

Official Report

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

7TH Sitting

Monday, 17TH August, 2015

The Assembly convened at 1.10 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

Mr. Speaker: The Opposition Members of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) will be taking their seats today as we have been informed and we will proceed immediately to the administering of the oaths.

ROLL CALL

The Clerk: Hon. Members, I now call, in the order as declared by the Guyana Elections Commission, the names of those persons who have, to date, become Members of the National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana following the elections on 11th May, 2015.

Will Members kindly answer as your names are called?

Roll call taken as follows:

Declared elected on 13th day of July, 2015.

People's Progressive Party

Mr. Collin David Croal

Mr. Carnel Damon

Mr. Irfaan Mohamed Ali

Mr. Komal Chand

Mr. Mohabir Anil Nandlall

Mr. Neendkumar

Mrs. Gillian Rosemarie Persaud

Ms. Priya Devi Manickchand

Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo

Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha

Dr. Jennifer Reginalda Ann Westford

Mr. Alister Saturnius Charlie

Mr. Adrian Venkatasuma Anamayah (not seated)

Dr. Frank Christopher Stainslaus Anthony

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal

Mr. Nigel Deonarine Dharamlall

Bishop Juan Anthony Edghill

Mrs. Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. Harry Gill

Mr. Joseph Linden Fitzclarence Hamilton

Dr. Clive Ramesh Jagan

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo

Mr. Odinga Lumumba

Mr. Ganga Persaud

Dr. Vindhya Vasini Harshkumar Persaud

Dr. Bheri Sygmond Ramsaran

Mr. Charles Shiva Ramson

Mr. Clement James Rohee

Mr. Dharamukumar Seeraj

Ms. Africo Archibald Selman

Ms. Pauline Rose Ann Sukhai

Ms. Gail Teixeira

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, my first duty is the election of a Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly. With the consent of the Members present at the second and subsequent sittings of the National Assembly, this item was delayed until this time. Do I have nominations for the office of Deputy Speaker?

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the PPP Members of Parliament, we wish to thank you for the courtesy of keeping the post vacant, however, we have no nominations for a Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon Members, in the event that there is no nominations from the Opposition Members of Parliament for the office of Deputy Speaker, this matter will be put down to our next sitting when someone will be nominated to serve in that office.

Deputy Speaker not elected.

OATHS

Mr. Speaker: We will now administer the oath of office to the Members who are sitting for the first time today. Hon. Members, who are to be sworn in today, I address you particularly in the context of the method to be employed in administering the oath, that method mirrors the method which was employed in administering the oath to the other Members of Parliament, who appeared in the chamber earlier. Instead of having the Clerk move among you and administer the oath to you individually, what I have employed, and I seek your consent on this, is that your names will be called by the Clerk, you will see before you a document, which contains the words of the oath, a document which is an oath form, when your name is called you will then rise, select the preferred book by which you would wish to declare the oath, you will repeat the oath after which you will reclaim your seat and sign the oath form. In the meantime, the Clerk will call the name of the other Member who is to be similarly involved in the work of the Assembly. We will then proceed in that way.

The Oath of Office was administered to and subscribed by the following Members:

Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo

Mr. Clement Rohee

Ms. Gail Teixeira

Mr. Irfaan Ali

Mr. Anil Nandlall

Ms. Priya Manickchand

Dr. Frank Anthony

Ms. Pauline Sukhai

1.25 p.m.

Mr. Odinga Lumumba

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj

Dr. Vindhiya Persaud

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal

Mr. Joseph Hamilton

Mr. Colin Croal

Mrs. Gillian Rosemarie Persaud

Dr. Bheri Ramsaran

Dr. Jennifer Westford

Ms. Africo Selman

Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha

Mr. Ganga Persaud

Mrs. Yvonne Pearson Fredericks

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Komal Chand

Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo

Mr. Cernel Damon

Mr. Alister Charlie

Mr. Nigel Dharamlall

Dr. Clive Jagan

Mr. Charles Ramson

Mr. Harry Gill

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Clerk. Hon. Members, one name from the benches of the Opposition was not answered when it was called, Mr. Adrian Anamayah.

Ms. Teixeira: I had just indicated to the Clerk before the sitting started that Mr. Anamayah had asked to be excused due to personal reasons.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member.

1.40 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Welcome to Opposition Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I welcome you to this 7th Sitting of the National Assembly of our Parliament. At this Sitting the seats to the left of the Speaker's chair are occupied and I bid the Members of the Opposition welcome.

Update on Acts passed during 2015

During the six sittings which preceded today's Sitting, the National Assembly has received two Addresses from His Excellency the President. The Assembly has also passed six Acts. I cite them here for ease of recall. Those Acts were the:

- Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2015;
- Former Presidents (Benefits and Other Facilities) Act 2015;
- Constitution (Amendment) Act 2015;
- Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act 2015;
- Local Government (Amendment) Act 2015; and
- Customs (Amendment) Act 2015.

Three of these Acts – the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2015, the Former Presidents (Benefits and Other Facilities) Act 2015 and the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2015, have received the assent of the President.

The other three Acts – the Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act 2015, the Local Government (Amendment) Act 2015 and the Customs (Amendment) Act 2015, have been submitted to His Excellency the President for his assent. All these Acts are of major importance for Guyana.

In addition to the Acts I mentioned, a noticeably large number of Reports have been laid before the House. Hon. Members, the Parliament Office has responded with alacrity to requests for information and, even in instances when information was not requested, has extended courtesies by providing details of the proceedings during these six sittings. It would be true to say Hon. Members that the Hon. Members of the Opposition are not without some knowledge of the events and proceedings which occurred during their temporary absence from this Chamber. I would ask the Members of the Opposition to meet with me in Committee Room No. 2 for the election of the Leader of the Opposition which, it seems to me, would be appropriate to undertake during the suspension today.

Decorum in the National Assembly

Hon. Members, as part of the efforts of the Eleventh Parliament to maintain the place as the primary legislative institution in Guyana, to make it more accessible to the populace at large and at the same time to provide the citizenry with an opportunity to view the proceedings of this House, we have made provision during the sittings of the National Assembly for live simultaneous unedited broadcasts, audio and video, to the people of Guyana. This reality, Hon. Members imposes upon us all an obligation to so conduct our business in this House, in the sight of our citizens, with dignity and decorum, with respect, one for the other, whether in debate, even in very spirited debates or in other exchanges in this House. Let us leave our fellow Guyanese in no doubt, that all Hon. Members, individually, view their places in this noble House as affording to us all a special opportunity to serve Guyana. Let us invite the most critical of our citizens to view the proceedings of this House and to be impressed by what they see. Let us Hon. Members, by our conduct of our affairs in this House, confirm in our citizens their best regard for our proceedings.

Hon. Members, since I was elected Speaker and took the oath of Office, I must tell you that a very great number of our countrymen and women, some known to me, but most unknown to me,

have approached me to express a word of encouragement or a word of concern in relation to our work here in this House. All of them, however, were optimistic that the Hon. Members of this House will continue to serve the higher interests of the people of Guyana during this Session. In my words to Hon. Members under this heading at our 2nd Sitting on 25th June, 2015, I pointed out that there is much work to be done by this Eleventh Parliament and I asked then, and I again do so, that we remain steadfast in our efforts to accomplish that work.

I pointed out too Hon. Members, that the public, who have sent us here and who look to us to serve them faithfully and well, now have an open window to our proceedings. I further exhort us to demonstrate, by our treatment of matters in this House, that we are committed to the efficient discharge of all matters and committed to respectful interactions between and among all Members of this House. Hon. Members, I repeat those words now and urge all Hon. Members to join me in the noble task which lies ahead. I thank you Hon. Members. *[Applause]*

Congratulations by Ms. Gail Teixeira to the Speaker on his assumption of Office

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, if I could interrupt just to say, we wish to publicly thank you and the Clerk of the National Assembly for keeping us apprised of developments in the National Assembly since its commencement on 10th June, 2015. We also wish to thank you for expeditiously convening a meeting today for the election of the Leader of the Opposition. We wish to thank you very much and congratulate you on assuming the Office of Speaker. We were not here to do that on the first day. Thank you very much Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you very much. Congratulations, whenever given, are always well received.

Birth anniversary of Mr. Sherlock Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Ms. Speaker: It is my pleasure to announce to the House that our esteemed Clerk, Mr. Sherlock Isaacs, has celebrated a birthday after midnight last night or tonight or today, whichever one it is. We would want to say congratulations and happy birthday. It is not the most tangible way of saying it, but we will accept that.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Regulations 2015 No. 4 of 2015. [*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2015 - MOTION TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2015

“WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic 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 the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2015 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2015-08-10.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2015, of a total sum of one hundred and eighty-one billion, six hundred and ninety-two million and twenty thousand dollars (\$181,692,020,000), excluding thirty-nine billion, three hundred and eighty-six million, five hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars (\$39,386,585,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now proceed with the debate on the budget for the year 2015. For the budget debate, it may be useful for me to remind us all of the times which we have set aside for this purpose:

- 1.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. - Sitting
- 4.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m. - Suspension (to allow us to refresh ourselves)
- 5.00 p.m. - 7.30 p.m. - Sitting
- 7.30 p.m. - 8.00 p.m. - Suspension
- 8.00 p.m. - 10.00 p.m. - Sitting.

I would ask that Hon. Members assist me in observance of those times.

The first speaker on my list for today is the Hon. Member, Mr. Irfaan Ali.

Mr. Ali: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Before I commence my presentation, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), we wish to thank all the public servants and all those workers who worked tremendously hard whilst we were in Government to give today, a Guyana that is vibrant, buoyant, productive and leading the Caribbean in growth and development. I want to say that we are very worried about the recent developments in the public service, where persons, who have served us well, persons who have served this country, are sent home, are fired and removed from their jobs without any justice or without any reason. This is something that we must address and something that Budget 2015 would have to contemplate during the course of this debate.

The recent Elections remind us how fragile democracy is and how important it is for us to safeguard institutions tasked with protecting democracy. Democracy cannot and would not reject verification and recount. It will always seek to verify and remove any doubt. The results of these Elections are subject to court proceedings and we are confident that the reckless and arbitrary style in which the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) operated will be exposed. It is important to note that Budget 2015 is framed in such a context in this modern era, when the foundation on which you stand is questionable; confidence and trust in you become an issue.

Nevertheless, the PPP/C has always put the people and the country first, and as such we are here today to defend, protect and promote the rights, privileges and aspirations of the Guyanese people.

1.55 p.m.

We are not a party of false hope and promises. Our track record will show that we have delivered consistently to the people of Guyana. We restored democracy in this country. We brought Guyana from economic ruins to prosperity. Imagine, after two months in office, the Government can boast of the largest budget and have enough resources to implement all their programmes. That, my friends, is as a result of the hard work and tireless effort of the PPP/C; like we did in 1992. Most governments go into power with things sliding downwards. In this case the Government inherited the successes of nine consecutive years of economic growth and development. The Government has inherited foreign reserves of more than \$615 million, 300% more than the Hon. Member Carl Greenidge left. We have left the Government a country today that is vibrant, buoyant, and full of energy.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I know that your people have to hear, but there is a Hon. Member across the way, a Vice-President no less, who is using the word thieving and is accusing people on this side of the House of thieving all of the money. I will ask that this is un-parliamentary and that Mr. Speaker you caution the Vice-President to stop this nonsense in this House.

Mr. Speaker: I like to thank the Hon. Member for bringing that to the Speaker's attention. I do believe that we should avoid the heated expressions which suggest un-parliamentary language. Thank you. Please proceed.

Mr. Ali: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I hope the time keeper is going to give me back my minutes. Mr. Speaker, you can make all types of slogans and shout what you want, but one thing is for sure, this Government never thought to increase the salaries of Ministers by 100%. That was one of their first tasks within their first 100 days.

However, if one wants a lesson in the fastest way to destroy a good economy, then this Government is providing that lesson. I am very disappointed in the Hon. Member Mr. Winston Jordan, who must have learned something under the astute leadership of Dr. Ashni Singh.

Budget 2015 has taken away thousands of jobs and over \$1 billion from Amerindian villages. Budget 2015 has taken away more than \$500 million of direct subsidies to the pensioners. Budget 2015 has taken away \$10,000 per family - poor family. Budget 2015 has further delayed the aspiration of the Guyanese people in having cheap electricity as low as 20 cents per kilowatts per hour. Budget 2015 has contracted the building and construction sector. The contraction of one project alone in the housing sector has seen the loss of close to 350 jobs. Budget 2015 has failed to address the issue of confidence and to remove the steady rhetoric on certain investors and companies. Budget 2015 is presented when workers in the bauxite industry are being retrenched, yet it is silent on its approach in dealing with these workers. Budget 2015 is presented when the price of oil has tumbled, yet we hear of no reduction in electricity tariff for the ordinary Guyanese. Budget 2015 has formally shut out the opportunity of our people having access to specialised health care, in the future, at a time when other countries in the region are expanding specialised health care facilities. If one is to look at the capital estimates he/she would see that Budget 2015 has reduced investment in almost every region, except Region 4. Regions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9 bore the brunt of this and attracted reduction of almost \$800 million in capital estimates.

What is worst is that this budget boasts about a new approach to expanding agriculture and in Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6, the regional allocation for agriculture has almost been cut by close to 70%, with Regions 6 and 2 feeling the brunt of this, losing \$81 million each from agricultural investments. Is this what you have promised the rice farmers? No. Not only did you abandon your promise of \$9,000 per bag; not only did you abandon your promise of higher paying markets; but now you seek to deprive them of important resources to boost investment in drainage and irrigation, which are critical to the survival of the farmers.

Budget 2015 speaks to a green economy. The green economy is built around sustainable extract of our wealth for our current and future generation; that is what the Hon. Minister of Finance said. What is fresh about this? We have one the most powerful tools to accomplish this in the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). What do we choose to do with this? Lay it aside. This document has international goodwill and credibility and is second to none in achieving the aspirations of a green economy. Any good investor... [**Mr. Greenidge:** *[Inaudible]*...] Not you

Mr. Greenidge, I said any good investor. Any good investor understands the value and nature of goodwill, but we have a Government that ignores this.

Maybe the only positive out of Budget 2015 is that we have one of the most critical thinkers in transformative Guyana present with us in the National Assembly, in the form of the Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo. There is a lot of fluff in Budget 2015. I described it as an essay full of fluff. There are a lot of statements, but there is no policy formulation to give meat to the statements. There is no structured approach in how we will achieve the output of the statements. But, what I can do and I have seen the Government would have started it, in some aspects of the budget, they have referred to the PPP/C's manifesto and that is a good point to start. So, I will say to the Government that they have a good reference point, use this document and serve the people of Guyana.

The Hon. Minister of Finance has made many claims. One of his claims is that the economy is bankrupt. I am still trying to understand how this seasoned economist would draw the conclusion that this economy is bankrupt. Whilst he is saying that the economy is bankrupt on the other hand he is saying... [**Mr. Jordon:** *[Inaudible]*...] Are you saying that you never said that the economy was bankrupt? On the other hand he is saying we have found \$23 billion, \$40 billion in private commercial bank accounts. He has said in the budget that we have more than \$615 billion in foreign reserve, yet he is saying the economy is bankrupt, an economy that is out performing every single other economy in the Caribbean. The point is that I believe that this Minister is a good visionary, by the time he is finish I am sure we will be bankrupt. That is a vision he has; he is running ahead of his vision. He is not speaking about the present.

Let us review the June 2015 statistical abstract of the Bank of Guyana, and I am sure the Hon. Member has access to this document. Gross international reserve of Guyana was \$621.8 million at the end of May 2015. This is 300 % more than when we came to Government. At a minimum, the Hon. Minister of Finance should credit the PPP/C for growing the country's reserve by more than 300%. The 2015 statistical abstract of Bank of Guyana shows that total deposits of the public sector was \$66.2 billion at the end of May 2015, and then it increased by \$70.3 billion. How could we therefore claim that the PPP/C bankrupt the economy, leaving the treasury without funds?

Mr. Speaker, put bluntly, public sector deposits at the time of change in Administration was highest in the last 10 years. The statistics are showing that we have substantial savings in the commercial banks and Consolidated Fund. It leaves one to wonder, and I think either moneys are earmarked for questionable expenditures or the Administration has no idea of the current financial status of the economy.

This Administration is now faced with a task. That task is fulfilling all the gimmicks and public pronouncements they made in the campaign. That task is to fulfil the promise in the 100 days document. Whilst they use this as a tool to capture the Guyanese people, they are now faced with the reality of brining this benefit to the people. It is clear that this is not their priority. We have seen what the priority of this new Administration is – extravagance. The Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge, was the author of extravagance, when he was the Minister of Finance; a time when the entire Guyana Airways was promenade to South Africa. Anyone with knowledge of our economy will know that our country has always recorded fiscal deficit in the past. As a matter of a fact ... [**Mr. Greenidge:** ... [*Inaudible*] ...] You *ah wah*. You tell us how much you bought that house for. There is no period in our post-independence history where the country had an overall fiscal surplus. However, under the PPP/C stewardship, the overall fiscal balance displayed marked improvements.

Firstly, it is important to note that the PPP/C Administration has consistently reported current account surpluses; accounted for as much as 36.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1984 and today, it is 6.3% on an average of 5% between 2006 -2014. [**Mr. Greenidge:** [*Inaudible*] ...] It is stewardship of the economy brother.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker, in May of this year the Bank of Guyana Annual Report provided the following forecast, “The economy is projected to grow by 5.3% at the end of December, 2015, growth expected to be widespread”. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its latest forecast, World Economic Outlook, has projected Guyana’s economy to grow by 3.8%, the third highest in South America, behind Bolivia, 4.3% and Paraguay, 4%. The IMF projected growth of 4.4% in 2016, second only to Peru, whose economy is projected to grow by 5%. These are the facts; this is the economy you have inherited, the outlook for Guyana.

Apparently, the outlook for Guyana has suddenly changed. Based on all the indicators, the economy is contracting and the growth targets will have to be adjusted downwards. Why? After two months in Government, the Government has not come off of its rhetoric. Investors are losing confidence. The Government needs to understand that confidence plays an important and integral role in attracting investors and people to our country.

Only yesterday *Stabroek News* carried an article which reported that all the major construction work in Region 4 will be postponed until next year. For those who have doubts, you may read the article captioned, *Region 4's major capital works postponed until next year*. How are you going to build and expand the economy, when you are contacting even expenditure in the Government sector? What confidence are you sending to the private sector?

We have heard a lot about rice and the plight faced by the rice farmers. We always told the truth to the rice farmers. We never promise \$9,000 per a bag. I call on this Government to deliver to the rice farmer, immediately, \$9,000 per a bag. If the Government do not want to deliver the \$9,000 per a bag, I am calling on this Government to deliver to the rice farmers the \$23 billion in the National Budget - I am calling for that.

The question is where is the \$23 billion? Where is it? The Hon. Minister of Finance believes that we do not know where, but we will call him out because I will say to the Hon. Member that we are putting him on guard, should the negotiations for the avenue through which they are expecting this deal falls through, we are going to hold the Government accountable in providing that \$23 billion. The Government will have to take it out of the Consolidated Fund and give it to the rice farmers because we will hold them accountable. **[Mr. Jordan: Who announced it?]** You announced it.

In addition to this, we call on the Government to immediately establish a national paddy price support system. We asked the Government to maintain production above 600,000 tonnes and to have markets ready. The Government said in the campaign, "We will deliver higher paid markets and better markets." We are asking the Government to deliver to the rice farmers the higher paying and better markets for 500,000 tonnes of rice ready to be exported.

We worked on a programmatic approach dealing with rice. We expanded our export to more than 32 countries and we have plans in places to further expand that to more than 40 countries. We

further asked the Government to continue to improved paddy yields to 40 bags per acre. We asked the Government to encourage value added. Do not look at agricultural diversification in a narrow way. The Hon. Member spoke about agricultural diversification and Hon. Minister of Business had sought it fit to stop two important projects in two predominantly rice growing areas, Wakenaam and Leguan, in which we are trying to have the farmers expand into new areas of plantain production. When we announced this project, we were in Government and the then Opposition was critical of this project. Only a few months ago, the Canadians had an advertisement in the newspaper for \$100 million of support for the plantain industry. We are talking about agriculture. It was the same thing when we talk about the serial plant in Essequibo, they were critical of it. Today in the budget, there is a grand announcement, “We will build serial plants and utilise this as one aspect...” [Mr. Greenidge: How many did you build?] We are building the first in Essequibo, you have inherited that. If the infrastructure is looked at, \$13 billion...

The Minister of Finance said, this Government is announcing fresh projects and he announced \$13 billion for the East Coast Highway, the Sheriff Street expansion, Mandela bypass road, Ogle to Diamond, West Demerara Highway. These are all PPP/C projects. All of it were conceptualised and negotiated under the PPP/C. Much of it was delayed by the then Opposition in the last three years. The same can be said about the maternity wing of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. The Hon. Minister announced that they were going to expand the maternity wing by 100 beds. This project had even started; it was started a year ago under the PPP/C Government; nothing fresh - nothing new.

