

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2014) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

75TH Sitting

Thursday, 3RD April, 2014

The Assembly convened at 2.09 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Launching of the Children's Art Competition

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to our sitting, the Parliament Office, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the University of Guyana, launched an art competition for children in which child's rights are to be promoted through art. We are grateful for the Members who attended, who were invited, and the details will be in the press and elsewhere. We believe that it is a novel way of ensuring that our children not only know what we are about, but that we also know how they feel and think about what it is we are doing. At the end of it we hope to have their works exhibited and, I believe, that there is even some consideration that some of those works will go on sale for the benefits of the children.

Minister Manickchand to address the House

Mr. Speaker: On Tuesday last, the 1st of April, Members would recall that there was, what I would call, a minor incident involving an exchange between myself and Ms. Manickchand in which I made some comments. I have since reviewed the series of events on video, both leading up to the exchange and after, and also I have taken into account the comments made by Mr. Sharma who, again, is not here today, he was ill yesterday, and the statement made by the Hon. Minister yesterday to the House. As a result, I have determined that I will not be hindering Ms. Manickchand's right to address the House, if she so desires.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I, on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), wish to respect your ruling, but I want to point out, Sir, that according to the *Hansard*... I want to read something from the *Hansard* which was said by Ms. Manickchand, the Hon. Minister of Education. While Mrs. Lawrence was speaking she said:

“... [**Ms. Manickchand:** Ask your Member Sharma, APNU Member, chief Member. There are girls under the age of 16 having babies and no one has ever been charged.]...”

APNU believes that this is a personal attack on Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, a sitting Member of the APNU and we are demanding that the Hon. Minister makes an apology directly to Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I believe that you are within your rights to demand that apology. I also wish to state that - there will be no debate on this matter; I notice another microphone has gone live - Mr. Sharma, when he rose, said that his father was being impugned and not himself. That is something that I reviewed and I had to take note of, that he did not feel that he was the one being impugned but it was his father. I believed initially that it was a sitting Member of this House but, by Mr. Sharma's own words, he said, “my father”, and that is something that I must take cognisance of.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[For Written Replies]

1. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PARAMAKATOI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Marcello:

(i) Could the Hon. Minister tell this House why construction of the Paramakatoi Primary School, Region 8 that started in April, 2012, has not been completed?

(ii) Could the Hon. Minister tell this House when construction of the Paramakatoi Primary School would be completed?

Reply not provided.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2014

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2014 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2014-03-24;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2014, of a total sum of **two hundred and five billion, three hundred and seventy million, five hundred and eighteen thousand dollars (\$205,370,518,000), excluding fourteen billion, and six hundred and seventy six million, one hundred and forty three thousand dollars (\$14,676,143,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Speaker: I am not aware of who will be commencing the budget debate today so I invite that person, whoever he or she is, to please start.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I am the required person, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Very well, sorry. Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, please proceed.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I rise to make my contribution to the debate on Budget 2014 titled, *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*.

Yesterday in the debate certain Members, the right wing of the Government side, offered to retire me and then to give me a comfortable room at the Marriott Hotel. Well, I just want to say to my dear friends that I do appreciate their concerns to my welfare but I need no room at the Marriott Hotel and I will be retiring from this seat until such time that the people say I should be over there.

I have no resources of the people which I have to manage. In fact, all that I have to offer the hard-working people of this country is hard work, and I offer my hard work to the people of this country, but, it is for those persons who have the resources of the country to manage, and to manage properly, who sometimes in the course of their work improperly managed those resources and sometimes do other things with them, they are the ones who have to fear that the rooms, they may have, might be rooms with a single bunk bed or a double bunk bed.

Since the time allocated to me is a very short one, I will get to the meat of the matter immediately. If indeed my language is not extremely elegant as some other Members of the House, I would hope that the House appreciates it because, in my humble view, because the people who are the real judge or judges of this debate are the people of this wonderful country and therefore I shall be speaking to the people of Guyana in the course of this debate.

From the outset, I wish to make one thing very clear, that is, that we, in the APNU, reject the notion that any person or entity can authorise expenditure from the public purse which is not approved by this National Assembly.

The eight years continuous growth, which was a boost by the Government, is little comfort to the hard-working people of Guyana. What they know is that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) has now been in Government over 21 years and for the vast majority of them their lives are no better. So please, Dr. Singh, Hon. Member, recognise your position, you are part of an administration that has failed to deliver a good life or a better life for all Guyanese. There is no doubt that your policies have created a fabulous life for a small number of them, but for the vast majority of our people it is a hard life.

Our friends on the other side of the aisle have made, and have been making, the case that we should work together. I was eagerly looking forward to the Hon. Minister Dr. Westford leading us in singing the song *Let Us Cooperate* but she did disappoint me by not singing. Unfortunately, these noble ideas of cooperation end here. Outside of this House is another world, the world of the PPP, confronting an uncompromising, contemptuous and arrogant political machinery which seems to feel that its minority status in the House can be made up by being the proverbial schoolyard bully outside of it.

This budget, such as the two previous ones, in the Tenth Parliament, has an underlying feature, or a golden thread, running through it which says this: Never concede anything to the Opposition, stay on course, more of the same.

How else does one explain the attitude of the Government to initiatives by the Opposition? Since 2012, in our budget debate, the combined Opposition made certain proposals to the Government about budget considerations, but what has it done:

- The Government refused to engage in any meaningful budget talks at the tripartite level.
- The Government refused to reduce the toll on the Berbice River Bridge.
- The Government refused to reduce Value Added Tax (VAT) by, at least, a single per cent with a promise by His Excellency, the President, to look at the tax structure and to establish a tax committee.
- The Government refused to increase old age pension to \$15,000 which we were asking for in 2012.

- The Government refused to commission an inquiry into Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and Guyana Power & Light (GPL) as a precondition to any further subventions to those entities.
- The Government refused to guarantee the independence of constitutional entities. Even after a motion was passed in the National Assembly it continues to refuse to do so.
- The Government refused to give presidential assent to any Bills passed in the National Assembly which the PPP did not support.
- The Government refused to address the issues affecting the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).
- It refused to have the moneys in National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd. (NICIL), lotto funds, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) transferred into the Consolidated Funds.
- It refused to take action on National Communications Network (NCN) and the Government Information Agency (GINA).
- It refused to establish a Public Procurement Commission.

It is all of those within in the last two years. Even if we had even a modicum of movement in the majority of these measures proposed by the Opposition, we would certainly have had a different kind of budget today and this is what the people of Guyana must know.

The problem, though, is that this rising tide of unemployment, joblessness and hopelessness, in Guyana, has the tendency to create an outcome that will consume us all. No amount of macroeconomic fundamentals and selective use of statistics, by my honourable friend, Minister Irfaan Ali, will change that reality. As a mass based partnership, the APNU has travelled the length and breadth of this country over the last two years. We had the opportunity to look into the eyes of our citizens and what they said to us was reflected in our speeches and the questions we asked in this National Assembly.

It is quite all right for the Hon. Member Mr. Joseph Hamilton to refer to an excellent presentation by Mr. Ronald Bulkan as suited to a Regional Democratic Council (RDC) meeting.

Mr. Hamilton, we make no apology for that. That is what you call bringing the business of the people to a forum which, from all appearances, you are either ill-equipped or unable to do.

Since the commencement of the Tenth Parliament APNU has consistently said that public infrastructure plays an extremely pivotal role in transforming Guyana. We have consistently stated that we do not believe in the current pattern of development which sees large sums of the people's money being spent on projects which have the appearance of providing jobs for boys and benefits only a segment of our population.

We called for a national conversation on the transportation system of our country, including roads, bridges, airstrips, airports and waterways. Last year, we repeated a call from the chairman of the Ogle Airport Inc., calling for a comprehensive long-term infrastructure development plan to support growth in the economy. Since then, we have had meetings of the National Competitive Strategy Committee, a component of which made certain recommendations for infrastructure development. The Government also sponsored an engineering conference in 2013 but sadly we see no evidence of these outputs manifesting itself in the major expenditure in this budget.

The problem is that the Minister and his budget team are locked into a budget matrix, set by this Government, in which the bulk of the public purse is spent on a few so-called transformational projects. Even if the Government intends, after eight years of this Dr. Ashni Singh budget's team, to respond to the calls of the people for change, it simply cannot do so without causing a budget disaster.

For example, we are locked into spending on Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, even if the investor has pulled out; we are locked into spending on Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) expansion project, even if the economic reality calls for change or modification and we are locked into spending on roads, even if the cries of the population require a change in priorities. While speakers, on the Government side, extol the virtue of this budget being pro poor, the reality is that it is not so and we have more of the same.

My colleagues, let us face it, Dr. Singh and his budget team are tired and they have produced an uninspiring budget, so uninspiring that the Hon. Minister, himself, in his presentation, seemed to have been infected by the tiredness of his team.

Thank you Dr. Singh for your many years of budget presentations, but I am of the opinion, and one which many persons in Guyana share, that it was your worst presentation and that you should follow that small voice within you which must be saying, “Give it up Ashni. Find another job.”

Since our Budget 2012 presentation APNU has said that the Government's spending on public infrastructure has been wrongly prioritised. We believe that public infrastructure must serve human development. If we understand that development prerequisite, we can then look at the infrastructure of our country in a different way. Since this issue is so important to the future of Guyana, rather than addressing the sums allocated to the projects within this sector, I will attempt, in this presentation, to give an insight into the broad policy approaches, in specific areas, that an APNU government will adopt in public infrastructure.

A more detailed examination of the budget for roads and bridges has been done by my colleague, Ms. Annette Ferguson, and further details of our approach to housing, water, and so on, will emerge in our consideration of the estimates, but in a broad sense. In 2012, the Government said that it was to invest \$11.88 billion on roads and bridges, it spent \$9.4 billion. In 2013, the Government said that it would have invested \$12.68 billion on roads and bridges and it only spent \$13.3 billion of that sum. In 2014, we are investing \$13.7 billion to improve roads and bridges and once the pattern holds true the full sum will not be spent. It seems clearly that there is an issue here of either poor planning or poor execution of infrastructure works or both. Is it that there is a systemic problem in the way Government spends in this sector? I refer to the manner in which responsibility for the construction of roads and bridges are divvied up in the Government.

The Ministry of Works is generally responsible for public works in Guyana. In this regard it is provided with resources by the state to undertake these works. However, what we find in Guyana:

- The Ministry of Housing and Water is building roads and bridges.
- The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development is building roads and bridges.

- The Ministry of National Resources and Environment is building roads and bridges, and
- The Ministry of Public Works is building roads and bridges.

The result is that in different communities there is different quality of roads. Contractors are allowed to get away with bad practices and citizens' complaints are not heeded.

Our demand is that this practice must be put to an end. It is to make one Minister responsible for roads and bridges in Guyana. If Minister Benn cannot do it, straighten him out or his Ministry. In an APNU government this will be a priority. An old Guyanese proverb says *too many cooks spoil the broth*, but, in this context, we may see that too many cooks steal the pot.

The fact of the matter is that since the commencement of this Tenth Parliament, the Government has spent, and will spend, nearly \$34.3 billion on roads and bridges. Is this the true picture? In this year, the Minister has allocated a further \$7.7 billion for rural communities and hinterland roads. On page 32 of the Minister's budget speech, he said that \$12.7 billion, this year, in the budget, will be spent on roads among which will be the construction of the Parika to Ruby *backdam* road. This opens up access to over 330 farming households.

No sooner that the budget was read, we saw a notice in the *Guyana Chronicle* newspapers, dated 30th March 2014, calling for expressions of interest for the building of a road from Parika to Goshen by GGMC. Are we building one road over the other? If this is a flyover I would really like to see the design. We are building one from Parika to Ruby and another which starts from Parika and flies over Ruby and goes straight to Goshen, all within the same budget period.

What APNU advises is to put all the moneys to be spent on roads and bridges together from all sources. Do a proper assessment and prioritise roads and bridges construction and hand it to one Ministry.

To continue in the present vein is to encourage situations as presented as the case of the bridge at Moruka. This is a situation in which the contract of a bridge, which actually costs \$43 million, was awarded to a contractor, the contractor then did some poor work but because it was work being supervised by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development he said that it was not poor work, that it was good work. This is what he said here in the *Stabroek News* dated Tuesday July 28, 2013. Even though the contractor said that it was good work this is what he

said about the project design and the engineering capacity of the Ministry (The contractor's name I would not call, but it is in the papers.):

“Many of the complications associated with the project, especially those related to the quality of the structure stem from the inadequacy of the design.”

In fact, what the contractor was saying is that “It was not me, blame the Government. It gave me an inadequate design to build a bridge”.

In fact, when we talk about looking our citizens in the eye,... On Thursday, January 30, 2014, a team from the APNU visited and spoke directly to the Toshao of that community – Basil Cornelius. The photograph is here; we were looking straight in the eyes of Mr. Cornelius and this is what Mr. Cornelius said. He spoke of what was called favouritism by the regional officials in granting of numerous contracts to a single individual or a selected few. Even after the community had complained about the quality of work the contractor was paid his money. He was paid \$28 million in the first instance and there was a sum of \$15 million which was held so that the Ministry would have been satisfied that the work is completed. Even though Minister Whittaker went to that community and expressed his concerns, as he quite rightly did, about the quality of work on this bridge and basically made certain statements that he will take action against the contractor, the contractor has been paid his full sum of money.

Our two major bridges require some special comments, the Demerara Harbour Bridge and the Berbice River Bridge.

2.39 p.m.

Before that, however, the Minister, in his speech, on page 33, paragraph 4.52, stated:

“Our Government has collaborated with the Surinamese Government for the construction of the fixed bridge over the Corentyne River. Resources are budgeted to...prepare the bridge terminal.”

Yet, agreement with a foreign state is reached, an unspecified amount is budgeted, work is to commence soon and the Minister has not provided the details of this transaction to the National

Assembly. This is a clear example of the contempt which the Hon. Minister and his budget team treat with the National Assembly. We will have to demand that the Minister gets it right.

The volume of traffic on the Demerara Harbour Bridge and the Berbice River Bridge requires separate attention. In this Budget, the Minister allocated \$338 million for critical works to extend the life of the Demerara Harbour Bridge. We are aware of the condition of the Demerara Harbour Bridge and the staff of the Demerara Harbour Bridge, under Mr. Adams, must be congratulated for keeping that Bridge afloat. My dear Colleague and Friend, Mr. Irfaan Ali, traverses there on a daily basis and I am sure that might have been one of the motivations to ensure that the Bridge stays afloat. Time has run out on that Bridge and the regular patching would not extend the life of it for any significant period, given the volume and weight of traffic on it on a daily basis. I am advised that on a daily basis, at least, 17,000 vehicles traverse that Bridge.

We urge the Government to expedite the work on the new bridge. In fact, last year in our budget presentation, we said that we support the construction of a new bridge. We are asking you this year to expedite the work on it. But we have one caveat. It is that a bridge authority should be established to deal with all issues related to the bridge. In this regard, what we are saying is that we do not want Mr. Winston Brassington to be part of the construction process for this bridge. What we are saying is we do not want National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd (NICIL) to be part of the construction process for this bridge. We want a bridge authority that will be able to handle all matters with the exception of that individual and that entity. This is A Partnership for National Unity's (APNU) recommendation on the matter.

The Berbice River Bridge: the toll for this Bridge has been a drag on the citizens of Guyana, but, more particularly, on the citizens of Berbice who are forced to cross the Bridge on a regular basis. If ever there was needed a clear demonstration of the callousness of this Government, it is the way in which it has dealt with the needs of the people in Berbice.

Here is one example: after taking millions of dollars from the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) – the nation's social safety net — to invest in the Berbice River Bridge, the Comrades on the other side of the House, by themselves, their servants, agents or assignees, allowed the Berbice

River Bridge Company (BRBC) to set a toll which can only be seen as taking from the poor to give to the rich. It is what I call Robin Hood reversed.

This Government has further facilitated a deferral of the payment of dividends to the NIS in preference to other shareholders in the Bridge Company. In the face of this assault on the people of Guyana, but the people of Berbice more particularly, the Government was either compliant or complacent.

The current toll for the Bridge is as follows:

Motor cars	-	\$2,200
Mini Buses	-	\$2,200
Motor Cycles	-	\$2,000
Four wheel vehicles	-	\$4,000
SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	-	\$4,000

It goes on.

In recognition of the toll being too high, the Berbice River Bridge Company Inc., for a specific period over 1st August, 2013 to 12th August, 2013, reduced the toll for the crossing of the Berbice Bridge to the following rates:

Four-wheel drive vehicles and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) were reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000; SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational purposes were reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000; four-wheel drive vehicles, SUVs and pick-ups pulling horse buggies were reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000; four-wheel drive pick-up transporting BBQ grills were reduced from \$4,000 to \$3,000; 50-seater buses were reduced from \$12,800 to \$9,000; 30-seater buses were reduced from \$7,200 to \$6,000; large trucks were reduced from \$13,600 to \$10,000.

This reduction coincided with the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Congress in Berbice and only catered for the large vehicles which are used to bus and truck PPP/C supporters from one event to the other - how selfish. This is the PPP/C that speaks about being a pro-poor government.

Having heard the cries of the people of Berbice for lowering of the toll to ease the burden on them, we of the APNU filed a motion in this National Assembly. We trust that the ebullient Member from Berbice, the Hon. Member Mr. Jafarally, will, for one moment in his life, stand on the side of the poor people and support the motion when it comes to the Floor for debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you will require an extension of 15 minutes to continue.

Dr. Roopnarine: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Hon. Member be granted an additional 15 minutes to continue.

Question put, and agreed to.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: What APNU proposes is not a reduction in the cost for the big vehicles and SUVs. Our proposal is to reduce the toll for vehicles which carry the ordinary people, the small man, and the poor. We are seeking reduction as follows: motor cars from \$2,200 to \$1,000; mini buses from \$2,200 to \$1,000; we believe that motor cycles, which are poor people's vehicles, should be travelling free; SUVs and pick-ups from \$4,000 to \$3,000. The prices for the other big vehicles should be left alone. We are dealing with the poor man. That is basically our position on the Bridges.

I now turn to water transport. I must say that I believe the Hon. Member, Mr. Robeson Benn, must have had a peep of my presentation and produced in the today's edition of the *Kaieteur News* an artist's impression of a floating ramp. I want to address that issue.

The population we have, dwindling though it might be, is a very mobile one. This has been the result of the building of new housing communities, which we acknowledge. That is a fact. But while these communities are being built, the major centres of business and employment have largely remained static.

In addition, the increasing number of persons who seek a livelihood or to live in the hinterland of Guyana has placed a greater reliance and stress on the roadways, waterways and airstrips. Unfortunately, our budgetary allocations have not taken note of this reality. So while the Government boasts of the number of cars on the road as an indicator of development, what we have is crumbling deteriorating infrastructure to cater to the needs of this change.

On any day, if one were to stand at the Vreed-en-Hoop, the Georgetown, the Parika, the Supenaam, or the Charity Stellings, one would see the vast numbers of citizens who utilise speed boats to get to their places of work, school and business. At these wharves, the landing facilities are ancient and, in many cases, dangerous. No provision is made for the physically challenged among us. Old and infirmed persons are not considered. Sanitary facilities are non-existent. If we are concerned about Guyana's citizens, the poor people, this must be seen as priority.

The account of a member of the Parika Speed Boat Owners Association last Sunday, when the Leader of the Opposition and his team were there on their way to Bartica, echoed some statements made by Mr. Stephen Bell, several months early, on the condition of the mooring at Parika. The gentleman said the members of the Parika Speed Boat Owners Association are frustrated over the docking arrangements at the decaying Parika Stelling. He said that it is inadequate for the daily traffic that leaves there and vulnerable to damages from waves and passing vessels. "This place", he said, "is way too congested." That is the present situation at that wharf.

He explained that speed boat operators from Bartica, Supenaam, Leguan and Wakenaam all vie for space at the Stelling, where a single set of stairs serves as a gangway onto the boats. Because of this confusion, a person might be intending to go to Bartica and end up at Supenaam. That is the reality. Sometimes people do not recognise what is happening until they get to the wrong destination and has to be taken back. [Dr. Ramsaran: What "nancy" story is that?] Ask Mr. Stephen Bell. He will tell you.

The Minister of Public Works, who has now arrived, stated that breakers would have been installed to help deal with the waves since last year. This development has not materialised. Mr. Speaker, you can take a trip to these Stellings and see the conditions. But, Mr. Speaker, I must caution you. If you take your wife, tell her to avoid a shoe with narrow heels since that is an invitation to a sprained ankle or broken feet.

If we accept a minimum of 15 passengers in these 300 boats that land there on a daily, we are talking at 4,500 persons at that one place on a daily basis.

The Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD), in January, 2013, stated that it was directing efforts to the construction of floating ramps to accommodate speed boats at Parika, Vreed-en-

Hoop and Georgetown Stellings. Of course, no mention was made of Supenaam or Charity. Even so, nothing was done in 2013. Now in March, 2014, the Hon. Minister stated that the engineers in his Ministry are studying the designs and, by a strange twist of fate, by coincidence, today there is an artist's impression of what this ramp would look like.

In *Budget 2014*, \$62 million is allocated for rehabilitation of Stellings at Parika, Leguan, Wakenaam and Supenaam. However, even from a visual survey of those Stellings, it appears to the common man that this is inadequate for the task because so much work needs to be done there. There appears to be no allocation for speed boat terminals.

I have some friends who like to compare us with Trinidad. My dear Hon. Friend, Mr. Ali, loves to make comparisons. I say to you, Minister, that you should compare the landing facilities to water taxis in Trinidad at Port-of-Spain and San Fernando or Port-of-Spain to Tobago with those at Parika and Bartica. Then, tell me what your statistics say. Also, please use photographs when you make your presentations, Mr. Minister.

Many of the Members of this House, who so aggressively represent the people of the islands of Leguan and Wakenaam, carefully navigate their way on these rotten boards at Parika. Where is the concern for the poor people? "To thine own self be true."

During this Tenth Parliament, the House passed motions calling on the Government to set up inquiries into riverain accidents. We also passed a motion seeking the reintroduction of the ferry service on the Berbice River. We expect that the Government will act in accordance with the Resolutions of those motions as failure to do so will cause the Guyanese people to judge them harshly and they will not be able to wait too long on an APNU Government to correct the mess.

