

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2018) 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*

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96<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Wednesday, 8<sup>TH</sup> August, 2018

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*The Assembly convened at 2.09 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Leave granted to Hon. Members**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, leave from today's Sitting has been granted to the Hon. Moses Nagamootoo, First Vice-President and Prime Minister, and the Hon. Ms. Indranie Chandarpal.

### **Number of Sittings as at Parliamentary Recess 2018**

Hon. Members, I welcome you to this our last Sitting before our long recess. In accordance with the Standing Orders, our recess commences on Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2018 and ends on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2018.

The 96 Sittings, which we have had to date, span the period 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 to today, Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2018. Those Sittings are divided as follows: At the 2016 recess, on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2016, there were 42 Sittings. At the 2017, recess on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2017, there were a total of 70 sittings. As at today's sitting, there have been a total of 96 Sittings. Much has been

achieved during that period, but it will be true to say that there is much room for a more concentrated use of the available sitting days.

### **Treatment of Reports from Committees**

As regards the reports from the various Committees, some proposals will be developed during the recess with the intention of enabling a speedier attention to the reports and recommendations emanating from Committees.

### **Training engagements for MPs**

During this period, now coming to a close, the Speaker has enabled the attendance of some Hon. Members at meetings, training programmes and other events to strengthen the awareness of Members of Parliament (MPs) and to better fit them for the very varied issues which now confront parliamentarians worldwide. Those engagements will continue as opportunities present themselves.

### **Dearth of meetings by the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC)**

Hon. Members, I must remark that there have been too few meetings of the Parliamentary Management Committee (PMC) this year. It is my hope that when we return, we will discover the means by which this can be changed.

### **Guidance to Members in the presentation of speeches**

Hon. Members, I make reference to two of our Standing Orders. Standing Order 38 (6) sets out the manner in which Hon. Members should present their speeches in this House. I call the attention of Hon. Members to this provision as a means of encouraging the obedience of Hon. Members to this requirement when we meet after the recess.

Standing Order 41 (4) reads:

“It shall be out of order to use offensive and insulting language about Members of the Assembly.”

I remark on this provision by way of reminder and entreat Members to embrace civility in the presentation of their speeches.

## **Holding of 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Parliament**

Hon. Members, I am pleased to tell you that the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Parliament will be held during the period 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2018 to 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2018. The motto of this year's event is "Our Generation, Our Voice: Inspire, Encourage, Impact."

Unlike previous years, this year's Youth Parliament will involve two groups: 35 students from the secondary schools in our 10 Administrative Regions and a similar number of students from the campuses of the University of Guyana (UG). As a result, two days of debates will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2018, with one day devoted to debates by each of the two groups.

As it has been in the previous encounters, the participants from the secondary schools are provided by the central and regional educational authorities for the secondary schools. The student bodies along with the University authorities have enabled the presence of the students of the University of Guyana. In both instances, the guidelines for selection were provided by the Parliament Office.

Some Hon. Members have agreed to assist the youths by way of talks on parliamentary procedure and other practices relating to service in the National Assembly. This support is welcomed and commendable and we thank Hon. Members.

All Hon. Members would have received invitations detailing the events for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Parliament.

I thank you.

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Report and Paper were laid:

Mid-Year Report 2018. [*Minister of Finance*]

**Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:** Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence just to make some brief highlights of this Report?

**Mr. Speaker:** The emphasis is on "brief".

**Mr. Jordan:** Yes, Sir. I would be very brief.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Jordan:** Firstly, I would just like to thank my hardworking and dedicated staff who have been able to produce this Report for the third consecutive year before we go into the recess. I think it would be appreciated that this Report is due by the end of August. We have been able to produce it, in spite of the many staff problems that we have at the Ministry.

After growing by only 2.5% at the half-year last year, growth at the half-year this year has been recorded at 4.5%. Among the sectors contributing to such growth are the agriculture, fishing and forestry sectors, minus the sugar sector, which grew at 3.4%, and the services sector, which grew by 8.2%. In the services sector, I would like to recognise visitor arrival, which has been up by 18.3%. Other mining grew by 31.2% and construction grew by 13.4%. We have to acknowledge that there have been some declines in the traditional sectors. Sugar declined by 30.6%; gold declined by 9.1% and rice declined by 3.8%.

The overall non-financial public sector balance for the first half stood at \$5.7 billion, slightly above that for last year.

This slightly deteriorated performance was due to deterioration in several public enterprises, not least of which were the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated (GPL Inc.).

At June 2018, the official bank rate stood at 208.5, a depreciation of 1%.

Private sector credit grew to \$225.8 billion from \$216.9 billion, and loan advances increased by 4.1%.

The commercial banks payment rates remained very low, as indeed inflation also, which remains subdued at 1.32%.

In terms of fiscal balance, total revenue collection increased by 12.4%, but, at the same time, total expenditure increased by 15.2%.

In terms of the outlook for the year, because of the good performance at the half-year, we are now revising the end-of-year growth rate to 3.7%, which is closely in line with the budgeted growth rate of 3.8%.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Green Paper on Managing Future Petroleum Revenues and Establishment of a Fiscal Rule and Sovereign Wealth Fund. [*Minister of Finance*]

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, again, I crave your indulgence to make some very brief remarks on this revolutionary Paper which has been presented to this Assembly.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you may proceed, but continue to be influenced by my reference to the word “brief”.

**Mr. Jordan:** Thank you, Sir. *Brevity is the soul of wit.* Mr. Speaker, thank you for accommodating this short statement which I am about to make.

Today marks a significant date in the history of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. On this 8<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2018, I have the pleasure of presenting to this honourable House, on behalf of the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, a Green Paper titled “*Green Paper Managing Future Petroleum Revenues and Establishment of a Fiscal Rule and Sovereign Wealth Fund.*”

This Paper captures key issues and mechanisms that will (1) ensure the sustainable use of our petroleum revenues to achieve a diversified and green economy; (2) ensure that we avoid the mismanagement of our national patrimony and the dreaded resource curse; and (3) ensure that all Guyanese, especially our youth, who comprise the majority of our population and future generations, are able to benefit from these windfall revenues, thereby enabling them to live in security and comfort, enjoying the good life that we promised our fellow citizens.

2.24 p.m.

