areas

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where PNC/R's supporters live. Poverty is on the increase. He said that there is tremendous development in the places that he visited, as I said. Where is the development, when every sector is failing? Where is the development, when people are leaving the Region and Guyana in large numbers? He also said that the new Technical Institute created an impact, but Comrades, I am living in Region 6, and I never heard that a new Technical Institute was opened there. I know one was built in Corriverton. I do not know that one was being opened in Region 6, and even if it is opened, can you find the qualified staff to man that Institute?

In no way in the Estimates is there mention of roads to be rehabilitated at Fort Ordinance, Fyrish, Suzanna Village, Aucklyne, No. 52 Village, No. 65 village, Crabwood Creek, Yakusari, Johanna, Mibikuri and Lesbeholden. What about roads in other villages, for example, Kildonan, No. 53, Limliar, et cetera? More and more money is spent in Black Bush every year, most of the money from the Budget, yet the people of Black Bush Polder are leaving in large numbers, some go to Bush Lot, some go to Crabwood Creek and other places, and others go overseas, because the works done there are not seen in terms of money spent and there continues to be severe hardship.

Comrades, this weekend I understand that you are going to commemorate the death anniversary of an honourable man, Dr Cheddi Jagan. I hope that when you go there, you will ask his pardon [*Laughter*] and you will tell him, *look from now on we will work with the people and we will work with the Opposition as well*, [*Applause*] *we will listen to everybody, so that we can push this country forward.*

Mr Speaker, I can go on and on, but I just do not want to deal with everything this evening. However, one should note that local government is going down the drain. It is about to be flushed through the pipe lines. Could you imagine that one NDC member told me that they cannot touch one man who has his cows sleeping on the street behind his house, making it impossible for residents to use that street in Limliar? Could you imagine a local authority telling me that? I went there myself and that is what they told me. They do not care. It does not matter. Where are

we going? What are we doing in this country? *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr Nasir Ally: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I do not really need fifteen minutes, because I was just wrapping up.

This Budget is another of its kind, and it will not help us fully to move through hard times and the troubled waters which exist.

Mr Speaker, we need to do quite a lot in Region 6. As I said, Region 6 is the backbone in agriculture. The last time I spoke in Parliament about Region 6, there was a lot of rebuttals which were not based on the truth. I remember that, when I said that the people from No. 51 to No. 53 were not getting water supply, one Honourable Member in this Parliament said that it is because, at a later stage, they will join the No. 57 well with the No. 47 well, when that was already joined and the people were still not getting water. I want to correct that at this point in time. That was in the 2001 Budget debate, because we had not the opportunity to do so. I saw them on television telling the public something else, giving them a different picture, which was not so. Our people demand their rights. Our people must be looked after. There are some villages where the backyards do not have electricity. They do not have telephones, so we need to do things to help these people. Let us try to do things in the future and, especially in Region 6, let us try to do better for these people.

Mr Speaker, I want to say that this Budget, as it is, which I read, will not meet the demands of the people. I want to thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Member.

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The Honourable Member, Mr Komal Chand

Mr Komal Chand: Mr Speaker, I rise to give my fullest support to the Budget as presented by the Minister of Finance. The Minister and his team from the Ministry need our commendation for crafting such a Budget.

The Budget contains a number of measures that will impact positively on the livelihood of the ordinary man. It is the largest Budget in the history of our country. Like the previous PPP/C's budgets, this Budget continues to commit substantial finances to social services. Over the years, the expenditure in this direction has been kept on the ascent. I wish to compare some current numbers in social spending as against previous numbers.

If you take education:

- In 1984, 6.4 percent of the Budget was committed to education, and then it slumped.

I am not going to take all the years, but I will shift.

- In 1989, 4.5 percent;
- in 1991, 2.1 percent;
- in 1997, 4.0 percent;
- in 1999, 6.2 percent;
- in 2000, 7.9 percent;
- in 2004, 8.2 percent; and
- in 2005 8.9 percent.

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- in 1984, 3.8 percent;
- in 1989, 2.9 percent;
- in 1991, 1.8 percent;
- in 1997, 2.8 percent;
- in 1999, 4.1 percent;
- in 2000, 3.8 percent;
- in 2004, 4.2 percent; and
- in 2005, 4.3 percent, a bigger budget.

If you take the spending in health, education, housing and water and other poverty programmes, they all added up to 22.1 percent of the Budget this year. If you compare this to what it was before 1992. For social services it was down to single digit, to be exact 8 percent in the last year the PNC/R was in the Government and, by this time, the PPP/C took it right up back to 22.1 percent. That is a clear indication of the decline that we found ourselves at the end of the PNC's rule in 1992.

Indeed, the Budget this year addresses the important areas which can improve the lives of the Guyanese people. The commitments in the Budget, once fulfilled, will enable us to witness a further improvement in the living conditions of the people. Some of the highlights I wish to identify are:

- the constructing, equipping and furnishing of a new hospital at Linden at a cost of \$160 million;
- the continuation of the basic nutrition programme through the expenditure of \$215 million;
- the budgeted sum of \$280 million for the management and care of STI/HIV/TB;

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- the sum of \$4.2 billion to increase access and improve housing facilities for low income families, and to develop an other 8,000 houselots.

Mr Speaker, there is a host of other good tidings in the Budget like:

- the spending in education and training - a sum of \$50 million has been budgeted to provide for textbooks;
- institutional strengthening and the improvement of school facilities under the Guyana Basic Education Training Project
- \$60 million is budgeted for expanding distance education to Aishalton;
- under the Guyana Education Access Programme \$350 million is budgeted to complete construction of schools at Linden and Skeldon.

Sugar – Efforts to improve efficiency in this industry will be accelerated this year, as was pointed out in the Budget, with the fruition of a number of initiatives. A contract has been signed with China's National Technical Import and Export Corporation for the construction of the Skeldon Sugar Modernisation Project, which will be completed in 2007. This is in addition to the US \$32 million concessional loan signed earlier this year for the construction of a cogeneration plant. As a result, GUYSUCO will be able to sell ten megawatts of power to the national grid.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, Members of the Opposition, many of them, read only the negative. The Honourable Member, Mrs Sheila Holder, in her presentation, spoke about the fall in the sugar target. What was the Budget for last year - 328,383 tonnes? What was achieved? - 325,377,000 tonnes ... A mere shortfall of 3,066 or a 0.9 percent decrease. But she failed to say that our production last year was the second highest since 1976. In 1976, we produced 332,000 tonnes; in 2002 - 331,000 tonnes and this year - 325,000 tonnes, our second highest.

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She failed to tell this Parliament that, in 1988, the PNC produced in the sugar industry 167,000 tonnes; in 1989 - 164,000 tonnes in 1990 - 129,920 tonnes; in 1992 - 160,000 tonnes.

She failed to reveal how much the PNC down-graded the sugar industry and just tried to choose something to suite her.

They are talking about burning. The PNC/R wants to remind us how they used to burn down the city in the 1960s and what have you. They could continue to tell us about that. Mr Speaker, the industry is very important to our country. It accounts for 50 percent of Guyana's overall agriculture. It is the single highest contributor to GDP - 17 percent, and the largest foreign export earner. At the moment, the industry employs 17,500 permanent workers and 4,000 temporary workers. The industry facilitates 5,000 private farmers, 10,000 persons provide goods and services for the industry, including the Honourable Member, Mr Jerome Khan; supports 24 percent of Guyana's population; provides health, sports, education, training; community and drainage and irrigation services in rural districts; bursary awards at secondary and tertiary levels to education of employees' children; secondary business development around estates; environment friendly production. It is important that we have to talk about the industry, because it is under serious threat coming from the proposed price cut by the European Union. We all have to work hard and we are fully supportive of the efforts of the Honourable Minister Clement Rohee in trying to stave off the severity of the proposal and, in this, we must all give our fullest support to the Government in its efforts.

