

# 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*

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76<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Friday, 4<sup>TH</sup> April, 2014

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*The Assembly convened at 2.09 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following report was presented:

1. The Annual Report of the Guyana Power and Light Inc. for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2012. [*Minister of Finance*]

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **For Written Reply**

#### **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 Paramakato Primary School would be completed?

*Answer not received.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** I had asked if permission would be granted to let the question wait until after the Budget Debate to be answered.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know who you had asked that of.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I had indicated to one of the Clerks.

**Mr. Speaker:** One of the Clerks...

**Ms. Teixeira:** ... if it were possible.

**Mr. Speaker:** I think that you needed to speak to *the* Clerk.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Actually, I think that it was the Table Officer, Ms. West.

**Mr. Speaker:** I see. That has not been communicated to me.

**Ms. Teixeira:** May I then, without that being communicated, seek your permission?

**Mr. Speaker:** I will discuss with the Clerk and we will get back to you, but there is a time limit put on questions.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I appreciate that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

**MOTION**

**BUDGET SPEECH 2014 – 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 under-mentioned 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. Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues in debating the 2014 National Budget which was delivered to this august House by the Hon. Minister of Finance. Permit me, at the outset, to express disagreement with the misapplication of the theme, *A Better Guyana for all Guyanese*. This is an unrealistic title for an almost three-hour litany and it is more suited to be labelled, ‘Making a Better Life for Some Guyanese’.

The 2014 Budget, touting a whopping \$220 billion, makes very little provision for the ordinary public servant. This anti-labour budget does not, in any way, offer hope for the ordinary man becoming a real man. Although there is neither provision for any new tax nor increase in taxes in the Budget, the ordinary public servant will continue to struggle to provide a good life for his or her family. This contrasts with decades ago when a public servant could have maintained his

family, educate them, cater for medical expenses and provide for an occasional vacation for the family.

Despite a new measure of an education grant of \$10,000 to every child attending school, this cannot suffice adequately for the small income earner. This measure, though it may sound well, will give more to those who already have and, therefore, not in need of such assistance. I would wish to suggest that some more thought be given to this measure before it is implemented. Since the child whose parent can afford will get the same benefit as the child whose parent is struggling to send him or her to school, it would have been better if a feasibility study was conducted so that the disadvantaged would benefit from double or triple times the \$10,000.

In addition, I ask, what has been considered for our ordinary nurses, teachers, the men and women in uniform, the sweeper/cleaners, the ward maids, etc? They, too, desperately need an increase in salaries to make ends meet. A \$10,000 non-taxable grant on their wages and salaries would have been a good start in an effort to alleviate the hardships they face.

The Hon. Minister of Finance and all other Ministers should park their vehicles occasionally and go to the market places, go to the bus parks and hear the plight of our public servants, as they would be better equipped to make informed decisions when it comes to the liveable wage or salary for our downtrodden public servants.

After the Budget was presented, I had the fortune of speaking with an old-age pensioner, who is very dependent on her pension for survival. I asked, "Are you satisfied with the 5% increase?" These were her exact words: "With \$625, I will buy a pound of beef for \$500 and the smallest packet of curry powder but still I ain't got no rice so how I cookin'?" In the year 2014, \$625 is just giving the pensioners almost nothing.

Of all the rosy sounding developmental works the Hon. Minister alluded to in his presentation, very little caters for the human development, the most important resource of any country.

In Budget 2014, billions of dollars have been allocated to the health sector. Ironically, although we hear of the amount of money being spent in this sector, one would be left in shock upon visiting some of our medical institutions. Only a few weeks ago, the West Demerara Regional Hospital was short of some basic drugs to treat patients. If the West Demerara Regional Hospital

does not have drugs, then it is logical that there would be no medical supplies at Leonora, at Wakenaam, at Leguan and at all of the other health centres and health posts in the Region.

The Social Services Committee of this very Tenth Parliament visited the Mahaicony Hospital in the month of March and what a tragedy it was to discover that the institution was short of insulin. It begs the question: if we spend so much money on drugs, how is it then that there is a shortage? Maybe it is time to zero in on the procurement process associated with drug purchases for patient care. Further, these health institutions continue to be short of medical doctors and other critical staff, although the Government boasts of training umpteen doctors and nurses. I, therefore, cannot help but wonder: are we training these health sector professionals for export? I would not even touch on the embarrassment the Government brought on itself with the recent attempt to train a batch of nurses, for which a miniscule amount passed.

We continue to witness the rapid decline of the sugar industry. Despite the astronomical amount of money that is being pumped into this major sector, it continues to fall short on its targets. A multimillion dollar factory designed and constructed at Skeldon, against advice from knowledgeable, experienced technicians has only served to trigger sugar into losing its sweetness. The annual injection of billions of dollars is not clearly the answer to GuySuCo's woes, for until we have the right kind of management, GuySuCo will continue to go to ruin. It was said somewhere during this debate that under a PNC Government, we closed Versailles and Leonora Sugar Estates. That might we so, but, although they were closed, GuySuCo was reaching and surpassing its targets on a yearly basis. Uitvlugt Estate, like so many other estates, did not reach its target in 2013 and from the current trend of how things are progressing, it seems like this would again be the case in 2014.

Of all of the graduates from the legendary Port Mourant Apprentice Training School, only one can be found at Uitvlugt Estate. Traditionally, GuySuCo was a corporation persons ran to for jobs and prided themselves on being an employee because of the favourable terms and conditions. Today, qualified person, both technical and administrative, are placing employment at the hitherto glorious establishment down in their priority for job placement. In fact, due to the inefficient administration, many attach to GuySuCo are looking for an opportunity to bail out. The managers from whom accountability is demanded are not allowed to manage. Take for instance if a person is to work overtime, a directive must come from the head office approving

this intention. This situation of accountability without responsibility was unheard of in the time of GuySuCo when it was reaching and surpassing the production targets. If the Government does not act wisely and does not do so now, GuySuCo will be a Corporation we once had.

Another major agricultural crop of Region 3 is rice and, from speaking with farmers, one would instantly recognise that they too are experiencing severe constraints in this sector. Unless we forget, on the day the Budget was presented to this National Assembly, dozens of farmers came from Region 2 out of disgust to protest against the Government for the hardship they are experiencing as a result of the clueless manner in which the state is managing the rice sector.

This grave shortcoming has resulted in the perpetuation of adversities to rice farmers, including not being paid for paddy sold since 2013's second crop. Rice farmers throughout our country are in dire need of a better stake in the industry by way of technical and economical support.

Education: Although they welcome the news, both teachers and students of Zeeburg Secondary and St. John Secondary Schools, on acquiring new buildings, the education sector in Region 3 is not without its monumental challenges. Once again, the department of education staffers continue to function in a cramped building with some officers occupying plywood cubicles as their offices. These hardworking public servants now have access to only one stairway of that building since the REO, in his wisdom, decided to close one stairway. This is an occupation health and safety breach and, undoubtedly, a fire hazard.

Our trainee teachers continue to be housed at Vreed-en-Hoop Secondary School with no access to a library because the area of the building they utilise for training is wholly inadequate to house a functioning library. While this short-sightedness is happening, a building which one housed a section of Winsor Forest Primary School remains unoccupied and unused - another case of short-sightedness, Mr. Speaker.

The students of Vreed-en-Hoop Secondary School have been relegated to utilising a portion of land in the compound of the West Demerara Regional Hospital as their agricultural plot. This discomfort exists even though a building which once housed the Practical Instruction Centre, Agriculture, is left to rot and more than three acres of land is becoming a forest. All of this is happening when this very Government has introduced the Secondary Competency Certificate Programme (SCCP) and Agricultural Science has the tendency to attract the largest number of

students. I recommend that the Practical Instruction Centre, Agriculture, at Fellowship be reopened.

The Practical Instruction Centre, Industrial Arts, is now being housed in one building and students are forced to do both practical and theory in the same environment. Here again, the other more appropriate building to do the theory is being left to crumble. What foresight does this exemplify?

Again, we continue to see in the 2014 Budget, as in previous years' budgets, the machinations that will result in a wanton waste of money while simultaneously enhancing the gravy train for political associates of Government. This historical revelation of an obvious absence of value for money regarding several road projects will intensify as well as the trend of works not being done to specification resulting in contractors becoming wealthier on the backs of the taxpayers.

A few cases about shoddy work in Region 3 are some community roads, such as the Haag Back Damn Access Road, Lanes Avenue and the Den Amstel Old Road. The main road leading to the Stewartville Secondary School is sometimes impassable in the rainy season. Much more has to be done. Much more can be done for all Guyanese to have and enjoy a better life if the title of the 2014 Budget is to be taken seriously. For now, it is devoid of the realism needed to stimulate the human capital of Guyana. I, therefore, cannot support the passage of the 2014 Budget in its present form.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me join with my colleagues in this National Assembly in commending the Hon. Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh and his team for presenting to this National Assembly another budget, a budget that speaks and responds to the aspirations of the people of Guyana and a budget that certainly will take us forward as a people united.

The 2014 Budget is being presented in a political context that is unique in post-independent Guyana, a political context as some of us or nearly all of us would recognise is pregnant with both opportunities and challenges. But a political context, if not handled and if not manoeuvred sensibly, can also undo some of the developmental achievements we have made as a nation. This

Budget, framed in the third year of President Ramotar's Administration, is one that is responsive and is one that is relevant to that unique political context I have referred to earlier and, certainly, it presents another opportunity in the year 2014 for all of us, collectively, to take full use of the policies and, more importantly, the measures that have been outlined therein so that we can make this new, and, perhaps, this challenging political reality we operate within, be converted into many opportunities for our nation.

The focus of this year's Budget, as we have heard outlined by our able Minister of Finance and many colleagues who have spoken – even some of the colleagues on the other side have recognised some of the merits therein – is about creating opportunities for our people, and I wish to say that it is not only creating opportunities for our people, but creating opportunities for all of our people, all of the people of Guyana.

We also live in a very, one can say, unique but also gifted social make up and social circumstances. We are a nation of much diversity and we are a nation in which we have to ensure that policies, programmes and projects take into account these social realities. If we look at the focus of this Budget, it is about ensuring equity. It is about ensuring fairness and it is about ensuring that all of the people of Guyana, if they live in the Rupununi, if they live in Linden, if they live in Parika, if they live in Georgetown, if they live on the East Coast, if they live in West Berbice, if they live in Kwakwani, if they live in New Amsterdam, Port Mourant, whether they live in Skeldon, Orealla, Siparuta, wherever they live, there is something for them in this 2014 Budget. It is about equity. It is about fairness. It is about opportunities for all.

More importantly, the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government, now in our 23<sup>rd</sup> year, has many achievements, solid achievements, incontestable achievements, and even some of the colleagues in and out of this National Assembly and the international community, as a whole... Several speakers have referred to statements made by international financial institutions. Statements made by individuals and organisations not known to be friends of this Government have pointed to the solid, sound and transformational achievements under the PPP/Civic.

The 2014 Budget, as presented by our Minister and representing the vision of our President and our Government, is also about transforming our country, transforming our economy and ensuring

that our economy is resilient not only from national circumstances, but also resilient in terms of dealing with what we can call unpredictable international developments.

The 2014 Budget is about positioning and also preparing Guyana, preparing Guyana not only for today but also positioning Guyana for sometimes the unknown and the known tomorrow.

Much has been said and due recognition has been given to the economic performance and the consistent growth of our economy that has outmatched those particularly in this hemisphere, particularly in this Region, but also countries that have faced similar histories - similar social, political and economic circumstances, near and far. If we do a comparison, we will see that Guyana has certainly outpaced many of those other similar societies. In fact, Guyana, in many regards, in recent years, has defied the critics, has defied the sceptics and continues to shine and shine very brightly.

Our Hon. Minister of Finance would have outlined, and this was reinforced by my Colleagues on this side, the performance of the various subsectors of our national economy. These have contributed to the overall growth. But in recent years, an emerging – not because I am the Subject Minister – sector, a sector that is very critical and very central to our economic growth and also to fostering social stability is that of the natural resources and environment sector. If we look in terms of the contribution of the natural resources and environment sector to our economy, we can see that this is growing and certainly expanding in many regards.

As we have heard from the Hon. Minister of Finance, we can speak about the contribution of gold. I want, on this note, to single out our small and medium scale miners who have created history in this land. I want all of us in this National Assembly to recognise their performance, whereby they have been able to produce and declare in excess of 481,000 ounces. This is the first time we have done so, even in the absence of a large gold mine. The last time we came close to that was when we had the OMAI Gold Mines in operation and then when we had the combined production in this regard, but this is the first time that we have seen our small and medium scale miners making use of the opportunity and rising to the challenge and certainly presenting our country with enormous opportunities. Last year, if we look in terms of diamond, we have seen our declaration for diamond increase by an excess of 55%.

If we move down in terms of the mining and quarrying sector, in terms of quarrying, we have seen quarry production has increased by as much as 40%. This speaks not only to the public works projects that are taking place, but it also speaks to the dynamic, private construction sector that is taking place in our economy.

If we look at the forestry sector too, we have seen an increase of close to 10%. That increase has taken place particularly in terms of the value-added sector because we have always recognised that in long term and in ensuring the development of our forestry resources, it is not only about the extraction of logs and the export of logs, but also ensuring that in our country we have maximum value. In fact, last year, we saw a decrease in log export in excess of 12% and increase, for the same period, in excess of 30% of value-added product, and that, again, speaks to an industry that is responding and responding to the opportunities.

We have recognised the challenges that we have had with bauxite, particularly, with the global market situation, but that did not daunt the two major companies and that is why, last year, they have invested in excess of US\$17 million and this year they are poised to increase and even diversify their production and their export.

As the Budget provides and as the Minister of Finance spoke to, we are making that direct and that intrinsic link in terms of ensuring that our economic development, more increasingly, hinges primarily on how we are able to mobilise and how we are able to develop our human capital.

*2.39 p.m.*

But that other rich capital that we possess is our natural capital and that is why this year it is about harnessing, it is about ensuring that we maximise the opportunities within the natural capital. That I speak to is the natural resources and environment sector.

The Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine last night in his presentation posed a number of questions, and very important questions. These questions certainly speak to some of the current issues which we are confronting and which we must confront collectively if we are going to move forward the natural resources or what we call, the extractive industries in our country. Speak to the issue of how we can minimise the impact of an expanding mining sector, particularly gold. And, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the programmes and initiatives that we have launched in terms

of clean and new technology, we are now a signatory to the Minamata Convention that is for the reduction and eventual elimination of the use of mercury, not only in mining but in other activities. But because of its prominent role and the use of mercury, traditionally, for recovery in the mining sector, we have committed internationally to transition out from the use of mercury.

I am happy to report to this National Assembly that since the last budget presentation we are in fact making steady, and in a way hurried progress along this direction. Through incentives provided by our Government and through support, especially technology transfer and training by the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), the regulatory agency for the mining sector, we have been able to support the sector; we have been able even to support suppliers in accessing this technology and also in making it available. At the end of last year we were able to announce a \$1 billion programme to assist the industry in moving away from mercury. Just recently in discussions with the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA) we have come to an arrangement whereby we will be approaching financial institutions not only in terms of managing this facility but also looking at the component of this resource in terms of us learning from our past efforts in ensuring that the right and appropriate technology is brought that meets our geological reality and conditions. So in response to that particular concern and question we have the commitment, we have the buy-in of the sector, we have the buy-in of all stakeholders, in moving in this area.

On the issue of diversification - because we do not only want the mining sector to be only focused on gold - we have started looking at other minerals. That issue is one again in which we require collective resolve, and which we do not hope that we will blow hot and cold on. Last year or earlier this year you would have been aware of the public debate on the Muri Project, and the granting of the Permission for Geographical and Geophysical Survey (PGGS) in the New River area; much has been said about that. But the underlying objective of that and other efforts is for us to understand what we have, the resources we have. The focus of that particular PGGS or the focus of that particular effort was for us to develop, as it were, rare earth elements which is a very scarce commodity, a very scarce item. It was in pursuit of diversification and understanding the geological makeup, understanding the resources we have, that we embarked on that. So the commitment is still there. In fact when we speak to our miners locally, and even when we have foreign investors, it is about ensuring that we make maximum use. In that regard we continue to

work with not only operators, persons who have prospecting licences, but also with our partners, be it the United States (USA), be it the Canadians, be it the Chileans, be it the Chinese, or other friendly Governments, in terms of giving us support so we can have a comprehensive, an updated geological map, so that we understand and know the resources that will allow us as it were to pursue diversification, and also for us to engage in sensible mining, mining in which we can reduce the impact, but I will come back to that in terms of what else we are dealing on the environmental front.