This Administration has committed to good governance and accountability. Within the context of the management of our petroleum resources, this has transitioned to include the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund. In 2016, months after the first discovery, the Hon. Minister of Natural

Resources quite wisely engaged the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist in drafting the sovereign wealth fund legislation. In 2017, the Ministry of Finance continued this engagement after being charged by His Excellency President David Granger with the responsibility for piloting this important piece of legislation through this honourable House.

In the interest of good governance, I anticipate that no Member of this honourable House will argue against the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund. Sovereign wealth funds play a crucial role in the management of natural resource revenues of the magnitude that Guyana is likely to experience.

Generally speaking, resource-rich countries with a well-managed sovereign wealth fund and clear fiscal rules fare much better than those without. In 2017, I had indicated that our proposed sovereign wealth fund would have three broad objectives, namely stabilisation, savings and domestic development. The fiscal options that have been proposed within the Green Paper are designed to achieve those objectives.

The first of these listed objectives, stabilisation, is particularly important for resource-rich countries that are dependent on natural resources for two simple reasons: (1) commodity prices are volatile and (2) production levels can be difficult to predict. These two factors can result in unstable revenue and, by extension, Government spending, which would negatively impact the stability and scale of social programmes and interventions. To achieve this, a portion of revenues will be invested in safe and liquid assets external to the domestic economy.

The second key function of our sovereign wealth fund is savings, to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits of the extraction of non-renewable resources across current and future generations. This would allow for the transformation of a depleting asset base, that is, oil, to a permanent asset base, that is, financial assets. This also allows for public spending during resource extraction to be maintained or increased long after extraction has ended. Given the uncertainties surrounding the future of fossil fuels, it is necessary for savings to begin from day one of production. To achieve this function, revenues would be invested in diversified portfolios comprised of financial assets external to the domestic economy with long investment horizons and higher expected returns.

We must save for current and future generations but this has to be balanced with the need to invest in order to overcome the human, physical and technological capital constraint that restrict Guyana from realising her full growth potential. For example, there are significant infrastructural gaps that exist, especially with respect to connecting the coast and the hinterland, and these needs to be addressed. But we must also be cognisant of the capacity of the domestic economy to absorb significant increases in expenditure, as well as the capacity of the public service to effectively and efficiently implement expanded programmes and deliver quality services.

We must avoid the resource curse at all costs. To do this, we must manage injections to domestic spending and when we do invest, we must ensure that these investments are catalytic and promote economic diversification, so that we would realise an economy that is strong and resilient, but can stand on its own long after oil has been depleted. Within the principles of good financial management, these investments would be guided by the national development plan, our Green State Development Strategy (GSDS), and executed by the National Budget, as occurs in countries that have been successful in harnessing, effectively, natural resource revenue for development, such as Norway and Botswana.

The fiscal rule options that allow for these three objectives to be met emerged after considering many other fiscal rules that were implemented with varying degrees of effectiveness. The proposed options have benefited from sensitivity analysis testing across various factors, including prices and production. We are confident that the fiscal rule that is eventually decided upon would serve the needs of current and future generations. It would hold a promise to be a model for other countries to emulate, especially given its potential to achieve the many goals already mentioned, a feat that only few countries have achieved.

The sovereign wealth fund legislation, as proposed in the Green Paper, is being drafted to adhere to the Santiago Principles, an internationally accepted set of principles that aim to promote transparency, good governance, accountability and prudent investment practices.

In addition to being introduced into this House, the Green Paper would be made available on websites. The Government welcomes feedback that is based on constructive discussions. We recognise that the journey to 2020 would entail significant public education and developing a

common understanding of the need to manage the resource revenues effectively, prudently and constructively.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for accommodating me. *[Applause]*

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

The following Reports were laid:

- (i) Report of the Special Select Committee on the Civil Aviation Bill 2017 – Bill No. 1 of 2017. *[Minister of Public Infrastructure]*
- (ii) Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the public accounts of Guyana for the year 2015. *[Mr. Ali, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee]*

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **Oral Replies**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Hon. Ms. Volda Lawrence, the Minister of Public Health, would like to make a request under Questions on Notice.

**Minister of Public Health [Ms. Lawrence]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Using Standing Order 22 (9), I hereby request that all questions standing in my name be deferred for the period as allotted under this Standing Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence?

**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Did you say “oral” questions?

**Ms. Lawrence:** I said “all” questions, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** All?

**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is oral and written questions.



**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Under Standing Order 22 (9), could we please ask the Hon. Minister to offer to this House a reason why none of these questions, which are so important, are being answered? We would now have to wait until we come back from recess, two months hence, to get the answers, Sir. Could we please have an explanation from the Minister?

**Ms. Lawrence:** The staff is presently working on their Budgets and the questions asked are very lengthy, some of which they have to do some research and get documents to support the answers.

So, within the timeframe Sir, the answers could not have been provided with the necessary documentation to back them up. That is why we are asking for the extension under Standing Order 22 (9).

**Ms. Teixeira:** These questions were submitted 21 days ago. None of the questions the Minister is referring to is for oral reply; all are for written reply. She has had them in her possession for more than 21 days, since 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. The most recent one was published on 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. Therefore, we are not supporting the request and we ask that, according to Standing Order 22(9), the House be asked to approve of this. We indicate right now that we are not supporting it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence for a few minutes. Thank you.

Hon. Members, I thank you for your indulgence. The Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, has requested that the request of the Hon. Minister that her inability, as stated by her, to present to this House the information, at this time, in accordance with Standing Order 22(9), which reads:

“At the request of a Minister and with approval of the Assembly, the answer to a Question on the Order paper may be deferred, once only, for a period of twelve (12) clear days.”

The Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, is requesting that the House gives its approval or otherwise to the Minister’s request. I will therefore put the matter to the House.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, could I just ask one question? The Standing Orders states 12 days. We have two months ahead of us. When is the Minister going to present the answers? Would it be in October?

*2.39 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I know that the Hon. Member is not trying to determine the result of the vote before we get there. Perhaps, we should await that and then consequences would fall from that. The Hon. Member is also aware of the provisions in the Standing Order in relation to what obtains during recess. So, maybe the question is rhetorical. I now put the question. The House is asked to approve the request of the Hon. Minister to defer her presentation of the answers to questions which were directed to her.