Bauxite - Members, we are also pleased about what was mentioned in the Budget about the bauxite Industry. We are particularly pleased about the efforts to have an alumina plant. We are talking about having an alumina plant because of what has happened in the past, because of what the PNC has done that today we have to talk about having an alumina plant at a heavy cost. If this becomes a reality, no doubt it will bring a lot of relief to the people at Linden, where many of the comrades, I understand, hope to go in a few minutes to their retreat.

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Mr Speaker, if there is a find in commercial quantities in gas and oil by REPSOL and CGX, there will be positive promises in the future for all Guyanese.

I want to turn to some of the issues raised by Opposition Members, particularly the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams. In his presentation, he made remarks as follows:

- The workers were palpably short-changed;
- The government continues to trample on the rights of the workers;
- Government's attitude to the workers is a heartless one;
- The Trade Union Board failed to live up to its purposes.

Let me deal with one of the issues that was raised by the Honourable Members, Mr Basil Williams and Mr Vincent Alexander. I want to refer to contracted employees. I wish to address to the issue of contracted employment and poor wages raised by the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams and, in the case of contracted employment ... the Honourable Member, Mr Vincent Alexander, also referred to it. I want to begin by ... *[Interruption: Inaudible "Well, you know what you did with Vincent Teekah"]* ... reminding this House that this innovation of contracted employment came about at a time when Mr Desmond Hoyte took the reigns of the Presidency of this country. It started from them, and the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams, if he was a real adviser to the Office of the President, he would have remembered that. At the time there was a huge cry to give Hoyte a chance. This is the man that had the medicine for the nation, the PNC/R argued. Contracted employment was the first dose of medicine for the Public Service. It started from the top and went right down to the level of drivers, an inheritance handed down to the PPP/C administration. Do you remember Paula Mohamed? Do you remember Cheryl Gopaul? Do you remember the late Tyrone Ferguson? They were all contract employees. They were all employed at super salaries. As I said, drivers were also

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contracted employees. This was done to get drivers, who all went to drive taxis and minibuses since the level of pay in the Public Service was so poor and far lower than those paid by the owners of taxis and minibuses. As I said, the PPP/C administration inherited this arrangement, and the Honourable Member, Mr Vincent Alexander, conceded that Public Service reforms in other countries have moved towards contracted employees, but he argued that this was done in a transparent manner, and in countries where the judicial system was good. Then, according to his logic, when President Hoyte started this system, Guyana had a good judicial system. [*Interruption: Inaudible "No, I am talking about the deduction"*] Let the Honourable Member provide evidence that there is no transparency with regard to those currently employed under contractual arrangement.

Now, I want to offer a piece of education to the Members of the Opposition, who are non-critical to this system, and to let them know that one of the benefits of the system is the inculcation of new work ethics, fresh ideas resulting in greater efficiency. If an examination is done in the public service, you will find that the predominance of contracted employees rest among permanent secretaries and chauffeurs, as was the case started out by the late President Hoyte. I am talking about the Public Service. I am not talking about the wider Public Service. The administration has not shirked its responsibility to terminate the contract of employees who have been either inefficient, or are non-functioning in the interest of the State. In any event, the Honourable Members from the Opposition must know that the number of contracted employees is limited, that they are not as manned. I am informed in the public service as at 1989. This is unlike what the PNC/R administration did when they found jobs for the boys in the Ministry of National Mobilisation, when more than half of the staffers of Congress Place were paid through the Ministry. In any event, while we are restricting contracted employees, the position is becoming more and more fashionable in the Caribbean countries and the developed countries where Public Service reforms have taken root.

They talk about an inefficient judicial system, but I want the Hon-

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ourable Members to know, and in fact this point was made by the Honourable Member, Mr Bernard De Santos, but my own number is that 95 percent of the decisions handed down against the State now were for wrongful termination which occurred in the days of the PNC Government. The taxpayers now have to be saddled with the burden of those terminations. To date, the PPP/C administration has never sought to interfere in the judicial process, and when one examines the judiciary and the magistracy, they will see immediately the vast improvement, among other things, in terms of the number of judges and magistrates, not to mention the quality ... and the independence they enjoy. These learned gentlemen and ladies in the judiciary do not shirk their responsibilities, and there were many rulings against the State as was verified by the Honourable Member, Mr Bernard De Santos, where employees sought redress. Reference was made to Dr Jagan. We do not want to take away from the commendation by the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams, of the legacy of Dr Cheddi Jagan. That is internationally known, but to say that the present administration is heartless - he means heartless to the workers and moving away from Dr Jagan's principles - is far from the truth.

Let us examine what happened since his death in March, 1997. We had wages and salaries moving from \$8,804 to \$23,205 since Dr Jagan passed away. An increase of 282 percent, while inflation for the same period totalled 41.4 percent. This is an improvement, in real terms, of the workers' living standards, even if we were to calculate in US dollars, you will find that indeed there was a significant increase.

Now, let us look at the PNC under Hoyte's presidency, since they are claiming that Mr Hoyte was this great guru, and they mentioned this, and that is why I have to select the years of Mr Hoyte. Let us start with:

- 1985 inflation was 15.3 percent, wages/salaries increased by 6.1 percent;
- 1986 inflation was 7.9 percent, wage/salaries increased by 5 percent;

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- 1987 inflation was 28.7 percent, wage/salaries increased by 41 percent;
- 1988 inflation was 39.9 percent, wage/salaries increased by 4.9 percent;
- 1989 inflation was 89.7 percent, wages/salaries increased by 40 percent;
- 1990 inflation was 30 percent, wages/salaries increased by 19 percent;
- 1991 inflation was 70 percent, wages/salaries increased by 115 percent.

Election year, election campaign, it was carried up, but still, it is to be noted that when Mr Hoyte took over the reins of presidency, a Public Servant's minimum salary was equivalent to US \$92.5 per month and, by 1991, it plummeted to US \$22.7. As of last year, it was US \$117.19. When Mr Hoyte ended his presidency, it was US \$22 and now it has gone to US \$117. When you examine the performance of Mr Hoyte from 1985 to 1991, in comparison to 1997 to 2004 of the PPP/C Government, which the PNC/R claims to be a heartless regime, you will see that we are comparing cheese to chalk. The show of 1997 to 2004, there was a significant improvement in workers' purchasing power. You will see a decline of the workers' purchasing power in the last days of the PNC. This is just to remind the Opposition Member that it was not the PPP/C that referred to the Hoyte's 1989 Budget as a *vampire Budget* and its ERP as *empty rice pot* and *every race punishing*, but it was people like the Honourable Members, Mr Jerome Khan, Sheila Holder, Clive Thomas, maybe even Ravindra Dev, who scampered for his life after the riot squad turned up on the West Coast, when he was on a line with workers, protesting ... [Interruption]

The Speaker: Just a minute, Honourable Member.

Mr Jerome Khan: Mr Speaker, I have been named by the on Mem-

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ber as somebody who made reference to Mr Hoyte's ERP Programme as empty rice pot. No source has been quoted, nor the date of publication where I said so. I have never said so and I think it is very unfair. I will ask him to withdraw.

The Speaker: At the conclusion of Mr Chand's presentation, I will give you one minute to explain. Proceed, Honourable Member,

Mr Komal Chand: But the PPP/C believes that Hoyte's performance was worse than

... *[Interruption]* Oh, you want me to start back, I am guided by the Speaker, and the Speaker will give the Honourable Member time to comment. I want to continue from where I left off, I just want to mention that, before the cock crows thrice, Peter denied Christ twice ... But the PPP/C believes that Hoyte's performance was worse than the abovementioned description for the Budget, for the Budget was deemed by us in the PPP/C as *anti-working class and unconscionable*, whilst the WPA and company described it as the *vampire Budget*.