But going forward to in the area of gold is also looking at the opportunities. We have previously spoken about a number of large projects and again the question was asked, can we be provided with an update. And, yes, there is an update. In fact, yes, there is much progress and there is much to be said. Regarding Guyana Goldfields Inc. much activity has started already. Close to \$200 million has already been invested and close to 200 Guyanese are already employed. And very soon a number of individuals will be employed in terms of construction and other activities for this very large gold mining operation. If we look in terms of ETK/Sandspring, another large mining project, much progress has been made. And, again, this investment will be in excess of US\$350 million. They are still finalising the time schedule, and I do not want to commit the Company or myself, but during the course of 2015 there will be significant development in terms of the realisation of that large-scale mine.

There has been another rapid development. Some of our colleagues would have noticed in the newspapers today one of the other investors we have had out of Australia, Troy Resources Inc, in terms of developing the Cuyuni project. Already that project will see the employment of close to 300 Guyanese in the short term; immediately in terms of the construction. And, like the other large gold projects, will see a minimum coming to the State directly in excess of US\$25 million in revenue per annum and indirectly that goes all the way up to US\$200 million per annum. These particular investments speak directly in terms of not only providing opportunities but also in taking the sector forward in this regard.

The question was also asked about bauxite and what is taking place in that area with interest in RUSAL/BGCI in the Berbice River, and BOSAI at Linden. All of us know that we have resurrected the bauxite industry, and have brought communities that were abandoned, be it Region 10, Linden, Ituni or up the Berbice River – Kwakwani, Aroaima and Hururu. Where

there was a feeling of hopelessness after the devastation that came about with the closure of bauxite we revived hope and were able to attract foreign investment and restart, rejuvenate the bauxite industry, the Linden bauxite as well the Berbice River bauxite. Today we can boast of both companies, notwithstanding a very unpredictable situation in world bauxite. If we look at world bauxite prices especially for metallurgical grade bauxite, and calcine grade bauxite that we particularly export, we no longer have a monopoly, for the information of the Hon. Members, because China has now lifted its export restriction on calcine grade bauxite so there is competition now. Notwithstanding these realities the Guyana bauxite industry continues to be one in which there has been considerable progress and this year there is poise for expansion; not expansion in terms of investment but also expansion in terms of export as well as job creation, direct and indirect.

The question was asked about what is taking place at RUSAL in this regard, and what is happening at Kurubuku 22. And yes, Hon. Member, in this new mine significant works have been done and it is expected that in the next two months we will see greater activities coming about as a result of the work and investment done in that particular area which, again, is to give hope and ensure the continuity of that particular operation. The communities around are very enthusiastic about what is taking place.

The question was asked by one of the Hon. Members about Hururu. The suggestion is that this investment has taken advantage of an Amerindian community in the Berbice River. Several Hon. Members here would recall that in an appearance before the Natural Resources Sectoral Committee a request was made of me to table all the documentation as it pertains to that particular arrangement, as it pertains to the investment and what is taking place. And I wish to report that I have submitted same, and it will show very clearly the deliberate efforts made by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs working with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment and the companies, but very critical, the role played by the communities in ensuring at the end of the day the best deal, the best arrangement, was had for that community. The documents are there; they are public. I have already tabled them to the Natural Resources Sub-committee. Let us not get away that these investments are cheating, robbing and denying people of opportunities. In fact, it is the opposite; they are providing opportunities and protecting

and enriching, and enshrining and expanding the rights and opportunities of people in those communities.

In terms of BOSAI, the question was asked has BOSAI been able to develop a new mine. And let me say for both RUSAL and BOSAI yes, there have been some adjustments to the original proposals made in investment plans. But those adjustments came about not unilaterally taken by the companies themselves. Those adjustments were dictated by the international market conditions and realities. The adjustments that were made to the investment plans of both companies were not done to the disadvantage of the people of Guyana; were not done to waste or misuse the valuable natural resource of our country, but, in fact, the adjustments took into account, first and foremost, the interest of all the people of Guyana and particularly those communities. I will give you an example, Mr. Speaker. In the original proposal for BOSAI the plan was for us, for Guyana, was that we were going to make Block 37 available, which contains significant deposits. But because of the changed business plan in investment proposal by BOSAI we decided that we will not proceed in allocating the Company the Block 37 concession. In fact, they had to look at other areas. Some of the other areas they are looking in terms of developing new mines, because of those changing realities, would be Yraribo, Aroba, upper Harokaro, East Bank, Kara Kara and the West Bank areas. I have listed those areas in direct response to the Hon. Member's question in terms of their plans. And it is expected that these particular areas, and these new mines, will have a life in excess of 20 years with the production of close to 500,000 tonnes of [inaudible] per annum. So the prospects are good for bauxite. The investment and commitment by the company, notwithstanding the international situation, are certainly very solid in that regard.

While we focus on the big investments and have looked at the big projects I want to talk a little on what we have done in providing support to the sector. What we have done in terms of providing support to our small miners, our small operators. On that note I want to make a brief diversion. It seems that in our debate, not only in the National Assembly but in some of the public discourses, we seem to be developing a feeling or creating the impression of some sort of "Asia phobia" when it comes to investment in terms of attracting opportunities to our country. I wish to remind this National Assembly that the first large Asian investment in the natural resources sector took place under the People's National Congress (PNC) administration and it

involved Barama and Samling Group of Companies. As someone of some sort of Asian heritage, Chinese I think, you can correct me if I am wrong – but all of us, we are Guyanese... *[Interruption]* Yes, but he has some heritage. All of us have various forms of heritage; we come from different places. But in the debate I wish you can encourage Members, this singling out of Chinese investment, Indian investment, American investment or African or whatever investment, I think is unhelpful and does not sent the right signal because we live in a globalise environment, an environment where the competition to attract investment is very, very intensive. The fact is that due to the enabling environment the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government is creating, and due to all the people of Guyana, we have been able to attract investors. I think it is something positive and something we must celebrate. So let us ensure that in this regard that we value development, we value investment, large and small.

The question was asked about what support are we providing to small miners, small operators in the sector; a very important question too. I wish to report that the large and medium scale miners would have what you call an Investment Development Agreement whereby they are provided with various forms of concessions – duty free in terms of machinery, equipment, spares and so forth. For the small and medium scale operators who may not have an idea they themselves through a process working with the GGMC would be qualified for exemption for All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), excavators, bulldozers and other machinery used within the mining industry, including mercury free technology and various spares and equipment that are necessary. These are the types of incentives. In fact, if we look at last year concessions granted to small operators, small miners, there were 150 excavators, 6 tractors, 190 ATVs, various pickups, a number of trucks and so forth. I wish to report that currently the Minister of Finance is examining the appropriate regulations whereby we can provide our small miners too – currently they qualify for single cab pickup vehicle for transportation – recognising we have female miners and need people to be transported, not only comfortably but safely, we are looking in terms of having double cab pickups and even cars qualified in some regards for our small miners. So I wanted briefly to address the issue of support.

Another support that we provide too is dealing with the issue of infrastructure and road. The Hon. Member Mr. Harmon would have spoken to the issue of the GGMC and the Ministry of Natural Resources working with the Ministries of Public Works and Local Government

involving road works. Then the other Member Dr. Roopnarine complained that the road access for miners is inadequate. For a number of years, especially with the boom of mining industry, particularly gold, the GGMC working with the GGDMA collaborates and executed a number of road maintenance and road building projects. The GGMC would provide resources to the Ministry of Public Works in executing some of those programmes. So it is a collaborative effort. We want to ensure the miners feel the direct support too, especially our small hardworking miners, that they feel the direct support in this regard. So I want to make it absolutely clear that there is support, and we continue to look at providing more meaningful resources in this regard.

Also in terms of dealing with the unstable gold prices we have had, especially cushioning for small miners, there have been a number of measures discussed at various levels working with the mining community in terms of looking at forms of support . I wanted to reinforce that particular issue.

Also the prospects for oil and gas continue to be on the horizon.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, before you proceed into that subsector, could we have an extension of 15 minutes?

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

*Question put, and agreed to*

**Mr. R. Persaud:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, on the prospects for oil and gas, currently as we know, we have Repsol and Tullow, two companies in a joint venture, actively pursuing work and hoping to engage in exploration in the Kanuku block. Exxon is also in the process of making a key decision and, in fact, has already established its office in Guyana again to engage in exploration activities in the Stabroek block; CGX too is engaged in a number of preparatory activities to have renewed exploration both in the Corentyne and Demerara, as well as the onshore.

Mr. Speaker, as you know we had the unfortunate development whereby Anadarko had one of its seismic vessels forcibly removed by the Venezuelan navy. And that itself, I wish to report, has set back our programmes in some regard. But it points to the fact that what we require in Guyana is unity, what we require in Guyana is togetherness on this particular issue. I wish to refer to

another issue where just recently our Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has had to protest through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Sometimes the statements we make and the mixed signals we send in our country embolden others outside. We had to withdraw our participation in an oil and gas conference that Suriname was proposing to hold in June. Why did we withdraw? There were circulating the documents and part of the Suriname map they had the new River triangle area included. I point to that because we have to constantly, consistently, and stridently take a unified stand not only on our territory but also the development of our natural resources and the development of all possibilities within our 83,000 square miles. We must not in any way suggest we are surrendering or we are as it were, being ambivalent on this particular issue.

While we talk about developing our natural resources it is also about striking the balance; striking the balance in ensuring that we respond to the accompanying social as well as environmental challenges that come with an expanding natural resources and extractive industry. Particular emphasis has been placed on strict environmental monitoring and enforcement. In addition to collaborating with our international partners Conservation International (CI), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), KfW of Germany, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and a range of other partners, we have also looked at developing our national regulatory institutions - take for instance the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - in ensuring that we boost its capacity; even the environmental division within the GGMC in ensuring there is compliance; working with communities, particularly Amerindian communities, in terms of training environmental monitors so that we can have constant monitoring. An area of particular concern is of water pollution and ensuring that we manage that and do constant monitoring, and we take necessary action if we find that we have a situation that requires attention.

Also the Protected Areas Commission is moving in terms of ensuring that the protected areas, the areas that have been defined by statutes, have the various management plans developed so these communities can also be responsive and fulfil our international commitment that we have made. So far close to 10% of our territory has been declared protected areas and we want to ensure that they are managed in such a way that we continue to be outstanding in this regard.

A particular area raised was about our commitment in terms of REDD+ and the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). I am quite sure Hon. Members would have noted the Minister of

Finance's reference to the Low Carbon Development Strategy which provides the guide in terms of our developmental pathway in the near, medium and long term. Just recently the international panel on climate change released its report which again painted a very ominous picture, an ominous reality, of what is taking place as regards the climate, and what we need to do. That is why we see recently this hurried effort at the global level hoping that next year we can have a very serious and comprehensive climate treaty in this regard. We do hope as part of that there will be due recognition and significance given to the REDD+ Initiative that Guyana has been championing and leading in this regard.

Our commitment, notwithstanding what is taking place within the sector, yes, we have seen a decrease in deforestation as a result of mining. And the question was asked whether or not we were going to be continuing our engagement with the Kingdom of Norway and the answer to that is yes. We are currently involved in discussions on the fourth payment. Already Guyana has received close to US\$115 million in this particular area and we are currently in discussion. We hope to proceed in further discussions in this regard. In the last quarter of this year we will commend the implementation of another REDD+ Initiative, working with the World Bank, that is for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility which is valued close to US\$3.8 million. This again is working with the communities because while we are the first country to develop a national monitoring, reporting and verification system, we are also trying to reinforce and build that through working with communities so that we can have accurate and much more realistic reporting. So I wish to assure this Hon. Assembly, as reference was made by the Hon. Minister in terms of commitment to the Low Carbon Development Strategy, we are committed to REDD+. We have just recently established, to assist in monitoring deforestation as well as land degradation, real-time satellite imagery whereby we can pinpoint – I am know I am not supposed to be showing placards or pictures, but I just want to aid the reference, where at any one time we can pin point or track where dredges are, where there is mining activity the specific location.

*3.09 p.m.*

We can also point to where there are hotspots of immediate deforestation. This type of information is very important because we can tell you every mining activity that is causing deforestation that is more than 10 hectares. Why is it important? We will be able to track where there is illegal mining.

We have already started a programme of aerial surveillance, working with the Guyana Defence Force, utilising their air assets. But not only the Guyana Defence Force, we are talking to the private aircraft operators, where we are going to fit on them monitoring equipment, so that in their flights in and out we will be able to review footage and see what is also taking place.

At the same time we are putting more boots on the ground. We are building 15 more mining stations, in addition to the 35 forestry stations that we have; already 4 have been completed. I speak to those efforts, among others, because it shows our commitment to REDD+ to managing. Whilst we are very much interested and we are promoting and expanding extractive industries, we want that to be done in a sustainable, as well as in a responsible way, so that we can continue to be in a shining light.

The Comrade is right. Also dealing with the issue of social issues, trafficking in person; dealing with issues wherever they occur, where there are children found in mining camps for one reason or another, not necessarily there for labour or other anti-social activities. It is working with the Ministry of Human Services.

The Minister of Labour has just been able to table, for the first time, Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. So it is also dealing with those other issues, in dealing with those challenges.

The centrality of the Low Carbon Development Strategy to Guyana's development and to what we are doing, not only in the Natural Resources and Environment Sector, but also so our overall development trust, remains very prominent in this regard.

What we see taking place in this particular sector, as in other sectors of our economy, is about job creation. I referred to several projects which will see hundreds of new jobs being created. I have heard the observation and the criticism made, without any justification, by several Members of the Opposition that this budget did not speak or respond to the issue of job creation or opportunities. I wish to point the Hon. Members to the number of projects that we have and also the Budget 2014 serving as a catalyst for economic transformation, as well as growth.

Last night, on the issue of economic transformation, a criticism was levelled, stating that under the PPP/C, there has been no transformation; we have not been able to restructure, as it were, the economy over these past 22 years. The Minister of Finance's office has been able to supply some

data, which I am quite sure he will be able to share with all Hon. Members, but I will just cite a few. The size of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) when the PPP/Civic came into office was just over \$37 billion. Today, the size of that GDP is in excess of \$359 billion. It is not only the shared size of the economy that we are talking about; let us look at the structure of the economy, what is taking place. In 1992, we had the contribution of agriculture and fishing which was in the vicinity of 33%, today that contribution is just over 19% of GDP. In 1992, sugar accounted for 20% of the GDP because of the growth, expansion and restructuring and the need for us to diversify and to create many pillars of growth, sugar today accounts for in the vicinity 3.9% of GDP. Rice then was 2.8% we have seen a growth of 5.4%.

Let us look in terms of mining and quarrying. In 1992, it was just about 8.9%. Today, as was reported by the Minister of Finance, gold alone accounts for 9% of GDP, while mining and quarrying has hold 12.1%. But then the story gets interesting, in terms of what we are doing to restructure and diversify. Services, in terms of its contribution to GDP in 1992 was about 26% and out of that 26%, Government services accounted for 15%. Today, services, as a share of GDP, are 65%. In fact, if we look in terms of public administration, which would be the Government, it is just a mere 7%. But if we look in terms of the new activities, there are sectors which did not even exist then, take for instance, ICT, that sector today accounts for close to 6.9% of GDP. I make those references because when we talk about 2014 Budget, it is not just another year another budget. It is about an unfolding story; it is about unfolding development; and it is about transforming Guyana, transforming our country for new opportunities, diversification and ensuring that we remain resilient.

Every budget of the PPP\C can be seen as a building block; a building block of a new society, a prosperous society and a stable society. If we are going to make full use and full opportunity in terms of realising the potential of this building block, what we require in our country is a renaissance of the Guyanese spirit...

**Mr. Speaker:** You have five minutes within which to begin wrapping up, Sir.

**Mr. R. Persaud:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. The renaissance would require us to develop a new political culture. This new political culture is not the burden or should not be only the onus of

one side of this House, but building this new political culture requires all of us working together in terms of building cooperation, and also the issue of genuine trust.

Mr. Speaker, you had a front row seat, recently, to the issue of this matter of trust and seeking corporation, I refer to your involvement to broker some sort of accord, some sort of understanding on coming to an agreement on the Anti- Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Bill. Mr. Speaker, you would have had a front row seat to show the efforts that were made and what led. I will not stand here and distribute the blame in this regard, but it requires genuine cooperation; it requires trust in this regard.