*Question put.*

**Ms. Teixeira:** Division

**Members of the Opposition:** Division.

**Mr. Speaker:** A request for a division is honoured by the Chair if it is said by one person and it is the same if it is said by a dozen persons. A division has been called for and if a division is called for, we must enter that.

*The Assembly divided: Noes 29, Ayes 32 as follows:*

*Noes*

Mr. Bharrat

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Gill

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Damon

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Chand

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Pearson- Fredericks

Mr. Persaud

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Selman

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Mr. Croal

Mr. Hamilton

Dr. Persaud

Mr. Seeraj

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai

Dr. Anthony

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. Ali

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Jagdeo

*Ayes*

Mr. Rutherford

Mr. Rajkumar

Mr. Persaud

Mr. Figueira

Mr. Carrington

Mr. Allen

Mr. Adams

Ms. Bancroft

Ms. Wade

Ms. Patterson-Yearwood

Ms. Henry

Ms. Charles-Broomes

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Sharma

Ms. Garrido-Lowe

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Holder

Mr. Gaskin

Ms. Hughes

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Lawrence

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Jordan

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnaraine

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Members, the motion as proposed has been approved by the House for the Hon. Minister to be allowed the request which she made to the House.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Based on the earlier point I made, the period is for 12 clear days only. Does the Minister intend to honour that? The Standing Orders are very clear.

**Mr. Speaker:** What I would say in relation to the Standing Order is that we must read the Standing Order in relation to Standing Order 9, which details what happens during recess. Some of the Standing Orders do not allow for separate reading. They must be read with others that may

impact upon them. Standing Order 9, you would see, does have an impact and would have one on Standing Order 22 (9). I think you would find your answer there.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, whilst there are no Sittings during the recess, I am asking a simple question. Will the Minister be submitting our answers to questions, which have been on the Order Paper for 21 days, during the recess? They do not have to go on the Order Paper, but the Member asking would get copies of the answers and it would go on the Order Paper when we come back. This now is looking very convenient, Sir. It is becoming rather convenient that this postponement will now lead to October, if we were to be very mechanical in how we analyse the recess period.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member and I repeat that Standing Order 9 and Standing Order 22 (9) must be read together. I understand what the Hon. Member said. But, in the absence of exceptional occurrence, I would expect that, at our next Sitting, I would receive a report that the questions have been answered. The Hon. Minister is at liberty and at any time the Parliament Office remains open to receive any document which is provided in recess or out of recess. If that document is intended for scrutiny by Members of Parliament, then, the Parliament will do as it normally does, that is, direct it to the Hon. Members. That is as much as the Chair is prepared to say at this time.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, there is an oral question for answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is so indeed.

There are seven questions on today's Order Paper. Questions one and two are for oral replies and questions three, four, five, six and seven are for written replies. Question one is in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Africo Selman, and it is for the Hon. Minister of Education. Hon. Ms. Africo Selman, will you ask your question please?

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## **POOR PERFORMANCE IN MATHS AND ENGLISH AT THE 2018 NATIONAL GRADE SIX ASSESSMENT**

“Following the announcement that Cabinet has approved a seven-point strategy labelled the “Emergency Education intervention for improved performance in Mathematics by students in Grade Six” in November 2016, with the expenditure of \$48.6 million to address what is deemed a “crisis” in students’ performance at Grade Six Mathematics, and the commitment to release additional funds in 2017, could the Honourable Minister of Education, M.P., inform this National Assembly as to:-

- (I) How was \$48.6 million spent in improving the students’ performance in Grade Six Mathematics as publicly stated in targeting the preparation and administration of a diagnostic assessment of pupils in the hinterland region; training of teachers in content and methodology; the recruitment of math coordinators and monitors; the training of officers and school administrators to supervise the teaching of mathematics; and the acquisition of support material for pupils as part of the projects?
- (II) What additional funds and resources were used in 2017 and in which areas?
- (III) In light of the 2018 results in Mathematics and English, what corrective measures are being put in place to improve the pass rates in 2019 in these two core subjects?
- (IV) Taking into consideration your statement during the 2018 Budget debate that there was adequate supplies of the textbooks and materials budgeted for, could the Minister say if any special efforts have been made, or in progress to improve the performance of pupils in the interior, with timely access to and available supplies of textbooks and materials, for each student in the systems in those communities?

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member for her statement. Hon. Minister of Education, you may reply.

**Minister of Education [Ms. Henry]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. I would like to begin with the first question and relates to the sum of \$48.6 million, which was spent in five strategic areas, namely training in content in methodology for

teachers. We trained 548 teachers at Grades 5 and 6 levels and that was done across all educational districts. The sum used was \$28 million.

Secondly, we recruited Mathematics Monitors and Coordinators. In fact, there were 10 Coordinators and 40 Monitors and we invested the sum of \$7 million.

In the third strategic area, there was training of trainers, which included School Administrators, Coordinators and Head Teachers to supervise Grades 5 and 6 Mathematics teachers and we spent \$6.8 million to do that. We trained 452 officers and Mathematics coordinators and head teachers in Regions 1, 3, 8, 9, and 10.

*2.54 p.m.*

The fourth strategic area was the diagnostic assessment which was done in all regions to the tune of \$ 2.9 million. In that instance we did a numeracy diagnostic instrument which was designed for pupils entering Grade Six and the last area was community based participation where we spent \$3.4 million and the total would be the \$48.6 million that was approved for the emergency intervention.

The second question speaks to the sum that was used in 2017 and there were three areas that we were awarded funding and we spent \$250 million. Six-two million dollars of that was spent for text books and that was for students in Grade Six; \$153 million was spent in training and that would be training for teachers, administrators, coordinators and monitors and that was done throughout the country for the entire year of 2017. The last area under line item 6284, Other, we spent \$35 million which we used primarily for placing of advertisement. There were clinics for Mathematics. We also had two mock examinations which we held prior to the examination, so that is in response to question (ii).

The third question which speaks to what is being done, there are several things and I will just touch briefly on the areas in which we are working and the first area is capacity building and training, and that would be capacity building and training for key personnel, including teachers, head teachers and education officers. We are also working on strengthening and monitoring on supervision of school teachers and also in terms of programme development across the primary level programmes. There are targeted interventions and remedial programmes which are



conducted in all of the regions and Georgetown also. We also did Mathematics camps and we will continue with Mathematics camp for Grades Four to Six pupils, and that is in all regions.