In relation to the airstrips, we have seen an increase in the persons travelling to the hinterland to live and to earn a livelihood. APNU says this: there must be at least one municipal type airport in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. We believe that it is time that the development of our country is put on such a footing. These municipal airports must have proper lights, airstrips facilities, and terminal buildings with proper lavatory, rest rooms and other facilities. That is what is meant by municipal type airport.

This Budget allocates \$185 million for works to be done at Matthews Ridge, Port Kaituma, Kamarang and Imbaimadai airstrips. This is clearly an inadequate sum. There are 116 airstrips in this country, of which 72 of these airstrips are Government owned. How many of these airstrips are being serviced by the Government? As our people venture out more into our vast hinterland, our focus on these airstrips has to be intensified.

There are too many accidents involving aircrafts in our hinterland and our weakness in search and rescue has been well documented in the public domain by Captain Gerry Gouveia. Captain Gouveia made the point that there must be an agency which coordinates search and rescue and suggested that these entities which deal with search and rescue – air, maritime and disaster preparedness - should all be under one agency. He recommends that the Civil Defence Commission (CDC), since it already has the capacity, might be the right place to do it. That is a recommendation which we support.

Regarding the issues related to safety in the sector, we are told they should be addressed in 2014 and a clarion call has been made by the Chairman of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), Mr. Hugh Denbow, in this regard. According to the Chairman of the GCAA, some of the challenges which the body recognise include Guyana's ability to respond to issues which deal with aviation safety, air traffic management, economic regulations for both domestic and international operations, reliable and adequate air transportation services, aviation security and the modernisation of airport facilities. He said Guyana is faced with the challenge of the need to strengthen institutional capacity and, most importantly, to recruit additional staff and provide specialised and relevant training for current qualified staff.

Mr. Speaker, there was information in the public domain that some staff from the Air Traffic Control left his or her post when the aircraft was about to land. I understand that an investigation took place and some persons might have been suspended or otherwise, but the story goes deeper than that. There is a shortage of the type of staff that is needed in this very critical area. Yet, I do not see in this Budget any allocation to deal with this very critical issue.

These are urgent priorities of the time and they must take precedence over pumping the bulk of the allocation in the sector to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) expansion project. These are important and urgent matters.

With respect to the speed boat operations and floating ramps, we say the money that has been allocated to Amaila Falls, where the investor is not yet known, and from the newspaper reports, the President is trying to court Sithe Global, should be used now to fix those ramps. Give it to Minister Benn and let him fix the ramps. [Mr. Benn: Are you giving me money, Mr. Harmon?] Yes.

Mr. Speaker, in concluding, our position on infrastructure issues in this Budget are as follows:

APNU recommended a hydro power authority which will review and decide on all matters with respect to Amaila Falls. We said that last year. This must include the environmental assessment done by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In the absence of the above and a clear identification of the investment partner, we shall be obliged to withhold our support for the allocation to Amaila Falls.

With respect to the CJIA expansion, what we are saying is that we must have the full details of this project with all the amendments being made available to the National Assembly. As a pre-condition, the issue of the residents of Timehri North must be settled.

In relation to the Demerara Harbour Bridge, we say that a harbour bridge authority should be established. Take NICIL, former President Jagdeo and Mr. Winston Brassington out of the project.

Regarding the Corentyne River Bridge, we demand full disclosure of the contract before we can allocate any money to it.

We are saying that the allocations for the construction of facilities for speed boats should be increased. The money from Amaila Falls Hydro Project should be utilised to fix that situation now. We cannot postpone that anymore, Minister, like we have been postponing the local government elections for all these years.

Finally, what we are saying is that the building of roads and bridges under the Ministry of Works must be consolidated. Put the resources and money there. Cut the fat and spread the wealth of the friends of the Administration and ensure that proper work is done in the infrastructure sector.

With those statements, I wish to say that the Budget, in its present form, unless these issues we raised are addressed, we would be obliged not to be able to support it in total. I thank you.
[Applause]

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai]: I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, and the dedicated team of planners and drafters from the Ministry of Finance for once again putting together the annual Budget for 2014.

I wish to recognise that the \$220 billion Budget offers allocation of funds for the economic and productive sectors which will further stimulate growth and expansion of our economy and will complement the progress established over the years under the PPP/C Government.

The Budget also offers a practical set of measures that places much emphasis on meeting the needs of the people, including women, youths and Amerindians, and safety nets to support vulnerable groups, including pensioners, children and single parents.

Budget 2014 is a true reflection of the PPP/C delivering on its manifesto's commitments to the Guyanese people. Be reminded, lest we forget, that the architect for two decades of transformative achievements and success is the PPP/C Government.

Mr. Speaker, recalling the late leader Dr. Jagan's objective for putting people at the centre of development, I wish to applaud the current Government for its foresight and investments and the continued confidence it has placed in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs to execute the programmes and projects that bring greater levels of support to Amerindian development.

This is unlike the historical track record of the past when there was little or no consideration for hinterland and Amerindian development, which, as we know, resulted in wide gaps in basic services which greatly hampered the wellbeing of the Amerindian population. The story of how our Amerindian brothers and sisters were left out in the wilderness and the cold, marginalised, maligned and neglected should continue to be repeated. However, the new success story must also be told of how, over the last two decades, amidst a tight financial base, the PPP/Civic Government took on the task of correcting the wrongs, filling the gaps and supporting the developmental needs of the Amerindian population.

Over the most recent years, Government intervention and support to Amerindian development continued to make positive impact on the wellbeing of the more than 70,000 Amerindian residents. This is not to say that there is nothing more to address regarding Guyana's Indigenous people. That is far from it. The transition of Amerindian village economy is an ongoing process. The granting of land titles continues to progress. The need for increased access to secondary education continues to be addressed. Improving and expanding healthcare and water access is an ongoing project for this Government. The empowering of Amerindian youth is spiralling. The cultural integration and development has been strengthened.

3.09 p.m.

Amerindian leaders are refining their governance and administrative skills. They have developed well defined goals for sustainable approaches for village development. Of course, this was all made possible in a conducive environment created, established and supported by the PPP/C Government.

Yesterday in the National Assembly, the concern of Amerindian students not having access to quality education was raised from the Opposition benches. However, this is far from reality. We can recall the Cyril Potter Collage of Education (CPCE) during the PNC days, the enrolment of Amerindian teachers – just teachers – was so minimal - very minimal. The hinterland schools depended mostly on coastland teachers who, of course, gave their best. Since the PPP/Civic took office, there has been complete turn around. Mr. Speaker, today, if you visit the hinterland and you go to the nursery, primary and even the 12 or 13 secondary schools which have been refurbished, rebuilt and established by this Government, the majority of those manning, administrating and delivering education are Amerindian teachers.

If I may add, to use one example, Martha George, a student of the Waramadong Secondary School who received quality education under this Government, has successfully finished her medical degree in Cuba and has returned earlier this year to serve. Is this not evidence of equity towards access to quality education that the PPP/C Government has pioneered? Even the Hon. Member Hastings, who sits on the opposite side, is a beneficiary of the same quality education, and I would like to congratulate her for remaining in the sector to serve her people.

Let me underscore that over the last 20 years, the Hinterland Scholarship Programme has produced 7,000 hinterland students and, in 2014, Region 7 registered the second highest number of such students in the Programme. Is that not access to quality and equitable education? The total investment in this Programme for the last 5 years amounts to more than \$350 million. This year, 2014, an estimated 470 students will benefit from the allocation of \$66.6 million, as proposed by the Budget, and I wait to see the outcome of the approval of the Estimates.

In addition to that, I wish to say that there are other related educational opportunities for hinterland and Amerindian students. We must recall that there is the School Feeding Programme, the Snack Programme, the National School Uniform Programme and, of course, the grant which is proposed in this year's Budget, a grant which will see the support of \$10,000 per child for each family to benefit from. When we add this up for the hinterland, \$10,000 by 30,000 hinterland students, it is a whopping \$300 million more investment in the educational opportunities for Amerindian and hinterland students.

Addressing the criticism made by Hon. Dr. George Norton on the failure of the primary healthcare system in the Amerindian communities, I wish to recognise that there are challenges, but I hasten to posit also that this Government continues to offer services to hinterland and Amerindian patients. Over the last five years, an estimated 7,000 patients received subsidised associated medical support, free meals and accommodation, free medical supplies, transportation, post operation treatment and patient care from the programme administered by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs at the Amerindian Princess Street residence. This enhances and compliments the healthcare services available in the hinterland.

Agriculture and food security continue to expand in Amerindian communities. The agricultural support received by villagers is now unprecedented to what obtained prior to 1992. Thirty-three tractors, trailers, and agricultural implements consisting of plough and harrow were provided to farmers to address increase cultivation, transport and marketing of produce so as to sustain increased production, thus improving community food security and income generation.

On the assertion which was made yesterday by the Hon. Member of the opposite side that the Upper Mazaruni's agricultural potential is not being supported, I strongly beg to differ because the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has distributed tractors and agricultural implements to

Omenike, Imbaimadai, Kaikan and Paruima to assist in their agricultural drive. What is wrong with the Opposition? I am advised by some of my friends to ask the question: is your vision infected with cataract?

Mr. Speaker, let us turn to road infrastructure development. Road infrastructure development continues to move apace. This year the budget is \$1 billion, targeting the main hinterland roadways. Many Members from the Opposition benches have said that they have travelled the length and breadth of the hinterland. I am happy to say that they could only have done that because it was this Government which has instituted hinterland road programme, making it possible for them to travel throughout the length and breadth of the hinterland. I admit that this Government has much more to do with respect to the road networks in the hinterland and so too they have to do with the airstrips maintenance, construction and expansion. Of course, we could have done much better with airstrip maintenance and construction if last year the Opposition did not seek to cut the budget on that programme.

Households Solar Units Distribution: for the first time in the history of Guyana, ‘jumbie lamps’ are now extinguished. Amerindian residents have benefitted from the distribution 10,858 solar home unit systems, providing innumerable benefits to our people, including students who can now study in the comfort of their homes later in the evenings. This programme also offered training for installation of these home system units to more than 300 young people of the hinterland.

River and Land transportation Investments: the lifeline of Amerindian people hinges on their mobility. The Government of Guyana continues to invest heavily in river and land transport to reach many of the far-flung villages in the hinterland. In the last five years, the land and water transport programme totalled a huge \$376.2 million investment. These investments resulted in the distribution of 53 ATVs, 25 mini-buses, 17 4x4 pickups, 65 boats and 107 engines which were much needed to boost the transportation needs of our people who reside in the hinterland.

The Presidential Grant: the Presidential Grant offered investment funds for Amerindian communities to invest in productive and economic ventures. This Grant financed various income generating and social development projects that enhance the livelihood options for the people of the hinterland. Projects implemented included, of course, transportation services for the

communities, construction and stocking of community shops, construction and furnishing of guest houses and multi-purpose centres, agricultural projects, including cattle rearing, poultry rearing, bee keeping, building of bridges, installation and improvement of communication systems and tourism projects. We must recall also and record that such projects that are currently being implemented should have been implemented prior to December to March. We should remember last year that the President's budget was cut to a mere \$1 and, of course, the Amerindian villages had to wait for more than two years for the Presidential Grant of 2011 and 2012.

I now turn to the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). Recognising the importance of this strategy which guides this country to sustainably utilise the forest resources, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs continues to play a leading role in the LCDS public awareness and consultation activities. Ongoing awareness programmes and updated activities continue to engage the Amerindian population in explaining the impacts and benefits and the level of implementation derived out of this national strategy.

I am very happy to report that on the signing of the agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Kingdom of Norway, Amerindians are the first beneficiaries of the LCDS initiative. Amerindians benefited from US\$16 million under this memorandum of understanding. US\$6 million is allotted for projects that will see economic transformation of their villages and communities through the creation of low carbon and environmentally friendly projects, thereby creating jobs for our people within their communities.

Today, Amerindians are blazing the trail with respect to developing a green economy in this country. Over the next three years, 160 villages and communities will directly benefit from an investment fund totalling US\$6 million. Of course, we have already notified this nation that 26 such projects are at various stages of implementation and these include agriculture, aquaculture, eco-tourism, logging and village enterprises, just to mention a few.

The PPP/Civic Government continues to focus and keep on their agenda the titling and demarcation of lands for Amerindians and it remains a priority.

Reflecting on the PPP/Civic election manifesto since the last Congress, major support for land rights and tenure security were recorded, borne out by the fact that after such reaffirmation in

that PPP Congress on 21st October, 2013. At the last Toshaos Council Meeting, the agreement for disbursement of US\$10 million was signed. This will address the remaining applications for land titles which are before the Ministry.

In the next three years, this US\$10.7 million allocated from the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF) to address the outstanding request will commence. Today, the Amerindians are the largest private land owners with collective rights over more than 14% of Guyana's land mass. The number of titled villages is expected to increase from 97 to 110, bringing to completion all applications for communal land titling. It will also include addressing demarcation and extension application.

There is no country in the wider international community that can match Guyana's records regarding land rights and ownership. It is the PPP/Civic Government that rose to the occasion to ensure that land tenure of Amerindian communities was secured. Twenty-two villages which settled after independence were provided with land titles. This dismisses the propaganda that the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government is out to rob Amerindians of their lands. These are the benefits that are derived from this Government and, of course, moreso supported by the initiative of the LCDS. I also need to say that on the opposite side, there sit two Members of the LCDS Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC), who continue to fail to inform their constituencies of such achievements and benefits under our LCDS.

I also want to turn to the aspect of inclusion in our Government and in our body politic. There has been no time in the history of this country where Amerindians, even though we form only 10% of the population, have a large and sizable representation in the Cabinet, in the Parliament, at the RDC levels in the hinterland regions. We have been provided with this opportunity under a PPP/C Government. Just look around in the front bench. What do you see? You see the face and the image of Guyana in our Foreign Affairs Minister. For anyone who wishes to dispute that the Indigenous people do not participate in their development and that the Indigenous people are not consulted with respect to development taking place at a national level, I wish to reaffirm that this is the evidence whereby even on the opposite side today one can see not only a handful but a substantial number of Indigenous MPs, speaking on behalf of the Amerindian population. This was made, of course, possible in the democracy which the People's Progressive Party / Civic continues to foster in this country.

I wish to say that the Budget is a pro-poor budget, a people's budget and, therefore, I wish to commend this Budget and I expect that on the opposite side of the House, we would not stymie the development prospects and potential for our country, more so for Indigenous development.

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

Ms. Marcello: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The AFC welcomes all support for my Amerindian People. “Waláu Túsè Êna kápon yà mūk wéchi Máláu, malaú yâing tái Paláu tú pui ka taú tok kóng yéchi, Wapeuyaluk kóng kolu Cáyána’ Yawong kóng pâe.”

Mr. Speaker: You need to translate, please, Hon. Member.

Ms. Marcello: We deserve better treatment as the first people of Guyana. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to lend my support to the Members of the Alliance For Change who have spoken before me. First of all, I wish to endorse the theme for this year's Budget which states, *A Better Guyana for all Guyanese*. As I listened to this great presentation of the Hon. Minister of Finance, I was left in dismay as to whether all Guyanese people are truly the beneficiaries of these large sums of money.

As I interact with my fellow Guyanese from all walks of life, I have heard them describing the country's state of affairs as the worst ever when compared to previous years of struggle. In spite of the largest ever budgets being presented year after year, the economic resources of this country are not adequately distributed, especially to the poor and working class. This year's Budget has not adequately addressed the needs and wishes of these ordinary Guyanese.

Let me proceed to address the most critical issues affecting the people of Region 8. Much has been said about development as the Minister continues to sing the same lyrics he sings every year.

Development in hinterlands is hindered by the Government officials selected to look after the affairs of the Region as they continue to refuse to take recommendations for development put forward by Regional Democratic Councils, education departments, health departments and public works departments to enhance democracy at grassroots levels.

Schools across the Region continue to experience difficult challenges when it comes to education delivery, as there are inadequate learning materials, textbooks, janitorial supplies in nursery, primary and secondary schools and inadequate number of trained teachers. In order to deliver good quality education to our children, the leaders of tomorrow, we need to put strong emphasis in training specialised teachers, rather than voluntary teachers. In most instances, especially in secondary schools, teachers trained in prevocational subjects are tasked to teach compulsory subjects like Mathematics and English. When this happens, they are unable to deliver quality education since they are not qualified in these subjects. Instead, they should be put to teach the subjects that they are qualified in. I am sure that our children will be able to gain outstanding performances. I, therefore, wish to ask the Government to train teachers from the hinterland so that upon the completion of their training, they would return to deliver good quality education from the comfort of their homes.

Build schools to cater for a growing population because the women of the hinterland have high fertility rates. Give scholarships to outstanding CSEC and Grade 6 students. Build technical institutes for Technical Drawing and Woods for successful students so that they can improve their skills and enter the world of work and earn a living.

I wish to turn my attention to health. Health in Region 8 has suffered tremendously with the shortage of commonly used medical supplies last year and it continues this year. Health is one of the most important things an individual needs to have to bring progress to his livelihood and to others. If this Government is serious about decent healthcare delivery in this country, let it pay public servants a 15% increase in their salaries, especially those healthcare providers who work tirelessly taking care of the sick.

Stock the hospitals, health centres and health posts with adequate amounts of drugs and medical supplies in a timely manner. Expired drugs have become an order of the day. Drugs supplied to these institutions are discovered to be expired upon arrival. The medical supplies are distributed in small quantities and the administrators fail to take into consideration the growing population.

The Hon. Minister spoke boldly about the increase of the nurses and doctors in the health sector. I would not dispute his statement. However, there are several health centres in Region 8 which do not have a doctor or a Chief Health Worker (CHW). For example, there is no doctor at Kato

Cottage Hospital. It is managed by two female CHWs. As in the case of Kaibarupai, Maikwak and Tumatumari, there is no medical personnel, so decent healthcare delivery cannot be realised in these communities. When applications are made by persons, especially from Region 8, and they reach the Ministry of Health, they are put aside by those doing selection for training by saying, “Region 8, problematic Region”.

Train medical professionals from the hinterlands to manage institutions adequately because these areas remain to have high fertility rate, not because we are sexy nor because of our culture, but rather because they cannot have equal access to family planning methods. We need dedicated persons who are readily available when emergencies arise because, in some instances, some doctors drink alcohol whole night and sleep whole day and sometimes go to work staggering. How can we trust a drunken man’s diagnosis and prescription? Due to such incidents, patients travel to Georgetown for medical attention at their own expense. That is why Georgetown Public Hospital is burdened with minor health issues which could have been addressed at regional levels.

Shortages of medical supplies in North Pakaraimas have led to unnecessary referrals to district hospitals in the Region.

Water: our water woes continue despite the implementation of wells in 2012 and 2013. The ‘salbora’ goes on and off. Three communities have had no water for three months now. The wells at Paramakatoi are non-functional. The walls of the well have broken away. Water leaks and cannot enter the pipelines. Dorm students continue to fetch water for staff to cook meals for them from a spring located 100 feet from the dorms, every morning, lunch time and after school. In other areas such as Bamboo Creek, Monkey Mountain and Tusenen, they need water storage facilities and extension of pipelines to better serve the community.

3.39 p.m.

In the years 2012 and 2013, more infrastructure developments have been promised to be built. As more sums of money are allocated in this sector, contractors continue to rake away taxpayers’ dollars either for substandard works done or incomplete work and overpayments for incomplete work as indicated in the Auditor General’s Report. When our representatives on this side of the House raise questions with the intention to rectify the discrepancies, we are referred to as foolish

men and women, and oftentimes, the regional authorities of this Government readily denies the facts. I stand here not to twist the truth, but to speak the truth. Therefore, I strongly recommend that these developmental projects are properly scrutinised in its initial stages and completion stages to ensure that quality work is done. I, therefore, want to urge the leaders on both sides of this House to work together as echoed by our Minister of Public Service in her speech.

Examples of projects include non-completion of Mountain Foot since 2012 and here are the pictures. Some of the blocks put on the walls are of concrete and mud bricks. The Arasawa Health Post has not been completed since three years ago; the X-ray department extension was left incomplete since works commenced early this year, and there are no X-ray services at the Mahdia District Hospital.

Accommodation is becoming a problem for our workers since apartments are built to house single workers. As more families enter the labour force, they cannot provide adequate housing for them and because of that, families split and women sometimes are left as single parents since we cannot keep them together. I urge this Government in all its wisdom to find a solution, at least, by expanding on new buildings to house a family of six since our workers are continued to be removed from the comfort of their homes to offer services in areas other areas where they are mostly needed. Furnished government apartments need to be made available to all, not to a few. In most cases, some workers are given empty quarters, while others enjoy the luxury of resources, thus forcing them to do furnishing at their own expense. While Government continues to make allocation for furniture and equipment, none are found in some. It is time for us to put our party politics aside and serve the people of this Nation with dignity.

Roads in the hinterland continue to remain in need of urgent repairs. Years ago, when simple tools like pickaxes and shovels were used to build roads, they were better built and lasted longer, but with heavy duty road building equipment, they are not properly maintained. In hinterland locations, we need mini-excavators and bull-dozers to use to maintain when needed. Make our roads established roads instead of pumping large sums of money in fancy hotels like the Marriot - which an Amerindian, like myself, would not be able to afford – give us a mortgage and a commercial bank in Region No. 8.

The Hon. Member Mr. Bulkan stressed much on the complete control of regional vehicles by the Regional Executive Officer (REO) and a small cluster of friends which are used for their benefits. I just would like to urge our leaders to put proper names on vehicles purchased for various departments.

For example, if vehicles are purchased for health they should carry the name Regional Democratic Council – Health Services, and for education Regional Democratic Council - Education Department so these vehicles can be easily identified. In recent times we were told some vehicles were purchased for health and education but when we were looking for the vehicles the REO claimed that they are for admin office. The ambulance is yet to be received. At this time we are looking for a new ambulance as we were told, not a second-hand which was touring around the country. An All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) given by the Minister of Amerindian Affairs to the Senior Councillor at Mountain Foot to help with transportation was never handed over to him even though attempts were made to secure same. The Community Development Officer (CDO) holds on to it and uses it for his administration even though two ATVs were given to him for his office - none are functional; corruption continues at grass root level.