We ask that this Government, immediately, reinstated the subsidies enjoyed by pensioners totalling \$500 million; immediately implement your plan on reducing the Berbice River crossing by \$1,200; and immediately fulfil your 20% increase in salary, retroactive from January 2014. We asked this Government to immediately fulfil their campaign promise by doubling the old age pension; that was supposed to be done in their 100 days. We asked this Government to immediately review the electricity tariff, taking into consideration the reduction of gas price. We asked this Government to immediately commence the construction of a new expansion of 100 beds at the East Bank Regional Hospital and two new hospitals in Port Kaituma and Region 8.

If we want a transformed economy, complete the following projects: the Amaila Falls Hydropower, the deep Water Harbour, the new Demerara Bridge, the Airport, the Corentyne bridge to Suriname, the Lethem-Brazil Road Corridor, the East Bank road corridor...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 10 minutes more.

Mr. Ali: ...the East Coast road corridor, the hospitality institute, the call centres in Enmore and Tuschen, the chip factory and the specialised hospital. If you want transformation, if you want Guyana to be transformed, we call upon you to complete these projects.

At a minimum, we call upon this Government to make available to the Minister of Agriculture and GuySuCo, \$20 billion for the modernisation and expansion of the sugar industry, with an aim of taking production to 400,000 tonnes and increasing packaged sugar to 50,000 tonnes. To expand the economy, bring confidence and create new opportunities, we asked the Government to establish free zones in particular regions to encourage industrial development and trade.

[Interruption]

I wish to turn my attention to measures for the old age pensioners. If we turn to page 35 of their manifesto, the Coalition's manifesto, we will see that they promised to double the old age pension and public assistance... **[Interruption]** No, this is what you said. Mr. Speaker, they said immediately upon assuming office, they would double the pension for old age pensioners. Not only did they promise to double the pensions for the old age pensioners, they promised to waiver passport renewal cost, they promised to removed payment for motor vehicles licence, they promise to removed payment of motor vehicles fitness, for driver's license, for road, bridge and ferry tolls. Furthermore, they promised to remove the airport exit tax. There is also silence on the measures to reduce the time and cost for the collection of old age pension. These are promises you made to immediately implement, on assumption of office. If we cannot hold them accountable to their own promises what else can we hold them accountable to?

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has five minutes more.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Ali: The coalition Government promised the public servants 20% increase and the Hon. Minister of Finance said that the way he structured the minimal increase far below 20% was to

ensure that the inequality gap is bridged. Something is wrong with his mathematical skills because, when the differentiation is checked, the higher earning public servant is going to take home 300% more than the lower earning public servant. How is the inequality gap being bridged when the higher earning public servants will be taking home 300% more, based on the percentage announced?

This Government can take the illegal transfer to the auditors. This is highly questionable and it flies in the face of every aspect of transparency and accountability. A forensic audit is being done. The process of identifying the auditors should at least be transparent. There is no advertisement; there is no tender process; there is no examination of the qualification of the auditors. Time has caught up with the coalition Government and it is on the journey of destroying every credible institution the PPP/C Government has established.

The Hon. Members, when they were in the Opposition and in their Manifesto, spoke about principles and laws governing collective bargaining in accordance with our commitment to the International Labour Organization (ILO). Where was the principle when an increase was arbitrarily imposed on the workers? There were no consultations with the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU), and the GPSU is calling for a minimum of \$100, 000 to be paid to the workers. On this note, I am in support of the GPSU's request. We are in support because, in our Manifesto, we promised to increase the salaries of public servants by far more than 20%.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have two minutes remaining.

Mr. Ali: Thank you. When one looks at the Budget speech, the Hon. Minister of Finance said that the salaries of Ministers and Parliamentarians prior to 1992 will be re-examined because he wants to adjust the pension. What about the nurses, the teachers and the police officers who worked prior to 1992? Are they not equally important?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order No. 38 (9) (a), I am asking that the Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, be allowed five minutes more to conclude his presentation. There were a lot of interruptions, Sir, and it was, sometimes, hard to hear what the Comrade was saying and I am sitting right next to him. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I note that Mr. Ali has already resumed his seat and completed his presentation, so we will go to the next speaker.

Minister of Business [Mr. Gaskin]: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my support to *Budget 2015* as brought to this House by the Hon. Minister of Finance in a comprehensive and riveting presentation under the theme: *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*.

Before I do so, I would like to welcome the Hon. Members representing the political Opposition to this session of the National Assembly. It is my hope that the Eleventh Parliament will see healthy, wholesome and fruitful discussions, leading to decisions which will ultimately benefit the Guyanese people.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I would like to take this opportunity to extend to my very good Friend and Colleague, the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Mrs. Catherine Hughes, my sincere condolences on the passing of her mother-in-law in such tragic and shocking circumstances recently. These condolences I wish to extend to the entire Hughes family also.

A fresh start is precisely what we need right now and this is not only my opinion, but that of the majority of the Guyanese electorate, so it is most appropriate that this is reflected in the theme of the first national Budget presented by the A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC) coalition Government.

A fresh start will see new investments being made in our economy because of our Government's commitment to fairness, transparency, inclusiveness and good governance, in general. These are the standards of the global investment community, and for good reasons. Reputable investors are reluctant to invest money in jurisdictions where there are high levels of sleaze and where the rule of law is not upheld because it places both their investments and their reputations at risk.

Guyana needs to be perceived as a good place to invest and a fresh start sends a good signal. In this regard, I wish to make the important point that *Budget 2015* is yet another manifestation of our Government's commitment to good governance and the rule of law in that it has been brought to this National Assembly for the purpose of providing legislative authority for making withdrawals from the Consolidated Fund, other than those constitutionally provided for. The Appropriation Bill of 2015, once assented to, will become the lawful authority under which our

Government will make its withdrawal from the nation's Consolidated Fund. There can be no doubt that this represents a fresh start.

Still on the Budget theme, a green economy is even more appropriate at this stage of our development and needs not continue to baffle and to elude us. It is widely recognised that the green economy is a viable model for sustainable development in today's world. It provides opportunities to improve resource efficiency, reduce pollution, increase market demand and create new jobs. It, therefore, serves as a point of convergence between environmental protection and economic growth.

The Hon. Minister of Finance has made it clear that the private sector must not only be the engine of growth, but the driver of our economy. Our Government recognises that the private sector has a critical role to play as a driver of a green economy since its investing and innovative activities are imperative to the transition to a resource and energy efficient low carbon economy.

In a developing country such as Guyana, green growth can be considered an opportunity rather than a burden for private sector development. There are opportunities in agriculture, craft, timber and forest products, food and beverage processing and ecotourism. These are opportunities that are well suited for small and micro enterprises. Small and micro enterprises will have to play a significant role in developing a green economy and our Government will encourage this by creating policies designed to promote greener business practices and greener investments.

The good life, which some of us may have already enjoyed, unfortunately, is not yet a reality for most Guyanese. *Budget 2015* addresses this through a well-thought-out and balanced approach for ensuring that the needs of the people of Guyana remain the first priority of our Government...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order No. 38 (6):

“A Member shall not read his or her speech except with the leave of the Speaker but he or she may read extracts from books or papers...”

So, I am asking that Standing Order No. 38 (6) be upheld.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. You have my leave to read your speech.

Mr. Gaskin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the good life, which some of us have already enjoyed, unfortunately, is not yet a reality for most Guyanese. *Budget 2015* addresses this through a well-thought-out and balanced approach for ensuring that the needs of the people of Guyana remain the first priority of our Government. I am particularly impressed by its inherent emphasis on equitable distribution of our country's resources because Guyanese in all regions, of all ages, of all ethnicities and of all genders must have a shot at the good life if we are to sustainably develop and experience long-term prosperity as one nation.

By the year 2030, Guyana must be leading the region in economic performance and must be a globally recognised good life destination, irrespective of which party is governing. If not, we would have squandered another 15 years of opportunity to build a nation that is productive, competitive, prosperous and proud. We cannot afford this.

Long before that, by the year 2020, the good life must be well within the grasp and scope of all Guyanese. *Budget 2015* is an important step in that direction. It is definitely a budget for the people. For Guyanese to really enjoy the good life, there needs to be a drastic improvement in most of the government services delivered throughout Guyana. What has prevailed until now is woefully inadequate. Our Government understands that there will be a high cost attached to this and that huge budgets will be required in the future. Our Government also understands that the tax revenues required to fund these budgets will have to be generated by private sector investments. This is why the development of Guyanese businesses is so important.

Guyana means business and our Government means business and this is why we now have a Ministry of Business. The Ministry of Business will ensure that the environment in which businesses operate in Guyana is one which is attractive to investors.

2.40 p.m.

The Ministry of Business, through the State's investment promotion agency, the Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest), will actively promote Guyana as a good place to invest and actively promote Guyanese exports to foreign countries. Go-Invest will also facilitate investments, both domestic and foreign, by strengthening its assistance to investors to navigate the various State

agencies involved in granting permits, concessions and other incentives. *Budget 2015* provides \$220,320,000 for Go-Invest and 2015 will be a period of capacity building under fresh management. During the current Government's tenure, the aim is to vastly increase the capacity of Go-Invest and ensure that it is present in the diaspora.

The Ministry of Business, despite being new in terms of its name, has a number of existing departments and agencies which will contribute to the implementation of policy initiatives. In addition to Go-Invest, the Ministry also consists of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards (GNBS), the Small Business Bureau, the Industry Department, and the Commerce Department. Furthermore, the Ministry will soon release its strategic plan which includes provisions to reconsider previous measures identified to enhance competitiveness in our economy.

The Guyana National Bureau of Standards plays a key role in business development by securing confidence in the quality of goods produced locally. For 2015, \$16 million has been allocated to purchase a truck and a weight cart which will allow GNBS to expand the quality of its service outside of Georgetown. In the years ahead, GNBS will expand its support and consultancy services to help businesses enhance their internal operations and value-added processes.

The Small Business Bureau provides specific assistance to small businesses, including loans, grants, training and resource services. This has been identified as a particular area of focus for the APNU+AFC Government. During 2015, we will target the creation of over 400 new jobs, training hundreds of businesses and releasing tens of millions of dollars in affordable financing.

Our plans for 2016 include the development of a small business development centre and ensuring a presence to support the development of small businesses in all regions. Furthermore, we will help ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have a fair chance of being awarded Government contracts by taking forward the 20% procurement initiative.

The Industry Department will implement new industrial development policies, designed to stimulate investments in value-added industries with a focus on expansion and diversification and the development of a competitive, productive sector. The Industry Department will also seek to ensure that lands allocated to investors for the purpose of industrial development are utilised for this purpose. The National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) will be encouraged to reinforce the terms of leases granted to investors at industrial estates, including

those at Coldigen and Eccles. NICIL will also be encouraged to provide the services required for the proper functioning of businesses on the Estates. Meanwhile, \$805 million has been budgeted, in 2015, to develop roads and infrastructure at the Industrial Estate in Lethem.

The Commerce Department has been responsible for the processing and issuance of import and export licences for a number of commodities. Currently, the entire process is done via paper applications which need to first be completed in triplicate, endorsed by the relevant agencies then brought to the Ministry for the ultimate approval. The Ministry of Business has committed to issuing these licences within 24 hours. Furthermore, during 2015, the Ministry will start the groundwork towards computerising the licensing process. On a national level, the Ministry will be strongly involved in laying the foundation for a possible single window system for trade transactions; with Information and Communications Technology (ICT), the sky is the limit.

Again, in recognition of the important role that the private sector needs to play in the achievement of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction in Guyana, the Ministry of Business is committed to engage the private sector meaningfully and regularly. Already, there have been engagements with the Private Sector Commission (PSC), representatives from the various Chambers of Commerce countrywide, and numerous members of the business and investment community. Continued engagements will develop a better understanding, within the Ministry of Business, of the many concerns of businesses operating in Guyana or hoping to operate in Guyana. We are taking on board evaluations of projects previously implemented by this Ministry that the private-public dialogue can benefit from having a formal and institutional structure.

In addition, the Ministry of Business will establish a help desk which will aim to provide tailored advice and support to traders and businesses. It is anticipated that, through this help desk, more entrepreneurs, businesses and investors would be assisted, thus providing an impetus for increased economic activities. The Ministry receives thousands of requests for information from businesses every year. This help desk is a new initiative, starting in 2015, which will be linked into the Ministry's wider support to public-private dialogue and to the Ministry's strategic plan.

The issue of the Guyana Exposition (GuyExpo) and whether it will or will not be held this year has engaged the attention of the Ministry of Business from day one and has finally been

definitively addressed. It will be deferred until May of next year when a special GuyExpo will be held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Guyana's Independence.

However, in 2015, in recognition of the fact that many of our small businesses look forward to GuyExpo as a means of boosting earnings, the Ministry of Business will be collaborating with the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association Ltd. to hold a small business expo towards the end of November. This event is to have a stronger business focus than the last editions of GuyExpo and the public will be notified as soon as plans are finalised. The Ministry of Business will also support our regional Chambers of Commerce in holding a number of regional expos designed to prepare businesses from all our regions for participation in GuyExpo 2016. This will commence in 2015.

Our Government has proposed a number of specific measures designed to make the good life a real possibility for all Guyanese. I will allude to just one of those measures since I am sure that many of my Hon. Colleagues will also wish to address these in their presentations and will do so more eloquently and with much greater lucidity than I can ever dream of achieving.

I would like to mention the reduction in the Berbice Bridge toll. This was one of the promises made by our coalition in our joint Manifesto prior to the last Elections. In fact, this matter was brought to this very House in the form of a motion passed to reduce the toll. This was rejected by the previous Administration, using the line that it could not be done without the use of - and I quote the words of the former Hon. Minister of Public Works, as reported in the *Stabroek News* of 17th May, 2014... He rejected it because it required economic modelling and defining to determine that it would be a benefit to the Berbice Bridge Company Inc., the shareholders and the people of Guyana.

The people of Berbice were crying out for relief for over five years. The previous Government refused to budge on this issue, hiding behind the fact that the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. was a private company, using this to say that the Government was powerless to do anything to bring relief to the people of Berbice who needed to use that Bridge and had to pay the high prices to do so. Our Government has listened to the people. Our Government has done the economic modelling and defining that posed such a challenge for the previous Administration and we have found a way to bring some relief to the people using that Bridge.

That is not even the main point I would like to make on this particular issue. Recently, when our Government put this issue back on the table, there were many concerns expressed about the rights of private companies. Our Government respects those rights and respects all the laws of this land, and the relief offered to the users of the Berbice Bridge will not come as a result of any unlawful imposition on the company operating the Bridge. Our Government understands the cost of disregarding our laws and will not jeopardise the economic future of our country by acting unlawfully.

Before I close, the previous speaker, the former Hon. Minister of numerous Ministries, including the one which I am now assigned to, has spoken vaguely about all the wonderful things that our Government has inherited from the last Government. His narrative is, at best, incomplete. I do not wish to sound ungrateful but the former Hon. Minister has bequeathed to me a number of half-finished projects. Perhaps, so as not to mislead this House, I should more accurately describe them as a number of half-projects since they were conceived without clearly documented outcomes and, now that they have reached their halfway points, there is no clear plan for the other half.

These projects were begun under the \$1 billion Rural Development Fund which the Minister spoke glowingly of during the 2014 Budget debates. In fact, he repeated his glowing praise of those projects in his presentation this afternoon. With good leadership, creative thinking and the right decisions going forward, some of these projects can be concluded in a way that benefits the communities in which they are located and we will ensure that this happens. However, there are two particular projects which have been causing me some grief. I am speaking about two factories earmarked for the production and packaging of plantain chips in Leguan and Wakenaam.

The one in Wakenaam is being constructed on land that has been deemed unsuitable for construction by the Sea Defence Board and the one in Leguan seems not to have considered the matter of access and will require additional funding in order to become operational. Over the last two months, I have lost my appetite for plantain chips. I cannot even bear the sight of a packet of plantain chips which, until now, I have always enjoyed. This is the extent of the grief that this inheritance is causing me.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I really was not planning to raise this but, since he brought it up, my question to the Hon. Member concerning the locally produced breakfast cereal, developed from our locally grown rice, is: Has he eaten it? Has he tasted it? I fully support the locally produced cereals using our locally grown rice but these others must be able to compete on the shelves.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has eight minutes remaining.

Mr. Gaskin: These products must be able to compete on the shelves of supermarkets.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to challenge you, but I have put the timing in for when the Minister started. It is 30 minutes and that has gone. The discussions between the Chief Whips and the adamancy of the Chief Whip on the Government's side that her Ministers and our shadow Ministers would have 30 minutes... *[Interruptions]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members should try to keep the Chair engaged. It is not very profitable to talk to one another, however much you are anxious to speak to one another closely. What I would suggest is that each Member be given an opportunity for me to hear the point that is being made. I have implicit faith in my timekeeping. The number of minutes remaining to the Hon. Member is eight.

Mr. Gaskin: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. However, I was at the point of concluding. Therefore, my final remarks on *Budget 2015* would be that this is indeed a peoples' Budget. It is the first Budget of this Government. It is a Budget which I fully support and I wish to commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for bringing this Budget to this House. Thank You.

[Applause]

Mr. Ramson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Allow me to join the Right Hon. Member, Mr. Gaskin, in sharing tribute and condolences to the Right Hon. Member, Mrs. Hughes, on the loss of her mother-in-law. Please extend the same message to your husband, my learned friend, Mr. Hughes, and I am sure I speak on behalf of the entire half of this House.

The substantive part of my presentation will be a focus on youth, as it relates to this Budget. But before I do, I have noted, with dismay, that the Right Hon. Member, when he began his presentation on the Budget, made reference to the Guyanese people rejoicing on the declaration of the APNU+AFC coalition being elected as the Government. But through to recent form, the Right Hon. Member has been economical with the truth. The Minister neglected to mention that about half of the population of Guyana was not only saddened, but shed bitter tears of disappointment and grief with the declaration of that very result, especially since they know to themselves that this very result did not reflect the true will of the Guyanese people and that this Election was driven by external forces.

At first, I see many Members on the opposite side frequently holding up the Budget speech. [**Mr. Bulkan:** Good Budget]. Right. And, at first, I was very pleased when I saw the theme being intitled: a fresh approach to a green economy. [**Member:** Good life.] *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*. I thank you. And then I started listening to the content of the Budget speech and then I realised the reason for the very same theme. The Budget and the coalition Government have gone so green that they have started to recycle the PPP/C's ideas. What worries me more than the budget deficit is the deficit of ideas that comes out of this Budget.

I noticed, as most Guyanese did, that the very first Budget made a great emphasis on a green economy which, as most people would know, represents an environmentally friendly, policy-driven economy. Despite this constant reference to a green economy, there is not a single iota of an environmentally friendly policy contained therein. And, if the Government was serious about having a green economy, the single greenest decision that it could have made to make this economy a carbon neutral economy would have been the execution of the Amaila Falls Project. The Amaila Falls Project would not only virtually emit no carbon, but would cut electricity in half and, more importantly, the cost of production will remain fixed for decades to come, while oil prices will continue to fluctuate, as it has in the years of the past and will no doubt in the future. It, therefore, leads one to conclude that the inclusion of the term "green economy" is an overt message by the APNU to the AFC that the APNU is stamping its authority of its dominance in this relationship - I see the Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, smiling - in what turned

out to be a marriage of inconvenience or what the French call a *Mésalliance* because the AFC brought very little support to this table.

Turning to youth, the first budget of any Government, especially of any new Government, is most critical. Why? It is because it not only sets the financial programmes and allocations for that Government, but it sends the message to the public, to the businesses and to the private investors, both internal and external. So, this specific Budget is more than just about numbers; it is emblematic of what the new Government stands for and intends to stand for in its tenure in office. And, having heard this Budget, I could not help be reminded of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* - and I see the Right Hon. Member, the Minister of Education, has perked up a bit - "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions." Context is always important, and, prior to this Election, the APNU+AFC coalition sounded the hymn of youth, youth, youth and more youth, and rode the wave of youth straight to the seat of power. And now, upon the assumption of that seat of power, how have their actions and their Budget been reflected in the welfare, interests and demands of the youth?

The coalition Election slogan of *It Is Time*, now in Government, has been translated into "it is mine," neglecting the youth of Guyana. How? First, the APNU+AFC Government relegated and demoted the Ministry of Youth into a subsumed, subordinate position and a programme of the Ministry of Education, something that we, in the PPP, totally disagree with. In fact, the PPP not only believes that there should be a youth ministry and a youth minister, but that young people should occupy the seat of power in all spheres of the State, especially in Parliament and especially in the Cabinet. I would go further. I would argue that the absence of youth representation from the coalition Government Members of Parliament (MPs) and the Cabinet is unconstitutional. *[Interruption]* You laughed. You laughed at the youth but, at the next election, the youth will be laughing at you because they will be saying goodbye and good riddance. This Budget should have been guided by the youth and a focus on youth.