That is why, also, there are talks by different Members. Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, Hon. Member, referred to the PPP/C as sometimes acting as a school yard bully, sometimes making the claim that we are contemptuous and that we are not doing enough for cooperation. Then the Hon. Member, last night said that we should provide more information on GuySuCo and more information on what we are going on the Amaila Falls Hydro-Power Project. There are Members here who would recall the invitation by His Excellency and the number of meetings that were had and presented, all the relevant documentations. In fact, the head of the Presidential Secretariat would describe it as the Government undressing itself for the Opposition, figuratively speaking, but undressing itself. Doing and providing all the information. We have seen this happen from time to time Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine. All the information we were providing on the Amaila Fall Hydro-Project. The Hon. Member Mr. Benn took Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon and others – flew them to the road in the Amaila Fall Hydro Power Project and then flew them to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. We saw all the favourable comments, the number of sessions that were held on the Marriot and on the Airport project. And what happened? We turned up here and saw the true picture. So if we are talking about cooperation, if we are talking about trust, if we are talking about us working together, it requires a new political culture. It requires cooperation, it requires genuine trust... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay Members, can we settle down please. Proceed.

**Mr. R. Persaud:** Mr. Speaker... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Come on Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, let us settle down please.

**Mr. R. Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, we all recognise that we need a new political architecture - new governance architecture. But this new governance architecture will not come about if we act in a way that does not do good to our country's development. That does not take into account the future of this country. It requires us taking important small steps for us to achieve what we are seeking to build and develop.

I do believe that there are genuine and well meaning Guyanese on the opposite side and it is in our duty. But we must ensure that we inspire our people to do good; that we inspire our people to build our country; that we inspire our people to live in unity. Let us not conspire to cause division, let us not conspire to sabotage; let us not conspire to under-develop because we will be doing the people who we represent an injustice.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon in his presentation said that he went out to the communities and he looked into the eyes of his constituents. I am happy he did that. But it is not only about looking into the eyes of Guyanese; it is about warming their hearts. It is also about lifting their hopes and giving them that confidence and giving them some sort of future so that they can want to live and build our country.

We are meeting here at this time, at a very auspicious time too, where we have our Christian brothers and sisters observing the Lenten season and as well our Hindu brothers and sisters observing Navratri. I do hope that we will make full use of this auspicious occasion at this auspicious time to show the true Guyanese spirit; to bring about this renaissance that we are quarrelling about in this regard so that we can inspire our people to build a better Guyana and we can inspire greatness out of our land.

As I conclude my presentation, this unique Tenth Parliament has so far can be described as a situation where we have a troika of bitterness, but it is not too late. With this 2014 Budget we can convert this troika of bitterness into a troika of togetherness. On that note I wish to commend the 2014 Budget to the National Assembly. [*Applause*]

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution, once again, to the 2014 Budget.

The job of every member of this Parliament is to help shape a better Guyana for all Guyanese. It is to listen carefully to the Guyanese people, do our honest best to make people's lives easier, not harder, and honour the commitments we make to those who vote for us. If that is how we discharge our duties as Members of Parliament, we in this August House, will earn the genuine respect of our people.

I agree with the Government that it is their duty to prepare the budget and I would like to thank the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his team, for preparing the 2014 Budget under the theme, "*A better Guyana for all Guyanese.*" Your hard work is appreciated and I do not doubt that you have tried to put a little in it for everyone.

However, I would like to remind all my Colleagues on the Government side, that the Opposition, also, has a role to play in this honourable House, and the role of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is to question the Government of the day and hold them accountable to the public. That is the reason we are here. The people of Guyana, who voted for us, expect no less from us. Ours is the responsibility to challenge the policies of the Government and in so doing, produce more enhanced ones that will benefit all Guyanese. This is how a true democracy operates.

The Alliance For Change (AFC) has the interest of our children, our youths, our women and men and our elderly at heart. We have the interest of all our Guyanese brothers and sisters at heart, in all 10 regions of Guyana. Upon examination of this budget, we will support allocations for projects and programmes that will benefit the majority of Guyanese, rather than a few. We will identify wasteful allocations and do the right thing, by obeying the court's orders and "not approve" them.

In my presentation I am going to highlight some concerns and also humbly make some recommendations, which I hope the Hon. Ministers will pay keen attention to and take heed.

I would like to start with pension. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines a pension as:

"An amount of money that a company or Government pays to a person who is old or sick and can no longer work."

For the majority of our senior citizens who are old or sick and can no longer work, an increase of \$625 in pension for them is quite shocking to me and is quite shocking and disappointing to our

senior citizens, who have each contributed to the building of this nation for fifty years and over. With prices for basic household commodities constantly rising, how can any of us here in this Hon. House bring ourselves to offer our senior citizens a paltry pension of \$13,125 per month?

The Minister of Human Services, the Hon. Jennifer Webster, tells us:

“The pension was never meant to be a living wage.”

Hon. Minister, I agree, but at least half the amount of the minimum wage would have been acceptable for now.

The \$20,000 per year electricity concession now available only to those who have metres in their names, I recommend that the Minister start lobbying her Colleagues to expand this amount to senior citizens who do not have metres in their names. We, in the AFC, believe that the pie must be shared equally.

We also recommend that after consultation with all stakeholders, the Government place the building of a retirement village as priority on their list of things to do. This village should be offering lifetime housing, social activities and levels of care as needs change for our elderly. This facility should be made available to senior citizens whose families have to work to upkeep their own families and, as such, cannot stay at home to care for their elderly. The facilities should also be available for senior citizens whose families cannot afford to care for them at home.

Our elderly are our mothers and fathers who brought us into this world and cared for us until we could do so for ourselves; they are our uncles and aunts who have helped to care for us while we were growing, making sure that we were safe. The right thing to do now is to return the favour by taking good care of them, when they need it.

Women - The Hon. Minister Jennifer Webster gave us a list of all the programmes our Government has implemented for women. Most geared at empowering them and enabling them to become financially independent. These are good programmes, but the problem is, many women do not know about these programmes, or, if they do hear about them, they do not have an idea how to access them. The Minister and her staff need to go out more often into the fields, into the depressed areas, and sensitise women about these programmes and how they can access

them. The net has to spread wide in order to capture the women who need the benefits of these programmes the most, Hon. Minister.

Violence Against Women - What is happening to our women and girls today is great cause for concern. Violence against women has risen to frightening proportions. In the *Stabroek News* published on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, the headline reads, “2013 saw 29 domestic violence-related murders” and according to the survey done by this newspaper, six of the victims were children with the youngest being just 8 years old; 25 of them were women.

Since the Hon. Priya Manickchand led the vigorous “Stamp it Out” campaign against violence, in all its forms, against women and the Act was passed, there seems to be an upsurge of domestic violence cases. Did we try to find out why this is so? If this was done, the results of the findings are a secret because I have heard nothing about it. Is there a comprehensive plan mapped out to stem this situation which is growing out of control?

We are only in the 4<sup>th</sup> month and already the headlines in our daily newspapers are screaming bloody murder and rape. In *Kaieteur News*, 29<sup>th</sup> March, publication, the headline reads, “Port Kaituma killer succumbs” with the subheading, “14 days after burning wife and 4 children to death.” On page 8, of the same newspaper, tells of the young depressed mother who fed her children carbon tablets because she feared her reputed husband was coming to take the children away from her.

In 27<sup>th</sup> February publication of the *Stabroek News* the headline on the front page reads, “Paradise girl found in shallow grave.” Patricia Younge was only 19 years old and the police suspected that she was raped before she was killed.

For the first quarter of this year alone the amount of murders and rapes of our girls and women are astounding. The Hon. Minister of Human Services needs to share whatever plans and programmes her Ministry has come up with to keep our women safe. She needs to share this with the shadow ministers of both the AFC and A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), so that, we too, can assist in the implementation of these programmes. We are all women, Hon. Minister, and murder and rape do not have political persuasion or colour. The way things are right now, no woman is safe and statistics reveal that more cases of HIV and other Sexual

Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in our elderly are on the rise. Why? Because these elderly widows live alone and many of them are repeatedly raped by young men in the area.

Women making waves - the time has come for us to have a Ministry of Women's Affairs like many other countries do. The issues of women, including health are wide and varied and cannot be lumped in the cook-up pot. A Ministry of Women's Affairs will be able to research and fashion better policies to reduce violence against women and increase their safety; research and implement more workable programmes, which will increase the economic independence of our women, bringing benefits to themselves and their families. Long gone are the days when women stayed at home with the children, while their men worked to provide for the home. In today's economy, the world over, the job of providing for the home cannot be left only to the men. This would be grossly unfair. The global economy demands that both men and women work to successfully support their families.

Women are the strength and stability of any home and since we are greater in number than our men, it is only fitting that those of us who have leadership qualities and wish to develop our own governance career be encouraged to do so and be able to access the relevant institutions and programmes that specialise in women in leadership. I guarantee that more women in leadership positions augur well for a country and its people and we stand a better chance of achieving our full potential with a fully focused Ministry of Women's Affairs. Women are powerful creatures and most of us do not realise this, sad to say. We do not realise how powerful we are. But, sadly too, somewhere along the road while fighting for our equal rights, we have allowed our men to outsmart us and hijack our power from us. I believe, that for the continuance of our species, we have to take back that power and so ensure our survival and restoration of our dignity.

Our men - Equally important are our men. I am happy that there is a functioning Men's Bureau within the Ministry of Human Services, to deal with the many issues that adversely affect our men today.

We heard the Hon. Bheri Ramsaran, Minister of Health, yesterday that prostate cancer is the number one killer in Guyana and statistics show that men, more than women, suffer from prostate cancer. I recommend that more awareness programmes...

**Mr. Speaker:** One second please, could you repeat what you just said? I think there is something inaccurate. There is an error.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Yes, a woman had prostate cancer.

**Mr. Speaker:** Did you say, "... more men have prostate cancer than women."?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Can I speak Mr. Speaker? I was of the belief that only men suffer from prostate cancer, but a woman told me she had it too. So I was wondering... *[Interruption]* Alright, I take that back.

Statistics show then that many of our men suffer from prostate cancer and I repeat, it is the number one killer in Guyana. *[Interruption]* I recommend that more awareness programmes about this disease be stepped up so that our men can be encouraged to have regular check-ups.

I have also heard the Hon. Jennifer Webster, mention that her Ministry will be addressing anger management programmes for men. Many of our men are out of control judging by the violent crimes they commit against their loved ones and to strangers as well. One can safely conclude that they are mentally and emotionally unstable. But what is the root cause of such beastly behaviour? Was a survey done to identify the reason or reasons behind such behaviour? The emotional and mental state of our men in Guyana is a case that demands urgent measures and I would recommend a national conversation, to begin with. Clearly, our men are severely stressed in the home and most of it has to do with finances..

*3.39 p.m.*

In most cases, in our vulnerable families, there is not enough money to last through the month, causing our men to suffer from helplessness and depression. Our women also suffer from the same stress and depression; they fail to recognise the same in their partners and proceed to react out of fear for the welfare of their families. Much more has to be done for our men. Anger management programmes are not enough. Our men need to be able to earn a minimum of at least \$70,000 per month, tax free.

The little for everyone in this budget is still too little for our vulnerable families and it is taking a toll on our men.

The people of the hinterland...

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

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Okay. According to Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), Guyana has recorded the highest ever gold declaration of 481,102 ounces as at December, 2013, surpassing the previous highest level of 455,000 ounces in 2001, which included the declarations of both Omai and small mining operators. Out of the six mining districts in Guyana, the statistics clearly illustrates that mining district 3, Mazaruni mining district, declared the highest production of 79,394 ounces followed by mining district 2, Potaro mining district, with 77,903 ounces while mining district 4, Cuyuni Mining District, declared its production of 71,070 ounces of gold. Today, gold is the leading main contributor to Guyana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the leading export of our country in terms of its value, contributing approximately 78.2 % of the total value of the mining sector's output.

These mining districts, which I have identified, are located in the hinterland regions and the statistical data from GGMC clearly indicates that our hinterland regions contribute the highest revenue towards our country's development. However, it is very sad to know that these administrative regions, in which the mining districts are located, have been receiving a small portion of budget allocation for their development.

Every year, Region 8 receives the lowest portion of budget allocation although it is the second highest contributor of gold production in Guyana. It is my firm belief that a good portion of this revenue earned from mining should be given back to these regions for their infrastructural development. Our roads and bridges should be some of the best in this country.

The road to Mahdia, for example, is in a deplorable condition and no one seems to be bothered about it. These bad roads take their toll on minibuses that daily traverse this road. The Mahdia road to Princeville is also in terrible condition. In February, when I visited, potholes were as large as 20ft x 20ft and one member of my team counted over 60 of them. The bridges and the culverts, which were done only last year, have already begun to deteriorate and in the case of a culvert, it was never completed; it was never covered. The repairs to the S bend are not being used because it was badly done so vehicles go around the repaired part of that road.

The problem is an old and ongoing, and that is, one of delinquent contractors got paid for incomplete and badly done jobs. This should not be and by now the regional tender boards must know who these delinquent contractors are and should begin to consider other contractors for these jobs instead of wasting our people's money by continuing to give the same contractors these contracts.

Education. Every year the Ministry of Education budgets millions of dollars for education delivery but from my hinterland visits to these vulnerable communities I have observed that not much attention is given to our hinterland children. For example, the pupils of Paramakatoi Primary School are still housed in the multi-purpose building and the Church of Christ which do not have adequate space. Construction, after two years, is only now being done. As stated by my colleague, the Hon. Member Mrs. Eula Marcello, "...these children are accommodated in the multi-purpose hall and the Church of Christ."

The regional budget estimates also show the allocation of moneys for furniture for schools in the respective administrative regions but schools in very remote areas do not benefit from it. For example, Chenapau Primary School in Region 8 has a shortage of furniture. The teachers' quarters, in which Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) teachers are staying, do not have electricity and the plumbing system is bad. Some schools in Region 8 are also not adequately staffed. For example, Princeville Primary has one teacher who does multi grade teaching and, at the same time, performs administrative duties.

Our youths in the hinterland. It is nothing but the truth that our Indigenous youth suffer...

**Mr. Speaker:** Please begin to wrap up Hon. Member.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** ... from the lack of opportunities more readily available to the rest of our Guyanese youth and this is mainly so because of the remoteness of the communities in the hinterland, but, as any other youth in Guyana, our hinterland youths deserve equal opportunities

I understand when the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs embarked on a programme to benefit hinterland youths, the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP). I think the thought behind this programme was a good one but I do not think it was a well thought out one. The Minister should have commenced this pilot project with at least three sectors, health,

education and forestry, where it applies, because from every community, which has these Community Support Officers (CSOs), complaints are coming out that many of them have nothing to do most of the time. Although this programme is a good one it should have been thought out better. It should have started with, at least, the three sectors, education, health and forestry and then to expand to others.

Right now, instead of receiving \$30 000 per month for doing nothing or working two days per week, they could have been training... I see an allocation for over \$700 million and I hope that the Ministry has budgeted for taking up training in the communities, training for joinery, masonry and plumbing. It is to take these things up there to teach them, and then they will deserve their stipend.

We want our indigenous youths to have value for things - for money and whatever they acquire. Nothing is free because whatever they get it is hard earned taxpayers money that is giving to them. When it is spent on our youths the Ministry has to make sure that it is used properly.

We are not against this programme; we just want it to be used properly so that our youths can really learn from it. Training programmes are the best thing, then they can deserve their stipend. If this is what the Ministry is going to do then there is no problem.

I conclude my presentation. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]:** I took note when Mrs. Garrido-Lowe, the Hon. Member, was speaking of her imprecation and issues with respect to women issues, not particularly the one with respect to prostate cancer. I took note of the general tone of her presentation because I remembered myself saying, at another forum, that the twentieth-first century belongs to women and the thrust of the People's Progressive Party/ Civic (PPP/C) budget for 2014 speaks to improving life for all Guyanese, with respect to the question of the largest chunk of the budget going towards issues that primarily affect women and revolve around women. This is an approach that we have always undertaken. The thrust of the budget, *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*,... The content of the budget goes along with our overall thrust in improving our country, improving the life, the living, the status of women and children because we think, based on the appropriations of the budget which are related to women's issues, that this is the most safe and productive use of the resources out of a public sector budget.

Somewhere it is said that in order to move forward one must go back to reconcile with one's past before one can return to move forward in tranquillity. I believe - given our experience from last year's high jinks, cussing out, quarrels and unseeing events in this honourable House - that perhaps we all need to look back to the experience of last year, at the presentation of Budget 2013, that we now have to reconcile that just recent past and take the opportunity now to take our country forward in tranquillity.