Security - as large sums of money are allocated to security sector we continue to see Guyanese being robbed, raped and killed every day. You cannot escape a day without a crime scene on the front cover of the newspaper. Where is the Police Force? Where is the SWAT Team? Are they only securing the Ministers of Government? The Police in the hinterland are not fully equipped to deal with serious crimes such as murder. They seem more than afraid for their lives without proper equipment and protective gear to venture into the deep forest of the hinterland to capture criminals. The hinterlands have become a safe haven for criminals; they walk free without fear, eat and dwell among us. They continue to steal and kill our hardworking miners for their gold and money, and their families do not get justice. We continue to live in fear.

Border security is nowhere close to reality. Brazilians continue to enter Guyana's shores to do mining without a permit especially through backtracks such as Iirin Matan and Mutun and take away our gold and diamond thorough the same route. I, therefore, urge this Government to become serious with the security of persons not only in some parts of the country but all parts of the country.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes within which to conclude.

Ms. Marcello: Give our military officers the means of adequate land and air transport. Let them secure our borders – land, water and air.

Communication - we The Alliance for Change (AFC) continue to pursue aggressively the development for all Guyanese by representing their needs. Region No. 8 remains years behind communication technology, no television, no electricity and no access to information about the happenings; thus, this Government use the disadvantage to filter into these communities the half truths about Opposition destroying development. We cannot continue to be fooled like this. Let me remind this Government that they cannot continue to fool us; we cannot remain this way all the time. We can use any opportunity presented to use to get the factual information on the happenings in Guyana.

When the Budget was presented by Hon. Minister, there was less mention of hinterland developments and more emphasis was placed on large projects which can benefit three-quarter of the population. We were asked by the former Minister not to worry about little things like potholes rather we must worry about bigger projects. This clearly indicates that this Government is following the footsteps of the Former President, continues to ignore the concerns of the little man in the hinterland.

Electricity not readily available – the Mahdia Power and Light (MPL) provides electricity to Mahdia at the cost of \$100. The solution to this problem is not the Amaila Falls it is the Tumatumari Hydropower Project. Solar panels given to Amerindian communities are non-functional as in the case of Tusening where about 50 solar panels given are non-functional and are stored in the corners of houses. This cannot work; come on Government, you cannot continue to treat Amerindians like this; give them good things so they can enjoy the benefits of a caring Government.

I wish to conclude by saying that this very Government who objected strenuously when Opposition made cuts to National Budget slashed 60% of regional budget before they are finalised into national Budget. How can this Government expect this side of the House to see smooth of this Budget when we did not have an input? The AFC stands firm and strong on this side of the House. This Government has failed people; this Government has failed Guyanese

people since 2012, 2013 and now 2014 Budget. Two years have passed since the Government promised to end corruption, create jobs, reduce narco-trafficking, and improve the living of all Guyanese by changing course. These continue to exist among us thus leading to prostitution, human trafficking, drug abuse, and increase in HIV among our young people in the hinterland. Only this year four young people under the age of 20 lost their lives with co-infection of HIV and tuberculosis. We need medical technicians to go across the Region to detect these diseases early so that people can be given medical care. Not even that, he has failed to correct corrupt policies of previous regime and even have failed to remove corrupt politicians in various ministries who are unprepared to make a better Guyana for all Guyanese. This type of behaviour is difficult to explain to ordinary Guyanese.

In closing, I wish to urge Members on both sides of this House to let integrity and honesty protect us as we continue to serve Guyanese.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Chandarpal: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh and his team for the work in crafting the 2014 Budget with the theme "*A Better Guyana for all Guyanese*" which captures succinctly the ideal which we all aspire for as a Nation.

We are reminded constantly about the natural riches of our country by many who have had the opportunity to see it. We know that we have the potential to make our country the proverbial "*El Dorado*" if only we can get the cooperation of the Opposition to put Guyana first as some would like to assert.

The quotes on the front page of the Budget Speech presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance remind us that we are on a positive path of development in a variety of ways. The one used by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) of 14th February, 2014 states, and I quote:

"Guyana is a good example of a country that has done some of the right things... they have come a very, very long distance in terms of their fiscal situation."

Good economists and house wives know that you can only spend what you have, and that the prudent management of money is a must whether it is your home or country.

The Minister of Finance reminded us in his speech that the economy recorded its eight consecutive year of growth, with real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanding by 5.2. This represents the longest period of uninterrupted real economic growth in independent Guyana.

We have heard the various Ministers providing enough information on their respective sectors. We have heard of the various initiatives and projects which have created thousands of jobs for citizens. But you know what; some of my Hon. colleagues across the table do not see anything happening. You know the saying, "*There are none so blind as those who do not wish to see.*" As far as the Opposition is concerned we have not done anything good for Guyana. Well it is their preferred view. But there is an objective view not from the Government, but the International Monetary Fund (IMF) who in December, 2013 had this to say, and I quote from the Budget Speech:

"During the last decade Guyana's strong macroeconomic performance has contributed to a reduction in public debt levels and sustained poverty reduction."

Guyana will be celebrating 48 years as an independent nation. Those leaders who led the Independence struggle had a vision for Guyana, and we as their heirs have a patriotic responsibility to ensure the accelerated growth of our country in all areas of endeavour to make that vision a reality. All of us want to live in a country where our needs are met and where the young in particular will have their dreams and aspirations fulfilled.

If we want the young people of this country to stay and develop we have to stop perpetuating these negative and divisive acts which are impeding our progress.

The people's National Congress (PNC) had the opportunity to rule this country for nearly three decades through rigged elections, undemocratic and dictatorial rule. Members of the PNC in the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) partnership seem to have forgotten that. They held on fiercely to power whether it was by overseas voting or by the Army takeover of the ballot boxes.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government on the other hand have the opportunity to govern but the difference here is that we are doing so by democratic rule.

We all aspire to see a better Guyana but yet when a transformative project like the Amaila Falls becomes possible our Opposition, who instead of being patriotic and innovative, opted to strangle the project. You keep harping about the cost of living and everything else, but we all know that unless we have cheaper electricity we will not be able to advance the developmental agenda as quickly as we want.

The Opposition sought to create havoc when the progressive increase was made for electricity in Linden in 2012. *[Interruption]* I am my own woman; I follow no one. This year \$3.2 billion has been provided to meet the cost of maintaining the electricity subsidy in Linden and Kwakwani so that 10,500 electricity customers in Region 10 can continue to benefit from \$23,000 monthly for electricity consumer. Compare this to the \$3.7 billion to benefit 170,000 of Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) customers and their families.

The Hon. Members in the Opposition have been putting up roadblocks all along, using all means possible to thwart development.

When will you stop being obstructionists and start behaving responsibly and constructively? When? Even before the debate started you were putting up boulders and stone walls. The problem is you had operated in an age when no one had access to information, because you silenced dissent. Today, you have access to information, hence the ability to scrutinize and to cuss us out.

Budget 2014 provides for increases in the social sectors which have been a trend of all previous PPP/C budgets. This Hon. Member Vanessa Kissoon is one of the principles of Dr. Jagan when he spoke about 'people being at the centre of development'.

We have changed the order of spending by ensuring that more money is spent on health, education and housing, rather than on propaganda and the machinery for the suppression of the people. We have provided subsidy over the years for electricity, provided loans for students, and made lands affordable for the citizens of this country. Where can you buy a piece of land for US\$250 for low income bracket? Tell me which part of the world can you do it? **[Mr. Greenidge:** Not here.] It was here. Dr. Jagan did not allow the bauxite industry to fall apart when he got into office. Millions of United States dollars were voted annually to ensure people kept their jobs. It is the same argument for the sugar industry. We do not want people to lose

their jobs. Perhaps the old attitude and belief still lingers with the Opposition, that sugar workers should still remain bare-footed and ignorant.

I was shocked to hear the comment made by Hon. Keith Scott when he said, and I quote:

"No money spent on projects will deliver a better life for people".

It is such a backward comment. But you should not be surprised because the Hon. Member is now joined in Opposition with those who failed for 28 years to deliver a better life for people. Your great brother-in law, Hon. Member, must be turning in his grave.

What about the initiatives of Linden Economic Advancement Fund (LEAF) and Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) which provided assistance to the people of Linden? What about the massive housing drive in Amelia's Ward? Who built it? Did not people of the area benefit from jobs as masons, painters, carpenters, truckers, and etcetera? Please do not repeat this fallacious comment. Return to your earlier way of thinking before you became politically contaminated.

Budget 2014 provides additional assistance to the elderly, job creation for young people, assistance to children going to school, access to credit, among others which were alluded to by other speakers. We applaud the initiative to keep Guyana clean. I, personally, am ready and willing to be part of this initiative on a voluntary basis. This is something which is needed, and we do hope that this one will not fall on your chopping block. *[Interruption]* As a matter of fact the nice up Guyana started since 1998. You were not even around.

The Opposition have requested answers to numerous questions on various Government policies, and they have been receiving them. Rather than chopping, you can do the correct thing by monitoring the process which is the role of the Opposition. You are not the elected Government; we still have the constitutional right to run this country. You can choose to vote against, but we have the responsibility to govern.

We were reminded by Hon. Joe Hamilton of the improvements and initiatives of the health sector when he spoke. The Parliamentary Sectoral Committee visited four Hospitals - Leonora, West Demerara Regional, Diamond Diagnostic and the Mahaicony Hospital. We went, we saw, we

made recommendations and we were satisfied with the outcome of that visit. And all Members of that team agreed.

A social worker from the Campbellville Health Centre speaks glowingly of the difference which they are making to the lives of people. She did not complain about the money but reminded that she was there to serve. I had the opportunity to visit the Georgetown Hospital as well, and I am pleased with the improvements and services that are being offered. Of course, there are lapses from time to time which have to be reduced by improving management.

I want to congratulate the Minister of Health and the Ministry for the various initiatives taken to improve women's health. These initiatives were already alluded to by the Hon. Minister Dr. Ramsaran. Effective management at the Regional hospitals in collaboration with the Regions will definitely see improvement in the services which are provided.

Budget 2014 allocates a sum of \$13.7 billion which is budgeted to improve roads and bridges of which \$12.9 billion will be spent on roads and \$844.2 million will be spent on bridges.

Expansion of our roads is critical since there has been an increase of vehicular traffic. In the late 80s there were 15,000 vehicles on the road and by 1992 that increased to 18,000. In 2013 all vehicles including agricultural, motor cycle, ATV's Buses, Lorries, cars, vans, pick-ups, jeeps etc. amounts to 128,000. *[Interruption]* Mr. Harmon, Hon. Member, I think you should think about that as you criticise the roads. This excludes bicycles, horse driven and donkey carts and all the containers that we see daily on the road.

As one of the Regional Representatives from Region 4 I wish to refer to some major Development Projects which were undertaken by the Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of Housing for this Region. They are as follows:

- The construction of the four-lane access road to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) on the East Bank Demerara four-lane highway as well as the widening of the East Coast Highway. These projects will continue.
- A study for the new Demerara Bridge has been completed, and already Government has invited expressions of interest for a public-private partnership for its construction.

- An additional \$338 million is allocated for critical works to extend the life of the Demerara Harbour Bridge.

The sum of \$1,021.020 billion was allocated for seventy-six roads in 2013. Thirty five (35) roads were completed to the tune of \$351.638 million with forty-one at varying levels of completion.

The Ministry of Housing under the Community Roads Improvement Programme (CRIP)

Programme has completed the following community roads:

- NDC, Unity/Vereening - \$494.452.million were spent on 32 community roads;
- Mon Repos /La Reconnaissance - \$248 million were spent on 31 roads;
- Enmore/Hope NDC - \$180.426 million for 15 roads;
- Golden Grove /Diamond - \$193.343 million on 14 roads;
- Haslington /Grove \$230.708 million for 18 community roads;
- Industry/Plaisance NDC \$318.814 million were spent.

In 2013, Central Housing and Planning Authority (CHPA) expended \$5.28 billion to develop 4,668 lots in nine areas on the East Bank of Demerara. All of these are on-going projects.

In terms of Sanitation Improvement, \$600 million is allocated to improve Georgetown sanitation.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes within which to conclude.

Mrs. Chandarpal: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The moneys allocated to the development of more housing schemes, provision of water supply, improvement in the drainage and irrigation along with all of the initiatives taken by the various Government ministries will improve the lives of citizens as we continue in the task of making Guyana a better place for all Guyanese. The dream of making our country a better place is fast becoming a reality. Of course, there are problems, but these will have to be resolved in order to move Guyana forward.

4.09 p.m.

In response to the ATV issue that was raised by the Hon. Member Ms. Marcello, I want to say that the six ATVs were handed over in November, 2013. Meetings were held on 29th March, 2014 in Cato and the senior councillor came to the meetings with his ATV to meet the Minister. I just want you to correct that misinformation that the Hon. Member said.

Once again, I wish to congratulate the Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Singh and his capable staff of the Minister of Finance. I commend the Budget and call on the Opposition to really put Guyana first and give support to the forward looking Budget 2014. I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member. Hon. Members, I now invite Ms. Rennita Williams, Regional representative for Region 1, Barima/Waini, to address the House. Thank you.

Ms. Williams: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my first presentation in this Hon. House on the 2014 Budget, themed "*A better Guyana for all Guyanese.*"

After listening to the Hon. Member on the opposite side of the House, I am not convinced that this budget is a people's budget. It might be better for some, a few maybe, but certainly not for all. The pressing questions that are frequently asked are: Where is the money to be spent, who benefits and what is the impact? A National Budget should be for the development of the whole nation, but we see, at the regional level, poor services, especially for residents of the hinterland.

I listened to Hon. Member Mr. Ronald Bulkan and I felt that he was referring to the conditions of residents of my home, Region 1. It is now clear to me then, that all the hinterland regions are being neglected and suffering at the hands of an uncaring Government. How can the Government face the residents of hinterland communities, where year after year living conditions deteriorate, while they read and hear about lavish lifestyles on the Coastal for a few?

My presentation will focus on the following areas: Infrastructure, Economical Development, Public Security, Education and Health Services, since I am proud a representative for the voices of the people in Region 1, Barima Waini.

On infrastructure, through the Ministries of Local Government and Regional Development, there are major defects in the quality of works delivered in the region. Hence, the people in the region continue to suffer. Let me draw this House's attention to an issue that continues to affect the residents in Region 1. As it relates to usage of bridges in Santa Rosa Village, Moruca and San

Jose Revetment, the residents find difficulties carrying in trades-off and other activities when they have to use these bridges. Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to refer especially to the bridge which continues to be highly contentious, based on the substandard works carried out by contractors.

Recently, we read and heard from the voices of concerned residents in Moruka in the Month of January, 2014, after several millions were spent on the revetment in Kumaka/Moruka. Numerous complaints have been made to correct the substandard works on the Kumaka/Moruka, both at the local and national levels, but to date no attention/action has been taken, so the residents continues to suffer.

On Hinterland Roads, there is a budgetary allocation of \$1 billion towards the rehabilitation of critical arteries. However, there is no mention of works to be done in Region 1. The roads in Region 1 are commonly referred to as "dry weather roads". The Kwebanna Road, whenever it rains the roadways becomes slushy, almost impassable. The Matthews Ridge road is in a bad state, this is as a result of the poor work done by the contractor and poor supervision by the regional officials.

I now turn my attention to Housing and Water, which remains a major problem to the hinterland communities. Allow me to highlight the few communities that are currently accessing water from those systems Port Kaituma- six pump stations; Barabina Village - one functional pump station and two non-functional pump stations; White Water- one pump station; Waramuri- one pump station; and Kamwatta -one pump station.

Currently, that pump station at Kamwatta is in dire need of repairs. I am calling on the Minister of Finance to direct funds to solve these problems. The population in Region 1 exceeds 4,000; hence, the systems that I referred to earlier as inadequate for the region. Owing to the fact that the potable water is not accessible through pipelines, students at learning institutions are made to pump water from wells into tanks in order to go about their daily chores.

Energy and power; on the issue of energy and power, there is no provision in Budget 2014 to improvement of such services in Region 1. In 2013, works had commenced on the provision of electricity services at Barabina. However, there has been cessation of these works as a result of the condition of the road and the promised bridge that was to be built.

We are discussing Estimates of 2014. I am unaware of any consultation which was done with my people of Region 1, Barima Waini, as there are huge gaps in education, which the budget has failed to address. These are the issues that people hoped would have been addressed: reconstruction of the Morawhanna teachers living quarters; our nursery school children and teachers are struggling with inhumane lavatory conditions. Regarding education delivery, there is no provision towards those, as I mentioned earlier.

The Minister has omitted to mention the provision of transportation in Region 1. Let me inform this Hon. House that the majority of the residents in Region 1 get around using private transportation, which is very costly on the residents. However, mention has been made for the sum of \$10,000 for transportation per child. While this sounds noble, what the Government should seek to do is to ensure that transportation is provided for our school aged children to and from school, since they pay \$2,000, return by boat and \$3,000 return by car per day. This suggests that the \$10,000 will be insufficient, due to the high rate of transportation costs in the hinterland. I join with the Hon. Member Mrs. Dawn Hastings-Williams in inviting the honourable Minister of Education to visit Region 1 and its riverine areas

I now turn my attention to the provisions in this year's budget allocated for the elderly. This I deemed as a total insult to the elderly in Region 1 and Guyana at large. As I alluded to earlier, the high transportation cost in the region will ensure that the elderly will continue to remain in the same position they were some two years ago.

Another concern of the residents and people of Region 1 is the demarcation of land and land titling for Amerindians. To this end, I do not recognise provision in Budget 2014 to have these issues addressed in hinterland communities; rather, there is a proposed provision to be expended on the construction of 100 hubs in 100 villages to facilitate the One Laptop Per Family (OPLF) initiatives. I am sure that the indigenous leaders would have expected that their land issues would have been addressed in 2014. However, indigenous leaders have accused the Government of snatching their traditional land through poor demarcation, saying some areas and communities were demarcated without their knowledge. It is only fair that this budget should have made provision to address land extension in indigenous communities. Moneys were spent to commence the project, but it is not yet completed. To date no land titles or extensions have been given to the certain communities.

Regarding economic development; no provision has been made for Region 1. It must be noted however that Region 1's sustenance is heavily dependent on farming, fishing, timbering, mining and logging. Yet, some \$1.5 billion is has been provided for other regions that do similar activities.

Public security - life remains unsafe for residents in Region 1. Port Kaituma a thriving sub-region in Region 1, but persons are vulnerable, yet nothing is being done to improve their security 2014. In 2013, some \$17.3 billion was expended, but Region 1 did not benefit significantly from this allocation. This allocation budgeted for 2014 has increased by \$2.2 billion dollars, yet there is no mention of Region 1 benefitting from these allocations.

Health Delivery - this brings me to my final point on Health Services Delivery in the region. Residents continue to face poor Health Services. Take for instance, the Kumaka District Hospital, that institution is currently providing services to the entire sub-region of Moruka, without a functioning ambulance. Hence, our residents are left at the mercy of private transportation to get to medical institutions. In most cases, residents are forced to leave the region to seek further medical attention at Charity, since the sub-region does not have the specialised equipment readily available.

The health centre at Matthews Ridge is in dire need of repairs. At the moment there is need for a mortuary. What we have now, in 2014, is just an ice box. Another area of concern that residents face on a daily basis in the region is the supply of medical supplies, which is being done on an irregular basis. Yet in perusing the estimates, it seems that the provision for improvement of Health Services Delivery for residents in Region 1. Rather, it seems to favour more purchasing of equipment.

In conclusion, I am calling on the Government of this country to have the budgetary allocations for Region 1 reviewed so that relief can come about for the residents of Region 1.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member. Hon. Members, I now invite Mr. Komal Chand to make a presentation.

Mr. Chand: Cde. Speaker and Members of the National Assembly, I take the opportunity to support the 2014 Budget presented to this National Assembly by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr Ashni Singh.

In this Budget 2014 presentation, the Minister has indeed covered a lot of ground regarding the country's economic state. The statistics provided, though they can be overwhelming, give us a better understanding and a clearer picture of where we are at this time. In several areas, we see real growth and I join in applauding such achievements.

Indeed, given the growth rate of last year, the size of the proposed Budget and its projections for the months ahead, the trend seems to be upbeat and positive. Budget 2014 indicates consistency. Given its thrust, focus and intention, in my general assessment, the Government is staying the course. The innovations it envisages fit into the course charted. With greater certainty, we can today say that we are more and more distancing ourselves from that time when our economic stagnation, hardship condition and a bleak future were aspects of life's realities. Hopefully, such experiences will remain in our past.

The Budget's theme –“*A better Guyana for all Guyanese*” grips interest. It implies for me, inclusivity. And, the words carefully chosen, I believe, should be emphasised and I urge, be our guide in our economic and other endeavours. When considered alongside last year's theme, we get a lofty political statement, one which is not only relevant, but also, which, in light of our current exceptional politics, deserve our adherence.

The Minister's speech informed us that the economic crisis that hit developed capitalist countries, since around 2008, may be receding. There are signs of an economic 'recovery'. While this should be taken as a positive development, given the global reach of that crisis and its attendant hardships, one cannot ignore the other manifestations of that crisis. We need to enquire for instances, whether the expected 'recovery' will restore homes to the millions of the homeless who are forced to live in night shelters, streets and tents. Or how soon will it provide employment with decent wages and give back dignity to the millions of jobless, the ranks of whom will increase this year, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Global Employment Trends 2014 Report. We should also be aware that the streets of many countries are still alive with mass demonstrations of working people and students who are struggling to shake

off the austerity burdens placed on their backs by the ruling elites. A 'recovery' should no doubt impact such realities, but it seems that they will not soon or easily go away. Importantly, let us not fail to see the dangers and traps of countries that chose the path of neo-liberalism.

As we follow economic questions and how they are playing out on the international stage, we should be mindful of other issues that warrant our attention. Allow me, Cde. Speaker, to refer to one; this year marks 100 years since the First World War started. It was an imperialist war that brought in its wake, the slaughter of millions and untold destruction.