One only has to look at the supreme law of our country, the Constitution of our country. If one checks the preamble - and I am sure many of the Hon. Members have not even taken the time to look at the preamble to see what it states - it states:

“We the Guyanese people acknowledge the aspirations of our young people who, in their own words, have declared the future of Guyana belongs to its young people, who aspire to live in a safe society which respects their dignity, protects their rights, recognises their potential, listens to their voices, provides opportunities...”

And you laughed when I said it was unconstitutional. If the Hon. Member may listen, he may learn.

Article 28 of the Constitution states:

“Every young person has the right to ideological, social, cultural and vocational development and to the opportunity for responsible participation in the development of the socialist order of society.”

Leaving us out of Government and Cabinet does exactly the opposite. As I am on the subject of the Constitution, I see, as part of the coalition Government’s new buzzwords, “audit” and “commission of inquiry”. There is now a commission of inquiry of inappropriate composition for constitutional reform. But I have an advice for the coalition Government. This one is free of charge. Do not expect any additional ones. The coalition Government does not need to rewrite the Constitution. The coalition Government needs to reread the Constitution.

Before we look at the numbers, let us look at the Budget speech, the same Budget speech that is being touted as some rescue to Guyana, as it relates to youth. I have circled it. There are two measly paragraphs on youth. And what is the big statement in there? It is that there is a draft youth policy.

3.10 p.m.

The youths are the reason you now occupy those seats of power and we deserve more than just two measly paragraphs in your budget presentation, and more than just platitudinous statements about a draft youth policy.

Let us look at the numbers. Though somewhat convoluted since there is no longer a Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Budget has four months of expenditure under the People’s Progressive Party/Civic, four months of expenditure under the coalition Government and

expenditure for four remaining months, which can take us into April of next year. So, the Budget can exceed four months, even though many social media and Facebook commentators are at pains to say it is only a four-month budget. It is not. It is expenditure for the entire year of 2015. In addition, it can take us, as it more likely will, to next year April. It is more than just four months. Let us see what the Government plans to do in that budgeted period.

If one turns to page 231 of the Estimates of Expenditure, one would see that budgeted for current expenditure is a grand total of \$53 million for youths. One would think that that is an error, but, when one turns to page 586 for capital expenditure, there is another grand total of \$50 million for youths. Many of you may not be able to have a comparison so I will help you to have a comparison. The People's Progressive Party/Civic, in 2014, budgeted \$535 million under current expenditure and, for capital expenditure, \$961 million was budgeted. This means that the People's Progressive Party/Civic's Budget allocated more for youth in one month than the coalition Government has budgeted to spend for the entire budgeted period. This is by far.

What is even more symbolic is where the item of youth appears in the programme. It comes under the Ministry of Education and it appears as the last item, the very last item, almost like an afterthought.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has five minutes more.

Mr. Ramson: It is almost like an afterthought, an errant child, a bastard child whose father reluctantly acknowledges him. This is what the youths in the street call a "B5" budget – no good, useless. It is no wonder that the youths who voted for the coalition feel disillusioned, disaffected, disenfranchised and, most of all, betrayed.

The People's National Congress (PNC) had 23 years to prepare a youth plan. The Alliance For Change (AFC) had another 10 years. Now they have assumed power. Are they now about to go and draft a youth policy? Are youths going to have to wait longer for the Government's youth policy to be enacted? Is the Government going to tell the same youths that this youth policy was 90% completed by the People's Progressive Party/Civic? Where is the big youth programme? Where is the big focus? Where is the big youth vision? Where is the big youth project? Where is the big youth employment? Where is the school cash grant? It is all talk and no walk. It is all gear and no game.

How is the Government going to tackle youth unemployment, bullying in schools, underage drinking and drug use, suicide, truancy in schools, and youth crime? The big solution cannot be to close bars at 2.00 a.m. and send everyone home. It is total incompetence. With every passing day, this coalition Government is proving itself to be yesterday's men with yesterday's ideas.

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

Mr. Ramson: From the tables when they were in Opposition, there were all the facile solutions for this country. Now they are in power and all they have are flaccid solutions. With the average age of Cabinet Members being 62 years old, it is no wonder. They are square pegs in round holes. There is the old Guyanese saying that one cannot plant plantain and get cassava.

We, the youths of Guyana, deserve better. We are more than just an afterthought. We are more than an errant bastard child who is reluctantly recognised by his father. We are the country's lifeline, the backbone. We are the past, present and future of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and we refuse to be ignored and silenced, and to be told to wait until the Government has a programme for us next year, and to be told to go home at 2.00 a.m.

It is for these reasons that I cannot, with any stretch of clemency, vote to approve this Budget.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

Minister within the Ministry of Public Health [Dr. Cummings]: Before I commence, I just want to join with my Colleague in giving Mrs. Catherine Hughes, Hon. Member, my condolences. I hope that you have the spirit to continue to do what you are doing.

Before I start my budget speech, I just want to calm the fears of that young, Hon. Gentleman, Mr. Ramson. Page 40 of our Budget Presentation...I want to make two points about that.

The PPP/C, having been in Government for over 23 years, produced 40% unemployment among youths. For over 23 years, the PPP/C never had a youth policy, but promised it. In less than 100 days, the APNU+AFC has at least finished a draft.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Speaker...

Mr. Speaker: Do you rise on a point of order, sir?

Mr. Ali: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask the Hon. Member what the source of the information about the 40% unemployment is. It cannot be the Budget. What is the source of that figure?

Dr. Cummings: It is on page 40 of the Budget Presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the 2015 Budget, which was so well deliberated...

[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would observe that time is precious. Please proceed.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Speaker, I just heard from the Hon. Member that the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government... [**Minister of Social Cohesion [Ms. Ally]:** Which one of the Standing Orders are you quoting from?] It is on a point of elucidation.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: The Hon. Member must state the Standing Order that he is relying on before he could engage you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Anthony: It is on a point of elucidation, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that the Hon. Member reclaims his seat. Kindly proceed, Hon. Member.

Dr. Cummings: I rise to support the 2015 Budget which was so well deliberated and ably articulated by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan. This 2015 Budget represents a shift in the APNU+AFC-led Government's focus that proffers a fresh approach to a healthy life for all Guyanese. The 2015 Budget has shown that the change in my Government's focus would be one that has turned the financial dial away from reckless spending with little or no accountability to one that would be bent on transparency, accountability and the promotion of a good life for all Guyanese. When sound economic policies are combined with a clear roadmap to create jobs, achieve macroeconomic stability, and free up resources to alleviate poverty, immeasurable blessings will be bestowed upon this nation, under the wise leadership of President Granger, along with the Cabinet, and the competent financial management of our Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Jordan.

My Government has buried a mean economy and has resurrected a green economy, not for some, but for all Guyanese, inclusive of those from and supportive of the Opposition.

I sat at the previous Budget Presentation in 2014, which, when presented, was intended to deceive the populace of Guyana. But, Mr. Speaker, permit me to make my contribution to a spanking new and outstanding financial plan that has been created to tool us rather than to fool us. This 2015 Budget has sought to help the APNU+AFC-led Government to plan wiser, to spend thriftier, and to deliver better products and services to all Guyanese.

The 2015 Budget matches the priorities of the nation and, in particular, the health sector. It paves the way for access to a safe, cost-effective and comprehensive healthcare. However, it must be noted that the APNU+AFC Government has inherited from the previous Administration a plethora as well as a myriad of problems such as high suicide rate, high maternal and neonatal mortality rates, as well as questionable procurement practices.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Guyana has the highest suicide rate in the world. The current suicide rate in Guyana is an astonishing 44.2% per 100,000 persons. The global average is 16% per 100,000 persons.

An article published in *The Guardian* on 3rd June, 2015 stated:

“No one factor can explain Guyana’s shockingly high suicide rate. Health workers have pointed to the deep poverty in rural areas, the prevalence of alcohol abuse (which is notorious for its contribution to successful suicides) and the ease of access to deadly substances.”

The same article went on to state:

“Some scholars have theorised that exposure to certain herbicides and pesticides used in the country makes the farmers more prone to suicidal behaviour.

Because of a strong stigma and a lack of resources in Guyana, suicide as a public health issue has fallen by the wayside. Efforts by the Ministry of Health in the last few years have been nominal and those interventions that have taken place seem misguided at best.”

3.25 p.m.

The article concluding that the *Guardian*, a renowned international newspaper, can expose Guyana's inability to sensibly tackle the problem of suicide in Guyana over the last few years is an indictment on the previous Administration and its lacklustre approach to its most serious issue. Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this coalition Government intends to frontally approach the scourge of suicide in our beautiful nation, and implement and execute targeted programmes, not only to reduce significantly the suicide rate in Guyana but to eradicate suicide altogether. Putting suicide on the agenda in 2015 and beyond has potential to save hundreds of valuable Guyanese lives.

According to Commonwealth Health Online, the most commonly diagnosed mental illness in Guyana is schizophrenia. Neuro-psychiatric disorders, like any other diseases, require careful treatment. In Guyana, much work needs to be done in diagnosing and treating all aspects of mental illness. I can assure you that this APNU+AFC Administration will work assiduously to ensure that we put effective systems in place to holistically deal with mental health in our society.

Within the Ministry of Public Health, there is a draft strategic plan for tackling mental illness. This plan, dated September, 2014, is entitled, *Shaping Guyana's Mental Health Vision 2020 – A National Mental Health Strategy for Guyana 2015 to 2020*. We will be reviewing that plan carefully with a view to operationalising it as quickly as possible so as to be able to effectively manage mental illness and mental health issues in Guyana.

The Ministry of Public Health, under the leadership of Dr. George Norton, will manage mental health and suicide by addressing a number of known risks and protective factors which set clear objectives that are sustainable over the long run and support villages and regional communities to take appropriate action. Some priorities include increased education on how to prevent mental illness and suicide wherever possible and eliminate stigma. We are going to help families, caregivers, schools, colleges, universities and faith-based institutions develop strategies to intervene early when problems first emerge, and promote mental health of children, youths and infants. We are going to set the right climate to create mentally healthy workplaces. We are going to expand the capacity of older folks, families and communities to promote mental health later in life, and intervene to reduce and prevent suicide whenever possible, modernise mental

health facilities and establish community centres for nursing suicidal persons and their families back to living productive lives.

As of September this year, we will partner with stakeholders, such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and others, to commence work in Baramita, Region 1, where the figure had risen to the crisis proportion of 69 within the last four years. The youngest person who attempted suicide was six years old, and the successful attempt was done by a 10-year-old. We will also be focusing on other regions such as Region 2 and Region 6 which have been the regions observed, from research, to have been the most challenging regions.

The lack of a Procurement Commission and the single sourcing of medical supplies and equipment have given rise to substandard commodities such as syringes and needles which have resulted in numerous unnecessary incidents. There have also been delays in obtaining medical supplies which were pre-paid and had not reached the facilities and institutions for which they were intended.

We had also seen some Regional Executive Officers who would have lacked the political will to function effectively and would have stymied the process of releasing funds in a timely manner so that the Regional Health Officers and Medical Superintendents would be unable to execute their mandates and consequently fall short of targets and measurable outcomes. The Government would, by God's grace, work assiduously to solve such unacceptable practices.

Significant disparities in the access and, in some cases, the delivery of health services exist in the Ministry. In addition, the tremendous burden of healthcare costs is being borne by the elderly and members of the geriatric population. As life expectancy and infant mortality have been indicative of the health of the nation, this Government would ensure that an adequate amount of funds would be spent to improve those facilities.

With the increase in the budgetary allocation, the Ministry of Public Health will begin to explore the addition of a department of men's health as well as the inclusion of a geriatric component to family health. These are two very important areas that need to be addressed.

Unacceptable as it may be, there has been an increase in waterborne disease resulting in severe cases of diarrhoea; there are vector borne diseases. We still see neglected diseases such as

filariasis and the recent recurrence of chikungunya. Efforts would be made by this Government to also address communicable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By spending money on preventative strategies, the Government would make every attempt to reduce the disease burden, and the morbidity and mortality of these transmissible diseases.

The achievement of proper sanitation, Millennium Goal 7C, has been elusive thus far. As a consequence, the Ministry of Public Health plans to ensure that effects of proper public sanitation are properly communicated to the citizenry.

The coalition Government would bolster the Presidential Commission on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases as well as utilise evidence-based medicine to address non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and the cancers, to inter-form our interventions. Hence, more moneys would be spent in effecting the Step-Wise Approach to Chronic Disease Risk Factor Surveillance (STEPS) to assist in the proper surveillance of chronic diseases. In addition, Information, Education and Communications (IEC) materials would be available to improve health literacy among the populace.

The APNU+AFC-led Government would address the social determinants of health – the downstream determinants, the mid-stream determinants and the upstream determinants of good health.

The Hon. Minister of Finance has allocated \$23.2 billion or an equivalent of 10.5% of the national budget to the health sector. This significant allocation is a very clear indication that this APNU+AFC Government is serious about the overall health and wellness of all Guyanese. When compared to the \$21.5 billion, which was allocated in 2014, in a so-called thriving economy, one cannot help but marvel that with only being in government for a few months, and with a paucity of resources in the national treasury, the APNU+AFC Government can commit 10% of its national budget to the health sector. The commitment of this share in the Budget 2015 to the health sector highlights the seriousness with which this Government intends to treat with public health.

The mothers of our leaders of tomorrow can be assured that neither they nor their children will be left to suffer death at the alarming rate at which it has been allowed to happen in the recent

past, as a consequence of malpractice, recklessness, irresponsibility and faulty equipment. The budget has allocated \$133.1 million for the expansion of the Maternity Unit of the Georgetown Public Hospital Incorporated (GPHC). With such a significant injection of funds, we will be increasing the number of beds in that Unit to 50. It is not to a 100, to the mister across there. Work will also be done on the upgrading of the Lethem and Bartica maternity waiting homes. As it is known, Lethem and Bartica are expected to become towns very soon.

New state-of-the-art equipment will be purchased for maternity and child care sections of the GPHC with a view of delivering service of the highest quality standard possible to the patients who use those facilities. I am talking about a thoughtful budget, a budget which changes lanes from a history of fiscal sigh to a booming economic sky.

The increase in wages and salaries would assist to boost the morale and would serve to motivate and encourage staff to adopt attitudes, values and behaviour to produce an enhanced approach to work. We have to set goals and implement evaluative strategies to assess tangible and measurable outcomes.

The mere change of name of the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Public Health has indicated the focus on health promotion and disease prevention. The Ministry would be paying attention to the healthy lifestyle of the populace, while working inter-sectorally with education, for example, to ensure that there is a balance and the provision of at least one hot meal in school. Primary healthcare would remain the fundamental strategic approach to realising the health agenda and the overarching approach to health care provision in Guyana. There would be evidence-based planning and decision making to ensure that there would be value for money.

This APNU+AFC Government is on course to delivering the best possible public health service ever experienced in Guyana. We look forward to Guyana becoming the mecca of health in the Caribbean. As we set about launching our national healthcare programme, we will be including all community health centres across Guyana so as to provide preventative care to medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this Government will modernise all regional hospitals and health centres with an aim to providing vital medical services, such as safe deliveries, diabetic care, the treatment of hypertension and heart disease, diagnosis and treatment of psychological disorders and

rehabilitation of substance abuse to all our citizens. Added to these fundamental changes, this all-inclusive Government for the people plans to fine-tune the Ministry of Public Health communication strategy. We will do this to persuade our good people to adopt the public health programmes, plans, activities and initiatives that we will implement to make being healthy for all a reality in Guyana.

As I conclude the World Health Organization (WHO) succinctly posits:

“Better health is central to human happiness and well-being. It also makes an important contribution to economic progress, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive and save more.”

I am confident that the Ministry of Public Health along with the shrewd leadership of the APNU+AFC Government will ensure that the Guyanese population is a health one, one that can really live healthily and happily in a green economy.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

3.40 p.m.

Dr. Mahadeo: Mr Speaker, first I want to congratulate you on becoming the Speaker of this honourable House and trust that you will be fair and just in your rulings. I have no doubt that is how it is going to happen. I also want to extend sympathies to my colleague across the aisle, and to say that, I think, Mr. Isaacs has a special day and to congratulate him.

I am glad to note that the Hon. Member, who spoke before me, took my advice from the last budget presentation to read Vision 2020, because of that there is little I could have answered to her. Nearly everything she had said comes from Vision 2020, the Ministry of Health, under the stewardship of Minister Bheri Ramsaran then, came up with that programme.

Before I start my presentation I would like to make some corrections. Guyana’s first youth policy was actually completed in 1993. This is information that I am sure Hon. Member Dr. Frank Anthony was trying to get over. The youth policy that is now being referred to in the budget was one that was started by the People’s Progressive Party/Civic and was funded by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Changing the name of the Ministry of Health is not going to change what it does, actions speaks louder than words. I want to start my actual presentation by saying that I want to congratulate all my Comrades on this side of the House, who are here representing the people of Guyana at this level for the first time.

I want to thank all the senior Comrades on my side of the House, especially Hon. Member Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, for standing up for our people and being here to lead the struggle to defend democracy and continue the building of a better Guyana for all. I know their calibre, I know that they will be true representatives and will represent in the best interest of all hard-working Guyanese. I would also like to welcome the new Members on the opposite side of this House, especially my friend from Region 2, who I have known for quite some time, and a Member from Region 6.

I would really have loved to say that I congratulate the Hon. Member Mr. Jordan on a good budget, but with a clear conscience I cannot because it should be better, given the state of the country in 2014 going into 2015. When I quickly browsed through the document entitled, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*, I said to myself that it is good that the Hon. Member recognised that Guyana was having a good life pre-May 11th, 2015 and is proposing “A Fresh Approach” to continue “the Good Life” as a fresh person coming in the position, and for “Green Economy”, I said to myself, hail Low Carbon Development Strategy. Then on to page 15 I saw “Vision 2020”. I said wow, Hon. Member Dr. Bheri Ramsaran must have contributed significantly to this budget, but I am disappointed.

First, I want to point out some developments over the last few years, and I do so to emphasise that we have a solid base. In Region 6, irrigation pumps were installed at Black Bush Polder to provide water for the farmers. I pause to say kudos to our farmers, especially the rice farmers and their organisation, the Rice Producers Association (RPA). They, with the help of the PPP/C Government, have broken all records and this present crop will again provide a bumper yield. I call on the Government of the day to show initiative to continue the success story of rice in Guyana.

In drainage and irrigation, all canals were cleaned and maintained. Twelve small excavators were bought; three large drainage pumps have been installed at Number 43, Rose Hall Town and

Number 19, areas prone to flooding. All the main roads and most of the secondary roads have been rehabilitated or maintained, works being done in a systematic manner. New housing schemes have been opened at Fort Ordance, Glasgow New Housing Scheme, Numbers 76 and 77 Villages, Chesney and Bloomfield with thousands of new homes built. The infrastructure works at the industrial site in Belvidere is completed and hopefully processing of applications is already happening.

New schools have been built, where necessary, and those that are there were rehabilitated or expanded. Teachers' training is now in Berbice; University of Guyana is now in Berbice; Technical Institute is in Corriverton, and there is the new water treatment plant. I am sure that my colleagues from Region 6 will develop on this. In health, we constructed a new theatre, a new Outpatient Department in Skeldon, new Outpatient Department, Intensive Care Unit and Accident and Emergency (A&E) at the Port Mourant Hospital. These are now to have equipment and to start functioning. We bought boat and engine for Barakara and a new boat ambulance for Orealla/Siparuta along with an all-terrain vehicle (ATV). There are new health centres in Agony's Avenue, Whim, Number 53 Village, Siparuta and Port Mourant.

What alarms me was when I looked at what the region gave me as to what was submitted but will not be built, will not be done in this year's budget. I read - construction of health centre at Mara; construction of the health centre at Providence will not be done; halfway homes for psychiatric patients will not be done; doctors' quarters at New Amsterdam will not be done. The mode of cutting seems to still be in place. These projects, which I mention, were there in the budget over the years as long-term plans.

I want to focus on health in Region 6. There is a good superstructure in place for health in Guyana. We have come a far way from the days when there was just a couple of medications available at the Government's pharmacies or when things such as needles, syringes and gloves used to be recycled. Those doctors who worked during that time would remember those days. This some Members of this honourable House would not want to hear. In fact, some persons would go on television, on call-in programmes, and when the people would call in to ask them why they would be misleading the people they would say sorry we are not hearing you and cut them off, but the whole population would have heard. They only tolerate what they want to hear.

Whilst we have come a far way I would be one of the first to say that we have not reached and we still have a far way to go. However, we can only achieve this by building on what we have, utilising all the resources and experiences available, putting the country and health of the nation and in the case of Region 6, the health of the residents, above parties and politics. However, sad to say, I have been hearing pronouncements from some senior officials of this Government that nothing is working, not good has happened and year after year things have got worse in the region. These pronouncements have come from persons occupying senior governmental positions at this time. I wonder if their eyes need fixing; I wonder who they are listening to, or if they have filters to filter out the good comments, only negative comments get to the brain. I remember my mother, a noble and wise lady, telling me that if you make your ears a rubbish bin only garbage will be thrown in.