Let us move to the PPP/C's record with respect to Labour legislation. Every single piece of labour legislation that was passed by the PPP/C has had the endorsement of a functioning tripartite committee, with major emphasis and support from the International Labour Organisation. The PNC used the labour movement as a tool, especially in the days of paramouncy of the Party over Government. The PPP/C administration utilises support of the labour movement to enhance workers' rights through legislation. It was for this reason that we today have the most modern piece of legislation on occupational safety and health, a protective mechanism for our workers, in the form of the Termination of Employment and Severance Pay Act. What the PNC failed to do in twenty-eight years of government, the PPP/C did through consultation with the Labour Movement to give the workers the legal right to belong to a trade union of their choice through the Trade Union Recognition Act, *[Applause]* the Prevention of Discrimination of Act. I want to challenge the Honourable Members from the other side, who so loudly

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and irresponsibly made charges of discrimination, to use the law and prove cases of discrimination. There is not even one occasion that there has been a challenge or ruling against the administration. Do not make empty noises and baseless statements. The legislation is there to protect every Guyanese, including all the Honourable Members of the Opposition. If you perceive that there is discrimination, Honourable Member Mr Vincent Alexander, use the proper forum and prove your case. I say to you, Honourable Members of the Opposition, *put up or shut up*.

Mr Speaker, having dealt with the glorious records of the PPP/C administration in this sphere of improvement of workers' welfare and improvement of their livelihoods, and having drawn the parallel, when the PNC was in power, the Guyanese people will clearly see that, if ever they want to continue to improve their standard of living and their own welfare, this can be achieved, not through a PNC/R administration, but through a genuine working-class Government. Mr Speaker, our records speak for themselves, but the record of the PNC/R's administration is what the Honourable Members from the opposition will want to hide from the public domain. The PPP/C's administration remains committed to the improvement of all Guyanese, and will continue to do so, and will never betray the thoughts, the feelings, the philosophy and the commitments of our late beloved President Cheddi Jagan. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we have all kinds of disclosures. I want to make some comments on a few things. We were told that this government should be charged criminally for allowing the flood to take place. I want to refer to the Honourable Member, Mr McAllister, and to promptings from the other side, and they boasted about bridges that they made, about roads that they made, and about the Canje Bridge, but they must be given full credit to make the Demerara Harbour Bridge ... and they should continue to talk about the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

I do not want to praise them, because I live in Region 3, and how convenient is the bridge, but they should be ashamed that they could not maintain the bridge. They should be ashamed that they commissioned the bridge in 1978 and, ten years after the bridge found itself in a dilapi-

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dated state and, on March 3, 1988, two pontoons sank to the bed of the Demerara River. For twenty-one days the people were frustrated. We had to travel in small boats at risk for our lives. In 1990, there was a number of hitches causing the bridge not to service the communities. In 1991, my friend, the Honourable Member, who was the REO in Region 3, must have been one of the persons who suffered to travel to Region 3. I understand he was dismissed from the job, but that is another matter which I do not want to deal with now. Mr Speaker, on January 28, this prestigious bridge again broke into segments - a big part was floating, they had to retrieve it, otherwise, where the Honourable Member Mr Mc Allister is living, somewhere on the West Bank, I am certain the bridge would have collided with his house ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given five minutes to conclude his speech.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr Komal Chand: Mr Speaker, In January 1991, again a number of flotations sank to the river bed. They had warning, but it happened just a few months after, again from 28 January to 4 April 1991 ... this is where they had warnings. We did not have any warning about the flood, but this is where you had warning, and you should be made to pay us compensation in Region 3. It goes on like this ... In 1992, the year of the election, they were not ashamed, the bridge again sank, a number of pontoons were dislocated and, for a number of weeks, the people were inconvenienced. So if you go back to compensation - you owe the Guyanese people for rigging so many elections, for punishing old people ... it is a lot of compensation, and I hope that the Honourable Member will take on some of the cases.

Mr Speaker, one member referred to ... *[Noisy interruption]*

The Speaker: Allow the Honourable Member to conclude in peace.

Mr Komal Chand: ... the 0.6 percent growth in the economy over the years, and some other Member spoke about how we are going down, but look at the growth rate. Let me just refer quickly to some numbers:

- 1991 ... minus 0.61 percent;
- 1990 ... minus 0.3 percent;
- 1989 ... minus 0.3 percent;
- 1988 ... minus 0.25 percent;
- 1987 ... minus 0.32 percent;
- 1985 ... 1 percent growth;
- 1984 ... 2 percent growth;
- 1983 ... minus 0.93 percent;
- 1982 ... minus 0.4 percent.

This is the legacy that the PPP/C took over from. I do not want to go into other issues of the paramourcy of the Party ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, Mr Alexander, you are very loud.

Mr Komal Chand: ... and what had happened to the TUC. I will leave that for another time. The time has come for the Opposition to recognise, and I agree with a lot of the comments that were made by the Honourable Member, Trotman. We need to have respect in our country. The Opposition has an important role to play and, once they could respect the decisions of the elections ... and they must understand that we could have done better in this country had there been a different behaviour from the Opposition, which they displayed after the 1997 and 2001 elections, and all the obeahism that they were walking on the streets

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with, If they could behave and respect the democratic will of the people, we can move this country forward, and we need to move this country forward, whichever party is in government. Let us commit ourselves to that and we will see progress in this country. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member, Mr Ramesh Rajkumar

Sorry, you have one minute, Honourable Member, and only to contradict the allegations made against you and nothing else. I am granting you that indulgence.

Mr Jerome Khan: I wish to correct and to place on record information that was raised by the Honourable Member who just spoke, who accused me of reading from a prepared text that I have made a statement, along with my colleague Mrs Holder - but I will speak for myself, that I referred to the Economic Recovery Programme that was adumbrated by the late President Hoyte, the late Leader of the Opposition Party, as empty rice pot. There is absolutely no way have I written or said that. If anything else, I am one of the persons on this side of the House who has always articulated the virtue of such a programme. So I just want that statement to be expunged from the records and to be corrected. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The Honourable member, Mr Rajkumar.

Mr Ramesh C Rajkumar: Mr Speaker, I rise to support the Budget as presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance. Mr Speaker, this Budget speaks volumes for development of our dear land of Guyana as we confront the challenges sustain growth and development.

Mr Speaker, before I go into the content of my presentation, I would like to dispel some of the areas that were raised by the honourable colleague on the other side of the House, and particularly the Honourable Members, Mr Ivor Allen and Mr Nasir Ally, as regards to Region 6.

I will particularly deal with Agriculture, and I would like them to know the areas of Black Bush Polder, and I would not use the terminology hectares because they may not understand, so I will use acres. In Black Bush Polder, there was cultivation of 30,000 acres of rice in 2004, yielding 778,240 bags of rice, equivalent to 49,434 metric tonnes. A contribution of equivalent to approximately \$1,167,000,000 to our Treasury ... *[Interruption: What is the source?]* "The source is there and you have to read it. I do not have to tell you the source now. You should have done your research when you stood up here and said that Black Bush Polder is not producing." Then we heard from the Honourable Member, Mr Ivor Allen, who also told us that the Berbice River is not producing. He said that there was a lack of machines, there were hardships, there was a lack of the Berbice River Steamer, cost of transportation to Georgetown by truck, lack of titles and leases. Well, I will leave the lack of titles and leases for later on, because I intend to deal with that in the contents of my presentation. But, on the other part of the Berbice River, I do not know if my colleague Mr Allen visited the Berbice River, but I had visited there as late as November, 2004, and I am speaking of areas such as Brandwagt-Sari, Torani, Beveldt, Gateroy, Harakuli, Sandhill, Friendship, Kimbia, Kaburi in the Berbice, and there were huge productions of ground provisions, oranges, citrus, blackeye peas, red beans, peanuts, and also the production of beef. All of those things are produced in the Berbice River and come to New Amsterdam for sale at the municipal markets, and other smaller markets and even in Georgetown.

When you mentioned the lack of a steamer, you must also know that there is community development committees that operate a boat from New Amsterdam market stelling to Kimbia, and that boat operates twice per week. The boat is a contribution from government for \$5 million - a brand-new boat that could transport all the provisions, all the products from the Berbice River, along with the passengers, having with modern facilities - a television, a washroom and the works. So when you come here and sit, you must do your research. *[Interruption: 'It is not working.'* "It is working at present because, as late as last week, I spoke to the captain of that boat to ensure that the boat is

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operating.”] And I can even go further, that is because we intend to take a medical team to do some outreach on behalf of the Government. Mr Speaker, I am saying that, up to last week, arrangements were being made to take a medical team up there.