After this, there was the Second World War and now-a-days we see an aggravated world situation where a prolonged economic/financial crisis provides fodder for a pervasive war machine that is roaming and spreading conflicts in several regions of our planet. Will these military activities trigger off another world conflagration? The threat is there: we must work to avoid it. Otherwise, our dreams for "*A better Guyana for all Guyanese*" and a prosperous and productive future, can go up in flames.

The Budget, once again, puts much emphasis on the Social Sectors. We know that these sectors are linked to the quality of life we enjoy. Expenditure in these sectors is probably the clearest expression and our best indicator that the working people and poor have not been forgotten. The sum of \$85.7 billion is allocated to these sectors. Given our development status, this is not a small amount. It demonstrates the Government's commitment to ease the hardships of our hard pressed people.

The housing sector continues to show progress. Thousands of Guyanese today have become home owners. It is an indicator of a rise in living standard and here the Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: 2008-2012 states, when it is interestingly observed, that "more than three-quarters of the poor had their own dwellings in 2006 with adequate rooms for occupants and bathrooms." The introduction of the Mortgage Interest Relief initiative last year, which supports the Commercial Banks and the New Building Society loan policies, makes home ownership no longer a luxury. It has been brought within the reach of the working man and woman. That worthy goal of the past, to house the nation, is today, increasingly being realised.

As with housing, similar strides have been made in the water sector. Over the year, much was accomplished in the installation, modernisation and rehabilitation of this sector. In this respect,

the Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2008-2012 states: “the significant progress made, especially in hinterland and rural coastal communities, has resulted in about 63% of the poor having access to potable water.” By 2006, some 91% of households in Guyana had access to safe drinking water, a significant increase, as against 50% in 1991, according to our Guyana Millennium Development Goals Report 2011.

The same positive trends can be seen in Education, Health and in regard to Pension. These are improvements and expansions that are on-going. Taken cumulatively, they have a major impact on poverty. Thus, in the 22 years of the PPP/Civic Administration, 39% of our population were taken out of poverty, according to the Guyana Millennium Development Goals’ Report 2011. With this Budget, I believe, there will be a further reduction in the level of poverty in our country.

With such noteworthy accomplishments, we cannot turn the Nelson's eye to the major role of the State, its institutions and the political leadership. In their hands are some of the biggest enterprises of the country and they managed them reasonably well and in the people's interest. Often, things are taken for granted and we fail to give the deserving recognition of the state, the importance and performance level of those who must ensure the various systems work. In this regard, we must be wary of those who would wish to make everything, including Health and Education, into commodities, whereby profit rather than people's welfare and well-being are being pursued.

Sugar - in the recent weeks and months, much attention has been paid to our nation's sugar industry. Such interest, I think, is not unexpected when the significance and enormity of the industry is taken into account. Certainly, the industry's performance in recent times has raised red flags and has caused many, especially the stakeholders, to become concerned. It has caused, at times, persons to call for the industry's closure and/or privatisation.

Lately, we have heard of suggestions that the industry should move away from sugar production and venture into other areas such as ethanol and aquaculture. I share the concerns, but do not agree with the solutions advanced. It is true that production has fallen and GuySuCo could not have met its 240,000 tonnes production target in 2013, especially when note is taken of its field and factories capacities and capabilities. But, I hold the view that the several factors responsible

for this poor performance can be identified and ought to be addressed in a more purposeful way. The Budget Speech identified some of the steps to be taken at this time and I wish to emphasise the importance of appointing a new Board of Directors for GuySuCo in these challenging times.

I am optimistic that the industry's turnaround is within our possibilities. Such a feat has been done before. Recall that between the latter 80's and early 90's, average production dwindled to 154,740 tonnes between 1988 and 1991. However, between 2002 and 2004, sugar production average 320,000 tonnes of sugar, the gradual reversal beginning in 1992. This industry can do this again. I am certain.

At this time, we cannot fail to recall that the industry remains an important and intrinsic component of not just our economy, but of Guyana's social fabric. Its development and progress over the last three and a half centuries are largely responsible for thousands of slaves and indentured labourers being brought to our country. For their descendants, the industry has become their economic lifeline.

Today, we should not downplay the fact that even at this time the industry continues to serve our country in a multifaceted way, which the Minister reminds us of in his Budget Speech. In one way or another, tens of thousands of Guyanese depend on the industry's operations.

At this time and with so much at stake, it is incumbent upon us that we continue to actively support the industry. In passing let me recall the industry's direct support to our country through the extractive and onerous Sugar Levy, which saw millions of dollars being channelled to the Consolidated Fund. Its role in producing thousands of artisans from its Port Mourant Training Centre or the provision of land for housing, the Government has shown its supportive hand. I urge that we all do so too.

In so doing consideration should be given to the disbursements from the European Union (EU) Accompanying Measures Programme, which is intended essentially, to sustain and help the industry to become competitive and sustainable once again. For those who have a negative view of the industry's prospects, it is unfortunate. It is still a viable venture and good guidance and leadership can regain its rightful place in our nation's economy.

Region 3 –as a Member of Parliament representing Region 3, obviously, its many-sided activities are of special interest to me. Region 3, as we know, is rather extensive. It is the third most populated of our 10 regions. Two factors that are unhelpful for the administration and in carrying out our representational work, but it is a region where its citizens are enterprising. As a neighbour and with ease of access to our capital, the residents are a main contributor to Georgetown's many-sided activities.

4.39 p.m.

The region, itself, is thriving. Workers, farmers, the self-employed and small family enterprises are the mainstay of its economic life, making their invaluable contribution to our overall growth and up keeping a vibrant economy.

Social and physical infrastructure works by the Government and the regional administration are, today, standard activities within the region. Over the years, such activities have served to change the environment and general looks of various villages, while, at the same time, enhancing our country's well-being. The focus on infrastructure, in practical terms, means paved streets, excavation of canals, extension and equipping health outposts and hospitals to facilitate health services to reach more people, rehabilitation and construction of schools going side by side with expanding water services and distribution of house lots, more so, at La Parafaitte Harmonie and Tuschen.

As with last year, this budget promised projects that will continue to see improvements in Region 3 and to usher in more changes. In the coming period, we look forward, eagerly, to the completion of the athletic track at Leonora, the construction of a new power plant at Vreed-en-Hoop and the beginning of works on the road from Vreed-en-Hoop to Parika. Hopefully, too, we may also see progress on the stated intention to build a new Demerara Harbour Bridge.

Looked at in totality, Region 3 is continuing to grow. Ups and downs, notwithstanding, in my region, progress is continuing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes within which to conclude.

Mr. Chand: Cde. Speaker, thank you.

You may recall in my last year's intervention on the budget that I raised the call for a national minimum wage to be implemented. Since this progressive measure was introduced in our country, I wish to express appreciation at the introduction of a national minimum wage. For those employers who may be reluctant to implement it, I now take the opportunity to urge the Minister of Labour that, with the set up mechanisms, systemic and legal, his Ministry must ensure full enforcement.

Tax reform, at this time, I feel, constrained to express disappointment that the income tax threshold has not been further adjusted. Moreover, I am also disappointed to learn that the tax reform, alluded to, two years ago, has not been realised. I urge the Minister to intervene here and by the time of the next budget the long awaited reform will see the light of day.

In conclusion, in his speech, the Minister of Finance called attention to a couple of historic accomplishments. Allow me to add another, Comrade Speaker. This is, I believe, the eighth budget presentation of the Minister. For the PPP/C's administration, he is the longest serving Finance Minister, a signal accomplishment. It is notable also, for yet another reason, that he has held on to that post when it is generally believed that Ministers of Finance have a short life span in governments. I congratulate him.

Apart from the recognition of personal accomplishments, sparkling as those maybe, our history can also be enduringly served by heeding other calls - the calls for integrity, for national unity, for social progress, among other just causes. This I say, let us face the challenges ahead and thus cause a brighter future for all Guyanese.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I now invite the Hon. Member Dr. Karen Cummings to give her inaugural, otherwise known as maiden, speech in the House. I do not think it is necessary to mention that there are protocols attached to a Member's maiden speech but with what gives in the House recently, I think, I need to remind Members that our new Member is entitled to the undivided attention of the entire House. Dr. Cummings, it is my pleasure to invite you to address the House on the budget.

Dr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I am delightfully honoured and cheerfully thankful to be given this opportunity to speak and to contribute to the Budget 2014 entitled, *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*. This caption comes close to APNU's Manifesto theme *A Good Life for All Guyanese*. Permit me to sound a warning, that the APNU party will not be easily led, flattered, bribed or terrified by such a move but will analyse the Budget 2014 rationally and carefully and offer constructive criticisms and the necessary recommendations in order to move Guyana forward.

I do join with my colleagues to say that Budget 2014, which was prepared and presented to this noble House by the Hon. Minister of Finance, lacks luster and has omissions. It was certainly not the best financial report. In fact, the cover page, notwithstanding some excerpts which appeared to be plagiarised, has shown and signalled the intention to the Guyanese populace that the future looks dismal and depressing. I staggered from what I saw and was bewildered by what I heard from the Hon. Members from the opposite side. I can only say that the Government's Budget 2014 is full of ironies and eye water. The ironies put the country in a state of anxiety but the eye water exposes APNU's depth of the Government's callousness.

This minority Government brags a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanding 5.2%, real growth compared to a global growth of 3.6%, an inflation rate of 0.9% and a possible projected growth of 5.6% for 2014. It is a Government that boasts of surpluses and savings but leaves the masses and working poor in a state of dispossession, and the jobless poor in bewilderment and hopelessness. Development is a many-sided process, therefore it does not only involve an increase in material wealth but must include the general welfare of the citizenry.

On the matter of eye water, from the evidence given to us, we have seen that the Government's mathematics has gone south of nation building because its leadership morality is sour to good governance which embraces accountability, transparency, disclosure and redress. The Government has not a single clue that the wealth of any nation is rooted in the health and well-being of its people. Nation building appears to be calculated and measured on which Ministry gets what and which supporter gets how much, but the nation's health care system is in need of rescue and recovery.

It is my intention to share some concerns, to make some recommendations and to offer gain changing solutions that would put Guyana's health care system on the road to recovery. The wish

is for the Government to implement initiatives that will reflect a 20/20 vision of health care for Guyana.

Concern 1. Nowhere in the Budget 2014 is provision made for the improvement in the socio-economic status of the health care providers. Theory and evidence, yes, Mr. Speaker, the praxis has shown that carefully designed performance, based approaches, can align the incentives of the health workers with the societal goals of improving the population's health which is a prerequisite for our nation's development.

Health care workers are finding it difficult to make ends meet. Only a week ago approximately 19 nurses did not report for duty at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), owing to the unavailability of money as they struggle to pay utility, transportation, food and rent bills with the meagre salaries they earn. What kind of family would allow its members to go hungry? What prevents the Government, which claims to be caring, from doing something about it? In our context, monetary motivation is still the preferred manner of encouragement for the health care workers, who provide preventive, curative, promotional or rehabilitative services in a systematic way to individuals, families or communities.

These health care workers look forward for the further 10%, after tax, increase in their salaries which had been budgeted for them one year ago. The health care workers have been deprived and are still to be paid their earned money. The health care workers look forward with great expectation to the said emolument with the requisite interest per annum.

The recommendation is that the Government provides significant improvement of benefits to the health sector workers to enhance retention and guarantee a higher level commitment and efficiency.

Concern 2. Mention was made relative to the extension of the wards of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, however, the Hon. Minister has not provided the methods that would be used to recruit more nurses or informed this august body of the anticipated additional burden which will be placed on the already drained and depleted nursing staff as a result of this expansion of service delivery. The *Kaieteur News*, page 11 of March 8, 2014, stated that over \$364 million of the taxpayers money was spent on nursing

education annually but the graduates are lost to migration to foreign countries. The taxpayers are certainly not looking forward to a brain drain but brain circulation.

To establish the point of shortages of trained nurses, it must be emphasised that out of the 120 eligible nurses from 255, who had enrolled for the three-year nursing course, less than 50% proved eligible to write the finals and out of the 50%, who were qualified to write the final exams, 15% passed, and in one county less than 1% of the nurses passed. This situation is a direct reflection of the large student to tutor ratio among other factors such as overcrowding, insufficient training materials and inadequate infrastructure. These are not nurses but these are postgraduate nurses who wrote the exams. Twenty-nine postgraduate nurses wrote exams and five passed. Thirty medex wrote their exams and one passed, and in this case the curriculum was not changed. This scenario leaves this noble House in uncertainty regarding the requirement of adequate nursing staff that will be available to aid the provision of safe motherhood, to attend to high risk mothers and babies who are being delivered.

It is recommended that the technical capabilities of the health care workers be strengthened, at all levels, through training and retraining, with the major emphasis being placed on strengthening supervisory skills.

Concern 3. In the *Kaieteur News*, page 11 of March 27, 2014, UNICEF's representative, Marianne Flach, stated that Guyana is battling to achieve the elusive Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 4 and 5 which address specifically the reduction of infant and maternal mortality. Neonatal mortality, she said, is still a critical issue.

There are health indicators. Neonatal mortality rate – it means less than 28 days of the infant - the value here in 2004 was 15 per 1,000, which is higher than usual. Infant mortality rate, 2004, was 20.8 per 1,000. Infant mortality in 2013 was 34.4 per 1,000, it is increasing. Maternal mortality rate in 2004 was 115.9 per 100,000. Mortality rate in 2010 was 280 per 100,000. There is the increase all of the time.

While the construction and outfitting of the proposed maternity waiting homes in Lethem and Bartica is a good gesture, this facility should be more decentralised with trained staff to respond to the growing needs in this area of health care service. The nine-bed Dr. C. C. Nicholson

Hospital at Nabaclis, on the East Coast, should be staffed with more midwives to allow for a twenty-four-hour service.

Concern 4, the specialty hospital. Mentioned on page 40, section 4.78 of the Hon. Finance Minister's speech:

“Efforts continue to advance the construction of Guyana's first specialty hospital which aims to deliver tertiary level health care not previously available to our people.”

From time immemorial Guyana boasts five levels of health care service - level 1 - the health post, level 2 – the health centre, level 3 - the district hospital, level 4 - the regional hospital and level 5 - a tertiary level institution with specialists. It is a referral and a teaching hospital and I speak of none other than the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

I think the wise thing would be to develop the already and existing tertiary level institution, which will result in less cost for the taxpayers. The specialist programmes, which are done at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation with the University of Guyana, the Universities of Vander Belt and Ohio in the USA and the Columbia University in Canada, have begun to train specialists in areas of Orthopaedics, General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Paediatrics and in Obstetrics and Gynaecology to name a few. Those should be sustained.

The remuneration package of such doctors should be attractive with specialist salaries. The doctors should be encouraged and deployed to work in the three counties where they would be able to manage the patients efficiently and monitor them accurately. This would significantly reduce the incidents of patients arriving at the GPHC at a late stage of their illnesses. They should spearhead procedures such as mammograms, pap smears and visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) among others.

Concern 5, emphasis on the specialty hospital rather than primary care. There has been a renewal of primary health care focus in the lead up to having healthy people and healthy communities. In fact, this approach has been touted to strengthen society's ability to reduce inequities and it is as an essential condition for meeting commitments, including the United Nations' millennium declaration. The latter addresses the social determinants of health and the achievement of the highest attainable level of health by everyone.

We recommend that primary care service should be complemented by different levels of specialised care, whether it is ambulatory or inpatient, but the focus should be at this time on improving the primary care system.

The APNU agrees, and joins with the authors of the Integrated Prevention and Control of Non Communicable Disease Strategic Plan 2013-2020, that there should be wellness centres and primary care services to promote greater integration of services to meet the needs of remote communities, including environmental surveillance.

The APNU asks this august body to pay more attention to primary health care which would have wider scope and greater impact in promoting health and human development, rather than the deliberate orchestration to put in place mechanisms to foster the distribution of patronage to those who are perceived to be loyal or satisfied certain prescribed conditions.

Concern 6. Page 42, section 4.84 speaks about recognising the growing incidence of domestic violence and having a service to focus on the prevention and management of suicidal behaviours. We are fatigued with rhetoric and grandiloquence.

APNU recommends that there be proper data and documents to capture the factors and aetiologies that have attributed to this social problem, for example, the percentage of persons who are frustrated and jobless, the percentage of persons who are engaged in substance abuse and the age ranges of such persons who commit suicide. APNU recommends that this information be provided so that a matrix can be developed to look at the host, environment and agent for to address the cause and thus provide prevention strategies at a primary, secondary or tertiary level.

Concern 7. The Budget 2014 has not addressed the numerous cases of early childhood and teenage sex molestation which health care workers are asked to examine weekly or monthly, especially those who have teenage children. One police division had over 100 such cases in a year, the assaults ranging from the formative year of the child to the early to mid teens. These young children and teenagers are at risk of developing cervical cancers owing to early sex and with multiple partners in addition to sexually transmitted diseases.

APNU suggests that there be a structured guidance programme in schools and health clubs to address these issues. Also there be a revival of the child & youth friendly schools to disseminate information on health and what the children and youths need to know in life.

Concern 8. There has been an increased in human capital in the health sector by the return of 278 Cuban trained doctors but insight was not sought and adequate provision was not made for the young doctors, as they are being deployed and being made to work and function at facilities and health centres which promote a breach of patient privacy and confidentiality, as working space is inadequate, and supportive supervision is not encouraged.

The majority Opposition believes that visits should be made to the health centres with the expectation of addressing the concerns of confidentiality and making these young doctors comfortable to execute their functions.

Concern 9, the ambulances. One hundred and seventeenth million dollars has been allocated for the purchase of 12 ambulances. The Hon. Minister did not say if they were new or reconditioned ambulances. We are unsure if the words “new ambulances” will in effect be a minibus with a stretcher and Ambu bag. We request further information as to whether or not it will be a real ambulance that can sustain a patient’s life in the case of an emergency.

We are recommending that ambulances be sent to the hinterland and in areas in which they are needed most and that they be fully equipped with life saving medical equipment so that they can really be used as a mobile intensive care ambulance.

Concern 10, procurement. This topical issue has been addressed adequately by the Hon. Dr. George Norton. Concerns have been raised about the drug procurement and the New Guyana Pharmaceutical Corporation (New GPC), being the sole supplier of the nation’s drugs to public health facilities, the sourcing of medical drugs and pharmaceuticals and the implications.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have five minutes to wrap up.

Dr. Cummings: While I am yet speaking, there is an insufficiency of essentials such as saline drops and infusion liquids, panadol tablets, soma. If a person suffers from arthritis that person is in trouble. The ordinary man on the street has to pay a higher price for medication, not only in the case of topical drugs such as ketoconazole and myconazole, but for other important drugs.

The *Kaieteur News*, January 5 2014, revealed that His Excellency, President Donald Ramotar publicly blasted the health sector over the incidence of shortages of drugs and wastage of pharmaceuticals at hospitals and other health facilities, nationwide. He said:

“We spend billions of dollars every year to buy drugs yet we are confronted with shortage of drugs at health facilities nationwide”.

He went on to say:

“Millions of dollars of expired drugs are written off and dumped in large quantities, this is totally unacceptable.”

There had been two studies published approximately a year ago in journal on malaria that emphasised the use of fake or expired drugs in our non-governmental commercial sector which had led to deaths. We would hope that good sense would prevail and that the drugs to combat malaria, which are stated in the treatment guidelines, will be the correct and genuine drug being available and given to the Guyanese populace.

It is the expectation of this august body that the procurement practices be strengthened and there be an increased oversight of the quality of consumables. The clarion call goes out for the establishment of the Public Procurement Commission.

My last concern, sanitation. It does seem that the Hon. Minister of Finance, and by extension the minority Government, is bent on not getting it right. Over \$2.5 billion is allocated to the sector on the sanitation system which is established for the management and disposal of municipal solid waste and sewage. However, no plan has been posited or evidence of consultations being made among non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the residents, the business sector or the city council as to the way forward for an integrated solid waste management plan.

It is the wish that a plan be developed that will consider waste prevention, waste disposal and combustion or controlled burning and recycling and composting.

I will conclude by saying that the Budget 2014, which has been proposed, seeks to have us embrace the achievement of financial goals by clandestinely forbidding and disallowing the Guyanese people and the honourable House to identify wasteful expenditures.

The Budget 2014 disregards and has neglected the working poor and vulnerable. It attempts to focus on numbers rather than trying to have a direct impact on the quality of service being rendered. The spending projected does not reflect value for money.

I will reiterate that the Government's Budget 2014 is full of ironies and eye water. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Dr. Cummings, I would just like to say that at the commencement of the Tenth Parliament when I heard new Members, such as Mr. Bond, Dr. Persaud, Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Trevor Williams, I remarked myself that a star is born. I would like to say to you today that I believe that a star is born.

The other thing, which I would like to say, is that I am sure that Mrs. Backer would have been very proud to know that you have succeeded her. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members, we will take a break for one hour. I would also like to say that I needed to make an announcement in that at approximately 12.30 today Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, himself, came to the Parliament Office and tendered a letter of resignation addressed to yours truly. As Speaker, I have delayed making this announcement because I did believe, and still do believe, that, though tendered, that letter is not final and every effort should be made by all of us, collectively, to convince Mr. Sharma that he plays a very vital role in this House and that he is very much appreciated. I believe that I should make the announcement in that he tendered his resignation earlier today.

Thank you very much. We stand suspended for one hour.

Sitting suspended at 5.06 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.06 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The sitting is resumed.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr. Speaker, speaking way down on the list of speakers for the budget debate has its advantages and its disadvantage. It is an advantage in that I can refute some fabrications and it is a disadvantage in that you would limit me to only 20 minutes so I might not be able to complete my prepared speech. I will crave your indulgence, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The Speaker has to take responsibility for and get the blame for so many things, but I will take it. Let us see what we can do. We are making excellent time today. I have been actually giving Members more than their 15 or 20 minutes today. I will protect you. Go ahead, sir.

Dr. Mahadeo: Thank you, Sir. As I crave your indulgence, I will try my best to accomplish both, lest my constituents be dissatisfied.