The General and Regional Elections season is over and I say stop campaigning. Get out of the campaign mode. Let us start campaigning when the next election date is set. In the meantime, let us build Guyana and we will not do this by destroying what is working and getting rid of the qualified and experienced personnel just because the PPP/C Government employed them. Their ethnicity and who they voted or campaigned for at the last elections must not matter in their professional lives. Freedom of choice and association is everybody's right.

Mr Speaker, over the years of my budget presentations, I have shown how we have grown in Region 6. I have shown how a Regional Health Authority (RHA) was legislated, implemented, regulated and how it has been leading the way in health care delivery in the country, in a number of areas, providing quality care for the citizens who accessed their services. I was surprised when I heard a senior Government functionary declared the Regional Health Authority in Berbice illegal. This official further said that there were no boundaries and no regulations stipulated.

I went to the Laws of Guyana on the Ministry of Legal Affairs website. I downloaded the following document with the title "Laws of Guyana, Regional Health Authorities Act, Chapter 32:06" . This document has 55 pages and on page 39 it states:

“ Regional Health Authorities Order

1. This Order may be cited as the Health Region No. 6 Order

2. This is hereby established the health region for Region 6 to be known as Health Region No. 6 having the same boundaries as Region No. 6 or East Berbice/Corentyne Region.
1. This Order may be cited as the Regional Health Authority or Health Region No.6 Order.
2. There is hereby established a regional health authority to be known as the Regional Health Authority for Region No. 6 to administer Health Region No. 6.”

This is followed by the heading “Regional Health Authorities Regulations”, with a number of pages. The RHA is a legal entity. Were this statement and following actions taken just to get rid of the staff who worked at the Regional Health Authority? It begs the question.

The Health Authority had a first Board approved by Cabinet and appointed by then Minister of Health Dr. Leslie Ramsammy. There were several boards after that. I guess now the official will say that the people in RHA were the wrong people, but, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you only a little of what the same proud RHA staff achieved.

The RHA had a work plan, successfully completed two business plans, 2007–2009, 2010–2012, and it is supposed to be in its final year of the third business plan 2013-2015. Before the creation of the plan, a detailed evaluation was done of each facility and a long-term plan was worked out together with medium and short- term actions.

Region 6 received the highest scores among all ten regions for the three years that the Ministry of Health (MoH) evaluated “Service Level Agreements”. Over the years, the RHA even established targets for the five hospitals within the region for the Maternal Child Health Department (MCH) and the Environmental Health Department (EHD).

As can be verified with the MoH officials, the RHA 6 was the only entity in the country that did Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in the form of quarterly reviews, starting in 2009. The last review done was the first quarter of 2015. I hope it is not going to be the last of such review. I hope it is recognised that reviews help us to plot our course based on solid evidence as the previous speaker stated and population needs.

The RHA prided itself on its community feedback. There was a complaints department that investigated all complaints amounting to 495 in 2014, of which 99 % were resolved and the 1% we needed to get guidance from the Ministry of Health. We learnt from these complaints and they helped us to improve the quality of service.

Towards empowering the people we serve, there was also a mandatory Health Facilities' Day for each health facility and this started since 2008. On this day the community and press are invited and a report, which includes achievements, constraints, targets and plans for the next 12 months, is presented. Users of the facility are free to give feedback and make suggestions openly and without fear. These days worked well and established in most places a good interaction and rapport between the community and the staff. It helped the RHA to provide care that is guided, and in some cases demanded by the people.

There were also regular surveys done, at least once per year for the Health Centres (HCs) and four per year for the hospitals. The feedback again helped us to serve better. There was annual evaluation that was done for each staff. Based on the findings, the best staff were recognised and rewarded publicly at 12 annual award ceremonies. At these functions, normally attended by hundreds of people, we would have presented our report and a revaluation of the RHA too.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has three minutes.

3.55 p.m.

Dr. Mahadeo: The last champion worker got a trip for two to Jamaica, sponsored by the business community. I am hoping that – my three minutes, I will try to stick to it - that the present Government will also continue. I can make this available to it. With the diabetic school project, that has been a success story; with the home nutrition programme, that has been a success story, and the care of the elderly and geriatric mega clinic that we started with the help of PAHO, since the end of 2013. There is no use to go and rediscover the wheel. We have experience in it, in Region 6.

In addition, talking about suicide – I do not want to quote; it is going to waste my time to quote from this document - I want to say that in Region 6, since last year, we started an anti-suicide

programme. It is going to take time. We know that the results are going to show up three or four years, hence.

The only region that consistently gave blood to the National Blood Transfusion Service is the RHA in Region 6. Men's health campaign is not mentioned in this document. We started it in Region 6. Other achievements would have included one hundred per cent immunisation.

I just want to say that any knowledgeable and efficient manager would have got an independent evaluation done before making a pronouncement on the RHA, as to how it functions. Then it would have been informed pronouncement, a pronouncement which has been made and maintained any evaluation being done at this time.

In speaking about the toll for the bridge, I did some calculations and I found that \$300 with a minibus carrying 15 schoolchildren, to go and come, it comes up to \$10 per day. Let us say that they go for 200 days in the year, which will be \$2,000. Give us back the \$10,000 per year grants, and then each student will have instead of the \$2,000 per year the \$10,000.

I also want to talk about a document that was presented where the Hon. Member Mr. Harmon, actually moved a motion, and with their majority, passed it in Parliament, where for the bridge, motor cars \$2,200 to \$1,000, mini bus \$2,200 to \$1,000, motorcycles are free, this promise cannot be implemented. There seems to be a difference. Hon. Member Mr. Harmon said something and then Hon. Member Mr. Jordan is saying something else.

Now, I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to a presentation in which the Hon. Member said 50 beds, and I would answer him with something that Hon. Member Dr. Cummings said at the last budget presentation. *[Interruption]*.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, let us allow the Hon. Member to complete his presentation - his maiden presentation to this House.

Dr. Mahadeo:

“Concern 2. Mention was made relative to the extension of the wards of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, however, the Hon. Minister has not provided the methods that

would be used to recruit more nurses or informed this august body of the anticipated additional burden which will be placed on the already drained and depleted nursing staff as a result of this expansion of service delivery.”

There seems to be confusion in the camp; there seems to be chaos. We need to get some cohesion going on.

This budget sounds like campaign propaganda, PPP, bashing and the APNU+AFC, aggrandisement - *nuff talks*, excuses and little substance.

I have been in this House – it is not my maiden speech, Mr. Speaker - since Budget 2009, for every budget, and in my humble opinion this budget presentation is the worse. Professionalism taught me that it is substance over form, but this budget is all about form over substance.

Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his presentation. Hon. Members, I think this is a good time to take the suspension. The sitting is suspended for one hour. We will resume at 5 o'clock and I would ask for your cooperation that we can all meet at that time. I will invite the Members of the Opposition to join me in Committee Room 2 for a very important event – election of the Leader of the Opposition.

Sitting suspended at 3.58 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed to the continuation of the debate, Hon. Members, I would wish to inform you that, during the period of suspension, we have a Leader of the Opposition. The Members of the Opposition have, in fact, elected as their leader in this House, Hon. Member Bharrat Jagdeo. I would like to offer congratulations to Mr. Jagdeo and to wish him, as I did elsewhere, success in his office.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence, with your leave, and in the absence of the incoming Leader of the Opposition – I think he has heard me and he is coming - Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, to congratulate him on his election, I suppose by secret ballot, to be the Leader of the Opposition People's Progressive

Party and wish him well in his elevation to this very responsible post. I look forward that he and I would work in cooperation, in the interest of our country.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his comments. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition may wish to speak at this time.

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: Mr. Speaker, may I once again in the National Assembly, because I did so privately when we met in the Committee Room, express my congratulations to you on your appointment as Speaker of the National Assembly. I said in the Committee Room that Mr. Scotland is a distinguished son of Guyana and we know that he has tremendous expertise in the areas of law and diplomacy. We believe that, on our side, that he would impartially discharge his duties as Speaker of the National Assembly in a manner that we would all be comfortable with. I have also said to him that even though we may vigorously pursue the mandate we have in this Parliament, and the discussions at some times may become a bit contentious, that we will do so from our side at all times with the greatest respect to the Speaker, and we will seek to do so with decorum.

I am very much aware of the grave responsibility placed on our shoulders, although, we are an Opposition now, to ensure that our country continues to move forward. That our country continues to deliver benefits to people and not rhetorically speak about a good life but, in fact, ensuing that people actually experience a better life. We all have an obligation to the people of this country, on both sides of the House to do so. I pointed out that our approach will be one unlike what took place in the Parliament, in the last several years, in which programmes were cut much to the detriment of services to people and which affected even economic activities in our country. It is that our approach will be very different. We will never ever, in this National Assembly, seek to remove benefits from all of our people, whatever their constituencies are; whether they voted PPP or APNU in the last elections. We will consistently try to enhance benefits to our people.

Since we contested the elections, both parties with their manifestos, and APNU now happens to be the Government and it made a number of promises to the people ... [**An Hon. Member:** AFC too. It is APNU+AFC]. You can add that bit. I am sure that Mr. Harmon can add that bit. Since both of us contested those elections and we had our manifesto, we are going to urge, in

every speech that we make, the Members on the other side to fulfil their promises to the people of this country.

We will work with the other side once the Members remain faithful to the promises that they made to the people of the country, because I think our country deserves it, to see maturity and decorum in this Parliament and that their business is done here.

Once again, congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the awareness that the office has kept with us by supplying us with documents even though we were not here in the National Assembly.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mrs. Garrido-Lowe]: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker to this august House. Good afternoon fellow parliamentarians. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sympathy to my sister, the Hon. Catherine Hughes, Minister of Tourism, on the loss of her mother-in-law. Please extend my sympathy to Mr. Nigel Hughes.

Let me applaud, first of all, the Opposition for participating in this historic sitting of Guyana's Parliament. Despite our differences, we represent the Guyanese population. We were elected to fight for the betterment of our people, and, to this end, I feel that we are all sitting in very good positions to assist in this endeavour.

After 23 years of a one-party domination as a Government, this nation has a fresh approach to life in Guyana. In fact, a coalition Government seems to be the only way forward at this moment in our history. This Government, which I am pleased to be a part of, aims to unite our people, to eliminate skulduggery, to reintroduce decency and morals in our society, while creating strong foundations for a progressive future.

5.12 p.m.

Unlike the previous Administration, we intend to lead by example. We intend to show intestinal fortitude in our quest to make Guyana a stable and viable nation. To this end, I must congratulate the new Coalition Government and the Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, in particular,

for what I think was an excellent A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC) Government's 2015 Budget, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*. It is quite obvious that Mr. Jordon and his team worked tirelessly to produce such a splendid document. They did well in articulating our vision for this nation for the next five years. I also must congratulate the teams from the various Ministries that helped to prepare the budgets for their Ministries.

The main objective of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs is to enhance the lives of Indigenous people all across Guyana. I feel that this new budget is a stepping stone to that position.

Green economy speaks of sustainable development with little or no degradation to our environment, which is extremely important to our hinterland brothers and sisters, who live off and respect the environment. The world is going green. Globally countries are looking at this route as the only viable one. Even China, the world's no. 1 polluter, is going green now.

Budget 2015, with its 20/20 vision, gives Guyanese much hope. It gives much hope to the hinterland population, especially our Indigenous brothers and sisters who have suffered from starvation, year after year: starvation from a non-existent village economy; starvation from trained teachers in our schools; starvation from properly trained healthcare personnel in our hospitals, health centres and health huts; starvation from lack of proper roads; starvation from lack of proper houses – many Indigenous families in this modern age, live under tarpaulin tents and this I have seen with my own eyes; starvation from training facilities that would allow our youths to acquire certificates in various skills, thus properly preparing them to enter the world of work.

There is no short cut to the fix-it list for our hinterland and Indigenous population. It is a tedious road, but one that is necessary to traverse, if we are going to move forward. The fresh approach that our APNU + AFC Government is taking, the vision of our President, David Granger, the One Guyana concept, is the vehicle that is going to take our hinterland and Indigenous brothers and sisters out of poverty. That is why the statement on page 4 in, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy* is so very important. It says:

“We share the same conviction that development must be for all our people, whether they are domiciled in urban or rural, hinterland or isolated areas”

This brings hope to a people who never really benefited in a sustainable way, simply because they were thought to be living in places far too remote. But our President has made mention to the fact that the hinterland is not a separate nation, and that our Indigenous brothers and sisters, despite their locations, should be provided with the same developmental apparatus as our coastlanders.

A Fresh Approach to the Good life in a Green Economy speaks of investments to grow the capacity of our people and ensuring that our basic natural resources remain available for our children. Our toshaos and councillors, our women’s groups and youth groups that will be part and parcel of the driving force of development in the hinterland, will be happy to be part of this capacity building.

Conserving our waterways for our livelihoods and managing our forests, are what our Indigenous brothers and sisters have been doing for centuries. The destruction of our forest, through massive deforestation without evidence of any replanting and the seemingly unabated polluting of our waterways, encouraged by the previous Government, left us truly worried about the future for our children. But this 2015 Budget has numerous benefits for our indigenous population.

Plans are in place to construct all-weather roads in Regions 7 and 9 which will greatly benefit the residents of these areas. Additionally, plans are also in place to upgrade internal roads in the proposed new towns of Bartica, Mahdia and Mabaruma. And along with Lethem, we have four predominately indigenous areas turning into towns so early in this Coalition’s tenure. This is proof that our Government will not forsake our Indigenous population. To this end, the Ministry of the Indigenous Peoples’ Affairs will engage fellow Ministries and institutions in preparing our youths for the employment that will be created.

A significant portion of the 42,397 beneficiaries of old age pension is of Indigenous descent. This group of persons will now benefit from a monthly pension of \$17,000 – a 30% increase from their previous amount of \$13,125. Under the previous Administration only 742 persons

benefitted from subsidies for water and electricity. I am happy that under this APNU+AFC Government, all of our 42,397 pensioners will receive these subsidies.

Not just our Indigenous elderly will benefit from this new budget. Our men, some of whom do small scale mining, will benefit from the waiver of customs duties on selective items. For far too long they have been bullied by the large scale miners.

In terms of agriculture, our Government will place greater emphasis on large scale private investment in the Intermediate Savannahs in Region 9, which should benefit the Indigenous populations of those areas. Crops diversification and the combination of fish and poultry rearing should help to create jobs and sustain most of these communities. Adding additional crops to the Intermediate Savannahs and Region 9 will benefit not only the Indigenous populations in those areas, but the country as a whole. Our Indigenous brothers and sisters are skilful, they are hard-working and they know the land - our land. Having this level of agriculture in their backyards is very progressive.

This new Government aims to work hard to develop new crops such as carrot, cauliflower, broccoli, turmeric, ginger and black pepper. For far too long we have depended on importing these products, when it is possible for it to be grown right here. This move will not only create jobs and purpose for our Indigenous peoples from that area, but it will strengthen our overall food security.

The hinterland has potential. Our Indigenous people are resourceful and we need to unearth these skills and use them in a progressive manner, both for personal development and national development. For far too long our Indigenous communities have been short-changed. I am sure that our Indigenous brothers and sisters are thankful for the little solar panels they received under the previous Administration, but the time is ripe for further development. The 2015 Budget highlights such.

This new Government will work on getting potable water in every tap, in every rural and hinterland community. This Government will ensure that the water quality is high and sustainable. A sum of \$130 million has been allocated to improve the water supply systems in

areas such as Koko, Mabaruma, and Port Kaituma in Region 1; and Mahdia, Monkey Mountain, Princeville and Campbelltown in Region 8.

This Government will look towards a community approach, when developing hydro and solar electricity in the hinterland. This will generate enough, affordable electricity to power, hospitals and health centres, schools and a vibrant Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector.

Women Development - Guyanese women are hardworking and progressive. The APNU + AFC Coalition respects this and will place much emphasis on the empowerment of women across the country and our Indigenous women will not be left out. Our Indigenous women are strong women. Our husbands and sons leave us to go into the mines, to the forest for logging and to far-off areas to look for jobs. Because of this, our Indigenous women are left at home to grow up our children; to take care of them. Nurturing them is not an easy job. Unlike the coastlands where access to markets is easily accessible, our hinterland women are tasked with planting to eat. Their farms are not nearby; they are in valleys far off to the mountains and in clearings in the forest, sometimes miles away from their living quarters.

When the men are away and even when they are there, our Indigenous women play their roles. They sacrifice a lot. For many villages there are no jobs available. As much as we respect farming, this Government wants to create more opportunities for our Indigenous women. We need options. We envision training our Indigenous as business women, to create more opportunities for them in different fields. We want to give our Indigenous women the same opportunities that all Guyanese women are privileged to. For example, in some villages in the hinterland there are semi-precious stones which can be used to produce jewellery marketed as an Indigenous brand. We need to train our women in jewellery making and designing. This Government sees the talent in all of Guyana and will not neglect the talent that exists in the hinterland.

Young people need more than what is afforded to them currently. When I look back at the previous Government's plans for the youths, which was basically a financial hand-out without the opportunity for growth, I get sad. Why have we not unearthed and developed the talents of our Indigenous youngsters. As an Indigenous woman and mother, I want the best for my

children. No right-thinking mother or leader of a community would encourage laziness in our youths; it is every mother's dream for their children to get a job, not to get free money - that is not development. The previous Government seemed not to understand that our Indigenous youngsters also have a lot to offer in developing this great nation of ours.

In closing, I must say that as an Indigenous Minister, I see the many strides being made to enhance the hinterland communities, while as an Indigenous woman, I am proud and excited about the prospects for a good life for all under this new Government. Thank you. *[Applause]*

5.27 p.m.

Mr. Charlie: Thank you so much Hon. Speaker. I must congratulate you. Hon. Members, I must compliment the Hon. Minister within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. We are getting mix up there, being kind of redundant. The presentation was well delivered, but lacking. I would like to remind all Members of the House that Amerindian peoples' development became a reality under the People's Progressive Party Civic Government and that tells my presentation. The People's Progressive Party Civic Government truly and always respected the Amerindian people. We were never excluded from any decision making to take our country forward.

In the field of education, hundreds of students have graduated from Cuba as Amerindian doctors to serve in the hinterland regions of this country. Under the People's National Congress rule absolutely one doctor graduated, which was Dr. the Hon. George Norton. Under the PPP/C the Hon. Dr. Norton identified himself as the only doctor under the PNC.

Under education, School Feeding Programmes - the \$10,000 grant was given to every child from the public schools. Hon. Members, the school feeding programme benefited our hinterland children. Compare today's results at the just concluded Caribbean School Examination Council (CSEC), were St Ignatius Secondary School was recognised as the top hinterland school of our country, with two students - whose parents are PPP supporters - writing 13 subjects and doing very well. At the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), Region 9, once again, was singled out and that was in the academic year 2014/2015 under the People's Progressive Party Civic.

The Community Service Officers (CSO) programme - I heard the Hon. Minister alluding to a nice package for the youth. Very good vision, but what happen to the 2000 who were laid off? Is

the budget accommodating the 2000 laid-off CSOs? Compare the \$1,150,000,000 that was slashed under the Amerindian Peoples' Development Fund. Compare to now, what is budgeted for 2015 under the theme *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy* with only \$287 million, and the Hon. Minister is saying that we have a "Good Life" for the youths. [Member: The Minister has a good life.] Exactly, the Minister has a good life, but our young people are suffering and they would feel the brunt of it.

Under the People's Progressive Party Civic - road/infrastructure - all roads in the five sub districts in Region 9 were rehabilitated and constructed. Way down in the South Pakarimas one can go as far as **Urumparu** and he/she can joy ride, compared to the PNC's rule when we had to suffer weeks to get into **Urumparu**. Today, it is much better and our Amerindian people have better road conditions. [Interruption] Into the south, roads have been constructed. There are newly constructed roads, farm to market roads, to make our farmers in the Rupununi livelihoods...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, there is a tradition in this House that new Members of Parliament (MPs), who are making their first presentation are not usually heckled. So I am asking for this tradition to be upheld? A number of the speakers on the other side are not maidens anymore, but we have 10 maidens on this side and we would like them to speak uninterrupted. And, by the way, they are all young.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for her observation. Hon. Members, it would be good to observe the traditions of this House. The Member may proceed.

Mr. Charlie: The Hinterland Electrification Programme – all of our Amerindian households benefited from this programme. Gone are the days when our mothers used to have to stop working when it was getting dark and our children had to do their homework in the dark with a flambo lamp. The PPP/C Government provided solar panels to every household. Cassava work can be done in the night; children can study; hence we have a very successful track record of education in Region 9. It was promised by the APNU+AFC Coalition on the campaign trail that huge and bigger solar panels would be provided. My people are still waiting and it is not in the budget.