Also, in the Black Bush Polder Scheme, we have the first stage of a aquaculture Fish and Rice Project, which is being done under the Food and Agriculture Organisation through some Phillippinoes, and they are working in conjunction with some farmers and other members in the community to bridge that Fish and Rice production, and that would be commissioned on Saturday, which is this weekend. So when we say that there is nothing happening, there are lots of things happening.

If one is to listen to the Honourable Member, Mr Nasir Ally, we will think that Region 6 is a dismal place and no one should go there, but there are many, many things that are going on there that I even challenge Members on the other side of this Honourable House that you may want to take up residence in that area.

Mr Speaker, in the Orealla area, apart from building the new health facilities and new schools - in this Budget, you will see the fencing of those buildings. We also have the community working in the production of pineapples and peppers for export purposes. There are also the production of jams and jellies coming from Orealla, and they are being sold ... I do not know about Georgetown ... but they are on the shelves in the supermarkets in New Amsterdam.

The Honourable Member also mentioned Jackman Drive, and we heard the Honourable Minister mention that this project is part of the Urban Development Programme. The Minister did say that there are some difficulties with the project under the UDP in this particular phase of the road building, and that the contractor was at fault and that he has promised to rectify and bring all those projects in the area up-to-date. We did hear that. That is why it is back in the Budget so that it would be completed properly.

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Mr Speaker, I was very disturbed when the Honourable Member also told us of the New Amsterdam Hospital. It is the most modern regional hospital, if I could use that term - State of the Art, provided by a grant and a gift to our country by the Japanese. There is no leaking roof. The difficulty that was experienced, and this was clarified by the Japanese engineers who were here recently, was that the cooling system, the air conditioning units, which never existed previously in any regional hospital, produced such low temperatures was so cold that the condensation was forming on the ceiling of the particular room, so they had to adjust the equipment. I did not want to say this, but nevertheless, for clarity, our local persons thought the roof was leaking, but it took the Japanese engineers to tell us that the condensation was too heavy in the air-conditioned parts of the building.

Mr Speaker, the Skeldon Hospital is not the Regional Hospital. It is classified as a District Hospital, so when seriously-ill patients go there, obviously they have to be referred to the Regional Hospital, so they must be taken by an ambulance.

The Honourable Member also mentioned that there is poor administration in the housing area, but I differ on that because the housing programme in the region is not administered by any particular person in the region. He is just a representative from housing. The whole process is controlled by the Central Housing and Planning Authority, which is a statutory body.

The Honourable Member mentioned that the Berbice River was overflowing and bringing losses to crops and livestock in the Sisters/Edinburgh area. I do agree with the Honourable Member that there is an area between Edinburgh to Sisters where the river defence is not in proper order. I have had cause to visit that location and the Ministry of Public Works has surveyed the area for commencement of works on that river defence and revetment, but what the Honourable Member was trying to portray is that there was this massive loss of crops or livestock. There was some amount of flooding, but it occurred in the residential area, and it would have had to overtop the road to get into the

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livestock and crops areas, so we must be very careful how we come to this Honourable House and present these findings of losses of crops and livestock, because these are residential areas where, immediately behind the citizens' houses, there are the breaches.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member, Miss Amna Ally, in her presentation said that the MMA/ADA Scheme is not functioning. Once again, we have had 52,000 acres of rice under cultivation in the MMA/ADA Scheme. In Region 5, yielding 1,531 440 bags of paddy which is equivalent to 97,278 metric tonnes, which gives a value to our national Treasury of \$2,300,000,000. That is our contribution from Region 5. So, Mr Speaker, in that regard we have covered agriculture, and as such, at this juncture, I would like to revert a little to the content, and this is where I say that this Government has achieved magnificent goals for our country and for our people.

The recent flood has demonstrated the profound respect and care we have for our people for this Government is a caring one. Apart from our social and human factors, which are respectable, we have seen positive economic growth from 2001 unto 2004, save and except for 2003. This year we have a projection of 2.2 percent expansion of the economy.

In 2004, at the presentation of our Budget, our theme was *Investing for Sustained Economic Growth and Enhanced Social Development*. So that the theme of this year's Budget of *Confronting the Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development* is within the content and consistency of development and growth in our country as we have seen over the years. Mr Speaker, at page 22 of the Budget Presentation, the Honourable Minister of Finance stated, to maintain growth and achieve a better society a three-year programme is formulated, and this is what the Honourable Minister said in paragraph 4.2: the over-arching consideration of the three-year programme is growth, employment-generation, and improvement of the quality of life for all Guyanese.

One of the strategies on-going on plan ... we have many areas that we will have to work on, and those are what the Budget has stressed on

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- the war on crime and drugs which also includes trafficking in persons, reducing poverty, strengthening democracy and good governance.

Mr Speaker, the economic growth and development that we have seen in 2004 was credited to our performance in all the sectors and, because of what the Honourable Member Mr Nasir Ally stated, I would have to reiterate for the benefit of the members on the other side of the House, that we have had increases in:

- sugar by 7.6 percent;
- livestock by 2 percent;
- egg production by 76.9 percent;
- forestry by 0.5 percent;
- other agriculture products by 2 percent; and

Mr Speaker, we could go on from this very Budget to see where our increases in the various sectors lie.

The development in every sector, particularly the road networking and housing, have placed more demand on our electricity supply, therefore our electricity generation in megawatt hours have increased over the years, and particularly in 2003, 476.9 megawatt hours to 514.9 megawatt hours. We will also see an investment of US \$120 million and of Government's allocation of \$300 million to fund projects that would ensure that 57,000 households will receive electricity in 2005.

In Region 6, areas of Sisters Village on the East Bank of Berbice to Moleson Creek on the Corentyne, which were unserved, will see the benefit of electrification. Also Black Bush Polder is a part of this project.

The Guyana Power and Light Company plans to improve transmission and distribution to achieve this investment.

Mr Speaker, our Minister of Finance and our Prime Minister have

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elucidated the Guyana Power and Light visionary programme, which I support, and this programme is in keeping with the energy sector programme under the National Development Strategy.

Mr Speaker, we have heard of our war against crime. The Honourable Minister Teixeira has spoken on that, but I would just like to add that we intend to spend \$3.4 billion on the Police Force in a programme to maintain law and order; \$441 million will be spent on Police Stations throughout the country, which includes the Central Police Station, New Amsterdam; No. 51 in the Corentyne; in Barakara, Canje Creek.

More vehicles and boats with outboard engines will be purchased. Other intelligence and monitoring facilities will also be invested in. To impact in the area of trafficking in persons, we will increase the expenditure for the purchasing of a vehicle. The overall result of this investment will see that the occurrence of crime in 2004 statistics of 3,448 cases will certainly be reduced. To augment our fight against crime, we have seen initiatives taken in the legislature that is in our Parliament to empower the Police and the Courts to enforce laws which impacts on our economic and social development that is taking place today.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned, the Courts, the Judiciary, experienced new appointments to give effect to the administration and dispensation of justice. Further to this special programme of legal education, the Alternative Dispute Resolution and the mediation programmes have been invested in.

Secondly, the Caribbean anti-money laundering programme has seen our particular members of the Judiciary and the magistracy participating in that programme so that we could enforce our Money Laundering Act, which was passed some time ago.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution also is utilised through the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission in its land-titling exercise. In Region 6, almost 1,000 leases were processed and distributed; approximately 250 were resolved for issuing under the Alternative Dispute Reso-

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lution protest. Mr Allen, the land-titling exercise is ongoing and has brought security of tenure to land to the farmers, especially between Nos. 52 to 74 villages on the Black Bush Polder, and also in the Crabwood Creek area. To support that Alternative Dispute Resolution process we had, on Saturday, 26 February 2005, an advertisement for all the ten regions in the country, whereby the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission called on persons to attend the Commission to check in for their further processing. 666 areas were advertised and 666 persons were called in to the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission by this advertisement. Mr Speaker, for the benefit of Mr Allen, also, there are about 50 of the land titling leases for the area up the Berbice River, where he said that the persons were not receiving titles. I could lay this over to you Mr Ivor Allen, but sometimes we must read the Guyana Chronicle especially on a Saturday or all the time.