I have to start with the speech made by the Hon. Dr. Cummings. I want to congratulate her on her maiden speech and I want to refer the Hon. Member to this document, which the Minister of Health was showing everyone yesterday, and to tell the Hon. Member that in this document there are topics such as situation assessment, strategic framework, strengthening the health system in Guyana through governance and leadership, human resource for health, health financing, strategic information, drugs and medical supplies, service delivery, addressing service priorities to improve health outcomes and planning for implementation. I think most of the issues she raised are answered in this document and I am sure the Hon. Minister of Health will make it available, like he promised, to every Member in this House.

As a practising doctor, I really disagree with the Hon. Member on the issue of not having a specialty hospital. A specialty hospital is a specialty hospital and it will do lots more than we can get the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) to do.

I would also talk about the ambulances because Region 6, last year, acquired one of the ambulances that were bought and I refer the Hon. Member to check the ambulances that are right outside as part of the ambulance brigade and she will see that they are not just minibuses with stretchers inside.

As I stand to speak on this Budget, I must say that I am proud to be a People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) parliamentarian, sitting on this side of the House, supporting a budget that takes care of Guyanese from all walks of life and at all stages of life, directly or indirectly, for example, the road on the East Bank of Berbice. Of course, this road is long overdue, but the residents will see the worst part of the road being completed this year. Thanks, Hon. Minister Benn and Minister Ashni Singh.

Whilst we could boast of reduction in maternal mortality and infant mortality, I join with my Minister of Health in saying that any avoidable death is one too many, whether it is a suicide, maternal death or an avoidable accident. I cannot say that all our staff are perfect, nor can I say that all our equipment are brand new, but I can proudly say we are certainly making progress.

I live and work in Region 6 but I serve in several different regions from time to time. I, therefore, speak with some degree of authority when I say that this Budget looks at all stages of life, whether it is the baby in the womb of the mother, who benefits from the antenatal clinics, the basic nutrition programme, the care towards a safe delivery, including the care of the newborn, even if they need neonatal care in a neonatal intensive care unit (ICU)...

Please allow me to divert a little bit to say we are making steady progress. Five years ago, we did not have an intensive care unit in Berbice. Two years ago, we did not have a neonatal intensive care unit in Berbice. Now, we have both and the statistics, so far, are very impressive. To answer the Hon. Member Ramayya who said that there are ICUs with no equipment or non-functional equipment, he could not have been referring to Berbice. I would be one of the first persons to say that we do not have a perfect system but then, Mr. Speaker, tell me where in this world there is an absolutely perfect system.

I cannot sit and hear someone say that the staff in the ICU are not trained. I wonder if the Hon. Member knows how many persons pass through the hands of these trained teams, recuperated and were discharged to go home to their loved ones. It was 226 persons last year. Does the Hon. Member know that the three-bed ICU is equipped with functioning cardiac monitors, three ICU beds, suction machines, ECG machines, ventilators and defibrillators? The neonatal intensive care unit is equipped with incubators, cardiac monitors, infusion pumps, atom phototherapy, suction pumps, *et cetera*. Training was done and the neonatal intensive care unit's equipment was donated by a distinguished Guyanese-born Canadian, Dr. Narsingh, and our thanks are expressed to him and his colleagues.

Hon. Member, I repeat the invitation I made last year to come and I will tell you the problems and how we in the Region are dealing with them or plan to deal with them. We make no secret of our problems. For us, every opinion matters and every suggestion is considered. That invitation is extended to all Members of this honourable House. I can give you a guided tour of our ICU

and the neonatal intensive care unit. These two departments are manned by doctors and nurses who have had special training, thanks to the Ministry of Health and GPHC. These include Dr. Ramsakal, Dr. Algoo, Dr. Harrinarine, Dr. Sharma and nurses Janath Hussein, Patterson, Van Nooten, *et cetera*.

From the care of the newborn, I continue with the childhood years and young adulthood with the 16 free vaccines that are provided by our hardworking primary healthcare workers, led by senior health visitor Terry Davis, who, in Region 6, led the team and again had 100% coverage of the children available for vaccines. Sir, I daresay that Guyana has performed well nationally but, again, Region 6 leads the pack.

For youths, there are youth-friendly health centres all across the Region and also all across the country. There youths meet, discuss youth issues, have computer access and they can even ask for guidance from the medical staff.

Let me use this opportunity, also, to mention the contribution that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport makes in this area. It has helped to improve the grounds and facilities to empower the youths. It has constructed a monument for the fallen sugar workers at Rose Hall, Canje. Please visit and pay tribute.

My Colleague Member of Parliament (MP) gave a hint of the grounds that benefitted from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. I want to share that grounds in Region 6 have been upgraded or are being fenced and, in some cases, being established, like in Courtland Village. I have the list here. This is always the dilemma: give all of the money to one or two grounds or share it and ask the community to take ownership. The latter was chosen and it works well in Berbice.

We are talking about facilities. There are facilities in Siparuta, Orealla, Scottsburg and New Amsterdam, Vrymens Erven, *et cetera*. By the first half of this year, these 32 facilities listed would benefit in Region 6 alone.

Let us move to the adult life and through middle age on to old age. Yes, Sir, we take care of our elderly. Here, I am not talking about pensions and subsidies of electricity and water alone, but healthcare. Four years ago, we started a three-pronged approach to care of the elderly in Region

6. The Berbice Regional Health Authority's (BRHA's) home based care programme, a programme that, as we have heard from the Hon. Joseph Hamilton, has now been implemented across the country.

Last year, we started the health and wellness army programme where volunteers are armed with eight months of training and provided with equipment to help manage the non-communicable diseases. The first batch graduated after eight months of training on 30th March, 2014 – fresh batch of Berbice health and wellness volunteers graduates. Each one of these volunteers will be given the responsibility to monitor and manage 15 chronic disease patients, mainly the elderly. As such, 210 persons are now benefitting as a result of this training. These volunteers report weekly to the hospital they are attached to. This will help us to keep tabs on patients and will encourage the patients to follow the rules of healthy living such as diet, exercise, medications, clinic visits, *et cetera*.

The third prong of the three-prong approach involves clinics dedicated to the elderly who are 65 years and older. Care of the elderly training was done by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), a very close partner of ours, and by the Ministry of Health. These clinics are being held across the Region. In today's *Kaieteur News*, there is an article captioned, "Region 6 gets roving elderly clinic."

Here, I pause to mention our other partners in the care of the elderly programme. They are Food for the Poor, which has partnered with us since the beginning, and the Guyana Medical Relief. We have managed to provide bedpans, urinals, walkers, crutches, diapers and disposable sheets and medications to all of our bed-ridden patients who need it and now the elderly who need it.

To help in managing the care of the elderly, we have several other partners – the No. 69/70 Community Development Group, No. 69 Mandir, Hampshire Women's Group, Canje Light House Mission, *et cetera*.

We do not believe that we can resolve all of these problems alone. We do take care of our elderly and we have communities willing to be a part of this vital task. I want, again, to invite you, Mr. Speaker, and all Members of this honourable House, especially those from Regions 5 and 6, to join with us at these clinics. We have things that you could also contribute to help in the care of the elderly by giving pep talks and talking about health issues.

At these clinics, we not only offer medical care but we look at social issues. The elderly also benefit from nail and hair care and things like foot massages.

I hope that not just because some Members of this honourable House are in the Opposition they do not want to see the good things that are happening in Berbice. Maybe they are not looking for anything good and have trained their eyes to see only bad and negative things. Do I need to refer you to the document that was shared out by the staff of the Parliament Office in which the Minister, Hon. Dr. Ramsaran, replied to questions I asked of him so that you could see some good being done? Refer to the answers on the question of the National Ophthalmology Hospital. Do I need to refer you to the fleet of ambulance that we now have? It was budgeted for last year and this year as well. Like I said, Region 6 got one. Outside, you can see some of them.

I also need to refer to the 2,323 visits by persons to the diabetic foot care clinic in the RHA, saving their limbs from amputation and improving the quality of life of these persons. I consulted and was advised that the words “lies” and “dishonesty” are unparliamentary so I will use instead the words “stranger to the truth”, if I may, or “truth bender”. I am glad I really did not get to speak yesterday so I have had some time to take a few deep breaths and quieten. I do not know why some Members massage the truth, bend the truth or are strangers to the truth. I asked the staff of the National Psychiatric Hospital to respond to some of the allegations of the Hon. Member Dr. Norton and these are some of the answers that I got, if I may be permitted to read it.

Problem: Grass is growing in the wards of the hospital.

Answer: “How can this be possible when the wards are all tiled and walk leading to each ward and the skirting of each ward is paved with concrete?”

Problem: There is water in the hospital only from 9.00 a.m. and none at night.

Answer: “Less than two years ago, a new pump was installed in the institution. This equipment is functioning well and serves the entire institution efficiently and effectively around the clock.”

Problem: The laundry department has no functioning machines.

Answer: “This department has two functioning washing machines.”

Problem: OT is non-existent.

Answer: “This is not so. This department is fully functional and can be attested to by the volume of work that is produced by patients on a regular basis. Not only craft is done, but patients attend therapy sessions five days per week. These sessions are geared to arouse their interest, courage, self-esteem and confidence to exercise mind and body in healthy activities, to overcome disability and to re-establish the capacity for industrial usefulness and social fulfilment.”

Here, I want to say that the Hon. Minister of Agriculture is going to help us to set up our shadehouse project in the National Psychiatric Hospital compound. He has made his promise; I am making it public.

Problem: Ten rolls of toilet paper given for 30 patients per month.

Answer: “Toilet paper and items such as toilet soap and other items are issued at least twice per month and there is an adequate quantity available so there is no need for limitations on such items.”

Problem: Nurses from the Hospital go to New Amsterdam with begging sheets for groceries.

Answer: “What nonsense is this? When did this ever happen? Who are the nurses? What did they ever have to beg for?”

Problem: No groceries for the Hospital.

Answer: “So how are these patients living? There is absolutely no shortage of any groceries.”

To add to this no groceries business, only February last, Ms. Adeena Cumberbatch celebrated her 95th birthday after living for more than 65 years in the National Psychiatric Hospital. Does Ms. Cumberbatch look undernourished in this photograph? I can pass it around.

[Photograph displayed]

The Hon. Member said, also, that there are two staff nurses at the National Psychiatric Hospital and the rest are nurse aids and Patient Care Assistants (PCAs) - not true, Mr. Speaker! The Matron (ag) sent me this note.

“At the hospital, there is one matron (ag), one ward sister, five staff nurses, seven nursing assistants, 28 nurse aids and 17 psychiatric patient care assistants.”

I advise Members to check out the BRHA’s Facebook page and be acquainted with some of our activities in words and in pictures.

We are hoping that by the middle of 2014 the acute care building will be operable to ease the load on the other sections of this institution. Thank you, Dr. Ramsaran.

In passing, I must mention our other programmes – home nutrition project where all health facilities are encouraged to have kitchen gardens to show mothers and mothers-to-be how to grow and prepare healthy foods. We had a brainstorming session on suicide prevention. We recognise that suicide is a problem. We had participation from several partners and we are inviting more, especially our MPs from Regions 5 and 6.

Our health facility days continue to give feedback to the people we serve. Our several management committees for separate health facilities continue to take ownership and do community monitoring and evaluation of our facilities and even contribute to the smooth running of our facilities.

This year, our 11th annual awards ceremony was the biggest and best. Ask Mr. Joseph Hamilton, the Hon. Member. We do appreciate the hard and dedicated work of the staff of the Berbice Regional Health Authority. Compliments of Fly Jamaica, the champion worker won a trip for two to one of three destinations of his choice – New York, Canada or Jamaica. Greenidge Refrigeration and Mr. Debedin continued to support. All our prizes, which included the Fly Jamaica trip, trip for two to Kaieteur Falls and trips for 10 couples to Mainstay Resort were sponsored by the business community, a true public/private partnership. They recognise our work, even if some in the Opposition do not.

Without the support of our Regional Democratic Council (RDC) and Regional Chairman, Mr. Armagon, and Regional Executive Officer (REO), Mr. Ramrattan, we would not have been the

leader of healthcare delivery in Guyana. The BRHA has excellent support from the RDC. Thanks to our Regional Democratic Council.

Infrastructure works were done at all facilities in the Region, including Siparuta, Orealla, Barakara and all the coastland facilities.

I sat and listened and heard on the one hand that the Budget is a good budget and has something for everyone. This case was made out very well by Ministers Irfaan Ali, Westford, Frank Anthony, Gopaul, Ramsaran and Hon. Members Cornel Damon, Jafarally and Mr. Joseph Hamilton. They have all made the case and have done so well.

I hear, on the other hand, that the Budget is no good. The Ministry of Finance must be in a fantasy world. Where does the truth lie? One Hon. Member even said that the Budget has cataract. As a medical person, I want to advise the Hon. Member, however, that objects do not get cataract. Some eyes that look at the object can have cataract and distort their vision. We can welcome those who do not see too well and need cataract surgery and lens implant to come to Berbice to the National Ophthalmology Hospital and we will relieve them of that condition. Then they can see clearly what the Budget has for the people of Guyana. We are actually scouting for cataract patients since there is no backlog.

Concerning fantasy, the successive terms of the PPP/C are where fantasy meets reality. With this Budget, more fantasies will come closer to reality. I am sure the first person to say he would liked to have put up a bigger budget would be the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, so more moneys could have gone especially to the elderly. But he can only craft a budget on what available funds there are. No one can doubt that over the years there have been improvements in all spheres of life with an increase in the average lifespan being adequate proof.

Now we are well on our way to not only increasing lifespan and living to old age, but also to increase the quality of life with care of the elderly, diabetic school and health and wellness army, three programmes that make a difference in the lives of people, especially the elderly. I have to say that, to my mind, every facet of life has been touched by this Budget – from the baby in the womb with the maternal and child health programme and nutrition programme to the newborn through childhood getting their vaccines on time, neonatal care if the baby is compromised in any way, adolescent life and free schooling in every part of Guyana, whether on the coast or in

the riverine and hinterland communities to post secondary education, whether it is university or technical institute, training college, nursing school, medex training, community health worker training, house lots and housing schemes everywhere.

We take care of the Guyanese people from conception in the womb to the elderly and centenarians. Sir, please allow me, again, to straighten out another issue. I was contacted by Dr. Samaroo, Regional Health Officer (RHO) of Region 8, who was shocked and disappointed by the utterances of the Hon. Member who said that the RHO never visited that sub-region in Region 8. Via BlackBerry Messenger (BBM), this is what he sent:

“Region 8 is divided into two sub-districts. On the 1st March, 2013, I started working in Region 8. On the 20th March, myself, along with a nurse, together with the REO and his team, rode on ATVs from Mahdia to the North Pakaraimas. On that trip I did medical outreaches to all health centres and health posts in that sub-district. On returning, outreaches were done in all the health posts and sub-districts in Region 2. This trend continues.”

Sir, this is from the officer himself and I think it is a travesty to say that the RHO never visited sub-regions. Dr. Krishendatt Samaroo is a hardworking, dedicated, young doctor who took up the challenge to serve in the interior and he must be commended.

Mr. Speaker: You have five minutes, sir, within which to wrap up. Thank you.

Dr. Mahadeo: Just in aside, Region 9, with three sub-districts, has its full complement of doctors; each sub-district has doctors, young doctors who leave their homes and families being accustomed to a different lifestyle to go into the interior willingly to serve. Like Hon. Minister Ramsaran and Minister Westford said, we provide opportunities like post-graduate training. Sir, I have in my hand a list that the Hon. Minister made available to me which could be shared. I could call some names. Zelda Luke, Masters Degree in Emergency Medicine; Celestine Haynes, Post-Graduate Degree in Ophthalmology – she spent three years in Paraguay and just came back; Shivanie Samlall, Masters Degree in Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Balram Doodnauth, Masters Degree in Emergency Medicine, and it goes on and on. This list is available to anyone who wants to read it.

Sir, I have heard all the talks. I would like to welcome people to come to Berbice. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport recently helped us to erect a monument. We have quite a few monuments there and I would like to invite the entire House to visit and pay tribute. We have a monument for the slain sugar workers. We have a monument for the ballot box martyrs, those young men who scarified their lives fighting for free and fair elections and for the right for their votes to be counted. We have a monument for Dr. Cheddi Jagan - no dispute that he is father of the nation. We have a monument for Mrs. Janet Jagan. Please come and pay tribute. They are there. We need to pay homage to these people.

I have heard talks about elections and us not being ready. We are ready for any elections anytime. The groundwork is ongoing. We are ready! People say everyday that they are sorry for making the mistake that they made.

Demands have been made for me to reply to the weekly attacks that are made on me on television on BTV Channel 2. I am not going to do that. The people are saying that with every attack they understand what is going on. We are ready. We stand unanimously behind our President and unanimously behind our General Secretary, the Hon. Clement Rohee.

In closing, I have to say to the Hon. Member, Dr. A. K. Singh, emphasis on the letters A. K., you have shot straight and through with the ammunition you have available and you have nailed bull's eye again in 2014. I am sure you would be the first to say that you would have loved to prepare a bigger budget to satisfy the wants of people across the country, but we recognise, and so will the people of Guyana, that the funds available are limited. Dr. Singh, Hon. Member, aided by your very able and hardworking staff, you did your usual excellent job of sharing the pie and helping to take fantasy closer to reality. Congratulations! I thank you. *[Applause]*

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: I thought that Dr. Mahadeo, the Hon. Member, should have ended his speech like the Hon. Member, Mr. Damon, did yesterday by saying, "I rest my case."

Dr. Norton...*[Interruption]* I was, for 30 seconds or so, going to say that other than Dr. Mahadeo, there is nobody in this room who has visited the National Psychiatric Hospital more than I have done, even though I am Minister of Agriculture at this time. *[Laughter]* I am glad about their reaction because, in fact, there are those of us who still care for people.

I listened to Dr. George Norton the other day because I was at the Ministry of Health and at the hospital when we were reconstructing some of those buildings and the kind of facility that we built. I know Dr. Norton was not there. He heard what somebody said and, like many things said over there during the last few days, it is hearsay. [An. Hon. Member: *Inaudible*] I know because I have been there. You just laughed about the fact that I go there.

Mr. Speaker and Colleagues, in spite of the national and global difficulties that we faced in 2013, Guyana still did very, very well in comparison to the rest of the Caribbean.

6.36 p.m.

The 2014 Budget Estimates are presented at a time when we have clear choices before us. The stark choices we can make are either to promote the welfare and peaceful development of Guyana or we can stall our development through misguided actions and obstructionism. These are two different and very distinct pathways before us. Too often, in the last 28 months since the last Elections, there seems confusion about the choices before us. Some of us think that our mandate in this House is to flex our muscles and score political points... [Dr. Norton: How your muscles...] You have come back, Dr. Norton. We think that we should flex our muscles, misrepresent, misinform, even if our country is harmed and our people's welfare is jeopardised. When we risk international blacklisting, for example, we place our country in harm's way. Comrades... [Mr. Ramjattan: ...elections and...] Mr. Ramjattan, I am not going to bother with you.

There has been much talk about a new dispensation - lots of talk. Do you remember? Our people spoke and wanted to see greater co-operation and, in truth, I have come to realise that there are different dispensations in the Tenth Parliament. There is a dispensation of blackmail politics. There is a dispensation of blacklisting as an option for our future. I am dismayed that there is even a dispensation called "scissors politics" – "the politics of the scissors". We are often reminded of that not only in words, but in the gestures. Truly, those who remind us of the scissors remind us with glee; truly here in the Tenth Parliament there are distorted dispensations from the one people may have conjured up in their minds. Truth be told, the dispensations played out in this Tenth Parliament are perversions of the people's hopes and aspirations. The people's business has become the victim of horse trading, blackmail and self serving interests.

Our people, however, will decide who is guilty and many of them have already expressed their views, but such perverted dispensations that we have arrogated to ourselves in the name of our people must be rejected and must not be allowed to become the character of the Tenth Parliament of Guyana. I refuse to think that this is the best we can do. I refuse to think that this is an option. I refuse to think that we are unable to shift gears and adopt a new imperative, the imperative to accelerate development, to foster an environment of cooperation and harmony, to lift the social welfare standards of our people and of our country.

Our development, promoting the welfare in the interest of our people, must never become a game of possum on a wheeler dealer dashboard. It is not a game of trading or roulette table. Take, for example, the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry. Mr. Speaker and Comrades, it is the right thing to do. We have procrastinated for too long. Let us do it now. Let us get it over with. It is in the national interest. Our people deserve better. Our people deserve representatives who can put aside pettiness and narrow political agendas whenever an opportunity arises for us to act in unison on matters of national interest.

I have listened to all of the speakers. I have listened to their speeches and were I to go with the story of Guyana that emanates out of these halls, one may think that there are two different countries that we are talking about. When I listen to my Colleagues over there, I hear of a country that is going nowhere, that is not developing, that is imploding, that is falling apart. They talk about a country of hopelessness. I hear of a country where nothing is right. I even heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, talk of apartheid. [Mr. Bulkan: It is not me. The people in Region 8 said that.] Okay, Mr. Bulkan. I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Desmond Trotman, explain the growth in our country and that it is driven by drugs and all the development and construction and so on are due to drug lords and drug money. This is the country I hear about. I hear that all of our teachers are gone and all of our professionals are gone. They have all migrated; at least all of the good ones have left when I hear the story from over there. But then I leave to go back to my office or to go home or go to the villages. I enter another country, another Guyana.

Do we have problems? Yes. I hear my Friend, the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence, talk about alcohol. True. I hear of suicide. True. We have many problems in our country, like every other country in the world. I think the Hon. Member, Dr. Mahadeo, said, "Tell me which country is perfect." We do have problems. We would be fooling ourselves if we think that we do not

have problems. But I also see a country that is proud. I see a country that is resilient. I see a country that is demonstrating day in and day out that it has the capacity to overcome our adversities. While I see a country confronting many problems, I also see a country boldly moving forward in the trajectory of development and it is happening everyday in our country.