There is also parental and community engagement which is also another initiative that we will be doing in order to address that.

For the last question, the response is yes. We have taken note. I just want to say that I have to point out that the result for the 2018 National Grade Six Assessment, in the instance, for English Language, it turned out to be the best year, in terms of performance where we recorded the 60% passes in English Language. I recognised that when there is 40% of your students who are not passing examination and it is something to be concerned about. Of course, it speaks to where we are coming from and where we are going, and we will continue to work to ensure that we have improved examination results throughout the education system. As you know, test result is just one way of measuring the work and the performance of the sector

Thank you for your questions.

**Ms. Selman:** With the respect to question (i) *per se*, could the Hon. Minister describe the nature of the community based participation which she referred to earlier?

**Ms. Henry:** Thank you for your additional question. The community based participation really spoke to the engagement of parents and community personnel in all of the respective regions. In fact, you may or may not be aware that there is a Parent Support Unit at the Ministry of Education and we move into all of the communities where we reach out to parents and community stakeholders and that incurred a cost, so that pretty much is a community participatory pace approach that we are taking at the Ministry of Education.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Selman, this would be your second question.

**Ms. Selman:** No Mr. Chairman. Actually it is with respect to question (iv). I am not clear on the Minister's answer with respect to question (iv).

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I believe that it will assist greatly if you would specify the question that you would like the Minister to make clear. It is the particular aspect of question (iv) that you would like the Minister to make clear.

**Ms. Selman:** Mr. Chairman, am I allowed to read the question again? The question is kind of complex, so I will if I am allowed, of course.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it to read the question?

**Ms. Selman:** Yes Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you reading the question that the...?

**Ms. Selman:** Yes Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will allow you to do that.

**Ms. Selman:** Thank you Sir.

“(iv) Taking into consideration your statement during the 2018 Budget debate that there was adequate supplies of the textbooks and materials budgeted for, could the Hon. Minister say if any special efforts have been made, or in progress to improve the performance of pupils in the interior, with timely access to and available supplies of textbooks and materials, for each student in the systems in those communities?”

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the Hon. Member through with the question that she was addressing? She has reread the fourth question.

**Ms. Selman:** Yes Sir. Basically, what I wanted to find out is...

**Ms. Henry:** I wish to restate my response. You are asking if there are any special efforts that have been made or efforts that are in progress and my response is yes. There are efforts that are in progress and there are efforts that were made. Some of the efforts that were made would certainly refer to the capacity building that I spoke about and the strengthening and monitoring to ensure that there is distribution of the textbooks in a timely manner. As you know, that is an administrative task and it does require training, not only in terms of acquiring, but in terms of acquiring the books, in terms of distributing the books, in terms of ensuring that there are consumption reports that we know where the books are and how many books have been distributed. Yes, the persons who work at the Book Distribution Unit have benefited and are

benefiting from training to ensure that the system is strengthened and to ensure that our students have the books. Yes, training is integral to that. Thank you.

**AWARD OF A CONTRACT TO HDM LABS INC. FOR THE PURCHASE OF PHARMACEUTICALS TO THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Dr. Anthony:** Could the Hon. Minister of Public Health provide this National Assembly with the following information regarding the award of a contract to HDM Labs Inc. for the award of pharmaceuticals to the Ministry of Public Health:

- (i) How many companies were invited to tender for this contract to supply pharmaceuticals for the Ministry?
- (ii) What were the criteria used for the selection of this company for a restricted bidding process?
- (iii) On what basis were suppliers of pharmaceuticals to the Ministry such as, Ansa McCal, International Pharmaceuticals Agency and International Healthcare disqualified?
- (iv) Why was a company that usually supplies laboratory equipment listed in the restrictive tender to supply pharmaceuticals?
- (v) What were the items procured under the contract with HDM Labs Inc., the quantity for each item and the unit cost for each item?
- (vi) Has HDM Labs Inc. provided all the procured items? If so, when?
- (vii) Does HDM Labs Inc. have the Manufacturer's Authorization in the territory of Guyana for the items listed in the contract? Have these authorizations been produced for verification?
- (viii) Does HDM Labs Inc., have their Goods certified by WHO, or the US Food and Drug Administration, and the Guyana Food and Drug Administration?
- (ix) Can the Minister of Public Health inform the National Assembly on the experience and technical capacity of the HDM Labs Inc.?

- (x) Is the Minister satisfied that the Ministry of Public Health has received value for money expended on this contract?

*Reply deferred.*

### **For Written Replies**

## **EXAMINING THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT (SLED) INITIATIVE**

**Dr. Persaud:** Could the Hon. Minister provide the following information to the National Assembly:-

- (a) Regarding grants totalling \$94,090,635 awarded as part of SLED Projects in 2017:
  - (i) Whether any invitation for submission of proposals was advertised in the print edition of a daily newspaper with national circulation?
  - (ii) The date(s) said advertisements appeared?
  - (iii) The title(s) of the publication(s) in which the advertisements appeared?
  - (iv) By what other means were proposals to access said grants solicited by the implementing agency?
  - (v) The deadline for submission of the said proposals?
  - (vi) The nature of the documentation required as part of the submission of proposals?
- (b) Regarding the (20) Co-operatives that are listed in the government's answers to Questions to Ministers at the June 25, 2018 Sitting, regarding the socio-economic impact of the SLED Initiative on **Notice Paper No. 145**:
  - (i) The reason(s) SLED grants were disbursed to Co-operatives whose registrations under the Co-operatives Act were not completed at the time of the disbursement?
  - (ii) The number of members in each of the twenty (20) Co-operatives who are qualified for membership pursuant to Section 21 of the Cooperatives Act?

- (iii) Whether a grant agreement has been signed between each of the (20) Co-operatives and the Ministry/Unit which manages the SLED initiative?
- (iv) The effective date and length of each such grant agreement that exist?
- (v) The date by which all parties affixed their signatures to the grant agreement?

**Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]:**

**(a) Regarding grants totalling \$94,090, 635 awarded as part of SLED projects in 2017**

- (i) Invitation for submission of proposals was not advertised in the print edition of a daily newspaper with national circulation.
- (ii) Date of Advertisement: Not Applicable.
- (iii) Title/s of Publication/s: Not Applicable
- (iv) Means by which proposals were solicited: Documentation was submitted based on the Public's awareness from information emanating from 2018 Budget speech and periodic reports on the television, print and social media.
- (v) No deadline was set. However, the Ministry had a cut-off date - August 2017- for consideration of any documentation that requested assistance.
- (vi) Nature of documentation required: request for assistance including location, contact information for point/s of contact, proposed idea/ project and projected cost.

**(b) Regarding the 20 cooperatives listed on Notice Paper No. 145:**

- (i) No funding/ cash was provided directly to the cooperatives. Construction works and procurement of goods and services required for the projects were done by the Ministry of Social Protection using Government's procurement processes while the lengthy registration process was being followed. Registration includes processes to ensure that members of the Committee of Management are in compliance with the requirements of the Anti-Money Laundering Countering the Financing of Terrorism

Act, No 13 of 2009. Completed works and goods procured were handed over to beneficiary groups.

- (ii) All members of each of the 20 Cooperatives are qualified for membership pursuant to section 21 of the Cooperatives Act which requires that members:
  - a) have attained the age sixteen years and
  - b) are resident within on in occupation of land within the society's areas of operations as described by the rules.
- (iii) No grant agreement was signed between each of the cooperatives and the Ministry. As a legal entity (having registered under the Cooperatives Act), the membership and management of the assets are governed by the Rules of the organisation in accordance with Cooperatives Act. The Ministry of Social Protection has oversight and regulatory responsibility for cooperative societies in Guyana.
- (iv) Effective date and length of each grant agreement; Based on (iii), not applicable.
- (v) Date by which all parties affixed their signatures to the grant agreement based on (iii), not applicable.

#### **TAX BREAKS FOR BENEFICIARIES OF THE (SLED) INITIATIVE**

**Dr. Persaud:** Could the Hon. Minister provide the following information to the National Assembly regarding the twenty (20) Co-operatives that are listed in the government's answers to Questions to a Minister on the socio-economic impact of the SLED initiative on **Notice Paper No. 145:-**

- (i) Which of the SLED beneficiaries have received from the Minister an exemption from payment of Income Tax pursuant to Section 57 of the Co-operatives Act?
- (ii) The terms of the exemption from Income Tax payment applicable to the respective beneficiary, including the amount of the exemption and the duration of the exemption?

**Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]:**

- (i) None.
- (ii) Not Applicable in view of the first answer.

**STATUS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S CHILD MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY COMMITTEE**

**Dr. Persaud:** Could the Hon. Minister provide the National Assembly with the following information with respect to the status of the Child Morbidity and Mortality Committee:-

- (a) The date the Members of the said Committee were appointed?
- (b) The terms of reference of the Committee?
- (c) How many times has this Committee met in the last 2 years?
- (d) Are the Regional Health Officers and the Director of Medical Services at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation required to report child morbidity and mortality data on a quarterly basis to the Committee? If not, how is this information shared with/provided to the Committee?
- (e) How does the Committee track child morbidity and mortality cases?
- (f) Does it make scheduled visits to the health facilities in the regions to inspect and investigate any changes in the child morbidity and mortality patterns?
- (g) Does the Ministry provide adequate resources to the Committee for it to carry out its terms of reference?
- (h) Does the Committee prepare and submit quarterly or half yearly reports to the Chief Medical Officer on the status of Child morbidity and mortality in the country?
- (i) Has the Committee made any recommendations and, if so, has any been implemented?
- (j) What would you say are the most urgent recommendations the Committee has made to the Ministry?

*Reply deferred.*

**PREVENTING INFECTION LEVELS IN THE NEO-NATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT,  
GEORGETOWN PUBLIC HOSPITAL CORPORATION**

**Dr. Persaud:** With respect to the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation, during the period June 2017 to June 2018, could the Minister state:-

- (a) How often is scheduled testing for sterility in the NNICU done?
- (b) Were there sufficient culture bottles to identify infectious organisms?
- (c) Were any multi-drug resistant organisms identified in the cases of sepsis and, if yes, which organisms were identified?
- (d) Was medication to combat the identified multi-drug resistant organisms and other organisms readily available? How many occasions were the medication not readily available?
- (e) Was any cause of death due to iatrogenic infection?
- (f) What organism was identified where the cause of death was due to iatrogenic infection and what methods were used to address the sterility of the unit in instances where multi-drug resistant organisms were identified?
- (g) In instances where contamination of the NNICU was detected, were the neonates moved to another sterilized area to allow for a complete disinfection and sterilization of the unit including all equipment?
- (h) In instances where the cause of death was due to iatrogenic infection and where contamination of the NNICU was detected, was any special investigation and or procedure were followed to ensure sterility of the facility and equipment before re-use?
- (i) What was the ratio of trained nurses to babies in the unit during the period June 2017 to June 2018?
- (j) How many specially-trained neonatal nurses are working in the Ministry of Public Health and how many of these specially-trained nurses are working in the NNICU to deal with critically ill babies?



*Reply deferred.*

## **EXAMINING THE STATUS OF THE NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNITS COUNTRYWIDE**

**Dr. Persaud:** Could the Hon. Minister provide the National Assembly with the following information:-

- (a) A list of government-run Neonatal Intensive Care Units countrywide?
- (b) The number of admissions from each government-run Neonatal Intensive Care for each month during the period June 2017 to June 2018?
- (c) The number of deaths and the causes of death at each government-run Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for each month during the period June 2017 to June 2018?
- (d) The number of neonates referred to the NNICU at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation during the period June 2017 to 2018?
- (e) Did the number of neonates in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit NNICU at Georgetown Public Hospital exceed the capacity of 18 during this period?
- (f) With respect to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation could the Minister state/provide:
  - (i) How many incubators and ventilators were available and working between January 2018 and June 2018?
  - (ii) How many incubators and ventilators have been added since May 11, 2015?
  - (iii) How many incubators and ventilators are operational as of July 1, 2018?
- (g) How many qualified technicians are available to repair these incubators and ventilators?
- (h) The average length of downtime of incubators and ventilators for each month for the period June 2017 to June 2018?