Mr Speaker, on that same note of security of tenure to land, the Honourable Member, Mr Nair Ally, mentioned that we were not distributing the water usage process between No. 51 to Lancaster. I would further mention that the process of the Alternative Dispute Resolution system, which augments the programme of the land-titling under the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, has brought development for the land, and also for the water usage programme. The reason for the No. 51/Lancaster, the Water Users Association is not into being is because the project has not been opened up in that area, because the Water Users Association programme is hinged on the distribution of leases and, I daresay, the leases are for 50 years, rather than 21 years Honourable Member Allen, which is a further security of tenure.

Mr Speaker, this programme of the Water Users Association is interlocking with the Alternative Dispute Resolution, which hinges on the land distribution and land titling exercises under the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. It is funded through a United Kingdom/Government of Guyana Project through the Department for International Development. When they should have moved to the area of No 51/Lancaster in the distribution of the leases, we will see the Water Users Association coming onstream in that area. With this same provision of land-

titling and security of tenure, we heard our Honourable Minister Baksh speak of the distribution of houselots of about 20,000 titles. In Region 6, about 6,000 titles were processed in 2004. Mr Speaker, this is what we call empowering our people because, with the land titles, they then could go and do many other things. We are empowering our people.
[Applause]

Mr Speaker, very quickly, I would like to deal with Education. We have heard some criticism that education is not going anywhere, but I will confine my answer to Region 6. In Region 6, there is the Berbice Campus of the University of Guyana. For the academic year of September to July, we have enrolled the highest number so far, of 508 students. Our grandaunts for last year amounted to 124 students graduating in all the fields. In other words, we have taken education to our people in Region 6, when there was no hope for them to have gone to the University of Guyana at the Turkeyen Campus. On that same note, \$1.5 billion alone will be spent on both campuses (Turkeyen and Berbice) of the University of Guyana, also with expenditure for upgrading laboratory facilities, so we will be producing our own scientists in Region 6 to cater for agricultural production, for the benefit of the Honourable Member Mrs Lawrence. *[Interruption]*

Mr Vincent L Alexander: On a point of correction, if one checks the Estimates, it does not provide for the Government of Guyana to spend \$1.5 billion on the University of Guyana. I just want to provide that information.

Mr Ramnesh C Rajkumar: Mr Speaker, we have advanced further whereby, for the very first time in the history of Region 6, at the secondary school level, we have begun the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Council Examination in Law, and that programme is being worked out by Members of the Berbice Bar, who give their voluntary services to the teaching of that programme. So we will now begin our programme of the preliminary training for students who may wish to pursue advanced studies at the University of Guyana in the programme of law. So Berbice, Region 6, is going places.

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For the benefit of the Honourable Member, Mr Alexander, we also see in the Budget, at Page ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: While you are looking, maybe you can ask for an extension of time.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his speech.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr Ramesh C Rajkumar: Thank you, Mr Speaker and Honourable Minister.

Mr Speaker, as we look towards the education of our young people, and I have already mentioned the University of Guyana, we could see, notwithstanding our constraints, at page 88, Honourable Member Mr Alexander, as we have always been doing, this year we will be contributing \$99 million to the council of legal education to continue to have our students trained in law in Trinidad. We are seeing that no resources are being spared in our efforts to education our young people.

Mr Speaker, the objectives of governance - energy, roads, education, land access, all combine to form the platform upon which we can continue our programme to achieve the eradication of poverty and a united Guyana.

Before I close, there is one last point I would like to make, as regards the Honourable Member, Mr Nasir Ally's statement to the effect that we are only building roads in areas such as Fyriish, No. 68 and so forth. But I would like to point out, that while that may be true at reference 198 Fyriish/Suzanna/Auchlyne, we also have No. 52 Village Honourable Member, while we may be doing that we are spending \$70 million in Epsom and Kildonan for revetment work and sluice. We are also spending money in Johanna, Black Bush Polder. AIness irrigation

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canal, Epsom Facade, Manchester West irrigation canal, just to name a few. So the development that we are looking at, one may have some roads, but we are looking at drainage and irrigation in another, a whole gamut of development in the whole region.

Mr Speaker, at this juncture, I would like to conclude my presentation. I therefore call on all Members in this august House to join in supporting the Budget of 2005. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Ricky Khan.

Mr Ricky Khan: Mr Speaker, every time we hear about the Budget, we always look at the pages to see what is in store for us in Region 1. Many times we read in the papers about great projects, projects in agriculture, like the organic cocoa project in Hosororo, but it is a very small project, when we look at the overall projects in Region 1 ... very small. But for the Region as a whole, in terms of agriculture, and especially what is given in the 2005 Budget for agriculture - \$3.5 million to strengthen revetment to Kumaka; Santa Rosa comes under agriculture. Mr Speaker, Region 1 is more than revetment and cocoa. Many years ago, the Waini River had many farmers. Today, one can count the farmers on his fingers. I do believe there might be three or four farmers. The Barima River had a lot of farmers. Today, there are very few farmers left in the Barima River. In the Aruka River many farmers have now turned to other means of employment. They have left their farms, and the same goes for the Kaituma farmers.

Mr Speaker, one of the problems about agriculture today is that, while we sit down here from time to time and criticize the policy, it is good to know, from time to time, that the People's National Congress had a policy for Region 1 - that it had implemented GAIBANK and co-operatives to assist the farmers. At the end of the day, we must understand that the Transport and Harbours Steamer was filled with provisions from these particular areas. It is important to know that while

agriculture is the backbone in the sub-region, today our farmers suffer.

We talk about floods. Everybody had their comments about floods. We had our fair share. At the end of the day, the tides rose so high that the farms that were left, most of them were flooded. We did not see any aid go up for Region 1.

Mr Speaker, I can go on to say that Moruka once produced a lot of peanuts. Today they produce little or no peanuts. Wauna area was also noted for peanuts and driers. Today, we are seeing little or nothing coming out from Wauna, including Yarakita. We looked at Mabaruma which was producing citrus. Today there is very little production. There is absolutely no improvement, in terms of agriculture. Right now, agriculture in Region 1 is at a snail's pace. I would like to suggest to the Honourable Member, Mr Satyadeow Sawh, that indeed a programme can be met with these non-traditional produce, if he can just formulate a programme that can co-ordinate with the Georgetown exporters and take it in to Mabaruma and the region as a whole. Try to implement a transportation system to meet the needs. At least the farmers can survive. Honourable Member, it is a solution, and you should listen and learn.

At the end of the day, we say in the papers that agriculture is on the rise, but it is not so in Region 1. In fact we are on the decline. Many farmers who have left their farms have little or no employment. Most of them would come to Georgetown and other areas.

Mr Speaker, while several million has been spent on roads and bridges, of which roads are \$40 million. Matthews Ridge road to Baramita, which we welcome, because today the only thing it serves is the mining community from Tekigrove to Port Kaituma School Road; Tobago Hill to Wauna; Mathews Ridge to Arakaka/Port Kaituma. The Tobago Hill Road to Wauna has been repaired several times but, due to lack of proper construction, at the end of the day we have spent so much of money in the Region and the money literally has been squandered by contractors, bad work and bad tendering processes. It is not

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that the Region did not receive an adequate amount of money to finance the road. We did, but it was squandered. The tendering process for the roads and many other things have gone haywire. It is just basically stuck within one family. At the end of the day, if you ask this family about equipment, they have probably two old tractors. Hundreds of millions have been spent and this is what they have to show. It has also led to stagnation in the region in many other things.