I see a Guyana that is growing, that is emerging as a country that offers us all better lives. You all look very nice. [Ms. Ally: We always do.] Yes. I see a country that is developing its infrastructure. I see a bustling country where we are trying to take better care of our children and better care of our elderly. I see a country where we do live in freedom no matter what you say. I see a country where people's dreams are unfettered and that there is a real chance of making dreams come through in our country, and they are coming through every day. I see young people, public servants, working in the various offices, who work for a few months and then put a down payment and get a car to come to work. I see that and I see many more who want those dreams to come through.

I see a country that has had eight straight years of uninterrupted growth. Never since adult suffrage in 1953 has Guyana had such a long period of sustained, uninterrupted growth.

We must be doing something right. No other country in the Caribbean, in CARICOM, has been able to do this so we must have done something extraordinary and it is time that we all be proud of it. [Ms. Ally: You are not *inaudible*] My Comrade, Ms. Ally, does not have to be afraid. Minister Ramsaran made sure that the ambulance is there. Eight years of growth, by any standard, is an extraordinary accomplishment and if you do not think so, then I am forced to ask, as my Comrade, Dr. Vindhya Persaud did, "What is wrong with you?"

I see a Guyana that is no longer a least developing country. We are proud that we, in the PPP/C Government, have guided our country to graduate from a least developing country to a middle income country. Yet, we will not rest because we also want, in our lifetime, to emerge as a high middle income country. That is the path that the 2014 Budget seeks to consolidate. That is the path.

The destinations that Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago have set themselves must not be elusive to us. Our ambition for Guyana is unlimited, but not unrealistic. When I hear the gloom and

doom of the country that my Colleagues so gleefully describe and a country in which everything is bad and wrong, I ask myself, “What is wrong with them?”

While I do see the problems, I also see a Guyana in which our children are topping the Region at CXC because we invest in the education of our children – \$32 billion this year. It is this investment that sees primary education access to all of our children in every nook and cranny of our country. It is this investment that sees secondary education coming to all of our children. I see our children completing secondary school, going to college, becoming doctors and lawyers and engineers and they come from every corner of our country today, from every kind of family in this country. This is the direct result of our development programme. I should take a lesson from my Comrade and Friend, Dr. Ramayya, the Hon. Member, by saying that this is a direct impact of our development. **[Mr. Ramjattan: [[inaudible] will rebut.]** Yes, you will have your time. This is the work of teachers who live and work right here in Guyana, even if our Colleagues on the other side think that their better friends have left the country. But it is those who are here that are accomplishing what we as a country are doing.

I see a country that was recognised, in 2013, by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as one of only 38 countries that has reduced hunger by 50% before 2015. I see a Guyana that the FAO has said is one of only 17 countries that were able to reduce malnutrition to less than 10% before 2015. It is one of few countries that were able to attain universal treatment for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and one of the few countries that have reached a stage of elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV.

This is our country. It has many serious challenges, as many of our Colleagues have pointed out, but so many good things are happening to it. I ask my Friends, why do you diminish our country and our people? In spite of all that I have heard, I am still very proud of my country, Guyana, and my people, my brothers and my sisters.

I see a Guyana where life expectancy is increasing. It is now 70 and it has a chance of being 75 by 2025, similar to most of the CARICOM countries and that is because we invest in health – \$22 billion this year. I have to ask, therefore, of my Friend: what is wrong with you? It is a direct impact, Dr. Ramayya, of our development trajectory, a development programme that our budgets of the past enshrined and that the 2014 Budget builds on.

When more of our people own their own homes and when more are expanding and repairing their homes, why can we not appreciate that these are the evidence of a country moving in the right direction? Can we not see and acknowledge, even if we want more? What is wrong with that?

When more of our people own their vehicles, as the Bishop said last night – more than 15,000 registered last year – is this not a direct impact of the development of our country?

I see a Guyana in which owning and using a computer is no longer a privilege of a few wealthy people, but a right that is being fulfilled with each year of the PPP/C Government. I see a Guyana in which investment by the local private sector continues to grow. Credit to the private sector has topped \$80 billion in each of the last three years. Besides the large private sector investment, small entrepreneurs are flourishing across the country. Whole new town-like communities have developed in Lethem and Bartica, Waramadong, Mabaruma, Parika, Rosignol, Vreed-en-Hoop, Lenora, Bush Lot, Bath Settlement and dozens of other localities in all of the Regions of Guyana. Smalls stores owned by ordinary Guyanese families are springing up everywhere and beauty salons, restaurants, agro-processing facilities, other small business, owned by young people, are providing livelihoods and jobs for people in every community of Guyana. Private schools and health facilities have become serious enterprises in Guyana. This is the Guyana I see.

Guyana continues to attract the interest of the international community. It is the reason National Geographic identified Guyana as one of the top ten destinations. It is the reason Copa is interested in Guyana. We speak in this House as if we live in two different countries, but there is only one Guyana - a Guyana that we can make even better with better lives for all by working together for our country every time, any time. This is our imperative.

We have heard a lot about investments in our country. The Minister spoke of foreign direct investment, more than \$300 million last year and, I suspect, that that amount of last year is more than all of post-independence up to 1992. The real story of development that I want to focus on is not the foreign direct investment, but the investment of our own people, people who live and work in this beautiful country.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that small-scale farmers in our country are actually the largest investor in our development? Take, for instance, rice farmers; in 2013, the rice farmers of Guyana invested in operational cost – not their total investment – \$28 billion - real money. This is money they invested in land preparation, in fertilisers and pesticide, in seed paddy, in water management in their fields, in harvesting and in transportation of their paddy. They invested a minimum of \$28 billion cultivating 400,000 acres. These same rice farmers, in the last three years, invested \$6 billion in just two items – tractors and harvesters. I also must mention the millers who in the last three years invested \$10 billion in increasing capacity for drying, storage and milling of paddy. Many millers are now working with the Energy Research Institute of India to replace the use of fossil fuel to reduce cost and to affect greater efficiency in their operations.

These are not drug dealers. They are not using drug money. It is their hard-earned cash that they invest. The economy of Guyana is driven towards positive growth by these investors, not the drug lords that some of our colleagues on the other side paint them as with one brush. These are the hard cold facts. When we speak loosely, we insult people like our rice farmers. These rice farmers generated income of more than \$45 billion in 2013. This is the story of Guyana. This is the Guyana I see, not a Guyana that develops because of drug money but because of hardworking ordinary citizens, our brothers and our sisters.

I am saddened that the other day we had to argue, right or wrong, about grass cutters in this House but that gave me a chance to focus a little on Leguan. The rice farmers of Leguan invested, in 2013 – I am talking about a little place – \$675 million. This is 0.1% of Guyana's GDP in one little corner of Guyana. Even if they do cut grass, guess what, they contribute to the development of our country. They contribute to better lives for you and me and for all of us.

When we seek to explain eight years of continued growth by dismissing it as a drug-driven growth, one diminishes the hard work of our people, their commitment, their dreams and their achievements. One insults them. This is the story of Guyana that I see when I leave the hallowed Halls of our Parliament. It is not a broken country with only dismal tales to tell. It is a country bravely moving forward, upwards, on a trajectory of better lives for all of our people. Comrades, Colleagues all, whichever side we belong to, we need to celebrate these successes.

Our country defied the odds of weather last year, including a full blown drought in the first quarter of 2013. Do you remember, Dr. Roopnarine, that drought in the first crop? We defied the paddy bug. When everybody thought that we were going to collapse because of bad weather and paddy bug, guess what, the rice farmers of Guyana produced 535,000 tonnes and 400,000 tonnes of that were exported. I think all of us should not be shy at giving the rice farmers of Guyana a loud applause and acknowledgment for their contributions. The country we live in can reach 600,000 tonnes this year. I remember when I was Minister of Health one of the debates when people like Mr. Robert Persaud and Mr. Seeraj spoke of a plan to reach 500,000 tonnes by 2020 and people told them that it is impossible. This year, we might make 600,000 tonnes.

Just before I came here, I looked at the latest statistics. Thirty-eight per cent of the crop has been harvested in the first crop and the production is 125,000 tonnes with 5.5 tonnes per hectare, among the best in the world. I reject outright that the \$500 million in the Budget is a handout to our farmers.

The rice industry contributed 5% of GDP in Guyana in 2013 and accounts for more than US\$240 million in export earnings. More than 40,000 people depend on this industry for employment and for their livelihood.

In terms of food security, rice has helped to secure Guyana's status as a food secured country. Last year, we invested in fertiliser to reduce the cost and we saved the farmers \$800 million. This year, we will again influence the market by forcing it to drop below \$5,000 per bag and we expect to save the industry \$1 billion in 2014.

In addition, we will procure a number of laser levellers to locate in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 to help to increase yields. Further, we will expand our research facilities to introduce higher yielding seed paddy. This year, we will spend \$70 million to operationalise the No. 56 seed facility and introduce a larger storage capacity for the industry. This is how we build the industry. This is how we ensure that the industry continues to be strengthened.

7.06 p.m.

I must make reference because the Hon. Member Jennifer Wade did bring up the payment to farmers. As of right now, there is no rice farmer owed any money for the last crop.

[Interruption] They were paid. The Ministry ensured that all our farmers were paid for the last crop. In 2012, 70% of our export went to Venezuela. In 2013, 58% went to Venezuela. In 2014, even though the absolute amount will be about the same it will be only 38% of our exports because we are growing the markets. It is at this point that I must say that we expect the first shipment of rice and paddy to Venezuela to arrive in Caracas on 18th April.

If rice tells a success story in Guyana blazing a development trail, sugar tells a story of concern. No one in this House can be more disappointed and distressed about the performance of GuySuCo than I am.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you go into GuySuCo proper, you will require an extension of 15 minutes.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to

Dr. Ramsammy: Sugar, as Dr. Anthony and Dr. Gopaul stated so poignantly and rightfully, is too important an industry to fail. It is not the first time, as the Hon. Member Komal Chand told us before that sugar is in distress. I grew up in the sugar industry and I know. But GuySuCo will recover and 2014 will mark the turning point in the performance of GuySuCo. We have made major changes in management and we have identified the members of the new board that will take control from 1st July. After three years of failing to reach its target, GuySuCo is set to reach its 2014 target. In the last five weeks GuySuCo has reached 45,000 tonnes as of yesterday, and an average of 9,000 tonnes per week. But the time we get to the Estimates next week, GuySuCo would have surpassed the entire first crop of 2013 and we will still have five weeks more of production to go. **[Ms. Ally: Do you know the target?]** Yes, I know the target. Every sugar estate is performing within reach of their targets. *[Interruption]* It is not an understatement...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are dealing with a very important and sensitive sector. We do well if we listen.

Dr. Ramsammy: Thank you. It is not an understatement to say that Skeldon has not functioned to expectations. Nevertheless, we continue to make progress in sorting out the issues at Skeldon.

For this first crop of 2014 the factory has increased on the tonne cane per hour process; the factory has also improved tremendously with its weekly grinding hours with an average of 140 hours per week so far for this crop. There is already a 25% improvement in sugar recovery and Skeldon will meet its target this week. There is a great deal of interest. For Skeldon, let me say that I have heard Dr. Ramayya and I am not allowing Mr. Harmon and others to draw me into this. But all of you are dead wrong when you say not one kilowatt of energy comes out of Skeldon; dead absolutely wrong. Because during grinding season up to eight megawatts of energy is being given to the national grid from Skeldon.

There is a great deal of interest in the \$6 billion allocation for GuySuCo. The \$6 billion will be geared towards the mechanisation drive of the industry, a drive that seeks to address a small labour pool that the industry now relies on and to improve on cane yields in 2014. Land conversion cost will account for \$1.1 billion with 2,500 hectares of land slated to be converted in 2014. Another \$1 billion will be expended on tillage and replanting programmes this year with 9,600 hectares of land to be tilled and 9,224 hectares to be planted. Investments will also be made in legume and flood fallowing programmes to further enhance cane fields. A portion of the \$6 billion will be spent on capital programmes in our factories. For example, we will be improving factory automation at Albion, works on the two pump dumpers at Skeldon, and we will upgrade the boilers at Uitvlugt.

I spoke of the two countries we seem to live in. Some of us see no future in sugar, but the Guyana I see is the Guyana in which sugar continues in the long term to be a sweet story. The PPP/C has no hesitation, no ambiguity; sugar will continue as a major pillar of our development. I hear the denial from several quarters that there is no plan to close the sugar industry. I am glad to hear the denial. I am glad that we are all on the same page that GuySuCo will continue to be a major industry in our country. *[Interruption]* We are not confused about that. Sugar is Guyana's past, sugar is Guyana's today, our present, and sugar is our future; very much so. We will continue to build the sugar industry to continue as a lead industry in our country and we will work with the sugar workers to ensure that their industry continues to provide employment, economic and social gains for our people and for our country. Those who harbour thoughts of the closure of the sugar industry are dead wrong.

To those who harbour any thoughts of the exchange of sugar for tilapia or ethanol, our answer to them is unequivocal that sugar in bulk and value-added forms will continue to be a primary product in this industry. We can see by-products such as rum and ethanol, but the PPP/C's plan is sugar and; not sugar or. In these difficult times, when challenges seem more than opportunities, some may feel the need to savagely attack our efforts, but the workers and managers have been sticking to the task at hand, reconfiguration of the sugar industry for another century of leading the economic growth of our country.

It is true that sugar and rice have dominated any discussion on agriculture but our people have always grown enough food to feed the Nation. We are a food secure country. We produce much of the food we need. But Guyana needs to organise its non-sugar, non-rice agriculture and formalise it so that it functions in an architecture which is similar to the formal organisation of rice and sugar.

During this debate, I heard the Hon. Member Jennifer Wade speak about an agriculture development bank. This is an ongoing discussion. When I became Minister of Agriculture twenty eight months or so ago, I put two matters on the table. But long before my time through Hon. Minister Robert Persaud, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the World Bank and other partners over the last several years have been studying two important initiatives: an agri-development bank and crop insurance. These are mechanisms that can prove significant in our development, if we are serious about agriculture as a main pillar of our development, these industries should be studied with a high degree of seriousness. As we implement the agriculture strategy, the Ministry of Agriculture intends to submit our recommendations as a way forward for Cabinet during 2014.

We produced more than \$30 billion worth of vegetables and other foods outside of meat products that are consumed locally. This is as far as our information allows us to confirm. We believe that the production exceed \$50 billion annually. We have never developed a proper production information system. And while it is true that most developing countries lack a true production information system for cash crops, outside of the big export crops, this is a deficiency we must address. This is one of the major ongoing activities in 2014.

We are happy to report that we have virtually eliminated the import of cauliflower and broccoli. We are presently on the same trajectory for eliminating imports of products such as carrots, and certain spices such as beets, turmeric, ginger, black pepper and cilantro. We import presently about US\$1 million worth of carrots. Why? What is wrong with us? We are therefore presently on a vigorous campaign to popularise the cultivation of crops such as carrots.

The coconut industry is a priority industry. There are major initiatives to expand the coconut industry and in the next few weeks a major coconut forum will be convened in Guyana as we roll out two major multi-country coconut projects, and as we roll out a number of local investments in value-added coconut products.

But whilst we grow a lot of food we have a hefty appetite for foreign food. Even though we produce most of the food we need we have a hefty appetite for imported food mostly in the form of processed meat products, snacks and other items. Our imported food bill has grown to more than US\$150 million a year or 30 billion Guyana dollars annually. This is leaving out things like corn and soya that are imported for the stock feed industry. This is about US\$200 per capita on imported food. The global average for developing countries is US\$70 per capita, and the average in Latin America and the Caribbean is US\$170. While Guyana's food import bill of US\$200 per capita is on the lower side, for CARICOM countries it is still unacceptable. We import wheat for the production of flour, we import corn and soya for the production of stock feed, but we also import vegetable oil, potatoes garlic, onion, and other vegetables. For example, Mr. Speaker, did you know that we imported US\$32 million worth of wheat last year for flour? Did you know that we spent more than US\$8.5 million last year on potatoes, onion and garlic?

Listen to this comrades.

A lot of people like to eat French fries. We imported frozen potatoes for French fries at the worth of G\$200 million last year. We spend more than US\$2.4 million in chick peas and \$4.3 million on palm oil. The high cost of meat production in Guyana is because we are two dependent on imported inputs like corn and soya. For that reason we are now beginning to do commercial production of corn and soya. There is an agriculture strategy 2013-2020 and in this strategy there is a crop diversification approach. In 2013 we tried commercial production of corn. We imported 40,000 tonnes per year for the stock feed industry. We now were able to grow two varieties of

corn at 8 tonnes per acre which is four times what we get presently with the local variety. We produced it at the cost of G\$20 to G\$25 per pound when we in fact import at a cost of between \$50 and \$60 per pound. We were able to grow soya with a production yield of 2.5 tonnes per acre; exactly what Brazil gets. So this year we are working with the private sector so that we can establish commercial level corn and soya production for the stock feed industry.

I do want to mention the fact that we have established an agro-meteorology section in Guyana. Agro-meteorology is a critical area of development, a support service for agriculture. Beginning this month this unit will be publishing agriculture weekly and monthly bulletins and crop specific forecast for rice, sugar and other crops.

The technical support services must be developed as a priority. I will simply mention the fact that the tissue culture laboratory will now be producing 50,000 clean plantlets annually. We will establish a gene bank; we will in fact create germplasm storage for cassava, sweet potato and Black Sigatoka resistant plantain. In 2014 we expect to produce over 10,000 Black Sigatoka resistant plantain plantlets. There is a bio-control laboratory that we will commission in a few months. The veterinary laboratory will be commissioned at the end of April; the artificial insemination laboratory will be further upgraded in 2014; and for the first time we will have a national soil laboratory. We will convert the GuySuCo soil laboratory into a national soil laboratory.

I do want to mention that last year we prepared a portfolio of agriculture infrastructure investment between 2013 and 2030. This is a portfolio of drainage and irrigation infrastructure, a portfolio of roads and dams, a portfolio of support infrastructure. And whilst I cannot go through all I can highlight the fact that the first phase of the conservancy adaptation programme CAP I was completed and we are now implementing a second phase of Conservancy Adaptation Project (CAP) that will include the construction of pumping stations at Hope/Enmore, Enterprise/Paradise, Annandale/Buxton, Lusignan, Mon Repos, Ogle and Annandale. These infrastructure products for projects will be supported in part by a CAP II project with the World Bank at the cost of \$11 million.

The Cunha Canal reconstruction will also have direct benefit outside of its benefit to the East Demerara Water Conservancy, to approximately 4,500 acres of farmlands at Sarah/Johanna,

Pearl, Badrima, Coverden, and the lower reaches of Kuru Ku-ruru. This project is expected to be funded through the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF) arrangement. There will be for the first time a pump station at Gangaram and a pump station at Pine Ground. I mention Pine Ground because it will be the first dual drainage and irrigation pump station in Guyana.

The Mahaica/Mahaicony/Abary (MMA) Stage II, is not in the 2014 Budget, but we are working with this and we mobilised partners. It is a \$34 million Euro Project and this will complete Stage II of the MMA with the damming of the Mahaicony River creating a conservancy between the Abary and the Mahaica River, and bringing in 200,000 acres of new land in the Mahaicony and Mahaica blocks.

The investment in the livestock industry will continue. I do need to mention a major project this year establishing a dairy industry. This year we will establish a dairy farm at Mon Repos with an imported nucleus of milk breed. In addition, we are talking with our Canadian partner to establish a public/private partnership for a milk processing plant in Region No. 5. This is all with the aim of increasing milk production - which is presently at 46 million litres - and to reduce the milk imports which is presently at \$7.1 billion annually.

The sustainable environments in agriculture are not separate pursuits. And even though I cannot go in details on this, I do need to announce that through partnership with our international partners, and through international chemical arrangements, support will be obtained to dispose six tonnes of obsolete pesticide, an achievement which will be a major goal set out under the Dubai Declaration on Strategic Approach in International Chemical Management (SAICM) 2020 goals. This year we will also obtain Marine Stewardship Council Certification that will allow our trawler operation to export their products to Europe and North America. We will also complete the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS). In 2013, 21 VMS units were installed; in 2014 we will install 96 more.

I wish I can relate the whole agriculture story but time does not permit me to do so. The truth is that agriculture in Guyana is the lifeline for a better Guyana and better lives for all. There are constraints and there are things we need to do, but in looking at agriculture we in this House see different things. Some of us see only bad things. We on this side of the House see both the challenges and the opportunities. We see the achievements of our farmers and these are not

trivial achievements; they drive the development of our country. These are the people and families that feed us but also ensure that our economy remains robust. The PPP/C is proud that the farms that were abandoned not so long ago are fully occupied today. We are proud that new lands are being brought under cultivation and more food is being produced, consumed locally and exported.

We must find a way for a dispensation of harmony and cooperation, even when our differences seem overwhelming. We must in 2014 avoid the unnecessary calamity of blacklisting. In this dispensation of harmony and cooperation I ask that we pass the anti-money laundering and counter terrorism act because it is the right thing to do. The anti-money laundering countering terrorism bill must not be a battlefield to leave the scar of war with a wounded nation. We must get on with the business of building Amaila because, with all we might see as ills, Amaila has the potential of propelling Guyana directly into a high middle income country, a place that we would be better off, and a place we deserve to be in. We must ensure that the Marriott Hotel is added to the landscape of Guyana, because it is good for Guyana. We must complete the Cheddi Jagan International Airport modernisation and expansion, because it is good for Guyana. Let us accelerate the Lethem road, the Corentyne River Bridge, the new Demerara Harbour Bridge. Let us put our heads together to improve the Demerara Harbour. Let us build the deep water harbour on the Berbice River. Let us build the Specialty Hospital because, it is good for you, it is good for me, it is good for all of Guyana, and it is good for our neighbours. This is our imperative as patriots, as responsible citizens. A better Guyana, better lives for all, is a destiny we must not abandon.

Thank you all very much. [*Applause*]

Dr. Roopnaraine: Thank you Mr. Speaker. As I rise to make my contribution to the debate on Budget 2014 under the theme “*A Better Guyana for all Guyanese*”. I wish to begin as I did a year ago in my contribution to Budget 2013 by embracing the remarks of those comrades on both sides of the House who spoke with sincerity and feeling on the need to eschew narrow self serving political in favour of greater and more meaningful engagement across the divide in our joint struggle to build the Guyana we wish to bequeath to our children and their children. But let us make no mistake on this score, the tasks ahead are enormously challenging and require all hands on deck. It has long been the considerate view of the Working People’s Alliance (WPA),

and I speak like a few other Honourable Members of a certain age in this House out of some four decades of intimate involvement in the political life of our country.