I heard the Hon. Minister alluding to Lethem becoming a town. I have scrutinised the 2015 Budget to see some hefty allocations, compared to Lethem alone. All the roads in Lethem were constructed under the People's Progressive Party Civic with a booming commercial zone. On the campaign trail in Lethem, the APNU+AFC promised the people of Lethem that they would be constructing asphalt roads. It is very disappointing at this time to say it is the opposite. They have not in the budget. It was promised as asphalt, but we are having DDST and I truly endorsed this being a carbon copy of the People's Progressive Party Civic. Not all the roads for Lethem and I must ask the question, is Lethem ready for township? I have spoken to some residents of Lethem and they have ask me to relate to the House that we once drove on the left side of the road, but it now seems like we will be driving on what is left of the roads in Lethem.

It was very disappointing to all the Amerindians who anticipated the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF). Villages have constructed computer hubs only to hear – and it was mentioned that the programme has now changed to One Laptop Per Teacher. Yet, we are talking of educating the hinterland students.

Information and Communication Technology - there is no ICT programme for the hinterland in the 2015 Budget, for Amerindian students.

Water transport - riverine communities in our region have benefited tremendously from boats and engines which made the lives better for our people.

Bringing produce to the market was difficult in years, but the People Progressive Party Civic came to the rescue and brought the Amerindian people out of poverty. The Amerindian people, for progress to continue, showed it at the May 2015 results in favour of the People's Progressive Party Civic.

I call on the Government to provide specialists - special doctors - at the Lethem Hospital. I have heard the Minister of Health alluding that the health centres will be upgraded, but failed to mention that in our region, we have health centres and health huts.

The people of Region 9 anticipated and are still waiting for all the promises that were made by the APNU+AFC Government. Amerindians are not a people who forget promises. Once again, I

say to conclude, Amerindian peoples' development became a reality under the People's Progressive Party Civic. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Minister of Citizenship [Mr. Felix]: Permit me to extend, publicly, my sincere condolences to the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Mrs. Catherine Hughes on the passing of her mother-in-law, under very tragic circumstances. I would also wish that she would so convey to her husband my condolences.

5.42 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join the debate of the 2015 Budget, which was powerfully and eloquently articulate in this House by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, on Monday 10th August, 2015. In his first Budget Presentation the Minister has demonstrated a clear understanding of Guyana's developmental needs and has allocated resources to cater for such needs, irrespective of where the private bank accounts were secured, as well as State resources.

At this time, and bear in mind that he only has four months in this year, he has given us a budget which has catered for all of our needs. He has released food items from the payment of Value Added Tax (VAT), which are expected to reach all consumers, more particularly, low income consumers, at a cheaper price. The salaries of public servants have been increased and a commission of inquiry will be established shortly to inquire into the conditions of service of public servants and it is likely to speak to the issue of public servants salaries; so too has the national minimum wage been increased.

The APNU+AFC Government demonstrate concern for the welfare of senior citizens of this country. It has increased old age pensions, significantly, to what we began to fight for in this House, when the Coalition entered in 2011/2012. It has moved significantly. While we are in Government, the first year, we have taken it to \$17,000.

While much more has to be done, we are setting the stage, through this budget, for adopting *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*.

The Minister of Citizenship operates out of the Ministry of the Presidency. This Ministry is not self-accounting; therefore, its financial allocations are addressed within the budget of the Ministry of the Presidency. The concept of citizenship, as a part of the Government structure, is

derived from the Disciplinary Forces Commission Report, recommendation 15, on page 52, which reads as follows:

“Civilians should be contracted to preform police functions that do not require police training as follows:

- a. Examinations of vehicles for road fitness certificates
- b. Processing of passport applications
- c. Typing and secretarial work”

At item “b”, it is the first part of the APNU + AFC Government’s attempt to give life to the Disciplinary Forces Commission Report, which was not acted on with the requisite alacrity to implement aspects of the Report of the Commission, which the PPP/C Government in office, at that time, had set up. This Ministry is structured to deliver an efficient registration and immigration service to Guyana and was focused on the needs of the diaspora. [**Mr. Hamilton:** You are talking from the wrong place.] A vision is articulated in following terms, “Rabbi”:

Vision - developing to its fullest potential, Guyana’s registration and immigration system. It is envisaged in the long term that Guyana would be serviced by an efficiently run and decentralised registration, immigration and naturalisation service, with branches in all the regions and Guyana’s townships. Accompanying this vision is a mission, “To provide a comprehensive and structured system for ensuring that citizens are documented, given the opportunity to know and understand their rights and responsibilities and have access to recourse in event of anomalies to the system.”

The Ministry of Citizenship has been created with the purpose of regularising, streamlining and formulating the structures and systems that regulate citizenship. These structures and systems have, until now, been functioning as disparate units, unable to share information and, therefore, not being fully able to serve their purposes for which they were designed. Under the new Ministry, there will be a review of the existing systems and structures and the formulation of a strategic plan to integrate these systems to achieve the following: the development of a comprehensive citizenship policy; engagement of requisite stakeholders; decentralisation of birth registration, immigration and border reform; and the development of a national development

model that includes civic education to transform the sector for the realisation of the full potential of our citizenry.

It is proposed that the Ministry of Citizenship will comprise two divisions. One involved in the registration of births, deaths and marriages and the immigration services will be engaged with the registration of the citizens, naturalisation, visas, extensions of stay, passport applications and other related matters. But the effective coordination of activities, flowing from both streams, require a clear and a well-defined structure which is being developed from the following ideas: the Ministry of Citizenship, with a managing board, the Minister will be the overall policy and parliamentary representative responsible for ensuring that the Ministry's mandate is realised. He will report directly to the President, Cabinet and Parliament.

Administrative and Operations Managers - the Operations Manager will be the operative responsible for the delivery of the Ministry's services, administration of day to day operations and the Ministry's building, infrastructure and vehicles.

A legal advisor will hold responsibilities for addressing in-house legal issues, drafting legislation and providing representation in legal matters that involve the Ministry's functions, all in conjunction with the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs.

The Information Technology Manager will oversee the computerisation of the Ministry's system, the integration of systems and structures, the collection of data, the tabulation of reports and the interpretation of data for the purpose of assisting the Ministry in delivering its mandate.

The Communication and Public Relations Manager will oversee a department that will focus on the dissemination of information about the Ministry and its structure. It will combine both public relation components; a communication section that will use mass media, social media and publications to provide the public with information about the Ministry and its functions.

The Human Resource Manager's responsibilities will include recruitment, training, interpretation of public service policy, structuring of job descriptions and industrial relations.

The operation of the Ministry of Citizenship will be the coordination of the all the systems that are instrumental in the life of the citizens of Guyana, from birth to death. These will start with the child's birth, when the child's birth is registered and in the end when the citizen dies. These

will fall under the construct of the citizenship policy, which will outline the rights, responsibilities and penalties, pursuant to being a citizen of Guyana.

Registration of births in Guyana has been an on-going activity. We are supportive of international standards to be achieved of 100% registration of births and in the ensuing year, movement forward on this issue will be in evidence. It is possible for our registration system to be so developed that a system of identifying every person born in Guyana is given a number that would identify him/her for the remainder of his/her life. This would be a part of a plan to improve accountability of all births. Though there are over 200 registration centres functioning in our 10 regions, they must be reviewed for their effectiveness in taking an efficient service to the public in all parts of the country.

As an APNU Government will ensure that every Guyanese has access to services offered by the General Registrar's Office. It is our intention to eliminate the need to travel long distances to acquire a birth certificate, unnecessary waiting in long queues and consequent corruption, so that these ill effects, on the public psyche, will be reduced to barest minimum.

Another area of birth registration, which begs for improvement, is late registration. The Registration of Births and Deaths Act, Chapter 44:01 omits this activity, but my observation sets it up as a prime target for review to ensure that all Guyanese are treated equally under one system. We will not permit a relaxation of requirements in one part of the country, while in another part of the country, the standard requirements are demanding.

Immigration is an area of concern, which demands our full attention, bearing in mind that international criminal activities will not spare us. Trafficking in persons and illegal migrations are at our doorsteps and only strict laws, enforced by a professional immigration service, will defeat those who risk choosing Guyana to perpetuate their nefarious activities.

Recent events at CJIA are cases in point and I am sure that we have not seen the last of such arrivals, having said that, we must now look deeper into our immigration laws for areas where improvements are necessary. The Citizenship Act, Chapter 14:01 permits naturalisation of foreigners who only has to satisfy a residency requirement, and once he/she is of good conduct, he/she is assured of going through a ceremony to become a Guyanese citizen. I often wonder whether such persons should be subjected to a test to ensure that the person understands the

language, history and geography of Guyana and our cultural life. This aspect will come up as the policy on immigration is developed.

5.57 p.m.

We have experienced, in this country, several arrivals for different reasons: to work, to have a holiday, *et cetera*.

What is happening in the mining industry is that there is a build-up of persons in the Interior and our countrymen are complaining of not being given a fair play. They see our lands being occupied by foreigners. For example, in 2012, there was 1,050 persons receiving employment visas; 991 were Brazilians and 24 were Chinese. In 2013, 462 Brazilians received visas. In 2014, 744 employment visas were issued with the Brazilians receiving 694 of those visas. In 2015, 304 employment visas were issued where 236 of the employment visas were issued to Brazilians. Contrary to my Friends on the other side, we are not averse to visitors or to having investment from foreigners. What we are saying is that Guyanese must have an equal play. We do not want a lopsided situation where our own people cannot have access to our lands to do what the foreigners are doing.

Secondly, there has been the issuing of employment visas for jobs such as cooks, labourers and certain jobs which I am sure Guyanese can perform. But, under the previous Administration, there was no regard for Guyanese labour. Unemployment figures could have gone where it wanted to. The Guyana Marriott Hotel was built by labourers from abroad.

The Ministry of Citizenship has been established to ensure that the interests of Guyanese are protected and preserved and that our borders and our airports are not violated by those whose intent is on perpetuating criminal activities. [**Mr. Hamilton:** That is you, boy.] They are right over there; ask your Friends in the front row and they will tell you.

The Granger Administration intends to accommodate foreign investment. We want the inflow of foreign money but we also want our people to benefit from the inflow. Our people should not be left to look on at others who come and enjoy the same jobs that they can perform.

Budget 2015 has given us a good life through this green economy. I am sure that this Administration will stand strong and firm to its mandate to ensure a good life for all Guyanese.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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

Let me begin by making mention of three matters before I go into my speech. One is that the speaker before me spoke about many procedural matters, nothing to do with the Budget that we are debating. I want to add that part of his mandate, as the Minister of Citizenship, should be the teaching of Geography. I am advised that, just a week ago, the Ministry of Public Security impounded the plane from Aruba when it was the plane from Curacao that should have been impounded.

Secondly, the Minister of Business spoke about the Berbice Bridge tolls being decreased...

Mr. Felix: I stand on a Point of Order. Under Standing Order No. 40, there has been an inaccuracy in the report from the Hon. Member. The plane was not impounded on geographical issues; it was impounded because it operated and still is operating as Insel Air.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his explanation. You may proceed, Hon. Mr. Joseph Hamilton.

Mr. Hamilton: The Minister of Business spoke about the Berbice Bridge tolls being reduced. The fact is that any measure that is implemented by a Government that does not benefit the consumer is a failed measure and, therefore, the Berbice Bridge toll has not redound to the benefits of the passengers who use the minibuses to cross that Bridge.

The third point is that the Minister within the Ministry of Public Health spoke about many issues but what the Minister failed to mention in her presentation about many of the programmes, projects and strategies outlined was that they met those same programmes, strategies and plans at the Ministry of Health. [**Member:** What is your point?] At least the Minister should have acknowledged that these were programmes and plans conceptualised by the People's Progressive Party/Civic and many were in the implementable stage.

The *Stabroek News* cartoon dated 14th August informs us that last Monday, 10th August, for about four hours, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Winston Jordan, converted this Chamber into the

theatre of David Copperfield, the master of illusion.

The cartoon which I refer to depicted Mr. Jordan regaled in his cape, with his magic wand in one hand and his rabbit foot in the other, standing on his hat, working his magic and creating his illusions. What is instructive, as presented by this cartoon, is that, whilst he was gesturing and trying to perfect his illusions, the Guyanese people were standing in line at the lotto booth. They believe that they have a better chance increasing their earnings for 2015 at the lotto booth even though that chance is tens of thousands to one. Some of the citizens, you would notice, are amused by his antics and some are dejected. They are convinced that, in *Budget 2015*, there is nothing tangible or substantial for them.

The Budget presented by the Hon. Minister, for 2015, is \$221 billion, of which the total sum allocated for current expenditure is over \$181 billion, some \$20 billion over what was expended in 2014. The sum allocated for capital expenditure is over \$39 billion.

I submit to this honourable House that less than half of the \$39 billion allocated for capital works will be spent by 31st December. So, we will have about \$20 billion of this sum returning to the public Treasury. Further, another \$10 billion allocated for current expenditure will not be spent. Therefore, the Budget, as presented, is overstated by some \$30 billion. The sum of \$30 billion will not find its way into the economy, even though it is desperately needed to help to stimulate the faltering economy.

The Minister of Finance is very much acquainted with the procurement cycle within the public sector and how it functions. The Minister must know that with just four months remaining in the year, by the time the debates are finished and the Estimates are examined, it will be the beginning of the month of September, and, therefore, it will be impossible to spend much of the sums allocated for infrastructural works and procurement of other goods and services. Therefore, the Minister was not being honest with the Guyanese people in presenting this Budget of \$221 billion.

Much has been said about the 21-points 100-day promise that the persons sitting on the opposite side made to the Guyanese people. I will not dwell on that; I will deal with some of the other prominent promises they made to the people of this country.

The parents and children of this country were told by the coalition that it is time for the children. I will present to this Assembly a stark example of a Government that has no time for the children. Much has been said also about the \$10,000 education grant given to our children in 2014 and the uniform voucher the children have been receiving for several years under the PPP/C Government. My good Friend, Mr. Trotman, some weeks ago, speaking about the education cash grant, had the temerity to shamelessly state that the \$10,000 grant programme was unsustainable. I want the Hon. Member to go tell that to the mothers in the depressed urban and rural communities.

What are the facts about these programmes? A single mother who has five school aged children is poorer, at the moment, by \$45,700 when she is preparing to outfit her children to send them back to school. In 2014, she would have received, from the public Treasury, \$50,000 for her five children from the Cash Grant Programme and \$7,500 from the School Uniform Voucher Programme, making it a total of \$57,500. This uncaring Government has made available, for her and her five children in 2015, only \$10,000 through the School Uniform Voucher Programme. Therefore, as I stated earlier, she and her children are \$47,500 poorer.

6.12 p.m.

The Government will be robbing our children of some \$1.3 billion and what is criminal about this is that the sum removed has been transferred and allocated to give to their friends and families who they have been hiring in the bureaucracy. When one examines the allocation for contract workers in 2015, this expenditure has increased by \$1.4 billion over 2014; these are the people who said there should be no contract workers. So, the moneys from the school grant programmes for the poor children of this country were taken wholesomely and taken to pay contract employees hired by the bureaucracy.

When one examines the allocation for contract workers, as I have said, the expenditure has increased by \$1.4 billion over 2014. Most of it will go to the “fat cats”, to borrow the Hon. Prime Minister’s words. My Friends in the Government, before they got into office, promised the Guyanese people that they would be rearing only “lean cats”. They promised to rear only “lean cats” but what we are seeing by an increase of \$1.4 billion for contract workers, they are now rearing only “fat cats”. The fallout between the former AFC MP, Dr. Ramayya, and the coalition is that they wanted to make him the only “lean cat”, and he will have none of that. He is aware

that “fat cats” were appointed by this Government and he has stated that many of the “fat cats” did not make any meaningful contribution to the coalition.

What the Government has done is to take milk out of the cups of the children of the poor and has put scotch and champagne into the glasses of their cronies. What a shame! My good Friend’s - Minister Trotman - Government can sustain their friends with \$1.4 billion, but refuses to sustain the poor children of this country with \$1.3 billion.

Advisers to the Government and its Ministers have been appointed here, there and everywhere. I am told that very shortly the Government will appoint advisers for dog bathing, cat feeding and rat catching. The citizens of this country were told that it is time for the youth. Take a good look over yonder. What do you see? What you see there is 30 shades of grey. Do not let the black hair on some of the heads fool you. The Government has been unfaithful to their own young comrades. Do you think they will be faithful to the youths of this country? The answer is no. The youths of this country are asking of the coalition Government the question, where is James Bond? Where is June Marcello? Where is Trevor Williams? Where is Rennita Williams? Where is the famous Vanessa Kisson?

All of us are aware that in the cycle of life, more so political life, the old horses are sent out to pasture. My Friends on the Government side have rearranged that cycle of life; they have sent their young horses out to pasture. The Budget was poor on job creation for young people and even poorer when it came to explaining how the new Government plans to boost the potential of youths as far as enabling them to have the socio-economic power to afford them a good life. **[Member: Who wrote that?]** Joseph Hamilton wrote this.

There is nothing about how the Government plans to use youths in its so called modern information and communications technology platform. As I speak, some four dozens highly qualified technical young persons are on the breadline because they were sent packing from the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) Programme. Mr. Jordan, the Hon. Minister of Finance, was orgasmic when he spoke about the scrapping of this Programme. He expressed no care or concern for these young people because he and his Government have no time for the youths.

Again, the Guyanese people were told that it is time for the Amerindians. What this Government has shown is that it has no time for the Amerindians. With one decision by its two Ministers in

the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, 2,000 Amerindian young men and women were fired by this uncaring Government. The analysis suggests that, because of this blatant discriminatory act, some 7,000 to 8,000 of our Indigenous peoples will suffer. Further, some \$270 million would be removed from the economy of the Indigenous communities. The Government has replaced the \$270 million with zero.

Minister Jordan said nothing about the Government's plan to improve the lives of our first people. They were completely ignored and treated as non-existent, apart from a few by the way references. The question is: where will the 2,000 fired young men and women find jobs? We were told that it is time for national unity. I will read a letter from a citizen, Clairmont Lyle, dated Thursday, 30th July, 2015. This is what he had to say:

“In the Electoral Assistance Bureau's final report on the 1997 General Elections, I observed that the ethnic composition of the National Registration Centre was very lopsided and I expressed the hope that sometime in the near future we might select people for office based purely on qualifications and not ethnicity. I was full of expectation that this new Government would have been the first to establish this new political culture. However, I could not help noticing that 80% of the recently announced, 35 chairmanship positions on state boards have been filled by non-Indo Guyanese. The development preceded by the composition by the latest National Awardees makes one wonder as to the promise of inclusivity and promotion of racial unity. I doubt the Government has deliberately set out on such a divisive course but this only serves to lend credence to the PPP/C's election warning of race politics by APNU+AFC. Our Government ought to realise that in politics, perception is reality and whether supporters or not we need to keep them mindful of that.”

The Budget speaks to cohesion and national unity. The sentiment expressed by Clairmont Lyle extended across all the segments of Government where appointments were made to the bloated bureaucracy...it has and is creating.

We were told that it is time for the women. The Government appointed four Vice-Presidents. Take a good look at the Vice-Presidents. Do you see anyone of them attired with a dress or a

blouse and skirt? Let us listen to what citizen Andaiye had to say. This letter is dated Friday, 31st July, 2015:

“The GHRA excellence statement on Wednesday, 29th July, 2015 has drawn widespread attention to the paucity of women on the newly announced State boards of the finance sector. Only three out of the 22 new chairs of these boards are women and only 22 out of 125 board members are nominated so far. It seems fair to say that the boards are constituted by merely men who are mainly older, mainly middle class and mainly African Guyanese. Is this what the President and Prime Minister wants?”

There was an instructive paragraph in this letter.

“There are other issues that women are up and armed about, including the very believable allegations against a male Minister that is continuing this sexual predication for which he is well-known long before he became a Minister. That too will be condemned publically by women, including women in his own political party.”

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has 10 minutes more.

Mr. Hamilton: The Budget was weak on social reform for the people of this country. Women and girls were significantly neglected in the Budget. There were no short-term empowerment initiatives and benefits for single mothers. Instead, as I said earlier, the mothers of this country were robbed. Further, no initiatives for abused mothers were announced. So much about it is time for our women.

We were also told that it is time for the workers. Therefore, the expectation of the public service workers was that they would have received a substantial salary increase. The public sector workers, since last Monday, have been busy utilising their mathematical skills in determining what the real percentage increase of their wages and salaries is and to determine whether there would be any real money in their pockets, whether they would be richer in 2015 than they were in 2014. Even a good friend of the Government, Mr. Patrick Yarde, had to indicate, via press statement from the GPSU, that he was deceived by the Government.

The good life spoken of by Minister Jordan and the Government...with all the security experts, apparently, it is incapable of understanding that citizens cannot enjoy a good life unless they can

end their continued and now monotonous rhetoric about fighting crime and literally doing so. Dozens of innocent people are dying and hundreds have been robbed, brutalised and beaten by criminals because of the Government's incompetence in this area.

6.27 p.m.

All of us are aware, Mr. Speaker, that the economic development we wish for will not and cannot happen without our people feeling safe and secure. The Minister of Finance stated that the Government will launch what he calls the one laptop per teacher (OLPT) programme, which we fully support. I was expecting him to also launch the "two dogs per family (TDPF) programme" and the "one horse per policeman (OHPF) programme" for the security sector. I searched the Budget Estimates for this expenditure, the allocation for the horses and dogs for the security sector; I was unable to locate same in the Estimates. I ask Minister Ramjattan, where is the allocation in the security sector budget for the purchase of the dogs and the horses? Could you advise the Assembly?