Mr Speaker, while we welcome improvements in the Region, we have seen money has been squandered. It is not to say that we did not get anything. Yes, People's National Congress/Reform admits that they did get a lot of money, but the money was squandered.

Mr Speaker, there is a village by the name of Morawhanna. It is our proper port-of-entry in Region 1. At the end of the day, Morawhanna has been tidal. In fact there is no sea defence or anything for the last twelve years. Being it is our proper port-of-entry, it also houses the GUYOIL Complex, Police, Coast Guard, et cetera. At the end of the day, if this is our port of entry, and this is the way we treat it, including the residents there, basically that means we do not even understand what is happening to our proper port-of-entry. The Steamer moors to the T&HD wharf, which is just barely standing up. In fact, right now, if you look at the wharf and brace it too hard with a boat, everything will fall down. These are the kinds of facilities that people have to use on a fortnightly basis. The boat still lands there, Honourable Member, and if it was abandoned, it should not be used, and there should be a notice. If you have to repair it, you should put up a notice. The T&HD Wharf at Kumaka now houses a sawmill. It is now good enough to cater for the T&HD boat, but it houses the sawmill. At the end of the day, it is the T&HD's property. In terms of looking after passengers and people's goods to take into the North West, the Transport and Harbours Department, from the time you put your baggage or your goods in side the bond, it is either eaten by the rats or the roof, which is leaking, soils the goods or, if it got stolen and you complain, today the claim process is non-existent. No matter how many claims you put in, you will have to literally take the department to court to get some action. At the end of

the day we, in Region 1, indeed are suffering in more than one ways.

As we go into the Matarkai area, the Matarkai garrison was dissolved approximately, I would say, about ten years ago. From the time it was dissolved, it has brought in Port Kaituma, Arakaka and Matthews Ridge, expanded the 32 miles that make up Matarkai ... [*Interruption: 'What about the train?'*] Yes, indeed there was once a railway there and, at the end of the day, you cannot even maintain the roads. Honourable Members, let me tell you, the roads were maintained by the Barama Company for a number of years - the water and lights were also maintained by Barama Company. Today, the administration has left one REO and a Secretary to run the whole sub-region. At the end of the day we have little or no control of even knowing what is happening in the Matarkai Division. There is more happening today in terms of the night life. You hear more boats in the nights travelling in the rivers than during the day and you ask yourself what is really happening. The law enforcement is literally non-existent.

Mr Speaker, we talk about miners. You go into any one of the police stations and ask them who comes in and who goes out - nobody even knows. It is the wild, wild, west. If you sit down and look at the crime rate in many of these mining areas, no one knows ... In fact you cannot give an account of how many foreigners are now mining in the Matarkai mining area.

Health Services - Mr Speaker, while we will like to compliment the Government in making a lot of health huts, repairing the hospital, and trying to get the health services going, it is good, but how many health care professionals today actually sit in those huts and dispense health services? There is absolutely no time that I have ever travelled, or even in the Region itself, that there is not a time that their patients are sent out by Trans Guyana to Georgetown. It shows that the health services in Mabaruma is not competent to deal with many matters, most of them are referred to Georgetown.

Education - Mr Speaker, while we know that there is a lot more schools

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built, teachers' quarters and a lot more money spent, but at the end of the day where are you going to send those people? There is no employment. Mr Speaker, we always hear about the Amerindian communities doing well. Well, I am saying today that the whole Region is basically a depressed region, not because there is no money. It is because, basically, the administration has gone wrong. If these contracted affairs appear in the sub-region is concentrated, in every single way, into one family's hand and is not extended in any way, it is obviously going to be a depressing situation in that particular sub-region. At the end of the day, whatever is mined in Matarkai is taken out, there is nothing left there. You will only have a village with absolutely nothing left inside. Barama has left and have you filled that vacuum? The answer to that is no.

In Region 1, while there is a nice picture painted about how the region is doing well in agriculture, health and so on, the PNC/R does not have a problem. We openly say that we support most of the programmes. Indeed, financially the programmes are looking good.

In health care the professionals are leaving, even the normal residents are leaving due to unemployment and what have we done to stop it, or to try to stem it in any way? We have done little or nothing. We continue to train more teachers, water down the system and, at the end of the day, we end up where we started. I am sure that next year's Budget we are going to sit down ...

Power Supply - Mr Speaker, there is \$3 million for electrical cables, meters and phones. The meters were there, and some of them were there two years ago. They have not been installed because of the wires also were not ordered for the installation of the meters. At the end of the day, the electricity supply with the old plant - the old plant indeed had problems, we are happy to say that we have a new one, but whom does it serve? It comes on in the afternoon from six to ten, and that is good, and it comes on from five to seven in the morning, but the administration works from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon. So really whom does it serve? The consumer's group went into the Chairman many

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times to try to regulate the timing and so on. It never did, we are still stuck today with the problems. Will it come on tonight? The shortage of fuel, it did not come on time.

Mr Speaker, I would want to go on and on. The Budget indeed has catered for Region 1 but, at the end of the day, we look at one simple thing, what has some of the youths turn to, in terms of Region 1? A lot of them smuggle fuel and when I ask them why they are smuggling fuel, they say they have no other choice, because there are no other jobs. I have asked many times at the RDC, why don't we put in a Customs Office ... probably your members?

Mr Speaker, we, in Region 1, applause the 2005 Budget financially, but the administration in the region has run amok. In fact, I want to comment on this several times. Today, the contractual arrangement is one that is making a mess of absolutely every single part of the sub-region, and even the contractors are posted to all two sub-regions. In fact, it tells you that, although it is an Amerindian area dominated by ninety-eight percent Amerindians, the Amerindian themselves, whomever the contractor is, will only get two percent of all of those projects, if they get any at all.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to go on and on. The Budget indeed ...
[*Interruption*]

The Speaker: Do not be tempted into calling any names, Honourable Member.

Mr Ricky Khan: No. I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Finance for being so generous to us, but I also want to remind him that the processes that are in place, please put the necessary Ts and Is on top of them so that we can get the jobs done. You cannot say that the People's National Congress/Reform is not willing to work, and work to show you that there are solutions at the end of it ... for agriculture, health, and for every single sector. I thank you. [Applause]

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The Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Member.

Honourable Member, Mrs Pauline Sukhai

Mrs Pauline R Sukhai: Mr Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance and his staff for the 2005 Budget, which was presented to this House, and which we are now debating.

The Budget Theme *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development*, it is a most appropriate theme in this period against the backdrop of the many tough challenges that we have to address as a Government.

Briefly, Mr Speaker, I would like to address a couple of points, or arguments, presented in this House by speakers before me.

The superimposed destabilisation challenges engineered by the PNC/R have had negative effects on growth and development for Guyana. The Guyanese people must be aware that all of the PNC/R destabilisation antics and activities, which attempted to thwart progress, indeed resulted in some negative impacts, particularly on the vulnerable communities, and sections of our population, including the productive sectors, which affected this nation as a whole. We are talking about the period of the present administration.

Yesterday, the Honourable Member, Mrs Sheila Holder, argued that the Private Sector has been under-performing under the PPP/C administration. She proceeded to say that it was due to the fact that they were afraid to speak out about their concerns, fearing that their investments will be jeopardised. What nonsense! *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, nonsense is not an acceptable word. I have already stopped the opposition from using that word.

Mrs Pauline R Sukhai: I apologise, Mr Speaker. What senselessness! Government fulfilled its responsibilities by creating an enabling environment for the Private Sector to grow; Government is committed

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to the policy that the Private Sector should be the engine of growth. Whether large scale or small, foreign or local investors, they all benefited from the support that the Government gave to the business community. Government, for example, established the stock-market in June 2002; Government enacted the Investment Act and Small Business Act. Today, Go-Invest's capacity to respond to interested investors has improved its facilitating role, and we have heard, and we should read, about the pending investments that are growing in this country. The inflation rate and the interest rate have been kept at a level which cannot be compared to the era of the PNC. Incentives and duty-free exemptions are now fairly awarded. No more are the widespread discretionary practices in the award of duty free concessions. That remained a historical malpractice in the record attributed to the PNC period.