I believe it is delusional to believe that either side of this House, guided only by its own lights and acting exclusively on its own, has the monopoly and the capacity to conceive, formulate and execute the policies that are needed to bring about the transformation to which we all aspire. Experience from the past 59 years following the ruptures and fissures of the United National Democratic Movement in 1955 and 1957 that resulted in the political and ethnic polarisation of the country should have thought us at least that much. It was out of this conviction that we and APNU raised the banner of a government of national unity in 2011 as inscribed in our Manifesto of *A Good Life For All Guyanese*. Nothing in our experience over the past two years in this Tenth Parliament has altered my view that the national challenges we face can best be met by a national government. As I said last year, we will not overcome challenges together until we confront and overcome the challenge of togetherness itself; it is the prior challenge.

7.36 p.m.

A year ago I had need to comment on what I perceived as the shrinking expectations of my Friend, the Hon. Minister of Finance, as expressed in his prefatory remarks to Budgets 2012 and 2013. Referring to the configuration of the Tenth Parliament two years ago, in Budget 2012, he spoke of, and I quote:

“domestic novelty... an arrangement that beckons our country into a new political epoch and heralds an opportunity for the nurturing of a new political culture. The prevailing dispensation”

The Hon. Minister said then:

“...will test and hopefully prove our resolve as a people, and within this House our respective will to serve as responsible representatives of a deserving people, to work together in service to the cause of national development.”

It was a cautiously hopeful note with which I had much sympathy.

By 2013, after the clashes and the slashes and the gnashing of teeth, caution gave way to intemperateness and hope to disenchantment. “The past fourteen months”, the Hon Minister bemoaned,

“have rendered a veritable plethora of examples of Parliamentary action, occasioned at the behest of the Opposition’s one-seat majority, that consumed valuable legislative time and effort in futile, unproductive, and oftentimes counterproductive pursuits.”

Mr. Speaker, you will recall only too well the ruckus that these remarks provoked on this side of the House a year ago. I myself referred to them as vituperative and tendentious. In this year’s Budget’s Introduction, the Hon. Minister is in more sombre of mood, as he engages in a few words of “midterm introspection”, restricting himself to noting two “instances...illustrative of the gravely debilitating consequences of legislative stalemate” – the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project and the Anti-Money Laundering Bill.

The Hon. Minister is not a careless writer. The “togetherness” of last year’s budget theme has all but disappeared, but not quite. The Hon. Minister has held his hand until the final words of his speech. He closes his address by saying:

“...it might be somewhat ironic for me to say it now, but had brevity not been a paramount concern, the theme of this year’s budget could equally have been, By All Guyanese, A Better Guyana, for All Guyanese.”

As the arguments have ebbed and flowed these past days and nights, Mr. Speaker, I am more fortified than ever in my view that what is to be done must be conceived together, refined together, formulated together and executed together. Irony or no irony, brevity or no brevity, it is on the part of my friend, the Hon. Minister of Finance, a sober if submerged recognition that the better Guyana for all Guyanese will only be realised if it is the work of all Guyanese. On this we are at one.

Nor can there be any quarrel with the Guyana of the future painted in Section 4.3. It is the Guyana we must combine our energies and our talents to build. And given the attrition we have suffered from the outward migration over the years, the haemorrhaging of our skills and talents

at all levels in society, the demoralisation and futurelessness of whole generations; it becomes more imperative than ever that inclusiveness be our watchword.

Turning our attention to the claims by the Minister of Finance, and I turn now to the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), in sections 4.6 - 4.10 on pages 17-19 of the Budget Speech. Concerning the Low Carbon Development Strategy, it is noticeable that the LCDS a year ago was touted as “visionary...the paradigm overarching our policy framework” seems to be of somewhat diminished centrality in this year’s budget.

The Hon. Minister would be on firmer ground to continue to claim that Guyana has earned these funds from Norway, if we saw more evidence of clear integrated policies and robust practices for reducing emissions from deforestation or forest degradation. We have been allocated money for avoided deforestation against an absurdly high reference level, but even there, deforestation increased by 50% in calendar year 2012 over the previous year 2011. The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and Indufor ascribe this increase to gold mining, while claiming that deforestation, due to the continued logging for export of unprocessed timber, was only 240 hectares in 2012 from a recorded production of 276,000 cubic metres of logs and 75,000 cubic metres of chain-saw and lumber.

The Ministry of Finance in Norway has blocked payments into the GRIF Fund after two tranches totalling US\$ 70 million, paid in 2010 and early 2011. Guyana continues to fail to prepare or submit project concept notes beyond the five projects already agreed, which total US\$31 million. Only about half that money appears to have been disbursed or is in process of disbursement. Many months pass after the GRIF Steering Committee approves a project before money is officially spent. No projects appear to have been audited so far.

The US\$91 million projected for GRIF funding in 2014 by the Minister of Finance apparently includes US\$80 million for the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, although that scheme collapsed in the middle of last year partly because of sudden, large and unexplained rises in financial costs. Other Government Ministers are now reviving Brazilian proposals for two much larger dams in the Upper Mazaruni catchments, but claiming that the flooding for reservoirs would be much less than intended in the 1970s proposal. No time should be lost in keeping the National Assembly abreast of these latest explorations and possibilities.

Although the Hon. Minister projects US\$91 or US\$92.8 million - again, there seems to be different estimates in different documents - to be spent on GRIF projects in 2014, as in previous years there are no details or justifications in the three associated volumes, nor reference to project concept notes or proposals.

I turn to Paragraph 4.6:

“Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the intensification of the adverse impacts of climate change, Government continues to forge ahead with our innovative climate resilient and low carbon approach to economic development backed by our unwavering commitment to good forest governance and stewardship.”

This is a fine declaration, as declarations go. Certain questions arise however and need to be answered. Knowing my friend the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources, I know they will be. Firstly, what accounts for the reported increase in deforestation to 0.079% and the likelihood that the disbursement by Norway will be significantly reduced for 2013?

Two - is there any correlation between the extraction of natural resources, agricultural activities, infra-structure development such as roads and trails in the forested areas, Guyana’s stewardship of the forests, and its monitoring and enforcement capability? Surely, if there was such integrated planning and execution, we would not be facing such a significant reduction in disbursement for 2013.

Three - this Agreement with Norway is scheduled to end in 2015. Is there an extension being negotiated with one year to go of the current Agreement? And if not, how does Government propose to sustain the projects said to be funded from the Norway funds?

In Paragraph 4.8, we learn that:

“2013 was a notable year of progress for activities under the GRIF. A total of four GRIF projects, with a combined approximate value of US\$30 million, were in their implementation phases.”

The paragraph goes on to list a number of projects: the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV), the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) and the Micro and Small Enterprise Development Project.

I ask, is there a database somewhere, listing all of these GRIF-funded projects and are they anticipated outputs being monitored to ensure the objectives are being realised? Are all of these projects sustainable and generating funds so that eventually they will be self-financing? In Paragraph 4.9, we read that:

“In 2014, sums totalling US\$90.6 million have been allocated for continued implementation of the GRIF projects previously identified, along with new projects in the priority areas of adaptation, high potential low carbon sectors, hinterland development and low carbon infrastructure. Specific new interventions are expected to include ecotourism development.”

The question that arises is this: are communities genuinely benefitting from community-based tourism and receiving a significant slice of the tourism cake? Or, are the tour operators, airlines and hotels the greatest beneficiaries? It is of no small interest, given all that has transpired in this House not so long ago, to learn that a sum of US\$80 million is once again allocated to meet Guyana’s equity contribution to the Amaila Falls Hydro-Project. Given all that has and has not happened is the Government intending to keep the Parliamentary parties and civil society updated with the resurgence of efforts in regard to the Amaila Falls Hydro Project?

We read in Para 4.10:

“On the international front, Guyana...”

I assume as part of Caricom:

“...will continue to advocate more ambitious emission reduction targets by industrialised countries and scaled up financing for climate change, and push for a global agreement on climate change by 2015. On the domestic front, Guyana is on track to have the world’s first fully operational REDD+ mechanism in place by 2015. This will enable Guyana to earn considerably more from the sale of REDD+ credits than we do today.”

Assuming that this mechanism is in place, is Guyana engaged in any active negotiations with countries interested in REDD+ credits? This should be a priority activity involving a dedicated team of skilled negotiators. It would be useful to keep the National Assembly abreast of the progress of these important negotiations.

While on the issue, what is the situation of the National Protected Areas System? Can Parliament be advised on the steps being taken to mobilise international and national financial contributions to augment the Protected Areas Trust Fund? Interest from sensible investment of Protected Areas (PA) Trust Fund would guarantee adequate funds for management of the Protected Areas. I am hoping that the responsible Minister who speaks after me can provide the answers that I am seeking.

I turn now to bauxite. Turning now to Paragraph 4.20, when RUSAL was given the Berbice Bauxite resources; they undertook to do a number of things when it was passed to them:

- They were to upgrade and expand the bauxite drying capacity and the production of metallurgical grade bauxite and some level of chemical Grade bauxite at Kwakwani;
- Secondly, they were to develop the large Kurubuka metal grade bauxite resources to sustain the increased production levels; and
- Thirdly, they were to build an Alumina Refinery and eventually an Aluminium Smelter with hydro-power facilities.

The reality is that:

- One - they are exporting about 1.4 million tonnes per year of mainly raw metallurgical bauxite to the Ukraine. Significantly less than was previously shipped from Berbice;
- Two - they are now belatedly developing the Kurubuka deposit; and
- Three - there is now no talk about an Alumina Refinery or Smelter.

It is strange that they would be considering a trans-shipment facility in Trinidad, since there is greater depth at the mouth of the Berbice River, than would be available at Point Lisas or Chaguaramas. BIDCO had abandoned Chaguaramas because it was far more economical to

develop the Demerara river channel to establish a turning basin and trans-shipment facility in the Demerara River.

I turn now to BOSAI. Like RUSAL, they had made a number of grand promises, including an Alumina Refinery and Smelter and hydro-power facilities, which seem to have been quietly dropped. The ownership of the Linden facilities gave them an international monopoly for Calcined Bauxite. The reality is that:

- One - they have opened no new mine at Linden, but have been scavenging existing mines and the Washer Pond at Linden;
- Two - they have been shipping about 200, 000 - 240,000 Tonnes, significantly less than had previously been shipped from Linden;
- Three - they have built no new Calcining Kilns, but have been using the existing facilities at Linden;
- Four – the issue of the conversion of the Kilns at Linden to use coal raises questions and issues about pollution from the use of low-grade Chinese coal, as well as product quality implications. It does appear that they are focusing on the shipment of large quantities of raw bauxite to satisfy demand for metallurgical bauxite in China.

Before we leave this issue, is Guyana verifying the quality of bauxite being exported by RUSAL and BOSAI? Do representatives of Guyana take independent samples and have them tested? As a country we should be concerned to achieve higher added-value through the processing of our raw material resources within Guyana. Instead we are seeing a continuation of the old model, which condemns countries like Guyana to perpetual under-development.

Given this record, it is with some scepticism that we read that:

“Despite the global markets being relatively unfavourable our local bauxite companies continue to rise above the storm, with Bosai and BCGI investing sums exceeding US\$17.5 million in 2013.”

There is, under all the existing circumstances, little that is consoling in the report of the new investments by BOSAI and RUSAL to make their operations more efficient and sustainable.

Members of the Natural Resources Standing Committee were curious to know, Mr. Speaker, and the National Assembly has a right to know: how much royalty and income taxes are being paid annually by RUSAL and BOSAI? Are the payments in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the respective licences? Are there any waivers?

We cannot leave the matter of bauxite without condemning the slow progress the responsible authorities are making to ensure that RUSAL is brought to book for the flagrant contempt it has shown for the labour laws of Guyana.

I turn now to Gold. The 2014 Budget presentation sidesteps the contribution of small and medium scale gold and diamond mining to the economy of Guyana. While the large scale licence holders are still conducting exploration in the approved manner, Guyanese miners collectively produced over 400,000 ounces of gold in 2013. That production is equivalent to more than twice that being promised from potential large foreign owned mines in Guyana. Yet no adequate analysis is presented to demonstrate what fiscal policy improvements are necessary to sustain and increase this outstanding contribution to the economy by these Guyanese miners.

I trust that any mistakes that I make in this presentation will be ably corrected by my Friend, the Hon. Minister when he speaks.

In October 2012, a report was published analysing the role of mining in national economies. According to the report, a Mining Contribution Index (MCI) was developed and each of the world's 212 countries has compared using this index. The report states that the aim of the MCI is to highlight the importance of the mineral sector within national economies. Guyana's assessment produced an MCI of 93.1 out of a maximum score of 100. Guyana was rated within the top 20% among all countries. The actual ranking was 11th. This rating suggests that Guyana is one of the few countries whose economies are highly dependent on mining. The report was based on 2010 data, and was published by the International Council on Mining and Metals.

The local gold miners are making an overwhelmingly strong contribution to the economy of Guyana. Are they getting fiscal incentives commensurate with the strong contribution they are making? What steps are being taken to group small miners into syndicates for more effective transfer of technology and higher recovery percentages?

There should be strict monitoring and verification of production from mechanised mining to ascertain whether there are any phantom operations. That is, no one must be able to buy gold from others and pass it through the Gold Board or licensed dealers as though it was produced by the declaration. This I believe would be an effective and necessary anti money laundering measure.

Our local gold and diamond miners have consistently complained about the poor maintenance of the roads leading to these vital mining areas. Judging from the poor condition of roads in some coastal areas, it is reasonable to believe the complaint of the miners. Roads to mining areas need to be all weather roads capable of accommodating low beds taking modern 25 ton weight processing plants to mining sites throughout the year. Minibuses must be able to travel all roads leading to the mining areas. The days of leaving miners to travel atop cargo at the back of trucks and pickups are over.

Key portions of the Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni rivers must be improved by dredging as well as by blasting to remove rock impediments to safe passage of large boats and barges. Dredged and blasted material can be used as coarse and fine aggregate. Interior airstrips must be improved and maintained to accommodate larger passenger and cargo planes. It is worth remembering that large planes serviced Guyana's interior during the 1970s and 1980s.

In addition, proper weather stations must be built and maintained for key interior settlements and airstrips. Mining development in Ekereku and Imbaimadai would benefit from larger airstrips to accommodate larger planes.

The Budget acknowledges that the gold mining sector has for another consecutive year played an important role in the domestic economy and delivered record-breaking production. That much is incontestable. Of at least equal if not greater significance is the issue of the environmental impact. There is abundant evidence of widespread environmental degradation across the hinterland, including the discoloration and even destruction of rivers on which communities rely on for life.

So it is good news that the adoption of innovative technology is unfolding as a necessary development to

“...blunt the issues associated with mercury abatement, improve efficiencies in recovery to offset cost of production and reduce threats to the environment.”

On the subject of the environment, to what extent is the Environmental Bond reflective of the true cost of rehabilitation of mined out areas? What correlation is there between the massive budgeted expenditure - \$500 million - by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) on rehabilitation of mined out areas, and the development of viable agricultural cultivations in suitable areas within mining districts? Such an initiative would reduce food being transported into the hinterland areas and also be a catalyst for establishment of settlements using the developing roads and other infrastructure?

Paragraph 4.23 assures us that:

“...despite the more cautious response by the global markets to the price shocks, the prospects for large scale mining for gold in Guyana are still very real. Fortunately, demonstrated investor confidence remained unshaken where large-scale projects for gold were concerned. We note and welcome the news that the Guyana Goldfields project at Aurora is advancing aggressively for late 2014 start up and that Troy Resources (Pharsalus) in the Kaburi area is on stream, for late 2014 start up if not earlier. The ETK/Sandspring project at Toraparu is also poised for further developmental works geared to production start up by 2015.”

My Friend, the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment should make public the proposed and final financial terms governing the mine developments by Guyana Goldfields, Troy Resources, Sandsprings and First Bauxite at Bonasika. A Study should be commissioned of the impact of variation of terms on the viability of each of the proposed developments and present it to the National Assembly.

This is an appropriate place to ask, Mr. Speaker, what progress is being made with Guyana's application for membership of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Efforts should be stepped up in this direction, since this seems to be a limiting factor in the preparedness of the IFIs to provide funds to investors in the mining sector in Guyana.

If I may be permitted to hazard some suggestions:

Guyana should craft a set of strategic fiscal incentives to encourage Guyanese miners to develop and mine minerals other than gold and diamonds: deposits of manganese, columbite-tantalite, kaolin, amethyst, bauxite, and aggregate can be targeted. Technical support, including market studies, can be offered.

Training in cutting and polishing of diamonds can be restarted. Training of goldsmiths and jewellers can be restarted at the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) Jewellery Training School. A study of the jewellery industry should be commissioned. These are some of the ways in which we can attempt to ensure that mining in Guyana is more than gouging precious metals out of the earth.

I turn back to that which has taken up much of the time of my friend, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, and that is the question of sugar. An examination of the production figures really says it all.

Sugar production by estate tells us that Skeldon, which produced \$39,883 in 2013, is projected to produce \$81,165 in 2017. I say this because the Hon. Minister has expressed great confidence in these projections for 2017. It really is mind boggling to understand how we expect to move from the production of 2013 to that projected for 2017, which is a question of moving from \$203,191 to \$349,719.

Distinguished Professor Clive Thomas, in one of his recent analytical pieces on the sugar industry, made this observation:

“One of the most tragic dynamics facing the industry is that those who are politically responsible for it and indeed those who are responsible for managing it, but feel obligated in some ways to those who are politically responsible for it, readily resort to spin and propaganda in preference to facts. Spokespersons make outlandish claims, knowing full well they will not be challenged by industry insiders.

Professor Thomas, then cite's Consider the following claims made by the Government Information Agency in February 2010, about the Ministry of Agriculture's report to the Economic Services Committee of the National Assembly:

- One - GuySuCo's Strategic Blueprint for success has been producing positive results;

- Two - production costs, including management and cane production costs, are falling.
- Third -co-generation of electricity from Skeldon to Berbicians is turning out to be a salvation.
- Four - Skeldon now is offering a dramatic increase in factory capacity.
- Five - the industry's break-even output level is 310,000 tonnes.
- Six - Guyana's sugar would be profitable by 2012.”

Further comment on these grandiosities is not necessary. In the Minister's 2014 Budget speech, he tells us that even though the industry is all but collapsed, through cogeneration in 2013, GuySuCo effectively supplied approximately 50 percent of demand in the Berbice area and so the industry remains relevant to the health of the national economy.

Am I mistaken in believing that co-generation involves the burning of bagasse rather than the heavy fuel oil used in the Wartsila generators at Skeldon to produce the power? While the Minister then outlines the crumbling market for our sugar and the possibility that the European Union (EU) may not be buying our sugars in 2014, he then tells us:

8.06 p.m.

“...many countries including Guyana still require additional financing to undertake further investments to complete their restructuring process.”

On that note, particularly given the public debate on this issue, it is useful to indicate that Government transferred a total of US\$195 million to Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) over the period from 2005 to 2013 in support of its various restructuring and turnaround initiatives. In 2004, the annual production was 325,432 tons. We are told that between 2005 and 2013 US\$195 million was transferred and notwithstanding this infusion of funds we saw the industry plummeted from 325,432 tons in 2004 to 189,000 tons in 2013.

As far as his promises of going forward, GuySuCo aims to substantially advance the mechanisation process, increase yields through piloting:

“the use of organic fertilisers, lower transportation and production cost by improving access to sugarcane fields, creating greater efficiency of the drainage and irrigation system, and establish a modern agricultural industrial complex at Enmore to produce direct consumption sugar”.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member your time has elapsed, you need an extension.

Ms. Ally: I move that that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Roopnarine: With no implementation plan, this really sounds like wishful thinking.

I do note with some relief that the Hon. Minister is no longer giving us these improbable production expectations, such as this one of last year, that the Guyana sugar industry had the potential to achieve and sustain an annual production of 400,000 tons in the medium term. This time he told us that the emergence of a revitalised sugar industry is anticipated. He also referred to valued added products such as extra processed, refined and bagged sugars, that he alleged, will achieve a profitable and competitive industry in the long run. But the Hon. Minister, being a serious person, was noticeably lukewarm with respect to the prospects of the industry.

We see no evidence that convinces us that even the lower expectations of the Hon. Minister can be achieved. In his 2011 presentation he told this House that GuySuCo would have produced 298,879 tons. In fact, the industry produced roughly 189,000 tons in 2013, the worst production in over 20 years. The Minister has completely overlooked the fact that as recently as 2004 the industry produced 325,159 tons of sugar and has been on a downward spiral ever since producing, in 2011, 237,000 which is 37% less than 2004. Therefore telling us that the industry will produce 5.7% more in 2012 than in 2011 is not compelling.

What needs to be squarely faced - my friend the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, who spoke just before I started, admitted as much - is that the sugar industry is in deep crisis and will require better management and less wishful thinking. In his 2011 speech the Hon. Minister told the nation that GuySuCo would be injecting \$4.3 billion in capital works which would enable the company to recover its production levels and restore its financial performance. We need to know

how that \$4.3 billion was spent and if it was spent properly and why another \$4 billion was needed.

We repeat the call for a Commission of Inquiry into this malfunctioning organisation, and specifically in relation to the complexity, that is Skeldon. There needs to be an official inspection of the basic issues involved. GuySuCo needs a root and branch overhaul and refitting.

To begin at the beginning, there needs to be put in place a new board of directors. I thank my honourable friend, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, for announcing that such a board has apparently been appointed. I want to go on to say that my understanding of a new board is that it should be filled with tried and tested people of proven competence and expertise, people who would be loyal only to the resurrection of the sugar industry. There must be no sacred cows.

The substantive utility of the most recent strategic plan must be subjected to detailed scrutiny, including the related implementation programme. There must be an identification of the specific management and operational resources involved, complemented by an audit of competencies, particularly of the management cadre. The crippling migration, away from the fields, needs to be carefully scrutinised as it relates to the potential of adequate personnel for the organisation's sustainability.