Our country does not need any more trouble. I believe, and I hope somehow, that despite some things, which were said, that we have this great opportunity, now, to take good consideration of where we who represent the best that our country has to offer at the level of politics, government and governance, we who are in this... You, Mr. Speaker, at the close of the new Hon. Member's speech last night, a woman too - I welcome her discussion and engagement last night - you talked about a star being born. I think we are all stars in this Chamber and this is a star chamber!

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, in ancient time a star chamber had a certain connotation that the learned Attorney General may advise you about, so be careful.

**Mr. Benn:** I refer to a star chamber in which the best that the Guyanese people have to offer, in terms of politics, learning and economics. The best people, who we have to offer on all sides, from all heirs of our country, are represented in this Chamber. The Guyanese stars are in this Chamber with respect to this problem. I think we need to have to take the position and reconcile our past. If I go back to last year's problems to try to reconcile ourselves, with respect to what occurred, maybe, I should only speak with respect to my Ministry.

I recall that we had, with respect to our budget, \$5.6 billion of budget cuts carried out, proposed, coming from the Opposition benches, both the APNU and the AFC... [**Ms. Ally:** A-P-N-U. It is not APNU.] PNU, okay. It was \$5.6 billion. There were very unkind cuts in the budget of 2013. I would not want to state that there was malice aforethought. I would not want to say that it was not properly considered. Perhaps, people were all excited, again, about the one-seat majority and all of these things, but there were a lot of very unkind cuts. There were transformative projects which were cut. We speak particularly to the issues of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport project, \$5.35 billion cut. We speak to the issue of the civil aviation, \$80 million cut,

with respect to safer and improved landing facilities and instrumentation. The unkindest cut of all was the cut to hinterland airstrips.

The Hon. Members in this House, on the other side, are coming, now in this House to talk about hinterland airstrips; they are talking about their love for indigenous people; they are talking about how our hinterland residents are being suffering from poor airstrips, poor aero services and all of these things. They have had an attack of contrition and so I am glad that they have come to a position, now, where they are prepared to support, I believe, the transformative projects, including the important matter of hinterland airstrips for our Amerindian people.

Again, Dr. Ashni Singh and his team have presented to us a significant budget in extremely trying circumstances with respect to our country's development, against a background regional and international... I think the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), only a few days ago, Ms. Christine Lagarde, was speaking to how, for Europe particularly, an international economy, the outlook, the future, was bleak and will continue to be bleak for the next few years, particularly speaking to the questions of low or no growth.

In spite of all of the criticisms, in spite of the threats... I would say that I would have to regret that it seems to be the *modus operandi* of the Opposition always to have our county in a state of continuous stress, in a state of continuous uproar, in a state of continuous trouble and worry. Perhaps this is how it benefits; this is how it continues its existence in politics. In spite of all of these things, the PPP/C, President Ramotar and his Minister of Finance, the Cabinet and the people who worked hard every day have delivered again to Guyana, the eighth year of continuous, successive, sustained growth at 5% and over to our country.

The people who plant the rice... I was going up on the West Coast of Berbice the other day and it struck me that people were smiling on the road, that the rice crop was coming in. I noted that people were happy and active and were busy because the rice crop was coming in. I noted too that in all of the communities, the mining communities, Bartica - I was recently at Kamarang and at Imbaimadai – that there has been a dramatic transformation of the skylines of those communities and the size and living conditions of the communities as a result of the efforts in the mining sector and the services sector related thereto.

We have our struggles in sugar, but that is our struggle to deal with. We have the continued efforts in the bauxite sector. With respect to the Opposition attempts to dismantle the economy, to throw it into reverse... I went back to last year, the people of Guyana, the Guyanese people of all races, ethnicity, religions and political persuasions, given the Opposition attempts to dismantle our economy and to continue negative growth in our economy, have given the answer. The answer they have given is a positive answer, that they want to see their country developed and grow and prosper and that they expect from us here, in this honourable House, the kind of engagement which will continue to see the improvement in lives and living, so that we hand on to the future generations a better life, if not for ourselves, even.

I therefore want to congratulate the Minister of Finance again for his diligent work, for his risk averse approach - deliberate to the question of the financial management, for the stewardship of our economy, of our country. I want to give him and his team all of the accolades with respect to this matter because this is the most important matter to how we move forward, how we continue to ensure food security, how we continue to ensure employment and living and a better life for people.

With respect to this year's budget, I have to report that we did indeed have, for the year 2013, a fairly difficult year. It is true that when we had all of the problems in the House - when we had the fights, the Attorney General Mr. Nandlall, Minister of Finance Dr. Singh and others making presentations; when we had the resorts to the courts from all sides of the House... We had a position for a time when there was a lot of confusion, in which investors, contractors and ordinary Guyanese were not sure as to whether we could have sustained our country, as to whether we should have continued to work. There was a slow start-up of projects; there were problems with respect to how we put the synergy and get our projects going. Overall, with an \$18 billion provision for last year, we were only able to achieve 84% of our programmes for 2013.

For 2014, we are being provisioned with \$22.4 billion which is a \$4.4 billion increase with respect to the budget. This is a percentage increase of 24.2 %. We would be hard-pressed but will work at a will at it this year to make sure we would fulfil the anticipations, the expectations of our Government and our people.

With respect to bridges, if I may start with that activity, we know that the Demerara Harbour Bridge is the significant linkage between the East and the West Bank of Demerara. The bridge has done quite a bit of work with respect to its rehabilitation and maintenance. I had said to the honourable House before - I heard Mr. Harmon to say last night that the bridge will not last its term - that this bridge is intended to last another seven years, so one year later I would say that we have six more years for the continuation and the proper maintenance of the bridge. The bridge is in fine condition for its age, from 1978, I believe. The bridge is under good management and maintenance.

The total number of vehicles which cross this bridge for 2013 is just over 6 million going both ways. This is a 5.5% increase on the previous year and we expect that this number may increase for 2014. We are looking at ways to reduce the loading by encouraging truck traffic to barge across at particular locations and we are looking particularly too at, perhaps, putting in place additional water taxi stations on the Demerara River to optimise the crossing at peak hours of the Demerara River. The bridge, for 2013, has had a \$479 million income revenue which is an increase of 11% over the previous year and a total of \$367 million, a 5% difference and is currently carrying a surplus of \$113 million which is being used for ongoing maintenance of the bridge.

With respect to a new Demerara River crossing Hon. Members may be aware that we put out expression of interest for a new public/private partnership to get proposals for a new crossing.

*4.09 p.m.*

We have had 23 expressions and the National Procurement & Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) is working on a committee to do the evaluation of the bids of the expressions of interest so that we could go forward with some arrangement which would allow us to have a new bridge across the Demerara River in six years time. Conceptually, the three proposed locations are Versailles to Houston, Schoonord to Peters Hall and Patentia to New Hope. This does not shut out any other location.

For 2014, there is \$338 million which has been allocated for capital works – two new extra large pontoons, fabrication buoys and connecting posts, supply of sheaves and tackles, rehabilitation

of pontoons and hydraulic system – so that we could continue to have this Bridge in a safe, operating condition over the next few years.

Hon. Members may be aware that there were a couple of collisions in 2013 with the Bridge from marine traffic. These matters are being attended to, but we are improving the lighting, bollards and cluster pile systems which would prevent serious damage to the Bridge that can bring it out of service.

Road and bridges under international lending agencies: these relate to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the European Union (EU). Nine bridges and 11 culverts were successfully completed in 2013 – two on the East Bank and nine on the West Coast Berbice public road alignments. These works were particularly and interestingly done by national contractors – Kares Engineering Inc. and Dalip Enterprise – and these works came in on budget and on time, and I want to salute these two national firms. We are encouraging the greater involvement of national firms in larger, heavier construction work that we undertake. We are very happy with this result and we want to be able to involve and encourage more and more heavy engineering enterprises by our national construction companies in this work.

We have had significant issues with respect to the third road project. We did have the East Bank Demerara road widening project and the East Coast Demerara road widening project. We have had significant issues and problems with respect to the question of utilities, their location, their removal, the funding for drainage to stabilise the sides of the road and, overall, the inclement weather and unseasonable weather in 2013 impacted negatively on our ability to finish these works in time.

We have also had a scarcity of materials. There has been a delayed delivery of materials, particularly construction stone. The quarry sector has to improve its production by some 40% for domestic production to meet our national construction needs not only for the heavy infrastructure, but also for housing and other domestic works. So, we have had to encourage the resort to the importation of stone from Dominica, St. Vincent and other places to try to haul back the delays in our schedules with respect to these roads.

We have had discussions with the contractors recently, particularly with respect to those on the East Bank Demerara road project. Now that we have the weather, we had discussions with respect to the 5.4 kilometres widening. This is a US\$17.2 million effort. Dipcon Engineering Services has Lot 1 for US\$8 million, GAICO [*inaudible*] for US\$5.8 million and BK International has Lot 3 for US\$3.4 million. We anticipate that the entire 5.4 kilometre section of this road would have significant completion by the end of this year.

We are undertaking an effort to improve the Sheriff Street/Mandela Avenue public road for 7.2 kilometres in length. The pre-qualification of contractors for the civil works is in progress. We have had consultations at the local level and at the technical level with respect to this project. We expect that the actual works will commence in June of this year and this effort would be funded by the IDB for US\$25 million, approximately.

The other important project which we are undertaking...we recently launched with the Caribbean Development Bank the West Coast Demerara Vreed-en-Hoop to Parika roadway project. The design has been completed. The pre-qualification of contractors to execute the civil works is in progress and works are expected to commence around the latter half of 2014. Funding is US\$34.2 million, approved from the Caribbean Development Bank.

There has been an ongoing discussion with respect to the East Bank Berbice road. We had initially anticipated that late last year or early this year we would have started works with respect to the East Bank Berbice road. Because of the funding requirements with respect to the design that is required for this road, changes with respect to the allocation of funding for the road were made so as to be able to realise the design that is required for the type of road. The work for this road will be done at the beginning of the fourth quarter in 2014 and, of course, will bring much needed relief to the persons on the East Bank Berbice and open up the agricultural lands there so that a lot of the arguments, quarrels and upsets with respect to the anticipated scheduled dates for the finishing of this road can be set aside. I want to assure the House and *Berbicians* on the East Bank of Berbice that the works on this road will start in the fourth quarter of 2014.

In the area of sea defences, I would have to say that despite the noises and little troubles we have sometimes and the dramatic pictures, which are usually inaccurate, and which are put in the newspapers with the stories that go along with them, our sea defence structures are under good

management and attention. Based on the condition surveys, we are aware of those areas of sea defences which need attention. We publish, at every spring tide, areas largely on the question of wind driven storm surges, where there may be overtopping. Everywhere there has been an overtopping has been an area where we have warned about and where the foreshore may have been lowered against the sea defence. We have to understand that where there is overtopping, it does not represent a breach of the sea defences. Water splashing over the wall does not represent a breach in the sea defences. The sea defence structures normally consist of a mangrove flat, a hard concrete structure or an earthen dam and a facade drain which leads to kokers. The representations made sometimes in the press with respect to this matter are not accurate, usually.

We have, with the Caribbean Development Bank, a third sea defences project of US\$25 million. Some 5.5 kilometres of critical sections of sea defences will be attended to. We have consultancy service for the supervision and institutional strengthening and capacity building activities within the sea defence unit of the Works Services Group. Eight locations are targeted for rehabilitation – Zorg, Johanna Cecilia, Endeavour, Blenheim, Success on Leguan Island, Grove and Look Out on the East Bank Essequibo, Crane, Harlem, Rotterdam and Mary on the West Coast of Demerara, Good Success and New Hope on the East Bank Demerara, Lonsdale and Sisters Village on the East Bank Berbice and Line Path at No. 78 Village.

Under the 10<sup>th</sup> European Development Fund (EDF) sea defence with the European Development Fund, the Government of Guyana (GoG) signed with the European Union a financing agreement on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2014 for €14 million for the sea defence sector. It is important to note that the European Union has moved over funding for the sea defence activities from project support to budget support. This identifies their confidence in our abilities with respect to the scheduling of vital sea defence works and with respect to our engineering management, supervision and execution of the works with respect to this activity. It has moved from project support to budget support and this expression of confidence from the European Union should not be lost on any person in this House.

In respect of nationally funded projects, we have the continued construction of the new access road to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) of \$2.5 million to complete this year. We have had extensions due to location of vendors. We have had issues with the removal of the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph (GT&T) Company's network wiring. These issues are now

being set aside and we anticipate that by August of this year, this work will be completed and that we would be able to access our International Airport in a safer manner and more appropriate manner for a facility of its size.

On the East Bank of Demerara, we expect the continuation of works to Annandale, in the first instance, road widening works, which Hon. Members would see in progress – Lots 1, 2 and 5 under Dipcon Engineering, Lot 3 under Courtney Benn Contracting Services Limited (CBCSL), Lot 4 under Compustruct Engineering Limited and Lots 6 and 7 under Colin Talbot Engineering. These are all national contractors. We do have some difficulties in a couple of sections with respect to the continuation of these works.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you require an extension.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Speaker, I am being very deliberate in my presentation because I want the Hon. Members to pay attention to it. Some of them come and ask me to fix a pot hole or some crater in front of their houses and I try to point out the necessity to do the works in other places but we will get to them. They have no interest when we speak about the road works and bridging works for the ordinary Guyanese people. [**Mr. Ramjattan:** Discrimination.] I am prepared to discriminate against you as long as work has to be done for the ordinary Guyanese people. You will have to wait. I am waiting too, you know! [**Mr. B. Williams:** You should not do that.] You have to wait too! Show the patience, Hon. Member. We are doing bridges at Sophia and Guyhoc Park to reduce the time of travel from that area. We have completed a bridge at Windsor Castle/Hampton Court. We are rehabilitating the Moleson Creek Acrow-Panel Bridge. We are rehabilitating the 'B' Field Sophia connecting bridge. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, could you settle down please?

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Speaker, in 2013... [**Mr. B. Williams:** *Inaudible*] Could I have your attention, Mr. Williams? [**Mr. B. Williams:** No. Apologise.] Mr. Speaker, I apologise to the Hon. Member for not going and fixing some hole in front of his place.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I rise under Standing Order No. 40 (b), Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Standing Order No. 40 (b) states that a Member may rise to elucidate some matter raised by the Member provided that the Member speaking is willing to give way and resume his or her...

**Mr. B. Williams:** Well, it is a matter for him.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, are you willing to allow Mr. Basil Williams to elucidate a matter?

**Mr. Benn:** Let him speak.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member has agreed for you to proceed.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the conscience is biting. Mr. Lumumba lives next to me. They fixed Mr. Lumumba's road five years ago and not mine.

**Mr. Lumumba:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Let this National Assembly know that I hired a contractor and paid for my own road and for my mother's road in Buxton to be done. Mr. Williams is too cheap.

**Mr. Speaker:** As entertaining as it is, we cannot have a sub-debate ensuing.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Sir, I just wanted the record to show that I have never asked the Minister to fix any road. Our President has said to me that when we win elections my road will be fixed.

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Speaker, for the record, the Hon. Member, Basil Williams, has several times accosted me outside of this House and asked me when I will be fixing his road in front of his house. I have said to him every time that the road in front of my house is worse than the road in front of his. I repeat that the road in front of my house or the road in front of Mr. Basil Williams' house will not be fixed until we fix more important roads in the community.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you would do well to proceed rather than respond to interventions.

**Mr. Benn:** I repeat that the prioritisation with respect to road, bridges and all other activities relates to their attachment to a major trunk line, the number of persons in the community who are serviced by it, if there is a school, religious building or some large community building in the

area or a sports centre and time with respect to when the road was built the first time and its condition. Simply put, the road in front of my house does not fit that bill and I am prepared to wait.

We did 88 kilometres of road last year both by Double Bituminous Surface Treatment (DBST) and asphaltic work. There was a supplementary provision of \$400 million for maintenance of roads. We are doing 20 roads in Region 2 for \$50.3 million; 22 roads in Region 3 for \$50.3 million also; in Region 4, we are doing 46 roads for \$79 million; in Region 5, we are doing 39 roads for \$55 million; and in Region 6, we are doing 83 roads for \$165 million. The benefits to be derived from this maintenance is reduced travelling time, reduction of vehicle operating cost, extension of service life of the roads and increase in driving contact. We have spent quite a bit of money and we have worked in conjunction with the Ministry of Home Affairs, particularly with respect to road accidents.