Mr Speaker, how, then, could the Honourable Members, Mrs Sheila Holder, Jerome Khan, and Stanley Ming have missed or overlooked these developments and blindly questioned private sector growth in this country. What they tried to do was to shift blame to the feet of this Government for the slow but expanding investment in the private sector. What they have not told this House, Mr Speaker, is that, while Government has been creating an enabling investment climate for the Private Sector, this environment continues to be marred by prolonged socio-political tensions which were encouraged and supported by the Opposition. They engaged in extra-parliamentary activities, including prolonged street protests, coincided their activities in the high point of violent criminal activities, targeting members of the business community, trying to drive fear in our private businesses, which resulted in the paralysis of business activities over the last three years. Herein lies the answer or, for the layman, a basic explanation as to why private sector growth is not generated at a desirable level. So where should we lay the blame - at the feet of the PNC/R, and sometimes the entire Opposition who colleague with them in their mischievous actions.

Further, another shoddy attempt to take a shot at Government by the Honourable Member Mrs Sheila Holder was her statement that there was a pattern of neglect of fiscal measure, again not surprisingly and as

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expected, she turned a blind eye to progress of fiscal reform and fiscal management in this country. *[Applause]*

The deepening of the devolution of responsibility and accountability for the majority of public spending today are in the hands of the governing body, both at the regional and local levels.

What she needed to highlight is that there is need for Government to take a hard-line approach and arrest the chaos, confusion and sometimes seemingly corrupt practices and behaviour of some regional and local administrators, particularly in the regions controlled by the PNC/R. A good example of confusion and chaos is the Region 4. It outshines Region 1, Mr Khan. Evidences were explicitly presented and demonstrated in this Honourable House last evening by the Honourable Member, Miss Peterkin, who read letters written by confused councillors and some officers who were trying to protect their political and administrative clerks. Is the PPP/C to be blamed for such poor management of the region and the mismanagement and low implementation of its development projects? You answer that to this nation.

Government must be commended for the reintroduction of strong fiscal management and transparency measures. Enormous progress and successes were achieved in these areas. The People's Progressive Party/Civic government, when it assumed office worked assiduously to ensure that public finances are sustainable; that our Government remained accountable for the delivery of services, and that public money is used efficiently and effectively. Presented to this House annually for eleven consecutive years is the comprehensive documentation of public accounts. What does this mean for our nation; what does this mean for governance? What does it mean for transparency? What does it mean for accountability? It means that the PPP/C Government has revolutionised fiscal information by delivering enhanced quality of and quantity fiscal information for scrutiny by the Honourable Members from all sides of this House, and the Guyanese public.

Indeed, there are some deficiencies, and deficient and defaulting public officials, but they are but a handful of bureaucratic remnants of the PNC era, with hang ups of a culture with massive discrimination and undemocratic practices.

Mr Speaker, those few continue to respond unfavourably to the public and, by their actions, they try to dull Government's performances. I can assure you that the PPP/C Government's continuation in office, and as a stronger fiscal management and reform begins to take firmer root in this country, such individuals will be forced to change their attitudes or dismiss themselves out of the Public Service.

Mr Speaker, this Government has delivered over the years sound macro-economic targets, which have today, resulted in a more stable and sustained economic growth, leading to development which is acceptable to our people. Notwithstanding some negative trends, overall the economy performed creditably and, while 1.6 percent growth rate seems insignificant to the opposition, it far outmatched the dark days of the PNC era when they shattered our economy and Guyana was declared a bankrupt State and un-creditworthiness stepped in, and of course I say no more.

For example, Government has focussed heavily on poverty-reduction, and why have they focussed on poverty reduction? It is because, when we inherited this administration, our Guyanese people were so poverty-stricken that one of the first programmes which we had to consult had to be the priority of addressing poverty. The rate of poverty today is 35 percent, and other speakers in this House have already told you from what level of percentage of poverty we have now reduced that to thirty-five. Thirty-five percent of people living on the poverty, or below the poverty line, is nothing to be proud of, but the pride will arrive as government continues to successfully implement the poverty-reduction programme. Mr Speaker, poverty-reduction should be everybody's business so that Guyana's vulnerability as a nation should be corrected. This Budget, the largest ever in our history, is geared to face the developmental challenges in improving the lives of our people. *[Interrup-*

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tion: 'Thank you, good night.' "I am not ready to sleep, Sir"] Keeping in mind that the most vulnerable are single-parent families, the elderly, and those families under difficult circumstances. It is therefore encouraging and comforting for me to mention to this nation that \$1.5 billion, allocated to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, will be spent on relief programmes to benefit the very poor, those living under less fortunate conditions and pensioners.

Mr Speaker, as I speak in this august House as a representative of Region 1, I would like to join with my colleague on the other side to make sure that Region 1's allocation will be used and serve the people of Region 1 in an efficient way.

Mr Speaker, I now wish to turn my attention to the allocations for Region 1.

Under Capital Project. allocations are included for projects that are expected to result in further development for that region. This will enhance livelihood opportunities for residents in both sub-regions. Let us now take a look at investment in road networks. As correctly stated by the Honourable Member, Mr Ricky Khan, allocations are made for improving the road network in various communities, Matthews Ridge to Baramita; Citrus Grove to Port Kaituma; and the Port Kaituma Road. I hope you do not mind, Mr Speaker, for repeating these allocations contained in the 2005 Budget under road network for Region 1. The road project will definitely improve communication and transportation, vital services that will aid the agricultural and mining sectors, and provide employment for residents in the region; likewise school children, mothers, pregnant mothers and the elderly will directly benefit from improved roadways.

Health Services - The region expect to see the construction of a dental hut and improved laboratory at the hospital. This is an amazing investment. It sure is since dental care is an occasional event currently, and surely such an investment will go a long way in addressing the needs of the residents of Region 1?

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I wish to remind you that Region 1 has come a far way from the time when I was a little child, whereby the PNC destroyed that region, a once eyeballed region by the late Forbes Burnham, who hoped to make that region the centre of Guyana. They hoped, but they destroyed.

I will just give you two improvements in health. For example, Mora, a small village in the Moruka sub-district, benefited last year from a new health hut or centre. Those communities, from time immemorial, colonial days, PNC era, have mostly welcomed the People's Progressive Party/Civic's intervention in bringing services to those communities, which were starved for services for so long, and it will appear to them that it is the first time their needs are being met by a caring Government.

There is now a new health centre at Four Miles, Kaituma, and there is a resident doctor at the Mabaruma Hospital. *[Interruption: 'That is nothing new.' "It is not nothing new, but it is a feature of the PPP/C Government. When you were there, there was not resident doctor for years. You could not even pay their salaries, or you could not even train them to be sent to the hinterland to give service to those people who were once neglected by you."]*

Achievements in Education - I will just give you two achievements from last year. There was recently built new schools in Assakata in the Moruka Sub-region and, of course, one of the largest concentration of populated area, the Santa Rosa Primary School, which was extended to cater to and to provide additional accommodation and space for children from a growing population that badly needed education in your time, and today they are not needing in that badly any more. It is a right. Education is finally being implemented as a right to the hinterland community.

Mr Speaker, I promised only to give two achievements. I cut short the achievements made last year because of the late hour, but I want to draw your attention to an additional secondary school, which was recently constructed to serve the Port Kaituma areas in Region 1. That is a beginning of challenges for the youths and the children in hinterland

communities.