At this time there is no substantive incumbent for the position of General (Estate) Manager at Skeldon. A logical follow-up must be about GuySuCo's training and development programme, assuming it has a credible organisation structure and related succession plan. The selection and recruitment process is alleged to be not the most transparent. Stories of the malfunctioning of the apprentice training school need to be closely investigated. More importantly is the reported incapacity of the management to upgrade the curricula in order for students to cope with the latest technologies in field and factory.

To conclude on the sugar industry, Mr. Speaker, allow me to say this: One of the major measures announced by the Minister in this year's budget, the \$6 billion subvention for the Guyana Sugar Corporation, will undoubtedly become a major flashpoint during the consideration of the estimates by the Committee of Supply. Given the deep troubles facing GuySuCo, senior Government spokesmen have gone on the offensive defending the subvention on the grounds that sugar has historically given to the country far more over the years; that GuySuCo is too big

to fail; that the livelihood of 18,000 workers and the families would suffer, and so on. Compelling though all this may be, and compelling it is, it may not be sufficient to give the subvention a free pass.

If he wants this subvention to be approved, a total of \$11 billion in three years, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture is advised to present to the Committee of Supply a viable plan for lifting GuySuCo out of its indebtedness and production rut. The problems are well known but neither the Government nor GuySuCo projects any real command of them. Therein lies the dilemma. Given the slumping production in recent years, the loss of a significant part of the labour force, poor field and agronomic practices, the size of the wage bill, impending negative developments in the EU market and the intractable problems at the Skeldon factory, the Government has to lay out a convincing plan to the Assembly that GuySuCo will be able to begin a sustained turnaround as was the case in the early 1990s.

The omens are not positive and the Government appears frozen in the politics of sugar and unable to take the right decisions even in relation to the composition of the board and management. Before a vote on the subvention is taken by the Committee of Supply there should be a forensic examination of GuySuCo's accounts over the last five years, an assessment of its indebtedness and the scrutinising of its present recovery plan to evaluate whether there is risk of continuing in the present direction. The Government will have to explain about the industry's circumstances in 2014 which necessitates a whopping \$6 billion compared to \$1 billion in 2013, and whether there is any certainty of recovery in the short to medium term. The use of recent subventions to GuySuCo and the large tranches from the European Union in accompanying measures since 2007 must be explained thoroughly.

If we are serious about salvaging the sugar industry, we must go beyond putting plaster on the sores. We must go to the root of the disease.

The Hon. Minister of Finance and his colleagues have expressed great pride that the country had experienced eight consecutive years of GDP growth with last year's being 5.2%. The figure and sustained growth are to be commended, except that critics and the average citizen would query whether that expansion in GDP has accomplished two things: a significant upswing in the job market and the lifting of the *per capita* income particularly for those under and near the poverty

line. My colleagues on this side have argued this point forcefully and with merit.

An enduring flaw in the Hon. Minister's budgets is their unwillingness to address the evident unemployment and underemployment in the economy. There is no evidence that the unemployment and underemployment issue is being seriously addressed and there is no policy or programmatic attempt to confront it in the Budget 2014. It must mean that the Government is at a loss on how to create jobs or even how to stimulate the private sector to accomplish this – the lone big project in recent years being Qualfon's Guyana Inc. call centre. The Minister of Finance was able to complete his lengthy presentation without any direct reference to unemployment and the measures that the Government would take. The results of the 2012 national census, which may shed some light on this, are still being awaited in 2014. It seems that the Government's answer to this issue of unemployment is merely to continue highlighting the varied youth training programmes being offered by it and non-governmental organisations. These undoubtedly create some enterprising entrepreneurs and lead to a few jobs, but certainly not in the quantities that are needed.

Qualfon's 6,000 promised jobs in business process; outsourcing is undoubtedly a big development in the information technology sector. That aside, the Government has been unable, through policies or by attracting investors, to significantly transform the economy. The danger of this straitjacket was evident in the fall in foreign exchange earnings in 2013. Sugar was down because of production problems, so too was the economic star, gold, because of the slide in world prices. Rice returns were up but in essence a set-off against what Guyana would have spent purchasing oil. Bauxite and timber had unimpressive showings. There was no other co-star to share the stage. Twenty-two uninterrupted years of PPP/C governance has failed to restructure and transform the pillars of the economy and there are dangers to each of the established sectors in the years ahead.

To end, where we began, I urge that my honourable friends, on the other side, bring a halt to their migration from reality and confront head-on with what stare us all in the face. It is this: that the configuration of this Tenth Parliament imposes on all three sides an obligation that is unique in our post independence history; an obligation to listen, to search relentlessly for common ground, however elusive it may appear from time to time; to curb every instinct to dominate; to treat otherness as a strength and not a weakness and to prefer generosity over meanness. Were we to

honour these obligations we would be worthy of those we claim to serve.

Allow me to conclude by quoting the words with which our sister Mrs. Deborah Backer ended with, in what was to be her final budget speech, on Friday, 5th April, 2013:

“We, APNU, have campaigned on a system of government called “shared governance.” I believe now that this Government is beginning slowly to recognise the advantages of such a system. Sir, you remarked yesterday that everybody forgot who he or she was as we rushed to help our fallen brother. Luckily it was only a temporary falling. Why we cannot, in this House, if Mrs. Backer, who people wrongfully say, if I may say, is very confrontational, genuinely say let us work together? Let us work together, so that together we can move this country, which we love so much, forward. Sir, I rest my case.”

As I rest mine, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Dr. Roopnarine. Hon. Members, I would advise that we do not take a recess. Members are free to go for coffee but I promise you that you will miss a very entertaining close to our debates because I invite Mr. Neendkumar to address the House and to take us to closure.

Mr. Neendkumar: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Hon. Ministers, fellow Hon. Members of this honourable House, as I rise to offer my unflinching support to Budget 2014 allow me to congratulate our Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, and his reliable and competent staff for the timely preparation and sound presentation of this year budget consistent as the constitutional provisions as set out in the laws of Guyana.

I have listened attentively, and very carefully, to the contributions of all those who made their contributions so far. I felt very bad sometimes when I heard some of the derogatory statements which were made, but I feel very proud to be on this side of the House which has men and women of integrity, men and women of substance, men and women who have led this country from the twentieth century to the twentieth-first century and these men and women, I am quite certain, will continue to lead this county for a very long time.

All Guyanese must be very thankful to the PPP/C administration for the presentation of this \$220 billion budget. Further, we must be a happy nation to know that for the eighth consecutive year

our country has realised real growth, hence, the theme of the budget is indeed appropriate *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*.

This Budget 2014, which is \$200 billion, is indeed a budget with an abundance of opportunities and certainly offers improvement in all facets of lives of every single Guyanese throughout this vast and diverse country of ours, eighth consecutive years of economic growth, with real GDP, expanding by 5.2% in 2013 which represents the largest period of uninterrupted real economic growth in independent Guyana. This is an ample testimony of quality leadership of the PPP/C Government-led administration which no one on the other side could match.

I am a son of a rice farmer. I grow up in the days when we were ploughing the rice fields with oxen. Today, I am proud to know that while in 1992 Guyana produced a mere 105 000 tons of rice it produced a record of 535 000 tons of rice in 2013.

Before 1992 the gold and diamond revenue was not accounted for, it was not put into the Consolidated Funds. In 2013 the gold industry achieved 9.7% growth to reach 481,087 ounces, the highest record in the history of the gold industry, including the period during Omai operations.

Expert earnings amounted to US\$1.4 billion while foreign direct investments accounted for US\$214 million. Guyanese are proud to know that this PPP/C administration has a gross international reserve of \$776.9 million. We must also commend the private sector as it expanded by 14.5% during 2013. **[Mr. Greenidge: Whose reserve?]** His reserve was zero **[Mr. Nandlall: Minus zero.]** Yes, minus zero. It cannot be denied that this PPP/C Government has transformed the economy and our people are enjoying a better life – sugar and rice must be supported.

As for bauxite - I want to answer Dr. Rupert Roopnarine - everyone who worked in the bauxite industry knows that the industry became unprofitable since 1982 and it deteriorated under the last People's National Congress (PNC) administration. The poor condition of both plant and mining equipment, resulted in heavy loss of market during the 80s and 90s despite an abundance of assistance, because of poor management and weak governance by the PNC, bauxite production from Linden Mining Enterprise (LINMINE) fell by more than 45% from 1991 to 1992 and continued to drop thereafter, despite Mining and Processing Engineers (MINPROC)

which was brought in under the PNC administration to manage this industry in an attempt to make it survive.

It is the PPP/C Government that took a bold decision in June 2003 to have LINMINE operations managed by Cambior Inc., a Canadian company which owned Omai Gold Mine Inc. Omai Bauxite Mining Inc. (OBMI) had an interim measure until the PPP/C was able to better organise the financing for the full joint venture through privatisation. In December 2004, the Linden bauxite was privatised by joint shares with Cambior Inc., having 70% shares and Government 30 % shares.

The Cambior Inc. shares were sold to Bosai Minerals Group Co. Ltd. in 2007. Today, the PPP/C and the workers at Linden can boast that Bosai Minerals Group Co. Ltd. is running Bosai operations at a profit over the last four years. The company employs 640 persons directly while more than 1,000 persons are employed on contract or otherwise. **[Mr. Greenidge:** How many of them are Chinese?] It only has 18 foreigners. Only 18 are working for your information. After all of the years of the of the bauxite industry today, we must recognise the fact that there is a dust collector at kiln number 14 and systems are in place to provide more dust collectors to ensure a healthiest and safe environment in Linden. The Hon. Minister is telling me that kiln number 18 is also installed, presently.

I wish to remind this House that the PPP, Dr. Cheddi Jagan's led Government, 50 years ago, was removed from Government in 1964 with two minority parties and the PNC closed the Aluminum Plant that Dr. Jagan's Government built in Linden. **[Mr. Nandlall:** Who closed it?] The PNC closed it; the PNC destroyed the Surapana farm; the PNC destroyed the citrus and agricultural farm in Kwakwani; above all the PNC ruined the Kwakwani, Ituni and Linden communities. The vibrant goat farm on the Kwakwani/Linden trail was also destroyed under your watch. **[Dr. Singh:** Who was the Minister of Finance?] A man named Carl Greenidge - short man.

With respect to the Berbice operations, Dr. Roopnarine, Berbice Mining Enterprise (BERMINE) died under the PNC administration. However, Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc. (BCGI)/ Russian Aluminium Company (RUSAL) is presently developing that operation. In 2013 the Berbice operations produced 1,563,000 tons of bauxite while in 2014 the target is set at 1,624,000 tons. **[Interruption]**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are on our last presentations and I think we should give the speaker our attention. Please let us settle down. I know that we are anxious to leave but let us settle down.

Mr. Neendkumar: The main activities in 2013 for BCGI were:

- Improving the quality of bauxite.
- Decreasing the volume of transshipment from 2 million tons to 1.5 million tons.
- Reducing the quality of rental equipment.
- The adoption of a satellite communication channel; and
- Increasing the availability of efficient mining equipment.

RUSAL considers the development to be one of the main aspects of the company. The development - Mr. Greenidge could not call this word - of Kurubuka deposits was that there was 33 million tons of bauxite reserves. The operational life of Kurubuka deposit is 15 years while there will be stable jobs for more than 1, 000 full-time workers, subcontracts and otherwise will attract more than 2,000 workers.

A tour to the new development at the mining area in the Berbice River is indeed a revelation. I would like to take Members of the opposite side on a tour. There is a new well constructed wharf [Ms. Ally: Who wrote the speech?] Jaipaul. I wanted to bring a pair of boxing gloves for you this morning when you all were quarrelling in the office. We can now see a new oil generator set, there is also a new conveyor system and a new spanking dryer, and there is a new warehouse for dried bauxite. The community now enjoys a better road to commute on. The future of the bauxite operation in Region 10 looks exciting and encouraging.

I now turn my attention to development works at the regional level. In the education sector in excess of \$40 million was spent on the enhancement of physical infrastructure benefiting the children of Ituni, Aroaima and Mackenzie, just to name a few. In the other areas another \$130 million was spent on roads, agricultural development, improvement in transportation, enhancement of power supply for betterment for all of the people of Linden.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Hon. Whip on the other side heckle from the floor “and how much money is going in your pocket?”

Mr. Speaker: You said so Ms. Ally, and to whom?

Ms. Teixeira: Somehow you do not hear what we hear, Sir, sometime.

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Ally, you said so, and to whom? Were you speaking... *[Interruption]* Hon. Members, one second... *[Interruption]* Hon. Members, I did hear something but the point is: Was it addressed to any person?

Ms. Teixeira: He was the one on the floor. It was a question asked to him – “and how much money going into your pocket?” *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, let us settle down please. Continue Mr. Neendkumar.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Speaker, I can ask in the same vein... The One Mile Primary School burnt down and some people went and collected moneys in New York, fundraising, and I want to know where the money is that was collected. Anyway I am not going there as yet.

The year 2014, Government will be, in keeping with that budget theme, better the total sum to the tune of close to \$200 million that will be spent in Region 10.

Development under this Government never, and will never, in any form and fashion stop. Let us together examine what we did for the people in Region 4, right here where we all live. In the RDC Region 4, this people-oriented Government invested in excess of \$135 million in the following areas – agricultural development, roads improvement, enhancement in the supply of power, further enhancement in the education and health sector. In this year the Government is committed in approving expenditure to the tune, in excess, of \$190 million. This is development in progress for all of the people in the region.

The building and construction of several diverse sports facilities around the country over the last few years is indeed motivational and is a manifestation of promises kept by the PPP/C. The PPP/C Government spent approximately \$3 billion in the construction and maintenance of state-of-the-art facilities to promote and enhance various sports disciplines in Guyana.

8.36 p.m.

On Tuesday we heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Trevor Williams – I told him I was going to answer him – questioning the leadership and vision of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. [Ms. Wade: What is wrong with that?] What is wrong with that? I told both Mr. Jones and Mr. Williams that anything they want they can come and I will discuss it with them. His main laments were that the Ministry is visionless, yet he has failed miserably to offer any alternative vision in his presentation. It is simple; he probably has none.

In the last eight years alone, we can see substantial investment and transformation of the sports sector. We have seen the development of the Guyana National Stadium, the National Aquatic Centre, public squash courts, and national synthetic athletic track – and it was completed today. It is not “soon” any longer; it is complete. Lights at the Albion Cricket Ground will be a reality shortly.

Following the logic of my Hon. Friend Williams, these historic firsts in Guyana is visionless. In an article written by the Hon. Member on 1st December, 2013 in the Alliance For Change (AFC) Column, he offered his grand vision for sports development in Guyana, which is to rename the Guyana National Stadium the Clive Lloyd National Stadium. While I have no problem recognising Mr. Clive Lloyd, who is an advisor to the Government on sport, the point is: naming the facility will not cause sports to develop in Guyana. You have to do much more than that. You have to invest in people, programmes and facilities.

Mr. T. Williams: I commend the Hon. Member for quoting my article but he did not say state the title of the article and what it was meant to say and that is not fair.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Williams, you had a chance to present your vision and you cannot tell the other speaker what in your article he should refer to. It is a debate. It is for him to pick what he feels he wants to pick from the article.

Mr. T. Williams: He is misinforming the House. That is not fair.

Mr. Speaker: We ask for references so that there is no doubt as to source, but when a Member is quoting that another Member has written an article...there is no denial that the article was written by Mr. Trevor Williams. We insist on references because we want to know that our sources are

correct. If you are denying that you actually wrote an article, then we can demand and insist that the source be given. If you do not have the reference of the article tonight, you can provide it tomorrow, Sir.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Speaker, I never come here unprepared. I have the article in my hand.

Mr. Speaker: What is the name of the article?

Mr. Neendkumar: The name of the article is, “A tenure characterised by inaction – Part 1”. It is in the 1st December, 2013 edition of the *Kaieteur News*.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Williams, does that satisfy you?

Mr. T. Williams: The Hon. Member is claiming that my alternative for sports development is naming the Stadium after Mr. Clive Lloyd.

Mr. Neendkumar: That is what you said.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Williams, was that one of your recommendations? Yes or no.

Mr. T. Williams: Not in that light, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Did you, at any time, recommend that the Stadium be renamed the Clive Lloyd Stadium? Yes or no.

Mr. T. Williams: Yes, I did.

Mr. Speaker: Well, then the Member is in order.

Mr. Neendkumar: I am quoting.

“With justification, there are many who consider it a travesty that the Guyana National Stadium has not been properly and appropriately named the Clive Lloyd National Stadium.”

Do you know what is interesting? This article was written in December last year. In the article, he stated that in part two he would examine Dr. Anthony’s failure in the areas of music and the performing arts. I am still waiting for that article. You have to do much more than that. You have

to invest in people, programmes and facilities. That is what we are doing. So, I guess we know who is visionless.

If you go to the AFC's Action Plan, in a half-page captioned "Sports policy", you will see that many of the things listed there have already been implemented by this Government. I just want to highlight two areas.

In sports education, the AFC would like to see courses in sports medicine, sports nutrition, physiotherapy and sports administration. The Government has established a multipurpose facility – the National Sports Resource Centre – that would evolve into a national sports institute where the courses mentioned and many others would be taught. It was a good idea, though, Mr. Trevor Williams.

This is not just about electioneering by making empty promises that you cannot fulfil. This is about proper planning and delivering on those plans. The National Sports Resource Centre is not a dream. It is a reality. I will say some more about it later.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Hon. Member please indicate when this institution was established and why he is using terminology...?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, we are not considering the Estimates and so no question may be put to a Member and no Member is obliged to answer. This is a debate. If I say it is my party's vision to establish an institute...

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to listen to me?

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Greenidge, with the greatest of respect, it is a debate. You cannot...

Mr. Greenidge: I am not questioning the vision.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot question a Member to give a time. That is his right. Mr. Greenidge, it is a debate.

Mr. Greenidge: I am asking as a matter of fact.

Mr. Speaker: You cannot ask a question in a debate.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, am I allowed to ask a question of fact?

Mr. Speaker: No, Mr. Greenidge. You cannot ask a Member, in a debate, a question.

Mr. Greenidge: It is about a fact. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will bear that in mind when I am speaking as well.

Mr. Neendkumar: Hon. Speaker, I promise you that I will answer him. Mr. Speaker, we must match rhetoric with action. I know that the AFC Manifesto stated that you worked to establish a national league in basketball. I know the general secretary of the AFC, who is my good friend, is the President of the Guyana Amateur Basketball Association (GABA). I wonder why no league was established under his tenure. Under the new President, Mr. Nigel Hinds, the national basketball club championship is currently being played. Was this vision or visionless leadership by the AFC? It is easy to criticise but when they had the opportunity to get things done, they have failed miserably.

Mr. Speaker: You have four minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Neendkumar: In their plan, they talked about the development of community grounds. Just last year, we spent \$300 million on community grounds. Let me assure you that a list can be provided to you.

Hon. Mr. Williams said that the Ministry is visionless. I would advise the Member to check the AFC's one-page on cultural policy in its Action Plan. I will say that most of what is listed there, this Government has already achieved. I will go further to say that we have surpassed what is stated there. The *visionless* Ministry did this: the National Music School was established; the National Theatre and Drama School was established; the Caribbean Press for publishing young writers such as the Hon. James Anthony Bond, whose poetry is in one of the books, was established.

Mr. Speaker, I feel very proud because LFS Burnham was a son of this soil. When I look at a book that was printed by this same Press... Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate you on this wonderful preface you wrote; it is good language and it is good for children. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. This is Mr. Forbes Burnham.

I am pleased that last year the Ministry completed the 1823 Monument. My friend and schoolmate, Mr. Trevor Thom, designed this statue. He has done an excellent job. I am proud of him and so too are thousands of Guyanese who have seen the monument.

Mr. Speaker: Two minutes more, Mr. Neendkumar.

Mr. Neendkumar: You will have to give me a little more time. As Guyanese, we are all proud of the Guyana National Stadium at Providence. It has become a landmark and houses visitors from around the world. The spanking new Olympic-sized swimming pool is today a reality and very soon the national aquatic centre will be an international facility with the completion of the warm-up and warm-down pools.

The National Racquet Centre at Woolford Avenue is a reality. Today, we can talk about the glamorous squash courts which are both of international standard and the first public courts in the Caribbean.

Recently – that is one month ago – the National Sports Resource Centre was commissioned by the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony. This \$55 million project adds to the ambience of the National Racquet Centre which also accommodates the tennis and squash courts. The commissioning of this important and necessary facility marks the beginning of a new era in sports for Guyana.

The National Sports Resource Centre will create the opportunity for athletes to be exposed to information via print and electronic media which will take them at the various sports fraternities to the highest level. Athletes, coaches, students and the general public will be exposed to public lectures we intend to organise. We recognise the fact that access to information is extremely important and intend to ensure development in this essential area. Hence, the National Sports Resource Centre is the forerunner for a future national sports institute, Mr. Greenidge, which is essential for Guyana to continue the positive development in the world of sports. This aesthetic and educational facility is expected to provide guidance, training and certification to the stakeholders in sports. Athletes, coaches, umpires, referees, scorers, journalists, managers, chaperones, technical persons, along with the general public will benefit. It is also envisaged that through various initiatives, the National Sports Commission (NSC) will organise several training

programmes. With the Resource Centre, we will be able to train and ultimately give certificates and diplomas to our sports officials.

The year 2013 was highly successful for some of our sports personalities. Shivnarine Chanderpaul continued to break records while our squash queen Nicolette Fernandes and other squash players continued to keep the Golden Arrowhead flying high.

In conclusion, I was extremely impressed with the crowd that attended the Babu John rally on the first Sunday in March. I was extremely impressed with the massive crowd at State House and I was extremely impressed with the turnout of the PPP/C supporters in Linden when we opened the office. This means that the PPP/C is ready for local and general elections.

Allow me to once more congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, and his staff. To all Members of this House, let us work together for a better Guyana. [*Applause*]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have concluded our business for today. I invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the adjournment motion.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the House be adjourned until 2.00 p.m. tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 2.00 p.m. on Friday, 4th April, 2014.

Adjourned accordingly at 8.50 p.m.