Every time the Minister of Public Security speaks, I am reminded of a movie that was very popular some decades ago, that is, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. The Government spoke about many miracles they will perform. The people were lead to believe that the cannon ball tree on Brickdam would not grow leaves anymore; they would grow \$5,000 bills. Many miracles were performed.

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

Mr. Hamilton: Minister Charles-Broomes attempted several miracles. The first day on the job, she made Mrs. Greene disappear. By weekend, she made the Secretary to the Public Service Commission disappear. Her greatest miracle was that one morning early, before the cock-crow, she went to Bartica, rounded up and corralled 29 ladies of the night, baptised them in the Essequibo River and made them Trafficking in Persons (TIP) victims. So much for miracles.

I am fascinated by the miracle by my namesake, Joseph Harmon. He did perform three miracles on one subject. My namesake, Hon. Joseph Harmon, took a mighty man and made him into a minute man. What the PPP was unable to do in 50 years, Mr. Harmon did in five days. Further,

he took a Bengal tiger and made him into a pussy cat and so we have no “grow” anymore; what we have coming from a certain quarter is “meow, meow”. So much for miracles.

The Private Sector is not enthused about the 2015 Budget. What this Budget contains for our private sector are mere platitudes and commitments to do this and that. There is not a clear and precise plan as to how the Government proposes to create avenues for growth and expansion of the domestic investments in Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, let me say that this Government is yet to think through some of its fanciful proposals and the short and long term socio-economic underpinning that will follow. Further, a budget must make total and complete economic sense and must fall within a local, regional and international framework that is based on Government’s modern philosophy of how to create wealth in the modern economic era. Mr. Jordan and his Government’s Budget fail miserably in this regard.

The new Government, whilst in pursuit of this good life for our citizens, has failed to pursue a competent, socio-economic and political philosophy.

Thank you, Sir.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his presentation. I will merely observe that the amplification, I am advised, is very effective and I suspect that, sometimes, Hon. Members might wish to overpower that. Perhaps, it does not help for hearing what anyone is saying. The next speaker is the Hon. Jaipaul Sharma.

Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Mr. Sharma]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give my support to *Budget 2015, A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*. A budget represents how a Government responds to its society’s aspirations. When APNU was launched on 15th July, 2011, we promised a good life for all Guyanese. When the Cummingsburg Accord was signed on 14th February, 2015, establishing the coalition between the APNU and the AFC, we did not deviate from that promise.

Two hundred and seven thousand, two hundred and one electors voted for the APNU+AFC in the 11th May, 2015 General and Regional Elections and we thank them for that. They voted for a good life for all Guyanese and *Budget 2015* is another step towards achieving that good life. It reaffirms our Government's commitment in improving the lives of the poor, even as the resources are under pressure.

Let me commend my Colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, on his maiden Budget presentation and for an excellent and comprehensive 2015 National Budget of \$221 billion that was presented in the honourable House on 10th August, 2015 on behalf of the APNU+AFC Government and which was delivered within the constitutional timeframe.

The Hon. Minister of Finance managed to capture the intent and the fulfilment of the promises made in the APNU+AFC Manifesto and in our 100-day plan and even going beyond what was promised to give the people of this great country a good life by ending discriminatory practices and to root out inequality wherever they exist. This was manifested in *Budget 2015* by substantial increases in the old age pension from \$13,125 to \$17,000, representing \$3,875 per month or 30% increase. Public assistance of \$600 per month or 10% increase and a structured increase in the wages and salaries for public servants, which translates the increase ranging from \$10,460 per month or 26.4% increase at the lower end for persons earning \$39,540 to less than 6% for those at the higher end earning \$500,000 and over...

Structured increase in wages and salaries for public servants was designed to achieve this Administration's commitment to reducing the income distribution gap within Government and to ensuring that the increase granted to lower income level brackets will substantially raise the disposal income of those in need.

It should be noted that this Government's intention is to work with the Trade Unions to determine wages and salary increases and, to this end, the Minister of Finance met with the Trade Unions of Guyana; he had consultation. Time was too short to have meaningful consultation; nevertheless, consultation was had.

The Minister of State had announced, recently, the launching of an inquiry into the conditions of service, which will consider wage increases, training, salaries and other issues for public

servants. In addition, Government granted the increase in the hourly rates for part-time sweeper/cleaner within the education system from \$202 to \$312 per hour, representing \$110 per hour or 54% increase.

In addition to those increases, all workers will no longer be paying income tax on the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), making the NIS immune to income tax and, therefore, representing an increase in the income tax threshold. This will result in loss of revenue of \$1.3 billion to the Government annually but, importantly, it will result in a net increase in disposable income of workers.

In addition to the increase in personal earnings, *Budget 2015* contains other measures for the benefit of all Guyanese. Some of these include the exemption of customs duties for the fishery sectors and the exemption of excise tax and custom duties for Toshao's. We also zero rated 21 food and household items. There was tax exemption for medium and small scale miners, phase reduction in the Berbice Bridge toll and uniform assistance programme, moving the uniform allowance from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker, the senior citizens are overjoyed with the \$17,000 old age pension since many of them did not benefit from the \$41,880 for urban pensioners and the \$38,880 for rural pensioners per annum in water and electricity subsidies.

Over 29,600 pensioners could not benefit from the \$30,000 per month annual electricity subsidies and 16,000 pensioners could not benefit from the \$11,880 for urban pensioners and the \$8,880 for rural pensioners per water subsidy simply because they could not afford to own or rent a property to call home and were living with family members, in shelters and even, at times, in the streets.

This category of pensioners was demoralised since those pensioners who lived with families and friends could not assist with the payment of water and electricity, and, in some cases, these pensioners were humiliated, prevented from taking a bath, prevented from listening to the radio or watching television and, in other cases, they had their pensions taken away from them to pay bills for the homes.

With the increase of the \$3,875 per month or the \$46,500 per annum in old age pension for 2015, this will allow pensioners, if they so wish, to be able to contribute to the water and electricity they utilise and regain some dignity in the home.

The Opposition will like to mislead Guyanese by commenting negatively about the APNU+AFC Budget which was prepared within the first 100 days in office. Mr. Speaker, the Opposition - and you just heard - referring to *Budget 2015*, claim that it is underwhelming. They accuse the Minister of Finance of presenting a budget that represents programmes of the PPP/C. The Opposition claims the Minister of Finance played a clever sleight of hand, a three-card trick on the people, duped the entire nation, indicating that the Minister of Finance is some sort of wizard.

Perhaps, the Opposition is, for once, correct in referring to the Minister of Finance as some kind of wizard since it would take an extraordinary person to deal with the mess he inherited from the previous Government, but yet made good strides in transforming the economy, restoring dignity, integrity, good governance and reducing poverty amongst the poor and working class, thereby renewing the hope and confidence in the people of this country.

6.42 p.m.

Perhaps, the Opposition overlooked the fact that the APNU+AFC Government has presented a \$221 billion budget to the National Assembly, which is also the largest national budget ever presented in the history of Guyana's independence, dating back to 49 years ago, and that should be commended.

Budget 2015 contains some \$97 billion, which is programmed to be spent on current and capital expenditures during the next four months remaining in 2015, and, as the Minister said, it is a stimulus, if ever the economy needed one.

If I did not witness these achievements, myself, it would have been unthinkable what this Government has achieved within a short three months. This is because of the many challenges faced during this period. To name a few of these challenges, there was the decline in the

economy. The growth rate for 2014 was scaled down from 5.6% to 4.5%. Even that could not be achieved for the economy contracted to 3.8%. This was the first sign that the economy was slowing down. A further challenge faced was that the Minister of Finance was greeted with a Consolidated Fund that was, in the words of the Minister of Finance, “heavily overdraft”.

In addition, he was greeted with the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) requesting a bailout in early June, an entity into which the young administration had to inject \$3.8 billion to avert a crisis and place a further \$8.5 billion in Budget 2015 for it.

The Minister was also greeted with an empty PetroCaribe Fund.

The Minister was also greeted with disgruntled paddy farmers, who were owed in excess of US\$17 million. The Minister of Finance placed a further \$20 billion in Budget 2015 to support payments to the rice farmers, who were owed billions of dollars altogether for the supplies made to the millers throughout the years.

A next challenge faced by the Minister of Finance was the falling gold prices and gold production. The price of gold continuously fell in 2013, from its peak in 2012, and gold production declined by 19.5% to 387,508 ounces.

The Minister of Finance and, indeed, every Minister of this Government had to face the situation of the unusual heavy rains which resulted in flooding in at least three regions of this country. In addition to that, the Minister of Finance, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, had to face the situation of Venezuela’s claims to two-thirds of Guyana’s land, and now all of its waters because Guyana has found oil.

Another challenge faced was something that was necessary but, nevertheless, it was a challenge faced by the Ministry of Finance and that was the merging of the Ministries and departments.

Finally, the Ministry had to allocate \$3 billion for the holding of Local Government Elections. Local Government Elections, Mr. Speaker, if you look at it, was only held once in 42 years and this administration plans to hold two such elections within its first term in office.

The citizens of this country understand why this young administration cannot give them every single thing in the first budget that it catered for in the manifesto. This is basically because of these challenges which have monetary implications in that since. We did not consider that we would have had to do large bailouts in relation to rice and sugar. We did not contemplate that the budget for the holding of local government elections would have been \$3 billion. If these and other things did not pop up, I am sure that the Minister of Finance would have ensured that the necessary funds were placed in the areas they are needed. We had to prioritise and I must commend the Minister and the staff of the Ministry of Finance. I must commend the other Ministries for understanding the way in which the Minister decided to share the pie amongst the various Ministries.

Budget 2015 presentation, without a doubt, charts the course to be followed by this new coalition Government for its initial five-year term in office with “Vision 2020: The Good Life in a Green Economy”.

Budget 2015 certainly is the beginning of a revolutionary concept of the people’s budget because it is the first budget in recent history which expressed the intent of redistributing wealth among the people of Guyana, in particular the small man, the real man, which would eliminate poverty and it is one that meets the approval of the Guyanese people.

The APNU+AFC Government believes that all Guyanese aspire to a good life, and the Government’s spending in relation to achieving that good was reflected in expenditure, as I mentioned, \$12 billion to GuySuCo, \$23 billion to the rice sector, \$33 billion to the education sector, \$23.2 billion to the health sector, and so many other sectors that received substantial amounts of money, which will benefit directly to the poor and ordinary people.

His Excellency President David Granger, in his address to the Eleventh Parliament of Guyana, said:

“Those of us who were elected have work to do. We have a responsibility to represent the people. We have an obligation to speak for them. We have a duty to serve their interest. They have put their trust in us.

Your Government is aware that too many very young and very old persons are still classified as ‘extremely poor’ with an expenditure level that is far below

what is required to purchase a minimum, daily, low-cost diet. Poverty can be reduced and, perhaps, eventually eradicated with good governance and the sensible public policies that we shall introduce”.

This is what the Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, did in Budget 2015, accomplishing what the President charged this National Assembly to do, and he should be commended for that.

In relation to improving accountability and transparency, His Excellency the President David Granger, once again in his charge to the Eleventh Parliament, alluded to ethics infrastructure or national integrity system, which refers to integrity, transparency and accountability in public administration, when he said:

“Your Government will also bring forward legislation to secure strong and lasting constitutional reforms and to guarantee good governance.”

As I mentioned before, this Government brought a number of Bills which are now Acts. It brought Bill 1, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, Bill 2, Former Presidents (Benefits and Other Facilities) Bill, Bill 3, Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Bill, Bill 4, Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Bill and Bill 5, Local Government (Amendment) Bill.

What is important with these, all of the five Bills, and many more to come, was that all of them, which were presented in the Tenth Parliament, did not receive support at the level when they were to be assented to by the then President of the country.

What this Government has shown by again presenting these Bills to this House is that it did not deviate from the position as Opposition as we move to be the Government. We did not deviate; we stood up. We talked the talk and we walked the walk.

They were Bills the Opposition wanted because each and every one of those Bills took away power from a Government Minister or a Ministry. The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, we know what it did, in terms of giving independence constitutional agencies, which in the prior

administration was a violation of the Constitution in what it did. It removes the power from the Ministry of Finance and prevents the Minister of Finance from meddling in the affairs of those constitutional offices.

The Former Presidents (Benefits and Other Facilities) Bill – I do not see the Leader of the Opposition here – took away...The President signed into law to take away benefits from himself. Nobody would believe this unless that person sees it. It is very important that these things are noted.

The Hon. Minister of Finance reported to this House that for the period of December, 2011 to February, 2014, a period of 27 months, the former President's benefits in relation to electricity was some \$9,875,680, averaging \$365,766 per month. With a stroke of the pen, the President of this country, David Arthur Granger, gave himself \$12,000. This is talking the talk and walking the walk. I do not need to state the other benefits, such as transportation, which for the 27 months totalled \$15,220,748, and security, which totalled for 27 months, \$20,321,520. This is the type of Government people are getting. It is a responsible, accountable Government, accountable to the people and one which respects taxpayers' money. [**An Hon. Member:** What about the rule of law?] Of course, it respects the rule of law and the will of the people.

We know that the Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Bill is connected to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill in that it removes those agencies that were on the list as budget agencies.

The Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Bill is a Bill which the former Government could have passed in this honourable House because it had the numbers. It made excuses. [**Mr. Nandlall:** We had it; we could have passed everything...] Even today, the former Attorney General cannot believe that his administration once had the majority in this House. Now, apparently, he has realised that or he still does not believe that. However, this administration, with its one-seat majority in the House, again, with the amendments in the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (Amendment) Bill, takes away the powers from the Attorney General and the Minister of

Finance and prevents them from meddling in the affairs of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).

It also removes the power from the President. It is to imagine that the President has signed a Bill into law which takes away his own power of appointing the head of the FIU and puts that power here, in the National Assembly, where it belongs. This is democracy and what this administration is about.

Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2015: Here, again, a Bill that takes away the power from the Minister of Communities, which was once the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, and puts it in the hands of a Commission.

6.57p.m.

In addition to this, there is the Fiscal Transfers Bill, which was passed in the previous House, in the Tenth Parliament, which will give the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and municipalities the authority to raise their own funds and even to have discourse with international financial institutions to borrow money, to lend money within themselves, be self-sufficient, independent, and giving power to the grass roots people.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 10 minutes more.

Mr. Sharma: This is what is important. Let me move to the area which may be of importance because, I think, it was mentioned here before, the area of carrying out forensic audits.

The Minister of Finance on page 55 of the budget speech said:

“Government believes that we need to throw open the door of public bodies so they can become more accountable. This will help deliver better value for money in public spending.”

Confronted with allegations and evidence of corruption and bad governance by the last administration, the new Government moved to institute internal forensic audit examinations. These forensic audits are essentially stocktaking exercises, and the majority of the audits cover a period of four years. These audits, internal in nature, are expected to establish at minimum the true financial position of these entities. Other benefits likely to flow from the exercise include

identification of revenue leakages, enhancement of revenue collection, promotion and promoting the agency to transfer to the Consolidated Fund of excess funds which are kept in bank accounts and the restoration of public trust.

Contrary to the misinformation by the Opposition, that the forensic audits were given exclusively to the critics of former Government, that is to say, Dr. Goolsarran and Mr. Christopher Ram, is further from the truth. In identifying accounting firms and individuals to carry out the forensic audit and review, contacts were made and interviews were carried out with Ram and McRae - and that is the company, not the individual – Nigel Hinds and Associates Financial Services, Maurice Solomon Accounting Firm, PKF Barcellos, Narine and Company, Harryram Parmaser, D. Bahadur & Company, TSD Lal & Company, Nizam Ali & Company, HLB R. Seebarran & Company in addition to four retired former senior staff of the Audit Office, including Dr. Goolsarran, the former Auditor General of Guyana, and three other qualified accountants and others who expressed interest in these audits. All efforts were made to have a very wide participation of chartered accounting firms, taking into account possible conflict of interest, capacity, and time constraints. However, as can be seen, because of the limited number of chartered accounting firms in Guyana we had to consider individuals since, for forensic audits, the individual does not offer an opinion on the financial statement. The individual does not have to be a holder or a member of a chartered accounting certificate.

Mr. Speaker, I could say to you that the revelations of these audits were very revealing, to say the least. As you know, these audits will be concluded in September and, thereafter, will be made public.

To improve integrity, transparency and accountability in public administration and the fight against corruption, which is fundamental to the APNU+AFC, these forensic audits were an important feature in addition to what we will do at the Ministry of Finance, in relation to Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System (IFMAS).

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has five minutes more.

Mr. Sharma: We shall carry out a study of the present IFMAS. Basically IFMAS is a system which was established in 2004 at the cost of some \$132 million and it has eight modules. To date, six are implementable and implemented and two are remaining. The cost for the remaining

two of the modules, I understand, is some US\$652,390. I cannot say why it was not implemented, but I can say that I recall the former Minister of Finance contending that the two unimplemented modules are for more mature environments – whatever that meant. I do not know what he meant but I can recall the Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan also rebutting to the Minister of Finance not wanting to implement the two most important modules which were paid for and delivering in Government an operation akin to Pablo Escobar running a drug enforcement agency. What Escobar would have done as the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) is that he would have knocked out the intelligence system. This is what the Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan had to say. I must say I agree. However, the Ministry of Finance would carry out a study and if it needs to be implemented it will be implemented. If there is need for a new programme, a new programme will be developed.

In closing, I urge all Members of the House to support Budget 2015, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. G. Persaud: I rise to make my contributions to Budget 2015. Let me commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for presenting his maiden budget, so to speak, in the National Assembly.

Just before I get into the depth of my presentation I would seek to use this opportunity to add to the Hon. Member Mrs. Valarie Garrido-Lowe's presentation. She had a list of starvation items but omitted a very important item of starvation on that list, that is, starvation of employment. I say this Hon. Member because only a couple months ago, having assumed office, you took away 1,972 jobs from the very people whom you call your people, your villages, who are lacking all the opportunities and punishing, so to speak. It is so sad.

I do not know too how the Hon. Member will light up and add to power generation in the hinterland, with our health centres, and so on, when a quick perusal of the budget presented under the Ministry of Communities has zero allocation for power generation. It is a wonderful way to go. Keep up the inconsistency and conflicts and we will make good. The Guyanese people will understand us fully well. [*Interruption*]. We can talk about next year and the other year but those years are not included in the 100 days.

I agree with the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma when he said that the APNU+AFC has presented through the Hon. Minister of Finance the largest budget ever. I agree with that, but budgets are not only figures; budgets have to be rested on a bedrock of available resources. It means, therefore, that you have accepted the gift from the People's Progressive Party/Civic. We hope you will acknowledge that you have received that gift and you will take good care of it because the signals we are getting very early from the APNU+AFC is that they are on a path of extravagance. The Hon. Member had said so. They are redistributing the wealth and redistributing it well - twenty-six Ministers of Government; four Vice Presidents; a ton of advisers. It is a wonderful way to go – redistribute the wealth and redistribute it well. The way to go, but remember when you would have got it and you would have spent it, at the end of the day Mr. Greenidge will tell you what bankruptcy is. There is another Member in the House who can tell you what insolvency is. It is so nice to hear these statements.

I heard too a lot of statements so far. I thought we were relegated during the budget presentation with fluff and bluff, but they continue, and so we are getting more of them. We are hearing now that we will have local government elections twice within the term of this Government. The *Hansard* is taking note.

This brings me to the point that my presentation this year will be a bit different. I will reminisce a bit. With your permission, Sir, I will remind many of us in this House of what we said during the budget debate 2014. I can start first with the pension. We have a wonderful Member of the House who is under some bereavement now. I express my sympathy to her and her family. This is what she had to say in 2014, talking about pension.

“The six hundred and twenty-five additional dollars our pensioners will receive will not cover the cost of the grill work they now need to install in their homes to protect themselves in this new Guyana. This could not be more visible than the recent attacks on two pensioners who unfortunately lost their lives.”

This is what that Hon. Member said on 2nd April, 2014. Well, it has worsened today, more pensioners, more steel grills and they are going to be compensated nicely. I will get to that.

Mr. Keith Scott likes to speak about senior citizens too. This is what he had to say on 31st March, 2014:

“It fails to bring pensioners the basic cash. We had asked for \$15,000. We are still to get to that stage and inflation is even taking it higher. By next year one would need \$20,000 a month and we demand that our attention to the old, the aged and other places be given some attention.”

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe is not to be left out. She had her say on the pensioners. This is what she said:

“With the prices of basic household commodities rising how can any one of us here in this honour House bring ourselves to offer our 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...

I am still quoting from the *Hansard*.

“...but at least half the amount of the minimum wage would have been acceptable for now.”

7.12 p.m.

Apparently Minister Jordan did not read these statements or he was unaware of them or the Cabinet of this land was unaware of these statements.