Let me now turn to some of the allocations for education in this 2005 Budget. Education is indeed a relevant issue for Region 1. Many excellent and hi-tech achievers have graduated from this more accessible secondary level education in Region 1. For example, today we can boast of having media and journalist personalities coming from Region 1. Environmentalists, engineers, technicians, for once Amerindian youths can stand tall under this Government and say that *while the opportunities are still limited, we have very good use of the opportunities presented to us by the People's Progressive Party/Civic government.*

The population of Region 1 will no more be starved on non-existent educational facilities. Kamwatta and Four Miles and Hotakwai in the Mabaruma sub-region is expected to benefit from increased and newer teacher's accommodations. Extension work for the North West and Santa Rosa dormitories are to be effected. Improving educational facilities and accommodation will benefit additional children from various locations in our region. This is just another mechanism for ensuring that secondary education is made more accessible to a larger percentage of children in Region 1, who otherwise would not be able complete secondary education in their small communities, thus widening the sphere of educational opportunities for students so that they can continue to move up the ladder, and even enjoy the service of tertiary education as they graduate out of those secondary schools.

Mr Speaker, as I speak about empowerment, challenges for the young people, yes, we have been starved in the past, but slowly we are going to match those young people from any other region. Mr Speaker, these achievements are very recent, and I have to tell you that I am happy for those young people, because myself, under the PNC regime, could not even afford to leave my community, because our parents could not even pay their way to Georgetown.

Power Supply - I remember visiting Region 1 with the late leader, Dr Cheddi Jagan. When we arrived in Region 1, we were so amazed to

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see the destruction of Mabaruma. It was like if hurricane Ivan had swept across Mabaruma. The buildings were so shoddy, they were somewhat collapsing on the ground, and others had no windows, zinc, or the few remaining zincs were flopping noisily in the wind. Mr Speaker, if you take a visit to Mabaruma today, or maybe I would say yesterday or tomorrow, you will enjoy the clean environment, the way that community has been transformed is replicated in other locations throughout the region. The progress is slow, Mr Ricky Khan, but we are slowly getting there, and we will surely get there.

Mr Speaker, I am amazed that my presentation seems not to be believable, while the other side of this House . . . but, Mr Speaker, they intend to continue to put their heads in the sand and blind their eyes from the dejection and rejection by the Guyanese people when they were there, when they had an opportunity to do better.

Mr Speaker, I wish to state to this House that electricity was a thing that was foreign to the region and that today all the communities, including Santa Rosa, Kumaka and Arakaka are now receiving power supply.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given ten minutes to conclude her presentation.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mrs Pauline R Sukhai: Mr Speaker, I was on the topic of improved communications. Region 1 can thank the PPP/C Government for improving and providing communication throughout the region. Most of the communities, two years ago had, and communicated through, radio sets, with the exception of the Administrative regional locations of Mabaruma and Port Kaituma. We are now happy to announce that Santa Rosa and Arakaka today are also enjoying telephone service.

I have been in this House for the last couple of days and I have

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heard how agriculture has been neglected, our agriculture sector has not been performing, and so many dejected arguments in relation to the agricultural sector. Agriculture development in Region 1, like all other sectors, has had its fair share of battering during the PNC days and today our government has the hardest of tasks to try to regain some respectability in that sector for our region. The glorious times that my friend on the other side spoke about - steamer filled with produce, all began in the early 1960s under Premiere and our ministers of the time. Likewise, I would just like to remind my colleague in the health sector on the other side, who reminded you that the devolution of the health services regionally, the initial improvements were brought into being by the then health minister and former President, Mrs Janet Jagan. *[Applause]*

Today, Mr Speaker, I do say that we are battling with bringing back some semblance of hope in the agricultural sector. The Ministry of Agriculture had identified Region 1 as the agricultural organic capital of this country.

The Mabaruma/Hosororo cocoa project is expanding. In 2004, the Mabaruma/Hosororo growers' Association was provided with additional support of US \$43,000, small for the PNC/R, because they used to take larger amounts, when they were there, from the British High Commission, under the small grant scheme, to further develop that industry for the region. The cocoa project continues to receive support from our own NARI, the British High Commission, and the Canadian government. Such investment surely will enhance and empower small farmers, who are directly benefiting from this project. They are taking their future livelihood and development into their own hands, supported by our caring Government and partners in development for poor people, creating another model of successful enterprise by small rural farmers since the advent of the PPP/Civic administration coming into being.

Other examples of growing agricultural business in Region 1, the organic heart of palm is succeeding more and more. Today, we have begun to bottle and can, providing employment to Amerindians and hinterland residents.

The Wauna Project, which my dear friend Hon Allen mentioned, for your information, is in the process of being privatised, giving this project further opportunity to expand and develop, and increase the options and alternatives for employment of residents in Region 1.

Mr Speaker, there is ready market for palm oil right here in Guyana, and our Government intends to support the investment so that regional community residents can also benefit from such a project. *[Interruption: Started under the PNC. 'Started under the PNC, but was also destroyed under the PNC.']*

Another agricultural crop ... and I rightly support the Honourable Member, Mr Ricky Khan, that there is need to look for other agricultural products in the region to give support to, and therefore organic ginger has been identified for examination for possible export. *[Interruption: 'Five years from now.' 'Surely, things do not happen overnight.']*

Again, attention was raised by the Honourable Member, Mr Ricky Khan, regarding peanut production. Indeed Region 1 has the potential to produce peanuts, and I agree with you. And in the same way that I agree with you, I would like to support that Government put much more interest and investment in peanut production. In so doing, I am convinced, because the Minister of Agriculture leaves no area unturned, and he has been able to solicit support for the production of peanuts not only for Region 9, but he is now including Region 1 into that programme. Again, we definitely will be going places in Region 1. I want to mention here, too, that, while Region 9 has been given attention, in relation to the peanut production, there are additional benefits coming their way. Soon farmers in Region 9, and I hope not too late from now, also in Region 1, farmers from Region 9 would go into the US on a study programme to understudy new varieties, production techniques, and value-added, perfecting their attempts for the production of peanut butter.

I want to say that if all the Opposition Members of Parliament could work as hard as the GAP representative in their respective regions, I am

sure we will go places, but the PNC/R continues to throw hurdles in the way of development for the very poor. I mean, they are comfortable off, some of them, most of them, but they need to understand that Guyana is not made up only of those so-called first-class and middle-class, but there are still yet some pockets of severe poverty in our community, and they should cooperate in the implementation of the programmes set out in Government's Budget.

Therefore, contrary to the picture painted for the North West, as it is traditionally known, by the Honourable Member, Mr Ivor Allen, Region 1 is poised for greater governmental and donor support, increased agricultural production, market opportunities, and development of the residents of Region 1. Government has recognised that Region 1's agricultural sector is the main and permanent livelihood option alongside small-scale forestry, mining and fishing, and therefore will continue to support this sector.

Mr Speaker, the 2005 Budget is another testimony to Guyana remaining safely on track, facing the challenges, and being ever-cognisant of the development needs of its people. The contents of the Budget therefore are in keeping with our proposal of the PRSP and the broader approach spelt out in the NDS, and therefore we will successfully implement the programmes contained in the Budget within the next year and of course when we successfully implement our programme, it will take us closer to the MDG goal post.

Finally Mr Speaker, I seek support from all sides in the region, that is Region 1, and nationally, to ensure the development projects continue to be successfully implemented. I heard my colleague saying that there was disarray in the administration of Region. Mr Speaker, he should read the Public Accounts, which are laid in this House, and you will see that, over the years since 1993 to 2003, that the section which deals with Region 1 is becoming cleaner and cleaner. That is one the reasons I said that I expect co-operation and support so that, in the future year's account, Region 1 would be an example to other regions, following in the footsteps of Region 8, which has done excellently in accountability.

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[Applause]

Even though the Honourable Member who represented Region 8 tried to paint a dark picture, that allocations were not enough, or that they were not spent, the information tells us otherwise.

I now submit the 2005 Budget as a document worthy of full support by all in this Honourable House, and I so congratulate the Minister and his staff, and I hope that all the projects will be successfully implemented within the year. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. This brings us to the end of our business for today. The Honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, on request by the Principal Opposition, we will not meet tomorrow. The National Assembly now stands adjourned to 7 March 2005 at 14:00h.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, if I may indicate, it is likely that the Budget debate will finish on Monday, and we will therefore begin consideration of the Estimates on Tuesday. The Assembly is adjourned until Monday.

Adjourned accordingly at 23:25h