- (i) How many incubators and ventilators are not functioning as of June 2018 in all the government-run NNICUs?
- (j) What measures has the Minister put in place to ensure that all government-run NNICUs are properly equipped and functioning?

*Reply deferred.*

## **REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **HIGH INCIDENCE OF CRIME**

**Ms. Teixeira:** I have requested an adjournment for a motion on crime. Shall I proceed to read it, Sir?

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, please.

**Ms. Teixeira:**

‘Whereas the levels of crime leading to death injuries of its victims and loss of property drives straight to the heart of citizens and threatening public safety and security across the country;

And Whereas the daily reports in the media describe a level of crime that has continued unabated over the last three years affecting rural, urban and interior communities, farmers, business men and women and miners alike;

And Whereas the Guyana Police Force in June, 2018, reported that our goal there was a 7% decrease in serious crimes of the end of May, 2018, relative to the same period last year, *there was an 8% increase in Robberies where no instrument was used; a 7% increase in Robbery Under Arms where a firearm was used; a 4% increase in Rape; a 3% increase in Burglary;*

And Whereas the level of domestic and sexual violence leading to murder of women in brutal circumstances has increased; on a weekly basis, the media exposes gruesome cases

of women being permanently maimed or murdered; the incidence of rape, sexual and physical abuse of children are on the increase;

And Whereas the budgetary allocation for the public security sector has increased significantly, citizens are not seeing any reversals of the level of crime and the popular perception is that the criminals are becoming bolder and more brazen;

And Whereas the 2018 Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) on Guyana's Crime and Safety Report, released by the U.S. State Department, assessed Guyana's crime threat to be at "critical level" with criminal activity continuing to be a major issue, with serious crime, such as murder and armed robbery, being common;

BE IT RESOLVED that this National Assembly caused on the Government to take urgent measures to effectively manage the public security sector and to uphold this responsibility to protect the safety of all citizens and reduce the level of crime which are "erode in public trust and lowering the quality of life."

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have considered the request made by the Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira and I am satisfied that the matter qualifies as one which may properly be raised on a motion for the adjournment of the Assembly. However, as the leave of the Assembly is also required, I now seek such leave.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** In accordance with our Standing Orders the motion will therefore stand over... *[Interruption]*... Hon. Members, is there some reason why Members are standing?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Standing Order 12 (3)(b), we are asking...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, the answer was "aye", the ayes have it. That means that Hon. Member... *[Interruption]*... Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, please resume your seat. Hon. Members, I know that that demonstration just now is not a robotic thing. It could not have been something that is just done by way of rote. If it is not, then, I wonder why you would stand after the Speaker has said that the ayes have it. I would not ask for an answer.

Hon. Members, as I said to the House, the motion will stand over until after five 'o clock.

3.09 p.m.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BILL – Second Reading

#### TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018 – No. 11/2018

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Tax Act.” [*Minister of Finance*]

**Mr. Jordan:** I rise to move that the Tax (Amendment) Bill 2018, No. 11 of 2018, published on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 2018 be now read a second time.

By the number of speakers to speak on this Bill, I take it that it is simple, necessary and in consonance with what both Government and the Opposition are thinking. The Bill seeks to amend section 71 of the Tax Act, Chapter 80:01, to allow for the issuance of provisional licences, for a period of not more than two years, to premises conducting the following businesses: grocery shops, variety stores, snackettes, and so on, which have had delays in the processing of such applications for licences by the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) because of various circumstances beyond the applicants' control.

The businesses that I just named fall under the rubric of micro and small Enterprises (MSEs). MSEs are critical drivers of long-term economic growth, innovative capacity and prosperity, especially in developing countries such as Guyana. We can, therefore, agree that MSEs are the best generators of the innovation and competition to lead to strong economic growth. Many small businesses and entrepreneurs still make up a large part of the informal economy. This is a major challenge in many developing countries and Guyana is no exception. While small businesses are not necessarily the biggest tax evaders, unreported business activity, at any level, is undesirable and retards real business growth and development by distorting competition. Additionally, informal business practices create scope for corruption.

There are many reasons why small businesses remain outside of the formal economy. Among them are inappropriate regulations and burdensome administrative procedures. It is, therefore,

useful from time to time to examine these with a view to providing a more enabling business environment for those who feel shutout of the formal economy.

Start-up MSEs have limited financial resources and these must generally be dedicated to the operationalisation of their businesses. For a large outlay of effort and capital to formalise their businesses, it could be a tremendous burden or a deterrent. Some start-ups might have the funds needed to formalise their businesses, but operate on extremely tight timelines. Most times these funds typically originate from loans at interest rates higher than the commercial banks and with a shorter repayment term. Any delays in getting the necessary documentation to start their business create additional burdens and, consequently, can contribute to default on loans.

The inordinate time it takes to process all the necessary documents to start-up or stay in business demands that the business owners be away from their core functions, that is, running their businesses. A day or two away from their business to process a document which brings the business in compliance, comes at a cost to the business, and ultimately, to the consumer. Allowing the MSEs to legitimately operate while becoming compliant will go a long way towards encouraging greater compliance in the sector and protecting vulnerable businesses from corrupt public officials.

In Guyana, many MSEs are prone to failure in the initial stages for many reasons, including an inability to develop economies of scales or a supply chain with favourable payment terms. The current amendment, therefore, is an important step in the right direction and a signal that Government understands the challenges facing small businesses. It comes on the heels of the measures announced in Budget 2017 where small businesses, whether individual or corporate, are being issued a one-time no-questions asked income tax and National Insurance Scheme (NIS) compliance. No doubt, this initiative has helped many to bid for contracts while they seek to become compliant.

The deduction of this Bill, too, emanates from the fact that even though there are over 18,600 - figures for 2012 - businesses countrywide, only about 7,500 are licensed, with many of them being unlicensed due to no fault of theirs. For businesses to be licensed, they need various permits from various agencies, including approved building plans from the Central Planning and Housing Authority (CHPA), safety certificate from the Guyana Fire Service and sanitary

certificate from the Mayor and City Council or from the related Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC). Visits to some of these businesses by officers of the Guyana Revenue Authority for value added tax (VAT) and business registration have borne out these facts whereby many of them, even though VAT-registrable, were afraid to come forward to be registered because they lacked a licence to carry on the said business. These non-licensed businesses also compete, and unfairly so, with licenced businesses which, on many occasions, lodged such complaints with the Guyana Revenue Authority.