I would like to point out that our cooperation with respect to the putting in place of highway lighting, roadside barriers, improving in striping and so on, in spite of the increase in vehicular traffic – and I am told that for last year there was an increase in vehicular traffic on the road, cars particularly, of 10,000 new vehicles – we have had a stabilisation of the road fatalities in 2013 to 103 deaths, all regrettable but this is a 50% or more reduction when compared to the situation we had in 2007 when we embarked on a new programme, when the Ministry of Home Affairs started on issues of seatbelts, breathalysers and so on and we started putting in highway lights and traffic lights. This is a significant reduction but we have to continue efforts to halve this amount again if we are to achieve the international standards with respect to this matter.

I spoke of Highway lights. We have installed 257 new lights all across the coast. With respect to Linden, we have just completed a project of Highway lights from the minibus park all the way to Amelias Ward and I am happy to report that we will put those lights into service tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to air transport, you may recall that 2013 was the year which represented a 100 years of flying in Guyana. This activity was celebrated in the country. A number of our flyers, particularly our female aviators, were recognised by the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA). The GCAA has been working continuously and we have had significant investment in its infrastructure with respect to operationalising of the Ogle

International Airport. That public/private partnership has been operating successfully in the location. There has been significant improvement with respect to the instrumentation in the tower but, particularly, there has been a marked improvement in training and education with respect to air traffic management and with respect to engineering in the facility.

There are, indeed, problems from time to time which we have to address and examine, management issues and issues of ergonomics in the tower, but there has been a significant improvement overall from the base where we started. We intend to continue on the work of continuous improvement with the staff and with the facility. The GCAA is tasked with the effort of our achieving category one status, in two years time, with respect to travel to the United States of America. I would like to point out that it has been successful in graduating 12 new air traffic and area control trainees. I am told that the success rate has improved from around 10% to 75% in the case of our young people who enter this programme and I think this is an important result so that we would have a new cadre of people who will continue to work this important activity of going ahead.

*4.39 p.m.*

I did say a little about the question of the expansion of the CJIA, the runway expansion by 1,000 meters which would allow us to land jumbo jets on our runway. I have to point out to the soon expected arrival which had been licensed on 2<sup>nd</sup> April; Copa Airlines would be coming to Guyana in July and we expect them to be flying to Panama City with Embrar and 767-500s and 767-800 aircrafts and there would be more options and, perhaps, cheaper recourse with respect to flying out of our country. Panama is an international hub for South America and for the United States with respect to air transport.

The Amaila Falls Access Road which provides access to the intended important facility – the hydro power facility for 160 megawatts at Amaila Falls – will be substantially completed in April. At Section 2 a national contractor is a kilometre or so way from the river landing at Essequibo opposite Butakari and in Section 7, there are two kilometres of roadway works still to be completed with respect to the movement of traffic to the base of the Falls so that this important capital transformative activity will be undertaken.

I am still perturbed because I heard some Members talking about the derailing, the stopping, all of these problems with respect to the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. While I leave the Prime Minister to give the important answers, I want to repeat that the question of cheap energy and cheap power for our country is, aside from the political problem, the most important thing which affects the economy of our country. It is the most important activity, the most important question, the lack of cheap power, renewable power in our national development equation. The building of the Amaila Falls Road and the establishment of the hydropower facility for 160 megawatts will resolve this problem so the question that is raised all over about investments from foreign countries with respect to the question... One gets repeated calls about feasibility studies and environmental studies and I still do not understand it. We provided these studies. These things are on the Guyana Information Agency (GINA) website. They can Google it but they come into this House and wale and carry on even after being provided with the information.

We are prepared to provide the information again. We are prepared to do it again and I was reminded that we took some Hon. Members – Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon and Dr. Rupert Roopnarine – on a trip there. They were very impressed with what they saw was unfolding, which they landed on. They rode about. They spoke with our young Guyanese engineers and technicians who were working on the road and are workers. They were very enthused. At the airport, they were shown all of the information at hand with respect to the development of the airport, the expansion. In any event, they came back and they applied the scissors and they cut so the very young people who were supposed to be working out there, in all of the confusion of last year, could not be mobilised to take control of the Project and to have it done as efficiently as we wanted to do all because of the cuts... [*Interruption*] I do not want to create any additional distress for the Hon. Member, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon. I would be the first to acknowledge that there is a significant brain thrust that resides on this side of the House; a significant brain thrust – bright, brilliant experienced men. The question is their political perception, their approach to the subjects and their willingness to be open and flexible with respect to important national questions. I look forward to the support. Maybe I should say 'continued support' from the Members on the other side of the House, including in the corner over here, with respect to this important synergistic national project.

We should not be coming and crying and quarrelling in here about giving moneys to Linden. I am told that it is \$23,000 or \$25,000 per month to every household and the net result of the putting in of this money is its wastage. Perhaps it is better that we give the people \$10,000 and let them pay for power and let us see what savings would result and then we can take that money and put it into important development works with respect to the communities, particularly Linden too. It is no use that we come here... The very Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you have five minutes within which to wrap up, Sir.

**Mr. Benn:** The very Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, in her presentation, made certain attacks, I perceived, against our development partners, against those who would want to come to communities which they say are significantly depressed or are in need of investment and I spoke to communities in Region 10... [Ms. Kissoon: Ask the Prime Minister...] Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Member was speaking, baubles were falling off from her head and I had a fear for the large cross that she had on her when she was speaking. There was laughter on that side of the House when Hon. Minister Dr. Bheri Ramsarran brought in their two ambulances here and they laughed at the two ambulances and the next thing you know... Who used the ambulances? Do not laugh at our well meaning interventions in this House with respect to our economy and what we want to do for all Guyanese. We mean well. [Ms. Ally: We use ambulances. You use jets.] I would not quarrel with the Hon. Member, Ms. Amna Ally. She is family. I would not quarrel with her. [Mr. B. Williams: Because the woman got sick you are attacking her?] I am pointing out the fact that whenever we attempt to make provision that is useful and well thought out with respect to our activities, it is scoffed at. It is laughed at. I am prepared, as it was said that we will be going through the Budget and we are in Committee line by line to provide information, to provide the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, who talked about having his scissors to do an abortion on parts of the budget...

**Mr. Speaker:** You have two minutes, Sir. I do not know if you want to spend them in this manner.

**Mr. Benn:** I am prepared to provide all information that we have at hand to be as open as only we can be with respect to our national Budget. Our country has moved from a time... I recall when, in the early days...

**Mr. Speaker:** You have 40 seconds, Mr. Benn, Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Benn:** ...when a certain Cheddi Jagan and Samuel Hinds and others and a Dr. Roger Luncheon... When one came to them with big problems – money for bauxite, money for this, money for that – they used to tell us “hold strain”. “We have to hold strain and we will improve it slowly.” We have improved it. We will make it even better... [Mr. B. Williams: For whom?] ...for all Guyanese, including you, Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams, and we need your earnest support with respect to achieving this result.

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

**Mr. Allicock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to represent the view of the concerned residents of the Rupununi Region, Region 9, on the 2014 national Budget. Some citizens wish to express their growing concern in relation to the development programmes and policies of the Government, but they are afraid of vicious reprisal. Members of Parliament are duly bound to reflect the wishes and wants of their constituencies. As one of the geographical representatives of the residents of Region 9, I wish to discharge my obligation.

This year’s Budget theme is *A Better Guyana for all Guyanese*, with a grand sum of \$220 billion. The question which looms large is whether the citizens were consulted in keeping with article 13 of the Constitution, which states:

“The principle objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens, and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being.”

A better Guyana is a Guyana where all of its citizens are meaningfully consulted and feel that they are participating in decisions that affect their livelihood. In spite of all of the boastings of the Government about the economic growth, I beg the question: economic growth for whom? That so called growth is not evident amount the ordinary citizens of the hinterland; it certainly is not evident among the citizens of the Rupununi. It is intimidation, victimisation and the rich gets

richer and the poor gets poorer, a total disrespect for the integrity of most of the residents of the Region.

The Government speaks glowingly about the wonderful things that take place in the Rupununi. I wish to mention some of them: the mega farm at Santa Fe in North Rupununi, the establishment of the Learning Channel, the fact that there are now lots of cars in the Rupununi, the construction of \$77.7 million secondary school at Sand Creek in the South Central Rupununi, the recent purchase of two brand new FG-Wilson 750 generators for the Lethem Power Company Inc., housing, the recent reconstruction of some roads in the communities of Lethem and St. Ignatius, the unfinished bridge across the Rupununi River at Sand Creek, fibre optic cable, OLPF. From those projects that I have just listed, it seems like a lot is happening in Region 9, but that is an attempt to obfuscate the realities of life in these areas.

I wish to highlight some weaknesses in the area of agriculture. In the area of agriculture, the Regional Democratic Council of Region 9 has been requesting pertinent information in relation to the operation of the mega farm. The information that was sent was irrelevant and when additional information was requested, the Council was instructed to go to Go-Invest. The fact of the matter is that the residents have legitimate concerns regarding the type and levels of chemicals that are and will be used by the company.

On the question of pesticides used on the farm, the Hon. Minister of Agriculture provided the names of two chemicals used; those are Karate and Pronto. In the rainy season, that entire area is one large sea of water. Naturally, when the water starts to recede, it will flow into the nearby rivers, creeks and ponds. We have no way of knowing the effects those chemicals can have on the flora and fauna of the area, especially on aquatic life. I am, therefore, concerned about whether or not any environmental assessments were conducted and, if so, what the findings were.

There is the experience of the neighbouring Brazil in the Roraima area where there was a similar exercise to the detriment of animals and people on that end so, as a result, we have a right to be properly informed. We are not against development but it must be done right.

There is need to safeguard our markets, for example our peanuts and other crops. They need to be protected so that we could be able to be just as economically strong as those farmers on the

coast. Community agriculture development would be the way to go for the creation of sustainable food production systems in keeping with the Low Carbon Development Strategy, empowering the communities with confidence that there is a role for the communities to play in regional and national development. Companies create jobs for a few yes, but this does not do the same as communities being given the opportunity to find their own strength to contribute to regional development. Is the Budget geared to support communities to develop a programme to so do?

I wish to turn my attention to education and, in particular, the Learning Channel. A survey conducted by a Councillor on the RDC, Region 9, states that less than 5% of the people in the Central Rupununi watch the Learning Channel. The main reason given for not watching is relevance to Region 9.

I wish to deal with the \$77.7 million secondary school in Sand Creek. Former President Jagdeo, just before he demitted office, promised the residents of South Central Rupununi that they would get a secondary school. He also promised that the school would be built at Shulinab Village, also known as Macusi Village. The villagers cleared a plot of land in anticipation. When the contract was awarded, the residents learnt that the location had changed to Sand Creek. In their haste to find a site, they chose one that is totally unsuitable for that purpose. The school is built at the foot of a mountain that has some huge boulders on its slope that can come loose due to erosion during the rainy season. There is not enough space for recreation for the students. That proves that the Government of Guyana has no vision. I wish to direct your attention to Proverbs 29:18 where it states:

“Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.”

The Government should be well advised to make a reality of this verse and Guyana would indeed be a better Guyana.

As to register their disapproval, some of the villagers of the area refuse to send their children to the school. The enrolment at the school, as of January, 2014, was as follows: Sand Creek – 81 children; Rukumoto – 9, Katunarib – 28, Sawariwau – 28, Shiriri – 6, Patarinau – 4, Baitun – 2, Parikwarinau – 4, Shulinab – 24, Region 8 – 45; that is a grand total of 219 children.

It is interesting to know that we have children coming all the way from North Pakaraima Mountains to this school at Sand Creek. Maybe the Hon. Minister of Education and Minister of Amerindian Affairs can enlighten this august Body as to how the children fare, being so far away from their homes, inclusive of their welfare. These children were treated very shabbily last Christmas. A time when children ought to be with family, these children were taken to the Students' Hostel at St. Ignatius and were left there for the holidays - no 'mommy', no 'daddy', no brother, no sister and no relatives. Is that how we intend to have our young people enjoy a better life?

The time is overdue for the Rupununi to have a technical institute. The courthouse which is still to be completed and operationalised could have been a technical institute; then we would not have had so many young delinquents and school dropouts.

Mr. Speaker, you may remember last year that the Hon. Minister of Education stated that a technical school for Lethem was to be constructed soon. I wish to implore upon the Hon. Member to treat this as an urgent need for the year 2014 by honouring her promise.

Amerindian Lands: the Budget has been strangely silent on the issue of land demarcation and extension of Amerindian lands in the face of many unresolved issues. There are a number of communities within the entire country that need immediate attention. We have unfinished work in the Region, for example, the South Savannahs, the North Savannahs, Chinese Amerindian Village in Region 1, the confusion at Moruka, the Santa Rosa boundary demarcation in Region 1. The Amerindians of Imbaimadai who have claim to land from Imbaimadai right up to Chi Chi Foot have virtually no access to their lands. Miners are given preference over them. This has led to untold hardships for the people whose womenfolk are forced into unsavoury activities, inclusive of prostitution, to provide for their families. Mining also has done irreparable damage to their environment, especially the main source of water at Kako, for example, and the Mazaruni River. This River is heavily polluted from Chi Chi Mountain right down past Kamarang, whose people recently complained in the press in this regard. It must be noted here that the residents have lodged numerous complaints to the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) without any redress. For all of the riches that are plundered from the interior, what do we have in return but our intellectual rights violated?

The Government boasts about the good that they have been doing for Amerindians. The Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP) has been used to manipulate and indoctrinate our people; intimidation and victimisation is the order of the day in communities. The Community Support Officers (CSOs) have been made to disrespect the village councils. A monster is being created which the Government will not be able to feed, similar to that of GuySuCo - dependency. Communities are divided through this system. There was no mention of training legal minds – a key component – to deal with ever growing concerns of indigenous rights and development. This and similar issues were not addressed in this Budget. We need our lands not only for this generation, but for all of our future generations. We have been the closest to the lands for centuries and we have preserved it. We know how to do it. That is our life and if it is taken away from us and destroyed as it is in the case presently, then a whole people will be threatened into extinction. We have led the way of the LCDS and must be properly compensated with the funds that are made available for such activities by using our names without consideration for us.

Tourism is also a very useful opportunity for us and I must sort of commend the Minister for looking into that area. We have the potential and we need more funding and expertise to help our indigenous communities. We need to see, in the Budget, the opportunity for clearing some of the issues that avoid our accessing funding from banks if we would want to; at the moment, it is not possible. The foremost concern of the residents of the Rupununi is an all-weather road, linking Linden with the Rupununi.

*5.09 p.m.*

The construction of that road began in 1989, and by 1991 it took all but three hours to travel from Kurupukari to Lethem in a Model M Bedford truck over some 200 km. Now it is up to six hours to Lethem. Between Georgetown to Lethem, it used to take 10 to 12 hours, but now it is about 20 hours or more. The company contracted to build that road, Paranapanema, a Brazilian company was rudely evicted from this country in 1993 without a chance to complete the section from Kurupukari to Linden. This was a brand new road inherited by the PPP/C Government which definitely lacks the engineering skills to even maintain the same. This road was left unattended from 1993 until it deteriorated in 1998.

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

**Mr. Allicock:** The road is the lifeline of the Rupununi and must be upgraded and upgraded immediately if the quality of life of the Rupununi is to improve. Money spent on the road yearly destroys its foundation and is a waste of valuable resources. What needs to be done is to use the same money with a little more and pave the road incrementally like Brazil did with its road from Boa Vista to Bom Fin or ensure that companies are equipped with engineers and proper building equipment for doing a good laterite road. Every driver, every passenger and road user is saying this trail has no more space for holes, even the holes are getting holes.

This brings me to the reconstruction of roads in Lethem and St. Ignatius. I said reconstruction because every year we are doing the same road in the same area. The method of road construction and the contractors need serious reviewing to ensure that our roads last while aiming at value for money.

The issue of power outage in Lethem and its environs continues in spite the purchase of two brand new generators.

The regional health system is in a better shape only for the dedication of the staff region wide. Were the staff not committed we would have witnessed a total collapse of the system. Mr. Speaker, please allow me to applaud the health workers of Region No. 9. They often work under some extreme conditions, often ridiculed by residents for the poor facilities they are made to work in and for which they are blamed. They have worked and are working and must be properly compensated so they can help the residents to live a better life. Last year I referred to the rate of referrals to neighbouring Boa Vista in Brazil, that situation has not changed. We still have a high rate of referrals from the much touted state-of-the-art hospital. The hospital is just not equipped to deal with such emergencies. The troubling aspect of these referrals is the high health risks; it is almost a very high risk to life for residents to be referred to Brazil notwithstanding the boasting of the Minister of Health during the Budget debate. The answer to the problem is to have a resident surgeon based at Lethem Hospital not visiting teams once or twice per year, which we are thankful for, but this is not the answer. We have a few native “Rupununians” that were and are being trained in Cuba, maybe one of them can be selected to be trained as a general surgeon.