She continues:

“The \$20,000 per year electricity concession is 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 meters in their names. We, in the AFC, believe that the pie must be shared equally.”

That is on pension, sharing the pie equally, and what we were saying in 2014, you made Budget 2015, Hon. Members, and you give \$17,000 to the senior citizens and you took away the electricity and water subsidy. You have done excellent; you have responded to their needs. Guess these persons who spoke here... This is not mine and you can check them in the *Hansard*; it is yours.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 10 minutes more.

Mr. G. Persaud: This is serious people's business and we must not come here to fluff and bluff because it will haunt us if we have a conscience. I say be responsible as you stand up to contribute to this debate. Believe in what you can do, stop misleading this nation. We have done enough of it during the campaign.

I continue on this same pension story, I would say that there are three categories of pensioners in this country. I have seen in the Minister's budget speech that he has selected certain categories for special treatment, pensioners before 1992. I say that the PPP Members of Parliament cannot support that. You either do it for all or do as the AFC stated – share the pie equally.

Collective Bargaining: I read very quickly what some of our people had to say.

Mr. Felix, on the 1st April, 2014:

“I would have taken notice of your indication that the collective bargaining agreement between the unions and the Government will resume. I am weary of the Government antics to start these talks and then for some inexcusable reason they abandon it and pay their own unilateral increases.”

Mr. Scott, then had his say too.

“We can say right now that the 5 % cannot work. We are asking you for a return to the collective bargaining table so that you can involve unions and workers in what is best for them and you would then know what is really required to pay them and what you can afford to pay them.”

Mr. Jordan, maybe, this missed you, too, Sir. For the unions out there, collective bargaining was more talk because it did not influence Budget 2015.

If we turn to the increase in wages and salaries, here, again, Mrs. Valarie Garrido-Lowe stated;

“Our men needed to be able to earn a minimum of at least \$70,000 per month tax free.”

Mr. Jordan, you did not hear that, Sir. This was said on the 4th April, 2014 in this House. Maybe he did not listen to a Member on that side of the House and Member of his Cabinet. We need to sit and talk, Sir.

Then Mr. Keith Scott had his bit to say too. He stated:

“The moneys that you are going to spend on the Amaila Falls project and the money which is to be spent on the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA), those billions, can be redirected and channelled in such a way that they very workers who are today crying would be in a better position to live comfortably and yet to look forward to better projects.”

Can I ask then - maybe this is what Mr. Jordan did - if there were no other pretext, no technical difficulties, but just that you needed the money to pay increase in wages and salaries?

We can talk about the crime situation and I can quote very quickly some of the things that we would have said on crime. I would like to go to my good friend Mr. Winston Felix. He stated:

“Members of the public are fed up and disgusted by the failure of the police to prosecute their mandate to bring justice to those offended.”

You said so Sir, on the 1st of April. I think you should have told that to Mr. Ramjattan now.

Then Mrs. Garrido-Lowe had her bit to say too.

“We are only in the fourth month and already the headlines in our daily newspapers are screaming bloody murder and rape. For the first quarter of this year alone the amount of murders and rapes of our girls and women are astonishing.”

Well, the situation has got worse now. I am certain Mr. Ramjattan got the statistics from the Guyana Police Force (GPF). Hon. Member, you would have got that. I am certain you got that. See what it is. [**Mr. Ramjattan:** Tell it to the youngsters.] Stop the talk and do some walk, get your handle on it. That is your portfolio; you are in the Government now.

Value Added Tax (VAT): I have it from my good friend the Hon. Member Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, and this is what he said to us in 2013:

“Maybe the Hon. Minister may see it fit to ultimately reduce the VAT from 16 % to 14 %.”

In the first instance, during the Budget 2013 debate, maybe he forgot to tell the Minister that. It is not a list of 21 items; it is 14 % you wanted it to reduce to. This is the rhetoric; this is the empty talk that we are getting in this hallowed chamber. The time has come for us to stop this thing.

Then there is the Hon. Member Mr. Bulkan, wonderful and well-spoken, and this is what he said:

“I urge that what is needed is a comprehensive approach to the needs of the region and of hinterland communities but this task has to be approached from the bottom up and not from the top down. In other words, the regional governments have to be meaningfully engaged to identify their priorities, not what currently obtains, which is central Government unilaterally deciding what hinterland communities would receive such as inadequate netbooks and young people cannot get jobs”.

This is unfortunate with this Hon. Minister. We thought that he was sincere when he made these statements, but his actions now have all contradicted these things. What this very Hon. Minister would have done would be to give instructions from the top with flags and emblems for every region. Instructions from the top, nothing from the bottom, disbanding of NDCs and municipalities...

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

Mr. G. Persaud: ... the very things he used to eloquently criticise in this House.

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Mr. Speaker, a Point of Order, please.

Mr. G. Persaud: You will have your say. Sit down and you will have your say. Be consistent, sit down and you will have your say. Let me continue on my five minutes. Mr. Speaker, you will give me back my minutes.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member will yield to a Point of Order.

Mr. G. Persaud: If you advise me, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: I do advise you.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 40 (a), on the Point of Order, can the Hon. Member state which NDC has been dissolved by me or this administration please?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Can I?

Mr. Speaker: Is the Hon. Member rising on a Point of Order on another Point of Order? Perhaps this is not the time to do it. I may suggest that you reclaim your seat.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Can I continue? There is nothing to answer that will...

Mr. Speaker: I will advise the Hon. Member to address the Chair.

Mr. G. Persaud: Will do Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing to withdraw; there is nothing to answer. The words I said here are “disbanding of NDCs and municipal councils.” That is what I said and that is correct, Sir. I am clear in that, Sir.

Removal of Regional Executive Officer (REOs): A wonderful thing is that this Hon. Member removed an appointed Regional Executive Officer and requested, instructed and directed that a handing over be done to someone who is not anywhere related to the Government service but has an employment within the Government Service. Yes. Is that not so? That man that he requested...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. G. Persaud: Please Sir. I had so many disturbances, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time is up.

Mr. G. Persaud: Can I have two minutes to conclude.

Mr. Speaker: Your time is up.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we should have a suspension of the proceeding for half an hour. We will resume at 8 o' clock.

Sitting suspended at 7.22 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.03 p.m.

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Mr. Scott]: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seize this opportunity to offer my congratulations to you, the first 'Doctor' to ever occupy this Chair. It is my sincere wish, my expectation, and I also know that I will not be disappointed, in that the scholarship that you bring to this office will only be to the benefit of this hallowed House.

I know that you know how to hold the scales of justice because of your past experiences, both as a jurist and as an internationalist. We have never had such eminence in that height and I look forward to seeing when you should have moved on and those who follow after you would have learnt a lot from you.

In the same way I would like to welcome the Leader of the Opposition, honourable citizen, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, and the other Members. I wish that the sentiments he expressed was very encouraging and it tells me that if that is taken seriously, first of all, by the Members of his side, then a new culture will be ushered into this House that was long missing.

I may also use the opportunity to offer my sympathy to my sister Mrs. Catherine Hughes on the passing of her mother-in-law.

My congratulations, however, are reserved for the Hon. Minister of Finance as I rise in support of this Budget 2015, which is themed *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*. The first budget of the APNU+AFC Government, a budget that is well crafted and piloted by a very able and competent Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston D. Jordan.

8.06 p.m.

Sir, the impact of the prorogation of the Tenth Parliament had a very negative effect on all aspects of life in Guyana. Students, who were about to take exams, were traumatised because of the great uncertainty as to which direction our society would have been going. I am quite certain that those who have children of that age would have known. However, I do forgive those who had office, without children of that age, having the sense of feelings that was necessary to understand that moment for a child.

The economic growth was revised downward, from a projected 5.6% to 4.5%, and further, as the decline continued, it levelled off at 3.8%, slowdown in business as confidence in the Government plummeted. That resulted over a period of time in the reduction of job opportunities and the economy, as the door to crime was opened.

A truncated budget came to the rescue, it had to be crafted in time to arrest the decline – four months and the evidence is there. Four months was all we needed to let the society live again. Never again, shall we allow a president to arbitrarily abuse the democratic process by proroguing a parliament in order to prolong his survival. In this regard, constitutional reform is a must to remove this royal prerogative. While we are at it we will also get to the point where we will have set elections dates forever. In that way, all levels of ... *[inaudible]*... and the Government being in control of election date will disappear, as it is done in America. It is that this budget has captured the imagination and support of not only the small man, but the respect and admiration of farmers, miners, businessmen and civil society. It is indicative of the nationwide confidence that our Government is on the right path in the determination to bring to our country a good life.

The first remarkable achievement of this unique budget is the success in delivering on our action plan. The covenant we made with the population to deliver within the first 100 days a menu of measures that will see the reduction of poverty. With the increase in salaries, all categories of workers today have received an increase in salaries, with the lowest category receiving, as much as, 26.4%, a long way away from an old annual imposition of 5% on them, during the life of the previous Government. It is tangible recognition and justification for voting it out of the office.

The long awaited holding of local government elections will now take place by December of this year. This ushering in of the rebirth of the local democracy is a promise that the President had long made to the citizens of this land. Each region will now actively participate in the physical

and economic development of their area. Jobs and training will develop as a result; skills will now remain in the region itself. Mentoring will now take place, thereby people who are now coming up as young people will learn from their elders. The concept of respect for the bigger ones will again take precedent. Young people will now have heroes within their own environment, besides cricketers, but statesmen, village leaders and teachers will once again be given the respect that had long left the society.

It is to be noted that the Berbice Bridge toll has been reduced. This will help those persons who have to cross daily, especially young people – the children and students. This is something that we longed, on that part of this House, fought for. This is something that when you were over here you strenuously resisted. Today, those very people, who gave us their votes and those who were hesitating in the East Berbice, will now certainly know that we, come 2020, deserve to go there again.

Today, the small man, pensioners and workers, are satisfied that corrupt officials will face their just deserts. We pledge to root out corruption and theft. We shall go after those who siphoned off the proceeds of wealth of the people - be it through illegal acquisition or transfer of lands, vehicles or even the misuse of people's money to put in *gold teeth*. Although, I must say that if that is the case extraction will be painful. No stone shall be left unturned in our quest to recover the wealth of the people. Justice shall be delivered on behalf of the people and of future generations.

The President's vision, as referenced by the Finance Minister, is to create a Ministry of Communities, firmly rooted in the desire of this Government to build cohesive, empowered and sustainable communities all across Guyana. The President, in his address at the ceremonial opening at the Eleventh Parliament... I am very sorry that even with the use of technology those people who are making noises did not hear it.

“Your Government aims at providing accessible and affordable housing in sanitary and safe communities, with the necessities wholesome and dignified living for citizens in need. We shall ensure that all state-sponsored housing developments are provided with recreational, educational and sports facilities in

addition to basic infrastructure and services such as electricity, telephone, roads, solid waste disposal and pure water supply.”

In striving to attain this Government’s vision of the good life, the housing programmes overarching policies of objectives for 2015 to 2020 will focus on improving the housing delivery system through completion of infrastructure priority allocation of lots. We are all aware that lots were given out and in many cases people cannot find their lot when they go looking for it. This will not happen. We will have allocations carefully structured where people can see where they are going.

Construction of houses, all types that we will cater for all, all will be able to access a house. In other words, we will not build a house and say only \$4.9 million or \$50 million can afford this. We are going to cater for all levels of the environment. All levels meaning, that even those persons who cannot afford that \$4 million, we will design houses that will suit even very poor persons. We believe in going further. There will always be persons who will not want a house but will want a house lot and we will make sure that we can give them a house lot, as Minister Ali, once did, but this time it will be structured; this time it will suit the person’s pocket.

We shall promote public/private partnerships to facilitate the provision of social infrastructure and community services. We shall foster the community involvement for the identification and implementation of community projects. When the Members were over on this side their policies were made by their President. He is listening because he sees the quality of what is being said. There is the coordination of projects and programmes through collaboration with Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), integrated planning – meaning that we shall involve civil society, people and we shall make sure that it is all measurable. [**Mr. Hamilton:** What is the allocation?] Comrade, that is why Rabbi had to leave the country. Rabbi saw only money.

Squatters’ regulation shall also be undertaken. Containment of squatting will also be done. Land settlement and land divestment will be pursued. It is because there are a lot of developers who would want to come in and put their piece into it – ask Mr. Lumumba - and they will see how they can go forward. [*Interruption from the Opposition Members*]. I am just showing you. We welcome you. This is why I praised you when you said that you are coming to the House at last

because for us to go forward as a Government, as a people, we need you, as well as us. You are welcomed.

The resulting impact would not only see the living conditions and incidentally the quality of life of beneficiaries and households improved, but ultimately will lead to the formation of cohesive and sustainable communities. Just before the 11th May Elections, the previous administration, in pure political gimmickry, embarked on a one-stop land distribution programme. The facts of the matter are that up to today persons cannot access those lands that they have paid for. The fact is that no development works were done in its time, that is why we cannot go forward. We will not joke with people's lives.

Governing is a serious business and we take the people's confidence seriously. The mere fact that our President has chosen to establish this Ministry is a clear indication of a paradigm shift. This shift recognises what is necessary, not *ad hoc* planning and giving out of house lots at exorbitant prices, but a development of a housing policy that provides housing at a much lower cost in communities with the required infrastructure to make these communities sustainable. If the Members look at our programme two years from now they will see where we are at. By developing sustainable communities, we mean that the new schemes will have lights, water, and proper drainage, schools, inclusive of day care centres, libraries, sports and other recreational facilities, among others. To put it differently, they will be complete communities.

To this end, the Ministry of Communities will decentralise power back to the grass roots, ensuring that communities not only participate but are involved meaningfully in the planning and implementation of community projects.

8.21 p.m.

We will create innovative and sustainable local economic development opportunities. This is where the construction centre, and the people you are talking about, will come into play. We shall create opportunities to expand the economy in terms of new sources of jobs and economic activities, broaden the role of Government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and enable them to play a much better role than they had played in the past. They will be able to undertake programmes that will help with job creation.

To move this process further along, we shall involve all the people. We shall put mechanisms in place to get feedback on what people really need. Using surveys, community encounters, and seminars, we will all monitor the housing progress. As we develop comprehensive plans to ensure that Guyanese can access low cost housing, our work will be evidenced-based; as we go along, our work will be evidenced-based. This way the people will see gains and will be more involved in their community's progress. We shall strengthen partnerships with Food for the Poor, Habitat for Humanity, as well as hardware suppliers and other investors who wish to sign onto the vision of building affordable homes.

The banking sector has been very supportive of our efforts to build and house this nation. We encourage them to support our manifesto pledge to introduce the following:

- Innovative financing for housing, including the development of mortgages as financial instruments;
- Mortgage interest support for low and middle income groups; and
- Incentives for aided self-help.

We may even think about bringing back the mortgage bank so that the poor man can once more live again. A mortgage is an important asset, but here in Guyana, the process to obtain a mortgage is too protracted and too complicated. It should be reviewed and made simple as is done overseas.

In this budget, \$1.9 billion has been allocated to the housing sector. Maybe this is less than 1% of the whole budget, but we look forward to a much larger allocation four months from now. It is four months and we cannot do anything much because we are just finishing off. In the New Year we will unveil our new townships in the regions. That is when we will decide to ask for more money.

One billion six hundred million dollars has been allocated to continue infrastructural works, including roads, drains, structures in housing areas such as Providence, Farm, Little and Great Diamond, Eccles, Sophia, Adelphi, Bloomfield and Cumberland. The Government will commence the phase of cohesive communities. What I just called out, yes, are areas that the previous Government identified, what you have seen is the magnanimity of this side of the House that we will not scrap it or go to other areas. We will conclude that, in the interest of

Guyanese wherever they happen to be. That is what we shall be doing. Wherever they are, we will fix the houses for them; we will give them, as we go forward to other areas throughout this whole country. We will not discard what you had. Where you did something good we will develop it and go with it. That is what Government is about, both sides of the House.

So that is why the 1,000 houses project at Perseverance will continue. That is why, although we know of the corruption that exists there, we are still going to go ahead and make sure that those houses are developed. We are even sketching it right now, so do not say that it does not exist. You can steal and you may get off, but do not say “don’t” because we know. But, we are going to go ahead nevertheless and complete those houses because what comes first for us are the needs of the poor man and that is what we are looking after.

The Government will focus on the construction of the fifth batch of 50 houses at Perseverance. Further, a total of 200 serviced lots at Diamond, Farm, Covent Garden, Herstelling and Providence will be allocated by December, 2015. This intervention will also create approximately 1,800 jobs in the construction industry, with over 11,000 households benefitting from basic services. If perhaps you feel that you played a part, I have no problem in inviting you, when that time comes, for us to talk to the people intermittently.

By 2020, when you are not there, we shall deliver to the people of this country, 4,000 houses and 16,000 families will benefit.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Scott: Thank you Sir. I shall not ask for an extension. As a result of this extensive housing development programme, Government will zero in on their no-tolerance for squatting. We will embark on the serious squatting regularisation and containment initiative. Every effort will be made to clear squatters from East and West Ruimveldt areas. Squatters will be provided with opportunities, through an increasing range of options, for them to move out. No longer will people suffer exploitation from the guardians of our housing sector and our housing stock will go up.

No longer will communities be set up without adequate infrastructure, essential support facilities and amenities to facilitate easy living and the orderly development. The Government will embark

on a comprehensive layout of community planning and design. Already, our technicians and engineers are engaged in programme designs for the future.

The Ministry of Communities was established by the Government of Guyana in June, 2015, with the aim of promoting the development of strong, sustainable, cohesive communities in which Guyanese may enjoy a “Good Life”. This will be achieved through promoting the development of communities through collaborative and integrated planning, good governance and satisfactory delivery of service within our Ministry.

As mentioned in the budget, the concept behind the President’s vision is to create a Ministry firmly rooted in the desire of this Government to build cohesive, empowered and sustainable communities (CESC) all across Guyana. The vision goes beyond the mere provision of basic services to house lots that have cohesiveness in it, sustainable communities, from the disjointed and episodic ones that were done in the past. It embraces the notion that citizens’ satisfaction is best met at the community level by Local Democratic Organs (LDCs) and not central Government.

The LDOs will be given legal responsibility for its service delivery, law enforcement, representation and advocacy for the needs of the people within their constituency. As such, they are going to be engaged as partners in the development of plans for these communities and we shall have a bottom-up and a top-down situation in a partnership that will see us and you in getting the better for the good of the society. Evaluation will take place at all times.

The Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI) has to deliver water, reliable and potable and at a pressure that takes water to the first storey throughout Georgetown. That is in the law. It is common, however, for residents to receive discoloured contaminated water with an unusual odour and low pressure. Comrades, we have been getting water from GWI for quite a long time. We know the problems that we experience. What we do not know is that, whenever that water leaves the shelter belt, it is pure. The fault, therefore, lies not with what is left, but with the transmission. There are pipes that are there 100 years and more and have asbestos. These are things that we know that we want to change. These are the kinds of infrastructural developments that we want you to join with us, so that we can give the people the delivery of water that, as it leaves there pure, it will arrive there pure, as the pressure is left, it will go there. Not when we

have water sent to Sophia and they get a telephone call, and they have to turn it down so that Bel Air Park will get a little higher pressure. We want to have an even distribution throughout the ...

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has five minutes remaining.

Mr. Scott: The entire reticulation system in the city of Georgetown will be overhauled by the central Government. Two billion nine hundred million dollars have been budgeted to improve the quality of water. This will see the removal of the discolouration and the replacement of the obsolete works.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the development of cohesive, empowered and sustainable communities, in which Guyanese can enjoy a “Good Life”, is indeed a reality and this Government is determined to achieve that goal. We shall implement fiscal policies which will see enhanced and improved housing delivery system, improved water supply system and communities in which families are working together for the benefit of each other and the community as a whole. This budget is the first step towards achieving that objective. I have no hesitation, therefore, in commending this budget to both sides of the House. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you Mr. Speaker and good evening everyone. Before I proceed into what I want to share with you this evening, I would like to join with the rest of my Colleagues in expressing my condolences to the Hon. Minister of Tourism, the Hon. Catherine Hughes and her family, on the sudden passing, under tragic circumstances, of her mother-in-law. I would also like to extend on behalf of the rest of the people of Guyana, especially those who worked so hard to improve the health sector in Guyana, one of which was the Caribbean Heart Institute (CHI), for the quality service that Mr. Noel Holder received, that he is now sitting with us this evening.

When I came this midday, I did not have a prepared speech, but I do not want to go against the grain of what I have observed across this afternoon that almost everyone, especially from those within the Government, has been speaking from prepared notes. So, I decided to start writing some notes as I was listening. Before I proceed to share those notes with you, I was listening intently to the Hon. Keith Scott and I concluded that, all the years I spent at President’s College - I was in the first batch of students at President’s College - I do not understand incoherence.

8.36 p.m.

One of the things that he had said about LDOs from my summation, all that his Ministry is doing is passing the buck. The responsibility of the Government is to lead and manage this country. It is not to pass the buck. So, I would like to encourage and implore the Government to manage and lead this country.