This amendment will not target businesses of the following type: petrol, petrol pump, druggist, butcher shops, money lenders, pawnshops, lumber dealers, cargo vessels, malt and wine, off-licence restaurant liquor, spirit shops, hotels and members' clubs.

The expected impact of the Bill: The Bill will allow for businesses to be registered and have a provisional licence rather than operating illegally and outside of the tax net. The provisional licence will cost 50% of the current licence and will allow the business to show that the application for the licence is in process and all efforts are being made to satisfy the requirements of the said licence. It should be noted that the provisional licence cannot be used to acquire any additional licence, including a liquor licence. Upon the expiration of the provisional licence, no extension will be granted until all the requirements are fulfilled.

With those few remarks, I have to indicate that this Government has, on many occasions, identified the importance of these small businesses but, at the same time, we have indicated that in supporting them, they must seek to get registered, put themselves in order and become part of the tax paying fraternity in the country. I hope with this and other measures that we will be putting in from time to time, including the upcoming budget, that small businesses can indeed find their niche in our economy.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Bishop Edghill:** I believe that all of us would agree that small businesses or micro-enterprises are a very important part or very important to the backbone of our economy and every support that is possible to small businesses should be encouraged.

I stand to speak to this Bill, Bill No.11 of 2018 and to indicate that, from this side of the House, in principle, we support the intent and the measures that this Bill is seeking to do. However, having examined the Bill and its context and the time in which it is coming to us, there are a couple of comments that I would want to make that I hope the Hon. Minister and other Members of the executive, including the Minister of Business, who I have noted is not speaking on this Bill, would seek to address.

The first thing I would like to suggest is that I believe that there needs to be a clear policy guide that will help small businesses in growth and development, especially in an environment where there is encouragement for Guyana's readiness for oil and gas. Small businesses are being encouraged to be service providers and even to engage in partnerships with other businesses that are seeking to do business here. We need to have a clear policy guideline that would encourage the growth and development of small businesses. There is need for innovation. I think that there needs to be a targeted niche of what we would like to see businesses in that sector growing, especially to aid in the advancement of our economy and how we are seeing things going.

In this policy guideline, I would like to suggest and this is an indirect comment on the actual provisions of this Bill, there must be consistency. While the intent and the principle of this insertion into section 71 of the Principal Act which would bring it to four, is good in principle, the application of this must be done in a very fair and equitable manner. I would have suggested, had I had an opportunity before the placement of the Bill, that the Minister is to indicate that these small businesses that will receive the provisional licences be somewhat tied to a business incubator or we have a system in place where these businesses are being coached, nurtured and their innovations being realised and encouraged in several different ways.

The admission by the Hon. Minister today that there are 18,600 businesses that are operating and just about 7,500 are properly registered can suggest and can be interpreted to mean that the environment for the registration, licensing and acquisition of permits for small businesses are not necessarily as hospitable as it should be. In our policy guide, we should seek to create that environment of making this environment more hospitable.

*3.24 p.m.*

By way of a criticism and thinking aloud, I would also suggest that perhaps the administrative mechanisms that are in place should be reviewed and fast-tracked, because for a provisional licence for two years for a small business is quite a lengthy time, if in reality our administrative processes are working the way they ought to be working. Perhaps, my colleague, who dealt more with this while we were in Government, in terms of the improvement of doing business and the humbugs to it, would be able to deal with that in his presentation. I would also want to suggest that we use stronger administrative processes to fast-track. It is better to fast-track the implementation of licensing, as against merely providing provisional ones. If we do the survey, the Hon. Minister may want to address this, the first two years of a small business is when it is most vulnerable. It is the most difficult time. It either make it or it will never even get off the ground after two years. Nurturing in that period is what I am advocating.

I noticed the Minister would have indicated the types of businesses this does not provide for, but in the language used in the Explanatory Memorandum to explain that “the application for the licence is in process and all efforts are being made to satisfy requirements therefor,” where it could be shown, to me, it leaves subjectivity to an individual to say that this person is making an effort, or this person is not making one. If it is the mere purchasing of the provisional licence, is there a time frame after the purchasing of it that other things need to be shown, to keep that licence? I think the licences are basically yearly. If it is up to two years, how would the second year licence be renewed, if there would be benchmarks that the business would have to show, having received provisional licence for the first year, supposing that they are annual ones?

The Minister also highlighted the challenges that are facing small businesses. We would look forward to hearing in this House, not merely talk about the challenges, but what is being done. I hope it is in a collaborative manner, how we could overcome those challenges to ensure that this particular group of Guyanese we are encouraging to be entrepreneurs, invest and take the necessary risk, that there is surety and growth in the sector that would facilitate them.

Finally, with these comments I would like to say that while we would have noticed that there are some amount of movement with the creation and encouragement of small businesses, in particular communities and with the engagement of a number of Government Ministers in that kind of activity, this would be done in a non-discriminatory manner. This must be done in a non-discriminatory manner. The economies of villages must be enhanced by this. When we say



villages, this must also mean the hinterland villages as. The economy of rural Guyana must benefit from this. I do not believe that this should be tied to any ethnic or any particular cultural group. This must be administered in a very fair and even-handed manner.

In that environment, Sir, I would like to make these comments on my contribution towards this debate.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Mr. Sharma]:** I rise to participate in the debate of the Tax (Amendment) Bill, Bill No.11 of 2018. Let me assure the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill that if he had listened to the Hon. Minister Mr. Jordan carefully. He would have grasped that the Minister placed a lot of thought in this amendment, as was highlighted in his short discourse. Let me remind the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill that it is the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), small “c,” Government that brought the Small Business Act, No. 2 of 2004. It was assented by the then President Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2004. Since then, there was nothing done to implement the Small Business Act or to improve small businesses in this country.

When the Hon. Member spoke about a clear policy guideline, the Small Business Act would have stipulated how that would have been spelt out. I could assure the Hon. Member that this administration and the Hon. Minister of Business is working on such a plan to put out clear policy guidelines as stipulated by the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill.