Another measure that can be employed to provide improved healthcare is the upgrade of some health posts and health centres, and some health centres to cottage hospitals with adequate and modern equipment. The health system is plagued with multiple problems. I can go on and on.

Housing has numerous issues. Housing lots should be at least 100 x 100. The residents would like to know what is the policy for issuing lands and what is the real cost for a house lot.

I have outlined, albeit briefly, some of the issues that are affecting hinterland communities. These issues are in no way exhaustive. There are so many issues that confront us in the hinterland which we intend to address at various forums. Those highlighted today represent but a sample of those issues. I would implore the Government to sit and talk with and not to residents of these communities to see the hurt and despair they are feeling. Handouts and hand-downs are not the answer. In most cases the Government rushes to address the effects of our problems but fail to see the cause of these problems. It is sad to see daily our basic human right being violated. I see good money spent to keep our young people under political control and division and this Budget has not been designed for a better Guyana for all Guyanese. Hence, until and unless I am given firm guarantees that the issues outlined here would be taken on board, a better Guyana for all Guyanese seems dim. Your best is not good enough. How could you do the right thing when you do not know what is right? You have to go and come again. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you Hon. Member, very interesting. Hon. Members we will take a suspension now and it maybe just under one hour. Thank you.

*Sitting suspended at 5.15p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 6.13p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Good evening Hon. Members, please be seated. This sitting is resumed. Hon. Members we will recommence this evening with the presentation from Hon. Member Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj.

I also wish to report that I will be momentarily absent from the chambers because I have a function to attend. Mr. Basil Williams, the Deputy Speaker, will be presiding.

Mr. Seeraj you may proceed.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I am not too uncomfortable with your pronouncement because I know since you are my very good Friend I would not want to ask you for an extension to put you in a difficult spot, to exploit that friendship, but I am certain I can do that with the Hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, along with my colleagues I wish to commend Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh and his able staff for once again producing a budget, Budget 2014, paving a better life for all Guyanese which is a Continuation of similar budgets in the past. The philosophy of the People's Progressive Party/Civic administration has always been one that is people centred. And the title of this budget adequately captures the thinking of the People's Progressive Party.

In the past, I have had the pleasure of serving my party in Region 9, in the Rupununi Savannahs. I traversed that area on bicycle, on horseback and later on motor cycles. I never had the pleasure of traversing with ATVs or four wheel vehicles which are the norm now. And I can safely say the first time I attempted to come out of Region 9 by land was in 1991. It took me three days from Lethem to Georgetown. Parts of the trail were in such difficult condition that utilising a Model M Bedford truck that has the capacity to use the winches one could not climb up some of those hills or even stop the truck to reel in the winch. Five or six of us had to be walking ahead of that truck with the winches on our shoulders so that the truck continues moving. I suspect the Hon. Member Mr. Joe. Harmon, Retired Lieutenant Colonel, would know about some of these conditions given his experience in the Army. So I found it strange that Mr. Allicock, Hon. Member, would have made reference now when one could easily do the Georgetown to Lethem route in 10 or 12 hours. I found it very strange he could say that things are worse off now when we have mini buses traversing into the area.

The Community Support Officers is from an agreement between the Ministry of Health and the Regional Democratic Councils of Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 for 161 Community Support Officers to be placed in the administrative sectors of these regions. One hundred and ninety eight of these officers received training in the management of the photovoltaic system, the solar panels, and management of basic computer hardware. This is to supplement the Government's initiative to make available the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) to communities and also to provide the basic power supply needs in those areas that are not connected by the national grid.

One hundred and two received training in the development of business plans; 37 received training in various areas of aquaculture, sustainable logging, cash crop management, bee keeping, basic book keeping etcetera. One hundred and ninety-four of these CSOs received training in governance. They are adequately serving these regions in which they have been placed. In relation to Region 9, especially within the Annai area which the Hon. Member, Sydney Allicock is familiar with, the Toshao, Mark Jord stated clearly that most of the CSOs are females and very helpful to the village councils. They are engaged in a lot of different institutions and activities in the villages including tourism, agriculture in the schools and also the village council office itself and, based on Toshao Mark Jord, these CSOs report to the office every day.

During the course of the Budget debate, Hon. Member Volda Lawrence would have made mention of a subject which I think touches all of us. It is painful to read of occurrences of child rape, to read of occurrences of rape of mature women by of course men, some of them ordinary labourers as is the recent case in Region 1 involving a six-year old child. I remember my six-year-old daughter and I shudder to think if something like that should happen to her. Frankly speaking, I do not know what is sexual about a six year old child. There are really some sick people in society; not only labourers. I think the Hon. Member Valarie Garrido-Lowe also spoke about this matter. I think all of us in this Assembly need to take a conscious effort, a renewed pledge, to address this matter. It is one that can consume all of us. Whilst the Guyana Police Force is taking steps to bring justice to some of these cases there is need also for continuation, not only the arrest of these perpetrators, or alleged criminals, but also the continuation of that process to bring a close by virtue of the trials, because both parties can suffer from the long time before these matters are concluded.

I am not too familiar with the legal terminology, but I suspect everyone in this Assembly gets the gist of what I am saying. There is a case of a prominent public figure arrested in 2010. The case is still pending for multiple charges of child molestation. So we need as the National Assembly to give whatever support we can to the Guyana Police Force, to do whatever we can in terms of the judiciary, the legislative framework, to bring these matters to speedy conclusions, Because I also shudder to think to about an innocent man or woman being held on a charge and not being able to prove their innocence. And I shudder to think of the victims who are awaiting justice for

those who are guilty. So I really want to add my voice to support the call for the renewed fight against this kind of criminal activity, this inhumane kind of activity that is prevalent in our society today.

Various speakers over the last four days and today would have spoken at length on the presentation by Dr. A.K, Hon. Minister. Sometimes it is very advantageous to speak later in the debate, but it also has its disadvantages in the sense that some of the big points one wants to make would have been already mentioned by one's colleagues. Suffice it to say one has the advantage of also responding to some of the issues that would have been raised not only on this side of the House but also on the other side.

The Hon. Carl Barrington Greenidge - I think he has left the Chamber - spoke about Value Added Tax (VAT). I recalled last year that this matter was raised. I said the Value Added Tax in Guyana, whilst it is 16%, also replaces a number of other taxes. The burden is less on our community. The Consumption Tax alone used to be 35% and the Value Added Tax has been proven in all jurisdictions where it was tested and tried, including developed jurisdictions, to be an effective means of collecting taxes. But the Government did not just implement the VAT in Guyana. The Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge spoke about items for zero rating and so on. I do not know whether he is familiar with the list of items that have been zero rated by this Government; there are hundreds of items. Mr. Speaker, I will need an hour to go through this booklet – essential food items, essential consumer items, essential domestic services, food, education material, medical supplies and all of that. If you want rice it is zero rated; bread, zero rated; milk, is zero rated. But some items we must pay VAT on. I am afraid we cannot zero rate Porsche and similar type vehicles. We need to tax also to provide for the education, health, sea defences, roads, and so on for our communities.

The issue of the NIS was raised and we are calling on the NIS to provide additional pension for our aging population simply because we have an expanding aging population. Because of the healthcare and the better quality of lives that Guyanese are enjoying more people are joining the ranks of the elderly, the pensioners, and we have to provide for them. I am certain that we as a collective body have to make sure that the NIS is managed in a proper way so that it can continue to provide for our elderly. And as mentioned by our previous speaker, we provide for

everyone. This Budget provides for everyone even the unborn babies; and we continue to provide for our elderly way beyond the retirement age.

In 2011, the election campaign by some of the parties especially in the sugar, belt and especially by some leading members of the AFC, those senior campaigners/members of the AFC, would have been going around in a targeted way in mainly areas supportive of the PPP. I did not see that kind of target and attention being placed in the areas that traditionally have been giving support to the PNC. It would appear there seemed some kind of agreement of which Mr. Williams is not aware of. There seemed to be some kind of agreement at another level to provide for the AFC to concentrate primarily in the PPP support areas and allow the PNC to regain that which they have lost in those areas. A lot of promises were made. Sugar workers were promised the moon and the stars and everything, "if we get into office." Less than one month ago you would have seen a recanting of those promises when the call was made to shut down sugar; "let us go and dig some ponds and rear tilapia." So out there when campaigning for the votes it is one thing, and then later down there seems to be a betrayal of those promises in dealing with the sugar sector. Sugar is in difficulty. The Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Finance and other Ministers would have stated clearly the plans to bring sugar out of the difficulties that it is in currently.

Hon. Member Catherine Hughes spoke very passionately and eloquently about her sector, the tourism sector, and compared our VAT collection system with a number of Caribbean countries including the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados and so on. She was saying they have a tiered approach to tax in this sector. I do not think we are ruling that out on this of the House. The President has clearly made his intention known. He has commissioned a committee to examine these taxes to make recommendation as to how we deal with it. But we also have to examine our country's core economic activities. What is it that this country can do with distinct advantages over other countries? We do not have sun, sand, sea and beaches. A lot of people say we have rain, rivers and the Eldorado. But there is a different tourism that we can promote but as a nation we are relatively young in this line of business, and we can examine the recommendation.

That is why I am saying that the Hon. Member made a number of recommendations which I am certain can be taken on board. But in order for us to give more to the tourism sector prudent financial management tells clearly that you cannot spend more whilst you are collecting less. So

we need to maintain a revenue system that can fund our core activities and provide for economic development so we can generate more funds to target our core activities. The sector is an emerging sector but not withstanding Bahamas and Barbados the investment in this sector is significant, over \$800 million. Rice is a core sector and the Minister gave us \$500 million and we are thankful and will make good use of it. But for an emerging sector we have to recognise that \$800 million has been providing in this budget for the sector of tourism to put in place the hospitality institute. This is significant. Visitors in 2013 numbered over 200,000 which is a 13.3% over the visitors in 2012. Clearly we are going places.

I am not opposed to the lobby for a reduction in taxes for the 4 x 4. I have been asking for that for the rice farmers. We have had a reduction for the single cab and we are looking for the double cab also because the farmer would want to take his family into the back dam too. Similarly eco-tourism operators will want the luxury vehicles to provide not only comfort for themselves but for their visitors in this area. But whilst we are keeping them comfortable in the 4 x 4 we also need to keep them comfortable in the places that they will be staying, the hotel rooms. We need to also support the Marriot so we can provide comfort for them in their hotel rooms. The issue of our tourist comfort, our visitor's comfort, goes beyond their travelling, goes beyond their rooms. We do not want our visitors to go to bed and wake up in the middle of the night hot and sweaty because there is a blackout and the AC is off. We need our visitors to be comfortable, so we need a reliable power supply to keep our hotels well energised.

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

**Mr. Seeraj:** Mr. Speaker, you will have to give me a top-up. Mr. R. K. Sharma at GT&T gives 10 after 2 and he is just a CEO. Mr. Speaker, you are the third most powerful man.

**Mr. Speaker:** You will get three after six.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, this issue of cheap renewable energy we have to address that. So I will encourage Ms. Cathy Hughes to join us on that road to Amaila Falls to make the Amaila Falls a reality. It all goes towards addressing in a sustainable way renewable energy, not only for our visitors but also for our people, cheap, renewable energy. But these transformative projects will make people happy, they will bring comfort. The Opposition does not want that. A happy contented people will ensure they go back to the ballot and vote again for the PPP. So the

major objective of the Opposition, the APNU, is to ensure that the Guyanese people are not happy with the PPP. Do whatever it takes, they are there to ensure that the people of Guyana develop discomfort with the administration by stymieing projects that are intended to enhance the services we bring to our people. But the PPP/Civic will not stop, will not be stopped. They will continue on this way forward, producing more for our Guyanese brothers and sisters. The radio station will also ensure that they have access to more than one channel so they can listen to different news.

Hon. Member Jennifer Wade, my colleague in rice, and also the Hon. Member from Region 3 Mr. Adams, spoke about the need for us to give support to rice. Obviously the Hon. Member Mr. Scott was not aware of what the Member's intentions are and obviously did not listen to the Leader of the Opposition when he made a pronouncement, I think on 25<sup>th</sup> March, to give whatever support his Party can to the rice industry. Mr. Keith Scott you should also join hands in ensuring that we not only concentrate on improving services for the urban dwellers, but the rural farmers, in Essequibo and in Black Bush Polder also need support. For the \$500 million Hon. Minister Ashni Singh, I want to join in the call by Hon. Member Damon for us to establish this rice milling facility in Region 2. For years now I have spoken to farmers about the Rice Producers Association (RPA)'s intention to establish such a facility in Essequibo. We are prepared to work with you in a private/public partnership to ensure this becomes a reality. We cannot say the rice sector is short of policy. Look at productivity.

*6.35 p.m.*

Productivity moved from three tonnes per hectare in 1990, to 5.2 tonnes last season. Areas under cultivation for both crops in 1990, moved from 93,000 hectares for both crops to 535,000, last season. That is the production.

Areas under cultivation in 1990, 51,368 hectares, by the time we reached 2013, 170,833 hectares. How can we say we are short on policy? This shows clearly that rice is on the upward movement. Since 2010 we have been breaking records. I want to join with Minister Leslie Ramsammy in telling Dr. Ashni Singh that its projection in the budget of 540,000 tonnes is very conservative. We are going to *lick it* up Mr. Minister with the farmers because the industry is on

sound footing Minister. The \$500 million will go directly towards supporting our competitiveness and our resilience. The farmers have been involved in this.

Five farmers' exchange programmes were held recently; 157 farmers field school activities in 2013 alone; 1161 farmers were trained in these farmers' field school activities. We are bringing them along with us. Three hundred and four soil analysis were done to inform us about what kind of fertilisers to use. That was in 2013 alone, a continuation of our programme going back since 2009. One and fifty four paddy bug control demonstration programmes were held involving the farmers. And these are not schools in any building; these are schools under a mango or a katahar tree down in the *backdam*.

Only last Wednesday I was in the Hague *backdam*, where we addressed over 80 farmers, from all five rice growing regions on the Coast, about exchange programmes, better practices and all of that. Fourteen thousand five hundred acres of farmers' fields were certified. The area of seed production is an area of concern. The Rice Research Station can only produce 12,000 bags per season. This country needs 230,000 bags of seed paddy. The RPA, with its multiplication programme is adding another 28,000 bags per year. The investment in the Number 56 seeds facility is going to ensure that we provide more high quality seeds for the farmers. I agree with the Hon. Member Jennifer Wade that we need more seeds, but because of the huge amount that is needed, we have taken the programme forward to ensure that farmers themselves are trained in the art of seed production. This will continue.

Mr. Speaker, I too visited Barkara and I am very impress with what the farmers are doing there. They have a medium barley type grain that a single panicle – I have checked it - had 237 grains, one single panicle. But it is a short grain; it is a barley type grain. I brought down samples for us to do further tests at the research station with our Plant Breeding Department there.

I promised the farmers of Barakara that we will go back there with a technical team to address the issues of enhancing productivity in those fields, so that we can continue not only to develop our farmers in the easily accessible areas, but also to address the concerns of farmers in the not so easily accessible areas, like we did in the Moco Moco area in Region 9, there is also the mega farm at Santa Fe'.

For the information of the Hon. Member Sydney Allicock, the use of the chemicals mentioned Karate and Pronto, we have been using those on the Coastland areas here. After seven days, the Karate, which is produced by a very reputable company name Sygenta, it is totally broken down. These two chemicals are used primarily for the control of the dreaded paddy bug, which can pose the biggest economic damage to the crop. These two chemicals are used at the time of harvesting.

We plant rice in Guyana based on the seasons. We sow in the wet; we harvest in the dry. Once it is applied during harvesting time, which is the dry season, there is no way that it could reach into the water ways. Most of these chemicals break down on touching soil because Guyana has signed on too for the eradication of POPs that is Persistent Organic Pollutant. We are no longer, as a country, using chemicals that can remain long in the environment and pose a danger to flora and fauna. Long gone are the days where we are using chemicals that can pose a danger. These chemicals are tested before they are released into the industry.

Mr. Speaker, I am on page three of seven pages, but I am testing your patience. I do not want you to...

**Mr. Speaker:** Your good friend is not in the Chair and believe me you have been given an indulgence, so I would ask that you wrap up thank you.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Mr. Speaker I am going to wrap up now very quickly, thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** As interesting as it is actually.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Do you want me to continue along those lines Mr. Speaker? I am certain that  
*[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Speaker:** We will have a gaff when we take the next suspension.