One of the things that Mr. Scott mentions was the strong stance that his Ministry will place on squatting. Whilst I was preparing my notes I was thinking too that my standing on the opposite side of this House is under dubious circumstances; under suspicious circumstances; under fake polls; and under a discredited election. I want to tell you that those who are squatting on the Government side of the House, we would spare no effort to evict them, when that time comes on or before five years.

My journey to this National Assembly began quite a number of years ago. As a matter of fact, it began in Berbice through the affection of my mother from Bath Settlement - I know that the Prime Minister knows or he is supposed to know that area very well - and my father from No. 7 Village. I grew up in the late 70s and 80s, when our country was awash in fear, militarisation, and extreme poverty.

Today, Hon. Members, you and I live in a society where freedom abounds, where Guyanese pride is exemplified, where ambitions are fostered and where dreams are realised. This did not happen because of wishful thinking, wild imagination or lack of effort. The Guyana we have today is built on hard work, civil cooperation and strategic vision, through profound policy implementation and active interventions, generated by indefatigable collaboration between our villages and communities and previous PPP/C Governments.

As I stand before you Mr. Speaker, ours is a country to be proud of; to be envied about. We are but a few that have exemplified positive physical, social, and economic growth on a consistent and successive annual basis.

I was a good student and I am still a good student of history. I know that in the 70s and 80s and up until the mid-90s, the infrastructure of this country left much to be desired. The report card of the PPP/C Government in rebuilding, developing, and expanding the infrastructure of Guyana is

filled with top grades, notwithstanding the challenges we confronted as a Government, whilst we were in Government, of course, until our unceremonious and machinated removal under suspicious circumstances. This Budget 2015, as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, albeit devoid of new initiatives by this Government, is indicative of the drive and effort of the PPP/C to ensure that our public infrastructure, our energy portfolio and our utilities are bought to the cutting edge.

The Hon. Minister of Finance is correct when he said that, “Enhanced public infrastructure is a major catalyst to development and growth and the prosperity of nations”. The Hon. Minister is also correct when he equated that quality infrastructure creates a multiplier effect. However, the Hon. Minister has only spoken one part of the story and he had refused, in his budget presentation, to acknowledge the other part of the story. That is that the 2015 Budget is filled with interventions and activities that the PPP/C Government created, implemented, executed, completed and some now in progress. As a matter of a fact, the entire road network, urban hinterland, community roads and major highways, spoken to and presented in the 2015 Budget are success stories of the PPP/C.

The deep water harbour has been on our agenda for many years, so too the East Coast Highway; Sheriff Street-Mandela Avenue road upgrade, the Ogle to Diamond bypass, the Sophia “Ring Road”, the Parika to Goshen Road length, the Linden to Lethem road, these are all projects of the PPP/C. It is nauseating, therefore, to read such an open and outlandish deceit propagated in the Budget Speech of 2015. The river transportation system to enhance ferry services in Berbice, Mabaruma, Bartica and Supenaam, is the PPP/C’s. The rehabilitation of the hinterland airstrips is the PPP/C’s.

Please recall that this very APNU Collation Government, when in Opposition and having an infamous one seat majority as they now do in Government, pursued a vicious agenda to cut and disapprove budgetary allocations for hinterland people. As a matter of a fact, our hinterlands’ village economies are now decimated by this wilful discrimination - 2000 youngsters, 12000 households, 3% of the Indigenous people of Guyana are being decimated by the inaction of the Budget of 2015.

The dredging of the Demerara and Essequibo Rivers, docking of MB Sandaka, MV Barima and Kimbia, rehabilitation of our main stellings, are all projects proposed by the PPP/C. The sea defence rehabilitation is ours too.

On the issue of National Drainage and Irrigation, the PPP/C is the brainchild of its rehabilitation. We have consistently, rehabilitated, developed and expanded this network. Notably, the Northern Relief Channel is the Hope Canal; for those of you who do not know, it is a Jagdeo Initiative. There is no reason for the APNU+AFC Government to be ashamed of calling it the Hope Canal.

The Berbice River Bridge is also a product of the PPP/C. This so far has been one of biggest and most successful public/private partnership (PPP) pursued in this country. Thousands of people benefit on a daily basis. The only significant input of the APNU+AFC Government on the Berbice River Bridge is to meagrely reduce the crossing fee and to compensate for it, through an additional burden on our taxpayers. In essence, there is no reduction, but it is a paper transaction which deflects attention and hoodwinks my fellow Berbicians. We need bridge tolls to be properly reduced.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have ten minutes remaining.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you very Mr. Speaker. The Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CGIA), another PPP/C initiative - APNU+AFC's claim to fame on the CGIA is to have had a meeting with the contractors and to announce that only 15 households will be affected. I would like for the reports of those discussions to be made public and for them to be annexed to the contract of the expansion of the CGIA.

On the issue of energy I would like to say that this budget is doing a the disservice to the people of Guyana. The double speak and confused rational, uttered by the Hon. Minister of Finance, is indescribable in this House. Only a few days ago, I read in one of the national newspapers that the Hon. Minister of Business made a Columbus statement, acknowledging that the cost of energy is an inhibiting factor to manufacturing. The Hon. Minister of Finance said that his Government, "...is prepared to explore every avenue to reduce the cost of energy". This sounds like the Hon. Minister was making a grand conclusion in rocket science. Yet, there is no cross-cutting energy intervention beyond what the PPP/C did, when we were in Government.

Everything hinges on the cost of energy, the survival of Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL). As I speak, over the past three months, the per capita days of blackouts have increased enormously under this Government. Sugar, rice, small manufacturing, public commute and transportation, our kitchens, our savings, our ways of life, all depend on the cost of energy; everything depends on the cost of energy. This budget is devoid of a clear direction on energy. As a matter of a fact, this budget is more about energy consumption than on saving energy.

We cannot wait until five years for the APNU + AFC Government to reinvent the wheel on our energy needs. Whilst we await their coming alive, the economy is in turbulence. It is nose diving at full throttle.

I would like to reaffirm that this budget is like a dummy transaction on the people of Guyana. It is a marketing gimmick. There is no sense of integration of policies. As a matter of a fact, it is a disintegration budget. Take for example, the guiding principle of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure anchoring Guyana's development. An anchor is a heavy burdensome object that fixes you to a spot. It does not allow you to move. Is this what the new Ministry is proclaiming? Is this the new direction that we are moving, to be in standstill? This country has to move on. The infrastructure of any country is the magic ingredient for modernity. The infrastructure sector is a high valued component in any national economic strategy. It affects competition and it is a pervasive force, as in communication. It is a foundation of economic and social goods. So, the Hon. Minister Patterson has to get a move on. He has to pull his anchor up.

This budget is presented by a Government that lacks nerves; a Government that lacks vision. This budget lacks ambition. It is not inspiring, it is uninspiring. The planning of this Government seems to revolve around the incompetence of the high command, rather than around the needs of our people. This budget speaks more about inquiries rather than policy initiatives and as they speak of inquiries, I would also like to join with my Opposition Leader to call for a mother of inquiries. Inquires that deal with fake Statement of Polls (SOP); that deal the completion of the Walter Rodney Commission of Inquiry (WRCOI); that deal with ethnic cleansing; that deal with the decimation of our Indigenous people.

Perusing this budget is a stark realisation that management of this economy is classically militaristic, authoritarian and reclusive. This budget has no scope for economic maneuverability,

integration and corrective action. This budget, when perused in detail, is a sham on the people of this country. The projects and interventions are plagiarised from the PPP/C. I would like the Minister of Governance to take note here of the issue of intellectual property rights. We will be pursuing on this one.

This approach of plagiarism is what the Hon. Minister of Finance would describe as having the stench of corruption and this seems to be the order of the day over the last 90 days of this APNU Government. The extravagance, the incompetence and the ill-will are so pervasive by this Government that it has gotten to a point of being acidic and unbearable. Imagine a country of 750,000 people, with 26 ministers of Government and a platoon of advisors and assistants.

8.51 p.m.

A friend of mine from President's College said that even the late President Burnham could not conjure up this, may his soul rest in peace. This is legitimising cronyism and nepotism and taking them to an unprecedented level. The multimillion inauguration of the President needs to be audited, so too the birthday bash and the frequent travels of the high command overseas.

The inability to make difficult decisions, decisions which will gain long term benefits, is sorely lacking in this budget. The long and short of what I want to say is that the 2015 Budget is tactical, piecemeal and is premised on a make-do-and-mend mind-set. What we, the people of Guyana, need is a budget that is strategic, comprehensive and systematic. The only thing fresh in this budget is the vendetta pursued on the people of Guyana. The unfettered and vindictive dismissal of Guyanese youth, especially our Amerindians and Indo-Guyanese brothers and sisters, is a case in point. It has railroaded the dreams and ambitions of the youth, rural and vulnerable people. This is a travesty which would come back to haunt this Government in no small order.

Mr. Speaker: You have two minutes more.

Mr. Dharamlall: In closing, I would like to quote Mr. Granger when he was Opposition Leader in 2014, now he is the President. This is what he said in 2014:

“It is not a budget for workers; it is not a budget for the young; it is not a budget for the old; it is anti-poor, anti-people and anti-progress, it is driven by politics and not by economics”.

I would also like to share some good advice with members of the Government. This is what Einstein cautions:

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without our thinking.”

The theme of this year’s budget before us is archaic and fascist, bordering on being sadistic. Finally, I wish to advise the Government that it needs to listen to our people with the intent to understand, rather than to listen intending to reply. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rutherford: Mr. Speaker, if it pleases you. I rise to make my contribution to this, the first budget debate of the Eleventh Parliament of Guyana, and the first of many for the APNU+AFC Coalition Government. Permit me to offer my sincerest condolences to the family of the Hughes and ask that Member of Parliament, the Hon. Minister of Tourism, convey such sentiments.

Before I move into my presentation, permit me on my own behalf and the people of Region 10, not only to commend the APNU+AFC Coalition budget chief architect, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, for giving us a people’s budget, but to state emphatically that the marginalisation and the oppression of the people of Region 10 have been lifted.

The previous Administration simply neglected the people of Region 10. We breathe fresh air as Budget 2015, under the apt theme *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*, seeks to deliver on the realistic promises made in the APNU+AFC Manifesto, which sought to give the people of Guyana, and more particular the people of Region 10, hope.

This opportunity for me it is not only a privilege and an honour, but with pride I can walk through my community to comments such as: “It was more than I expected. This sounds like a year before election budget. If we get an election now the coalition will get a landslide victory.”

The Government of the people of Guyana is overjoyed for those comments, but say to the Guyanese people... [*Interruption*] We will get Local Government Elections and you do not want

it. The Government of the people of Guyana is overjoyed by those comments, but say to the Guyanese people, this is just the beginning. Our Government is committed to a well governed Guyana, which the passage of this budget will support. In the words of His Excellency, President David Granger, and I quote from paragraph five, page four, of His Excellency's visionary address on the opening of the Eleventh Parliament:

“Your Government is committed to a well-governed Guyana. We will reassert and reaffirm the integrity and autonomy of the National Assembly. We shall ensure that this Assembly is granted administrative autonomy, institutional autonomy, political autonomy and financial autonomy. We have seen how a subservient National Assembly could become a bane rather than a boom to democracy.”

This budget, it should be noted, addresses from the unborn to the deceased. Page 38 of the Budget Speech, under “Universal Health Coverage for the Wellness of the Nation”, 4.62 and 4.63:

“We have budgeted to spend 10.5 percent of the national budget, or \$23.2 billion, in the health sector. Our Government is unwavering in its commitment to ensuring that the people of Guyana are among the healthiest in the Caribbean and the Americas.

This Government will invest significantly in the health of our people to realise the successful implementation of Health Vision 2020.”

Under the health Agency 80 and section code 12, under Health for Region 10, we will spend \$18 million on the construction of incinerators at the Muritaro, Coomacka and De Veldt Health Centres; Sand Hills and Ebini Health Posts; extension of One Mile and the ever growing Amelias Ward Health Centre. The health sector in this region will also be better served with the purchase of a vehicle for \$8 million under “Water and Land Transport”; \$19.9 million, under “Furniture and Equipment” to “...purchase neonatal ventilators, pressure apparatus, fogging machines, ultrasound machines, resuscitators, *et cetera*.”

This spending will support our trust in building sustainable communities for stronger regions and a stronger nation. Overtime, it is envisaged that our citizens, in our far reaches, will be obtaining more services there, reducing their need to travel to the Linden Hospital Complex or the Upper

Demerara Hospital for basic services. Likewise, less of our folks will leave the region for health services in Georgetown and at the East Bank Demerara Regional Hospital. All stakeholders, including, from our doctors to ancillary staffs, will be better kept.

Union – unemployment in our regions is at an all-time high and possibly getting higher even with the recent episodes at the Bosai Minerals Group (Guyana) Inc.; the falling of gold and timber prices and other unfair practices in these sectors. Coupled with this, our union seem to be at an all-time low. We want and need strong unions. Democracy permits and encourages strong unions and thus, we have matched this feeling in a tangible way, with \$19 million to our unions nationally. This is an effort to strengthen the capacity of our unions to better represent the rights of workers.

The guide to our Government's path will be our 100 Days Plan, our manifesto and His Excellency's mandate in his address at the opening of the Eleventh Parliament. Since our peoples' needs are many, the aforementioned will guide, but not limit us.

His Excellency would have indeed laid the corner stone when he said:

“Your Government seeks first and foremost to eliminate extreme poverty. Our Poverty Reduction Plan will adopt a ‘One Nation’ approach, reducing inequalities, removing obstacles to education, opening opportunities to the disadvantaged and uniting coastland and hinterland. We shall introduce social policies that will harness and develop the creative energies of our people and that will support the holistic development of our women and youth.”

This budget, this 2015 Budget, this peoples' budget is but the dawn of this vision. The people of Region 10 main focus of economic activity continue to be forestry, mining and quarrying. Since it is hope that with the financial rebirth of LEN, these sectors will be strengthened and the supporting manufacturing and servicing sectors will see new life. Our miners will benefit from this budget, as our small and medium scale miners will benefit from the waivers of custom duties on certain items, to aid in reducing their cost of production and creating a more leveled playing field, when compared to large scale miners.

Our forestry sector will be attended to, as the Minister of Finance alluded on page 10, section 3.36 where he stated:

“Following two (2) years of negative growth, in 2011 and 2012, the Forestry sector rebounded, in 2014, growing by 14 percent. Logs accounted for 75 percent of the industry’s output. This is in spite of investment agreements that speak of re-investment into downstream value-added industries.”

The citizens of Region 10 welcome the intent to keep investors with downstream value-added industries, which will create employment to boost our economy. The people of Region 10 should be hearten with a glance at our manifesto, page 26 (8) which states: “To promote furniture and other value-added products in Region 10.” Thus, the sum of \$80 million for our Capital Expenditure and \$544.42 million for the Current Expenditure will aid in better monitoring and training at the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and hence, the Forestry sector in Region 10.

Our small loggers in Region 10 need help and help will be given as the monitoring and training will educate and empower them and ensure a levelled playing field. The mining sector is crucial to Region 10, not only for bauxite and quarrying, but for precious minerals. The decline in gold prices and the consequent production, have severely affected our people. A turnaround is forecasted and will be fuelled by a total expenditure of \$3,679,460,000 and \$83,271,917,000 for the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and the Guyana Gold Board, respectively. This will support and strengthen our stakeholders in the region.

Region 10 Administration - the previous Administration’s neglect of Region 10 is an understatement. Many times it is appeared calculated, for example, for most of the past three years the previous Administration chose to rent a vehicle for the Chairman’s use, despite repeated request for the purchase of a vehicle. The delay in the purchasing of an ambulance further testifies to this. This will be alleviated under the region’s budget, under Agency 80 and Project Title, “Land and Water transport”, to the tune of \$11.5 million. Outboard engine and vehicles will be purchased and our communities, in the riverine, areas will be better serviced.

The Regional Administrative Complex is the hub for the region. Thus, the sum of \$10 million budgeted for the purchase of generators, computer, cameras, printer, photocopiers and other furniture and equipment is imperative to the realisation of the improved operational efficiency.

The geography of our vast region is complex, with its many rivers, creeks, valleys and highland areas, thus, infrastructure must be carefully attended to. As such, \$41.18 million will be for improved access, as the completion of the bridge and revetment of 42 miles of the Mabura Road, Rockstone and Victory Valley is addressed.

Continuing on Public Works in the Region, \$27 million is proposed for the upgrade of the road in the Damon Avenue and the rehabilitation of roads in Blueberry Hill. To construct an emergency landing at the Linden Hospital Complex on the bank of the Demerara River and the upgrade of the drainage systems at central Mackenzie and Amelias Ward \$30.35, million is budgeted. This will improve access to health care and drainage systems, respectively.

The improved drainage and irrigation at Plantation Fair's Rust and Block 22/Ice Water will use \$10 million to excavate and distil creeks there. Our critical region roads network will seek continuous maintenance and the purchase of a grader and other vehicles to the tune of \$28 million.

Education- Education is pivotal to this fresh approach to the "Good Life". As such, this Administration will invest \$23 billion or 14.9% of the national budget, in the educational sector this year. This is supported by the Hon. Minister of Finance's Budget speech:

"This Government will move beyond the platitude of proclaiming the centrality of education to tangibly ensuring that education indeed becomes both a means to, and an end, of our sustainable development. Education occupies a prominent role in the post-2015 development agenda, and at a national level we will work towards the realization of a vision where all of our citizens have equitable access to high quality education and learning opportunities, and where education is positioned as the key intermediary through which we lay the foundation for a robust and competitive economy, as well as an inclusive and socially cohesive society."

9.06 p.m.

The provision of post-secondary, tertiary education in Region 10 is limited to the Linden Technical Institute (LTI) and the University of Guyana Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE). The people of Region 10 are looking forward to the increased services and the possible reopening of the Critchlow Labour College (CLC) Linden Branch with the

budgetary subvention to the College. Nevertheless, LTI will receive \$23.17 million to complete its automotive workshop and purchase furniture, tools and equipment. This will complete the workshop which started more than 10 years ago.

The 2015 budget for education for Region 10 stands at \$1,804,365,000; \$57.5 million of this amount will be allocated for the construction of fence and general rehabilitation of the Mackenzie High School and the Christiansburg Wismar Secondary, two of our premier secondary schools in the Region.

Our Nursery Schools will not be left out as provisions for outdoor equipment at Middle Street Nursery, Wiruni Nursery, One Mile Nursery, Amelias Ward Nursery and Blueberry Hill Nursery Schools would be realised. Our land and water transport in the education department will be strengthened with the purchase of a truck, All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), outboard engines and boat at a cost of \$15.9 million. This will further complement the quality of our teachers and the fortitude of our students to enable us to achieve even better performances.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Rutherford. I do not need all of that, Mr. Speaker.

Continuing on education delivery, improved operational efficiency for our teachers, students, pupils and administration will be further addressed as we expend \$13.5 million for the purchase of school furniture such as desks, benches, nursing sets, chairs, tables, air-conditioning units and braille machine. Investments such as the purchasing of braille machines speak to our equitable access mantra. It is hoped that most of these purchases and services will be done in the Region to strengthen the Region's economy.

Other regional MPs will further support Region 10's acceptance of this Budget as, in the words of the Hon. Minister of Finance:

“This budget may have been long in coming and will be unavoidably short in implementation, given the limited time remaining in the year. It, nevertheless, remains an important document, not only from a constitutional standpoint, but also for the fact that it sets out in some detail, the APNU+AFC Government's development agenda to 2020, and

several of the policies, programmes and projects that the populace can expect, in pursuit of that good life.”

In conclusion, I commend the Hon. Minister of Finance and I commend this wholehearted Budget to this honourable House.

I thank you.

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, with your cooperation and kind assistance, we have exhausted our list of speakers for today. There are two matters which I crave your indulgence to make mention of.

The first is that I have scheduled, in the Speaker’s Chamber, a meeting for Wednesday, 19th August, 2015. The intention is to seek to establish the Committee of Selection. I would express the hope that the Whips can meet me on that day at the suspension so that we can proceed with that matter. It would also prove particularly helpful if they could also give some attention, before then, to the names of Members for the other committees which we are very anxious to get started.

The second item which I wish to make mention of is that, given the information provided to the House this afternoon in relation to the nominee for the Office of Deputy Speaker, the matter now falls squarely in the hands of the Members of the Government benches. I know I had asked you to forebear in the expectation and the hope that the Members of the Opposition benches would prefer a Member for the position of Deputy Speaker. We have learnt this afternoon that that will not be so. I would, therefore, ask the assistance and cooperation of the First Vice-President and Prime Minister and the Government’s Chief Whip to assist in this regard in the shortest possible time.

My preference would be to do this tomorrow; if not, soonest after that. I thank you, Hon. Members.

This brings us to the end of our business for today. I now ask the Hon. First Vice-President and Prime Minister to move the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned to tomorrow, 18th August, 2015 at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Sitting stands adjourned to 1.00 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, 18th August, 2015.

Adjourned accordingly at 9.12 p.m.