**Mr. Seeraj:** Mr. Speaker, I think there is a serious issue and the Hon. Member Robert Montgomery Persaud mentioned it. I think it was a spill off from the comment raised by Dr. Rupert Roopnarine. The Hon. Member is a veteran politician in the local landscape and further afield and I by no way can even attempt to put myself in a position to criticise his remarks.

Having said that, I will try to lend to it; this issue of shared governance also have to engage all of our attention.

In the campaign leading up to the elections we also have to address this issue as to what is happening here in the National Assembly. If we are touting share governance outside, we also have to tout it here in this National Assembly. The party with 32 seats, as against 26 and 7...

**[An Hon. Member: *Inaudible*]** There is nothing shared with the party with the majority seats. We do not have the Speaker's position. Mr. Speaker, if it was not for the PPP/C's principled position you might not be sitting there, but we held to our principle position and the party with the 32 seats did not even get the Deputy Speaker's position. If we are talking about shared governance... **[Interruption]** It is easy to share what you do not have. It becomes more difficult to share what you have and if we have the majority in the Parliament, we also must share that. We must share that with the minority party that is in Government.

The PPP when it was in the majority it shared; as a minority Government it is also continuing that programme of sharing – sharing in here and sharing out there. Budget 2014 is no different - “A better Guyana for all Guyanese”. Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Damon, I rest my case. **[Applause]**

**Mr. Morian:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me thank God for this opportunity again that I can be another year to address matters concerning Budget 2014

I know for sure that the budget will not be able to address the expectations of everyone, but there are some fundamentals and gaps which I will seek to address and also to add recommendations. I would like to address issues in Region 10, primarily our indigenous people in Berbice River, Rockstone, Riversview and by extension the entire Guyana.

I want to address the economic situation... **[Mr. Seeraj:** You used to live in Rockstone...]  
...the last time I saw a mouth like that it had a hook inside brother, so be quiet. I need to address... **[Interruption]** I need to address the economic situation in Region 10 and be able to offer recommendations... **[Interruption]** I heard you my good friend.

I wish to start with the Indigenous People in the Berbice River. I wish to highlight some of the gaps and the fundamentals that the budget did not address. I am not here to rage a war against the budget, but I am here to offer recommendations for gaps that are exposed. I hope that the other

side will take on board these recommendations in good faith. Before I do that, I would need to highlight what these gaps are to this honourable House.

The Indigenous People of the Berbice River, Rock Stone, Ituni, Riversview, Coomacka, Waruni, just to highlight a few of these communities. They lack basic infusion of finances for sustainable livelihood. I remember recently, in these communities that wells were sunk. What they are not having is value for in Region 10. If one goes and check those wells right now, they are functioning. By extension, in Amelias Ward a well was sunk three years ago that well also is not functioning.

Mr. Speaker, the Indigenous People are faced with food security problems. They do not have the knowledge of agronomy and integrated pest management; they are plagued with crop destruction from wild animals and transportation issues to get their produce markets. The amenities for Amerindians in Region 10 are total lacking.

*[Mr. Speaker left the Chair.]*

*[Mr. Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, poverty is a serious issue among Indigenous communities in Region 10. What is most troubling is that young people are migrating from these areas. In the Budget of 2013, I recognise the Amerindian Development Fund; in excess of \$3.9 million was spent. Under this same heading for 2014, I now sees \$1.1 billion. It is iniquitous and is bordering on madness to spend \$1.1 billion dollars on line items. I have never seen this in all my 5 years plus of project management and accounting that \$1.1 billion will be spent just on line items.

My recommendation for the Indigenous People in Region 10 to counter the line item approach to the development of the Indigenous People is a National Amerindian Development Programme. This is my recommendation. The Amerindians in Region 10, and by extension the Amerindians in Guyana, need a National Amerindian Development Programme, where the following can be established: broad objectives in a holist manner, strategies could be outline, impacts, measurable indicators could be established, time schedules; a programme logical framework could be established, these are necessities if we want to take the Amerindian community forward.

I need to pause here. How many of us in this House will trade places from where we are living with the Indigenous People in Region 9 or Region 7? I am aware that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is working, but the approaches are anachronistic, unrealistic and do not give efficacy to Amerindian development in this country.

My call for an Amerindian Development Programme is not an outlandish one. Australia has an Aboriginal Communities Development Programme that is functioning right now. The United Nations have an Indigenous Peoples Partnership Framework, which is a programme that addresses Indigenous People's development. It cannot be done piecemeal. Government builds a school or a playground there. It cannot be done in that manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even the International Federation of Agricultural Development have a Indigenous Peoples Sustainable Development Programme; India has a development programme, the United States has one; Brazil, who is next door has one. I call on this House, this is one of the gaps and I am calling on the Government side to fill it. This is one of the areas I feel is necessary if we are going to develop Amerindians in this country. [Mr. Nandlall: Are you talking for the Amerindian now?] Yes, Amerindians form part of Region 10 Sir.

I wish to turn my attention to Region 10 proper and to address some of the issues. Not only address some of the issues, I wish to offer again, recommendations for development and economic upward mobility in Region 10. I need to posit or share here that I did have a good talk with the Hon. Minister Benn because I am looking for approaches and initiatives to fill the gaps. The issues in Region 10 are: unemployment, limited circulation of cash, the budget does not point to a fresh injection of capital in Region 10, the Budget does not address any new investment in Region 10. Hence, the situation will remain the same or get worst. As I said I did approach the Hon. Minister Mr. Benn because I am discussing Region 10 and I am looking for initiatives for the way forward and he gave me the assurance that the work in 2014 - I have no reason to doubt - the staff that would be used will be coming from Region 10. [Mr. T. Williams: What! Did you believe him?] Well I believe him so far, I have no reason to doubt, but the proof of the pudding is left in the tasting.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at the 2014 Budget, as I said earlier, one is looking for initiatives to turn things around. I am hearing concerning a whole lot of other things, but when

you are speaking about economic development, what has brought us to 2013, based on what is happening in Region 10, there need be new initiatives and there are none. But this does not mean that Region 10 do not have opportunities for investment. I need to take us there right now.

In Region 10, Buyers Report from London speaks of the high demand for Kaolin. For those who do not know, Report Buyer is a reputable marketing agency worldwide, with headquarters in London. This was their report; you can check it on the internet. All of us are connected there. They say that the demand for Kaolin will rise 3.45% thru 2015 and this represents 28.4 million metric tonnes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have opportunity in Region 10 for investment in Kaolin. Mr. Finance Minister, Hon. Minister Sir, this is a gap that needs to be filled. Kaolin is found in Linden, Ituni and Kwakwani. You need to know that China, the United States and our neighbour Venezuela are also buying Kaolin.

We have laurite, but let me look at silica sand in Region 10. Demand by 2016 is tabulated at 278 million metric tonnes. This is Region 10; someone was not listening. Buyers and markets are already lining up to purchase, but somehow I wonder if there is a deliberate attempt to under develop Region 10? Why do I ask this question? If the opportunities are there and the opportunities are not being made use of, then something sinister is a foot. I believe in time and I believe in changes and I want to say in this House, at this juncture to everyone, remember Nuremberg... If you do not know where Nuremberg is, sorry. I will explain after.

I see agriculture in Region 10 is very important. What I do not see is the investment initiatives coming to Region 10. Vokaty and Associates did a study in Region 10; this study was made available to the Government. Hence, I am not just pulling this out of the air. Year after year this report is sent to various places – Office of the President, Ministry of Agriculture and various places because this study pointed out the areas of Region 10 that are ripe for agricultural development. But in the 2014 Budget nothing is there [An Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*] I will find out and let you know. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seem to be distracted by a comedian, but I will take it with grace.

I want to know, right here right now, what is happening in Guyana and Region 10? What is in the physique of the Government against the peoples of Region 10? Because here is another opportunity for development – agriculture, there are so many farmers lining up to do things in

Region 10, but do you know what we get in Region 10? We got a Minister that came to Region 10 with a black plastic bag and says to the officers, “Do not share it until I am gone.” [Ms. **Teixeira:** Who said that? Name the Minister.] Ask me after the session.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy that I have cause such a ruckus in the House. I seem to be mashing some corns Mr. Minister. But if their corns got mashed I think they should say ouch...  
*[Interruption]*

I need to look back; one thing missed me as it relates to the Indigenous People. Twenty ninth January, 2013, a case was called in the High Court...

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Member has made an accusation - a Minister who is unnamed. I would like to ask the Member, since he has made a very sweeping comment that he named... [Ms. **Wade:** He is a priest.] He is not a priest in this House; he is a Member of Parliament in this House. We were not elected as priest; we were elected as Members of Parliament.

I would like to ask that the Member be asked to name which Minister did such a thing. Name the Minister; that is all I am asking.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member you would recall that a precedent similar to this one occurred and the objection was taken I think by you yourself that a Member could not ask another Member any questions during the debates.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am not the Speaker Sir.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will follow that precedent because we do not know what kind of Minister he is talking about. *[Interruption]* I know that the Hon. Member is a Minister himself, but I would say Hon. Member that you move on with your presentation.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to Standing Order 41 – Content of Speeches, sub-clause 6:

“No Member shall impute improper motive to any Member of the Assembly.”

Can I ask that the person be named Sir?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Mdm. Teixeira, this is the ruling, one - I am familiar with that Standing Order, no one has been named so there is no question of any crime being imputed to anyone. I asked the Member to continue with his presentation. **[Interruption]** I would advise that you take notice of the ... **[Interruption]**

**Mr. Morian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the churches in Linden have 120 ministers...

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member you have five minutes to complete your presentation.

**Mr. Morian:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me wrap up. I just want to say that the churches in Linden have 120 ministers. In the 2014 Budget Estimates, under the following ministries and offices, there are funding under the Ministry of Finance, reference # 1900400 – “Basic Needs Trust Fund” and the Ministry of Agriculture reference # 2801400 – “Rural Enterprise Agriculture Development”. I would appreciate very much where these funding are under these ministries; that the guidelines to access these funds are made known to this House. I would like to know under these funding Sir, the guidelines to access these funds. If there are application forms to be made, who are the contact persons that need to be contacted for Members of this House to access these funds?

In closing, my recommendation remains the same: A National Amerindian Development Programme to move the indigenous people forward. I also recommend that the natural resources in Region 10 are well able to move Region 10 forward if the Government exercises the will to bring those kinds of investments. I also posit here that the state of affairs in Region 10 is because of the Government highhandedness and the way how they are dealing with Region 10. But I conclude that we shall overcome. God bless. **[Applause]**

**Mr. Lumumba:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I begin my contribution to the 2014 Budget by first extending thanks and congratulations to the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his staff. But before I continue I would like to say that I will always miss the Late Hon. Attorney at law Deborah Backer for her sterling contribution in this Parliament and her overall contribution as a woman to the development of her country. I also want to let her family know, in particular, her husband Mr. Steve Backer and her children that some of us will always still be around if any help is required.

I want to just quickly answer Rev. Morian. I am not clear if he is suggesting that the \$1.5 billion to the Amerindians is inadequate or adequate and whether that is the official policy of the A Partnership of National Unity (APNU) to challenge the allocation of moneys to the indigenous People. I am not sure, but \$1.5 billion is much better than the zero amounts that the People's National Congress (PNC) provided to them in the past.

There is always great anticipation as to what I may say and how I may say it, but I believe this is a watershed year and my presentation must be unique and different. I believe this country is at the crossroads and many of our younger generations have not felt the pain that touch some of our people, like the Hon. Opposition Leader Brigadier (Ret`d) David Granger, Member of Parliament Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, Member of Parliament Moses Nagamootoo, Hon. Minister Clement Rohee, Hon. Minister Leslie Ramsammy and many others.

*7.06 p.m.*

We felt pain because of the shattered dreams of this country from the wounds inflicted on us. Some of us have witnessed death at our doorsteps, some of us witnessed injuries, some of us were recipients of abusive language, death threats and all forms of verbal and mental abuse, but we are still standing today and, I believe, we are in this honourable House because we want to make a contribution and that contribution probably is of most importance today than any other day.

Therefore my short presentation is aimed at laying the foundation for what we should avoid and not allow ethnicity and economic genocide to be part of this budgetary discourse. What is very apparent for us is the Opposition, in particular APNU, and to a lesser extent AFC, has allowed race to creep into this debate without knowing it. Still I do not believe that the chambers of Congress Place would have encouraged this or develop a proposal that would suggest sustainability of one group against another.

I want to be very careful because I am going down a road that is covered with nails, broken bottles, and I do not want to be misunderstood. I want to be listened to very carefully. In essence, I want to pull this debate back and let us deal with the hard economic issues that can clearly make comparison as to where we were as a nation in 1992 and where we are in 2014 and just move this discourse forward without isolating any race, class or religious group.

In this debate we must be able to highlight universal positions. We are not gods; we all have successes and failures, and thus the focus of this debate, in particular my colleagues on this side, must be the successes of a nation in particular areas such as housing with the distribution of hundreds of house lots to our people and the development of dozens of housing schemes.

In addition, we can point to health and talk about the reduction of shortages of medical supplies, the hundreds of doctors that we have trained, the nurses that we have trained, the hospitals we have built. It is true that we must also address the issue of management and shortages. We can talk about the roads in all of our communities and improve potable water systems but we must also, through, Budget 2014, address the issues of communities that may have not been touched.

I can now move to sports and talk about dozens of sports facilities. We know that some villages lack adequate facilities but, remember, we are coming from zero in 1992. In every area we can point to development but the Opposition has decided to focus only on the negatives.

It has made Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) a bad word. Why not talk about the blatant inadequacies of the People's National Congress (PNC). This debate has become a tale of two cities. We have to deal with bauxite, one city named Linden, predominantly Afro Guyanese based, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), the other city, GuySuCo, predominantly People's Progressive Party (PPP) based. It is a tale I do not like and we need to pull back because both cities have been the catalyst for the development of Guyana.

Let us briefly talk about Region 10, Linden, the tale of one city. Let us briefly talk about bauxite between 1975 and 1992. During that period of time the Government of Guyana bailed out the bauxite industry by the amount of US\$500 million. As a matter of fact, the industry had stopped paying for itself by 1976. There was an overdraft at Guyana National Cooperative Bank (GNCB) with a 30% compound interest rate and on three known occasions US\$100 million had to be written off to supplement the industry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, bear in mind that Linden, as a predominantly Afro Guyanese community,... and the Burnham/Hoyte regimes had to recognise the political and economic consequences if they did not support Linden. Therefore the state treasury had to bail out the industry and the community as a whole. Electricity subsidies to Linden from 2004 to 2013 amounted to over \$20 billion, Kwakwani amounted to over \$2 billion.

We have spoken about bauxite. Let us now talk about sugar and GuySuCo, the tale of the other city. When we analyse GuySuCo we must approach the entity as a community and not as just sugar. GuySuCo, such as bauxite, represents, culture, communities, predominance of an ethnic group and a national historical framework. It is true that there have been missteps by the institution. It is also true that both GuySuCo and bauxite have had good solid periods. However, at the end of the day GuySuCo is a formidable and in many ways an independent entity with its own foundation. Here is what makes GuySuCo special and dynamic.

- 18,000 direct employees.
- 100,000 citizens and impacted by family ties.
- 30,000 citizens, indirect service, customers to the industry.
- Dozens of rice farmers who benefit from GuySuCo input by drainage and irrigations systems that are in proximity of the sugar estate.
- Community centres that are secondary homes for thousands of young people and including the development of the Kanhais, Joe Solomon, Moses Dwarka, Roy Fredericks and dozens of others.
- Community roads that had to be developed because of the facilities and infrastructure in support for the extensive system, thus direct benefits of villages and farmers.
- Maintenance of the drainage and irrigation system of the Neighbourhood Democratic Council's (NDCs) in Regions 5, 6, 3 and 2 and many other areas.
- The dominant employment and economic growth equation of Skeldon, Albion, Blairmont, La Bonne Intention (LBI), Enmore, Rose Hall, Wales, Uitvlugt and dozens of secondary villages that are attached to this massive institution. Let us not forget the schools and other supportive industries.

Over the last 20 years, 1994 to 2013, sugar earned US\$2.5 billion as a compared to bauxite, \$1.7 billion in export earnings and in particular to bauxite 1,394 direct employees.

GuySuCo and bauxite represent the right and left arms of Guyana and neither must be the focus of the debate that allows perception of ethnic or economic discrimination. Any attempt to starve GuySuCo can be interpreted as ethnic cleansing - *what is good for the goose is good for the gander*.

Leader of Opposition Brigadier (Ret'd) David Granger and his shadow Minister, the ex- Minister of gloom and doom, Member of Parliament Mr. Carl Greenidge, suggested that the survival subvention of GuySuCo represents waste. It is waste when it affects a particular race and business as usual when it comes to another. Those who take this stand can be judged as architects of ethnic and geographical discrimination. Let us not forget how Rwanda started, how Kosovo started, how Germany started, how Idi Amin and Uganda started, how South Sudan started Central African Republic started and the many others. It was a narrow analysis...

**Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]:** On a Point of Order. Is the Hon. Member, who is speaking, describing me as being an architect of ethnic...

**Mr. Lumumba:** I never said so.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** He mentioned me by name.

**Mr. Lumumba:** I particularly said that your words and your statements can be interpreted, not by me, but I said it can be interpreted. I also went on to state that in many countries where there were problems with ethnicity it was these simple statements that were misunderstood. As a matter of fact, in Rwanda it was a simple statement by a Catholic Priest.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was mentioned by name. I would like to know which words I used that could be interpreted in the way... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba, from my viewpoint, I believe that your statement could be imputing motives of race to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. I would suggest that you withdraw that remark because you have actually juxtaposed his name to the words.

**Mr. Lumumba:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has stated publicly that he is against the subvention of GuySuCo.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You are saying that that is a racist statement. Mr. Lumumba, I am asking you to withdraw those words.

**Mr. Lumumba:** Withdraw what words?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The words in which you juxtaposed the name of the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and suggesting that what he said could result in racist consequences. I am saying that it is imputing... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Lumumba:** I never said that.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Could you sit? Could you withdraw the words? The Member has objected and I am asking you to withdraw those remarks which impute race into him.

**Mr. Lumumba:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot withdraw what I did not say.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Well Mr. Lumumba, you would not be able to continue your presentation. [*Interruption*]

**Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would sincerely ask that you deal with this matter with some objectivity. The Hon. Member Mr. Lumumba...

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Bishop Edghill, could you sit?

**Bishop Edghill:** I cannot be heard.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Are you disrespecting the Chair? You are suggesting that the Chair is not being objective.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I was asking for... It is that the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, in his earlier remarks, asked that we listened carefully because where he was going was on the road that has bottles and nails and he did not want to be misinterpreted. He asked that we do that. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, Mr. Lumumba has stepped on the bottles and nails and I am asking that he withdraws the statement which imputes racist...

**Bishop Edghill:** Which statements?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The statements which mentioned the Leader of the Opposition and suggested that his statements were racist.

**Ms. Teixeira:** He did not say that... [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker... [*Interruption*]...

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** This is the final time that I am speaking on this matter. My ruling is that his statement imputes racist suggestions to the Leader of the Opposition and he must withdraw them. [*Interruption*]

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not clear on what you want the Member to withdraw, therefore, could you allow the Member to read this section again so that you can hear? He has a written speech.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Read, what again?

**Ms. Teixeira:** If you do not trust that, I suggest that we pause, get the verbatim records, you can hear the audio and then you can rule, Sir.

You can suspend for a few minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and listen to the audio.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I put two propositions to you. I do not know if you are cogitating or whether your earlier ruling holds. Could you please guide us? I would like to suggest a suspension and let you check the records.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It is all right. The Clerk has indicated something to me; I am awaiting his return.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Do we all wait here?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Yes. Do you wish to have a suspension of the session for that? That exercise could take about ten minutes, so we will suspend for ten minutes.

*Sitting suspended at 7.21 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 7.39 p.m.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Odinga Lumumba.

**Mr. Lumumba:** Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** When we took the suspension, it was in relation to something you had said. Are you now ready to address the Assembly?

**Mr. Lumumba:** Yes, I am.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You may feel free to do so.

**Mr. Lumumba:** First of all, I want the National Assembly to understand that my intention was in no way to call the Leader of the Opposition a racist or suggest that. What I said, and I will be very careful what I said, or what I meant to say,...

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I do not believe that you should repeat what you said. I think what you had said is enough.

**Mr. Lumumba:** You want me to move on.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just move on.

**Mr. Lumumba:** It was narrow analyses that lead to the conflagration in those states. It was economic and ethnic disputes that got out of control. We must put an end to these gestures now.

I am saying that some of these pronouncements have similarities. For centuries these economic tactics have been used as economic tools and a weapon against political opposition, especially people of different race and different religions.

I am personally obliged to join my friend across the aisle to support the reorganisation of not only GuySuCo, but the way we do political business in Guyana. However, it is imperative to resolve the issues without setting the stage of one race favouritism while allowing another to flourish even when the economics say that all must be treated equally, especially with the payment of light bills, which must be paid equally by the people of Region 10 and those of Region 6.

This matter is complex. In the 1960s, the section of Afro Americans led by Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Martin Luther King Jr. challenged the racist system of America at that time. At that time a few blacks or coloured people were called Uncle Toms because some bowed to the

racist system and in many ways accepted white oppression of blacks. Blacks, such as H. Rap Brown and H. P. Newton of the Black Panthers, called the coloured folks termites. We may find similarly here, in Guyana, that it could happen if a certain set of people are labelled as termites or Uncle Toms of Guyana.

In Guyana, many of my good friends on the other side are of political sound minds and revolutionary wise and pro equality. Let me use, for example, my honourable friend Moses Nagamootoo, a man who dare not and would not share the same ideological position on this issue of GuySuCo with APNU. While APNU, to me, seems to vent destruction against GuySuCo, an institution that feeds the predominantly Indo Guyanese of Region 6, Brother Moses and the AFC will be judged by their position if, for incorrect reasons, they show us any kind of similarity to the Roy Wilkins of the 1960s.

The AFC cannot provide milk and honey to Linden and Region 10 and coconut milk and hard bread to the people of Region 6, in the sugar belt.

I am asking that APNU removes itself from this destructive path. Imagine the difficulties faced when a country with just over 700, 000 people cannot find a common solution. APNU has already put fears in the hearts of a large section of the community by suggesting an amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Bill so that the police and GRA officers can seize \$2 million cash or kind from the pockets of rice farmers, gold miners and storekeepers. APNU is politically tainted and biased on this issue of GuySuCo. These utterances by a few Members have already sent shivers down the backs of many Guyanese, especially those who have suffered...

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** I rise on a Point of Order. On the question of the correctness of the Member's statement that we have driven fear into the hearts of people by seizing \$2 million..., by suggesting that the police can do this. There is no such recommendation or amendment in the Special Select Committee on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Bill. It is not so.

**Mr. Lumumba:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand by my position that an APNU representative has suggested that in the Special Select Committee. They might have changed that, but I do not have such information.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** But that is the position, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Attorney General and all of the other Members of the Special Select Committee are here and I am asking that the Hon. Member withdraws that statement please.

**Mr. Lumumba:** What I would change is that there was an original suggestion by the APNU representative.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** You cannot be making it now. You are speaking now.

**Mr. Lumumba:** I am entitled to speak about the past. *[Interruption]* APNU is politically tainted and biased on the issue of GuySuCo. These utterances by APNU Members have sent shivers down the backs of many Guyanese, especially those who have suffered the PNC outrageous search, seize and destroy conduct in the 1970s and 1980s.

We have to deal with this solution in a sensible manner. I do not have all the answers but apartheid and economic ethnic cleansing cannot be the answer. We cannot preach total support for one group and zero support for another group.

In closing, I am in nowhere suggesting that things should not change at GuySuCo but the end results of this process must not be destructive for the hard-working citizens of Guyana, in particular the citizens of the sugar belt and the citizens that are predominantly Indians.

I urge unity and compromise on the way forward. *[Applause]*

**Mrs. Baveghems:** Thank you, Cde. Deputy Speaker for affording me the opportunity to speak on this Budget 2014. Before I do so I would like to draw an incident of what happened yesterday afternoon. There are two persons in the gallery by the names of Seon Rollins and Muza Haynes. Could they please stand so that people can see them?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Sorry Hon. Member, the gallery is not a part of the proceedings of this honourable House.

**Mrs. Baveghems:** I am sorry I withdraw that. They came yesterday to listen to the debate and the police chased them away, asked them what they were doing here and that they could not have entered. When they would have stood for me see them when I would have come they said, "Do not stand up here, you all go along. What are you waiting for?"

They are human beings, they are Guyanese, why can they not come and listen to the debate? Anyhow, they made contact with me last evening and I told them to come today and they were here. I do not know if they have left but they were here, and they are blind.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We note what you have said.

**Mrs. Baveghems:** I would like the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs to talk to his policemen on that issue.

Now, it is to speak on the budget.

As a grass roots Member of Parliament, I stand to represent the working class and poor who are not catered for in this budget. Value Added Tax (VAT) is still holding a large amount of water and that water is not being used neither is it being evaporated.

The Members on the other side of this House need to visit the post offices around the country on the first of every month and they will witness the large number of pensioners lined up from 6 am, and in some cases earlier, to cash in their pension vouchers. That is how desperate many pensioners are. Wake up Minister, wake up! Sometimes they are in the rain, for example, at the East La Penitance Post Office and the Bourda Post Office. Sheds should be made for them so as to protect them because they are old and they cannot take rain.

With respect to the pensioners, I would love to see the Hon. Minister of Finance treat the pensioners as if they were his parents. What can G\$600 do for them? The pensioners have to pay for proper medical care, purchase medication, drinking water and personal products to have them looking and smelling good. Those are not cheap, I assure you. To add to that, the Hon. Member Ms. Shadick said last year, and again this year, that children must look after their parents. Cde. Deputy Speaker, children cannot look after their parents. Is it with this salary they are getting? Come on, Ms. Shadick. Some time when the pensioners get their few cents they have to put it into the children hands to help them to send their children to school. Probably the Member has a personal problem with that.

Pensioners and our senior citizens need assisted living facilities. They have worked hard and given their service to this country, it is only fitting that we should show our appreciation to them by having them spend the remainder of their lives in some degree of comfort and dignity.

The National Insurance Scheme (NIS) is an organisation which is supposed to provide relief to workers who become ill, disabled or old. The complaints are numerous regarding the inability of contributors to get their benefits in a timely manner. Some persons even complain of not getting their benefits at all. This state of affairs has resulted in some persons calling this institution, "The National Institute of Swindlers".

The Guyana Power & Light (GPL) Inc. is another sore point for the grass roots. People there have numerous complaints that when they purchased prepaid credit they are being robbed of G\$1,000 or G\$2,000 worth of credit. Their complaints fall on deaf ears. I hope that the Hon. Prime Minister can look into this. Perhaps the Hon. Prime Minister will investigate and inform us of corrective actions taken by GPL.

According to Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI)'s billboards "Water is life, Save it", however, apparently the persons at GWI do not believe that slogan, at least the first part of that slogan. Before they put "water is life" they should have put an adjective – "good" water. I say this because on numerous occasions when one turns on the tap there is no water. On other occasions, the quality of the water is atrocious. It cannot be used to cook or drink; neither can it be used to do the white laundry.

*7.54. p.m.*

I turn now to Education. Every year we hear about the billions of dollars that is allocated to the education section, but I wonder who benefits. Teachers are a major stakeholder in the delivery of education but we do not hear anything in the budget to improve the welfare of teachers. I still hear about teachers having to work under conditions that the Hon. Minister and her officials would absolutely refuse to work under. Teachers continue to complain about dust falling on them while teaching, inadequate or poor accommodation, poor sanitary facilities for themselves and students, classes being disrupted whenever it rains. It would appear to me that the welfare of the officials and staff of the Ministry of Education are more important than those of the teachers and students. Why do I say this? I have heard about retreats and fun days being hosted for the officials and staff at a resort along the Linden/Soesdyke Highway, annual Christmas dinners and parties for the staffs and officials. To add insult to the teachers, the Gravity Lounge was reserved for a luncheon, not for teachers, but for officials and staff of the Ministry of Education.

I was overjoyed when I was told that women in Education were honoured by having their photographs displayed on large billboards along Brickdam. However, I was disappointed when I only saw one active teacher being honoured and she was not honoured for being a teacher but for being a Guyana Teachers' Union (GTU) official. Are there not any active teachers who deserve such recognition? Will some of the \$32 billion be spent to improve the welfare of teachers and students? Or, will it be spent on parties, outings, retreats, high power lunches and billboards for education officials and staff?

The budget does make mention of a payment of G\$10, 000 to schoolchildren, to assist with their transportation. At thirty-eight weeks per school year, and it is to deduct one week for interruptions and national holidays, that money translates into approximately G\$53 per day. We are still short G\$7 for a one side short drop fare around the city. That amount is inadequate. What guarantee is there that parents will spend the money, even though inadequate, on the intended purpose? It is my view that providing school buses would have been a better measure. According to the man in the street, "Government is trying to buy their votes." I do not know if the Minister heard the song they are singing. The parents are singing, "Not a blade of grass, not one *carass*. We love the one-seat majority".

Nurses and public servants continue to be treated with scant regard by this administration. They are humans too and if they are not treated properly we cannot expect to get proper service from them. At the first opportunity they will migrate.

The blind and or visually impaired are always imploring that they need to be treated equally. They have been asking if the Ministry of Housing and Water has any plans for affording them the opportunity of obtaining a "turnkey home" at a low cost, not those homes in which the walls are crumbling. They also said that living with the sighted is not nice.

We have a "Champion of the Earth" and a "Doctor of the Environment" but at almost every street corner there is garbage. The Le Repentir Cemetery has been renamed the Le Repentir Forestry. I am hoping that the funds allocated to clean up our Garden City are indeed used to clean up our city. How can we have a "Champion of the Earth" and a "Doctor of the Environment" and our environment is in such a deplorable state?

I close with two observations. One is that lately I have observed that there is a paucity of carrion crows flying around. When I brought it to the attention of my grandson he remarked, "Granny Joan, the carrion crows have migrated too because people hardly have anything to eat much less to throw away for the crows to get." [**An Hon. Member:** They will eat garbage.] They do eat not garbage.

Two, I asked a young man "why is your stomach so high?" He remarked, "Miss Baveghems, have you not seen that almost everyone has a huge stomach? We have to have guts to survive in Guyana these days."

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair.*

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** I am extremely pleased to join with my colleagues in the House, from both sides...

**Hon Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, order.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, Hon. Members.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk*] Apology.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, could we have order to allow the Hon. Minister to speak, to address the House.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members. Please proceed Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Jaipaul.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I may have to suspend the sitting.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Manickchand:** The ruling is being disrespected, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I may have to suspend the sitting.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Lock up the rapist.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Mr. Benn:** Do not say anything.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Mr. Speaker:** We will suspend for five minutes, Hon. Members

*Sitting suspended at 8.03 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 8.57 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I felt compelled to suspend the sitting for a few minutes. One, it was to see if the few minutes would have brought a period of calm and perhaps we could be able to resume, but also the opportunity was taken to meet with the Whips and the Clerk to see if the issues, which were affecting one side of the House, could be known and if known dealt with. At the end of which it was reported to me by the Opposition Chief Whip and confirmed by the Government's Chief Whip that there has been no narrowing of the issue. I believe that we know what the issue is. I, myself, had believed that it was dealt with. I am aware that this protest is as much as against the Chair as it is against the Minister. I therefore invite the Minister to proceed with her speech.

*Members from the Alliance For Change withdrew from Chamber.*

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you Sir.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I wish to join in congratulating Minister Ashni Singh and his staff...

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Minister Ashni Singh has...

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, order please.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, I ask for your protection.

**Mr. Speaker:** Could we have some quiet so that the Hon. Minister may give her presentation, please?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you Sir. I join to congratulate Minister Ashni Singh...

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*] Apology to Sharma.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a motion on the floor.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*]

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to put a motion on floor.

**Mr. Speaker:** I cannot hear you.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*]

**Ms. Teixeira:** I wish to move a motion.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped the desk.*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I recognise Ms. Teixeira.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I wish to move a motion that the Minister be allowed to speak, all vote for or against. Mr. Speaker, have you heard me?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am unable to hear anything. I am seeing you but I cannot hear.

**Hon. Members (Government):** [*Rose to their feet.*]

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped on desk.*] Go home!

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, if this continues, because I cannot hear anything, I will adjourn the sitting to Monday.

Minister, I invite you once again to make your presentation.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Thank you Sir.

**Hon. Members (Opposition):** [*Tapped on desk.*] Apology.

**Hon. Members (Government):** [*Rose to their feet.*]

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I do not know if you can hear me but I am adjourning the sitting of the National Assembly until Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April at 2 p.m.

*Adjourned accordingly at 9.02 p.m.*