Let me assist the Hon. Members on the Opposition, to give them a background of this piece of amendment. This amendment basically has its background in relation to sections 18 and 20 of the Tax Act, Chapter 80:01. In particular, this is as a 1940 kind of Principal Act. When you speak about what you are doing for small businesses, you had all the opportunity, 23 years, to something for small businesses. Tax Act, Chapter 80: 01, section 18(a), has indicated in relation to the trade licence:

“...any person who –

(a) occupies any store, shop, room shed or yard or any part of any such space...

(b) erects or use any small stall...

(c) who occupies any office or counting house...

(d) who occupies any wharf, shed, room or yard or any part of such place in or within one quarter of a mile from the municipal boundaries of Georgetown, or in New Amsterdam, or in Linden..."

"...wherein are sold, bartered or exposed for sale any goods, wares, merchandise or provisions other than spirits, drugs, patent or proprietary medicine or any article in respect of the sale of which a licence with a special fee is charged thereon is required...", what this is saying clearly is there needs to be an amendment in relation to these two sections, in relation to trade licences. How could we better make these amendments, in relation to the trade licences? How could we do so? We could do so by amending the section 71 which deals with the specific section, which gives the Commissioner General the authority to carry out such an amendment.

We know the rule of Government is creating an enabling environment for the success of businesses. We are rewiring the legal and institutional framework under which businesses operate. In doing so, we must ensure that small businesses, the real men, the small men, can exist in this country.

Now small businesses, by this amendment, could now register as an approved small business under the Small Business Act, Act No. 2 of 2004. Small businesses could now participate in Government procurement.

Small Business Act, Act No.2 of 2004, section 11(1):

"at least twenty per cent of the procurement of goods and services required annually by the Government..."

This is stipulated in section 11 of the Small Business Act, Act No. 2 of 2004.

It would lead to the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I believe this Act would solve some of our Sustainable Development Goals' requirements. I believe that it would solve; Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 8: Decent Working and Economic Growth, Goal 10: Reducing Inequalities and Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

With this simple amendment, we could accomplish at least five of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I believe that this a worthwhile Bill to support. I add my support and I ask the honourable House and the Opposition to support this Bill.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Ali:** First of all, let me make it clear that we, on this side of the House, have no hesitation in supporting any amendment to any law or to support any policy that would improve the business environment, ease the hardship of people out there and bring an improved system. We would always be on the side of such amendments.

Before I go into some issues, in the interest of moving our country forward and in the interest improving the systems that are there to administer the way we operate as a Government and as a country, I wish to draw to the Hon. Minister of Finance two observations. One, the amendment as we look at it is a transition. It is not a permanent amendment. I do not know, Hon. Minister of Finance whether you would consider putting a time frame, an expiry date in relation to the amendment. We should not be looking at this amendment to be the solution to the problem; we should be looking at fixing the system and the problems. That is the issue that I would like to address a bit later.

Hon. Minister, we also need to have a definition of small business. How do we define small business? If you go back to the Principal Act, I could point the Hon. Minister to the definition of small business. If you do not have a clear definition, whether it is based on turn over, it could be left for interpretations. Interpretations could lead us into many misdirection. I want to flag that too, as something that we may want to look at. This is an evolving process.

*3.39 p.m.*

Improving the way we do business, it is not the responsibility of one Government. Regardless of which party or who is in Government, the process will change as the world changes. We have to become more competitive. We should not reduce our level of competitiveness. We should not go backwards, but always move forward, when it comes to competition and our competitiveness.

Unfortunately, if one looks at 2016 and 2017, we have made some backwards steps along some very key indicators that would affect our overall competitiveness. For example, if one looks at 'Ease Of Doing Business', our ranking has moved from 124 in 2016 to 126 in 2017; 'Dealing with Construction Permits' our ranking has moved from 148 to 163; 'Getting Electricity' our ranking has moved from 129 to 132; 'Getting Credit' our ranking has moved from 82 to 90; 'Protecting Minority Investors' and the Hon. Minister Jaipaul Sharma spoke about small businesses and small investors, well my friend, in terms of 'Protecting Minority Investors' our ranking has moved from 87 to 96. [Inaudible] Well, you can have a small business as a minority investor. Do you not know this Hon. Minister? 'Trading Across Borders' our ranking has moved from 135 to 142; 'Enforcing Contract' our ranking has moved from 91 to 93; 'Resolving Insolvency' our ranking has moved from 156 to 162. Based on all these indicators our international ranking has moved backwards instead of forward.

I am happy that an Hon. Member has asked the question: What did we do whilst we were there? I would be happy to share now the holistic policy framework in which we developed a strategy to deal with small businesses and improvement in the business environment. We brought the...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you are addressing the general merits and principles of the Bill.

**Mr. Ali:** Definitely, Sir. I have not strayed one moment.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is a good thing if the Speaker does not draw that feeling, but please proceed.

**Mr. Ali:** One would recall that, to improve the business environment, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) brought the Competitiveness Strategy and the Competitiveness Commission. There was a national body that came together to overlook the implementation of various aspects of the National Competitiveness Strategy. In that National Steering Committee, the Opposition then, now in Government, had membership; the Private Sector Commission (PSC) had membership; the Small Businesses Bureau had membership; and the Women Organisation had membership because improving the system required input and collaboration among all the stakeholders in the business environment.

If the Hon. Members would have followed the strategy, we were looking at the development of a single window application process. To be fair to the Hon. Minister of Finance, the Hon. Winston

Jordan, he himself, many times, spoke about single window application processes for different aspects of the economy. We were looking at a single window application process where, when the application comes in, it goes to all the relevant agencies at the same time. For example, if you are applying for a building permit in Georgetown, you do have to go to the City Council and then to the Guyana Fire Service and then to the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) because the process was too long. We were saying that there must be a common platform where the application is submitted and all the agencies have accessed to that platform and they could give their input in relation to that application, which will shorten the time for the granting of the building permits. We are totally not competitive when it comes to the timeframe it takes to grant permits and we have to address this institutionally.

It would have been good if the Hon. Minister could have also highlighted or brought to us the strategies that would help us to improve the system itself - the systemic problem that is affecting the functioning of the machinery as we speak.

We have to look at improving the institutions themselves; building capacity within the institutions so that they could function more effectively and efficiently. For example, we have the Ministry of Business that should have a clear mandate and should be looking at these things on a continuous basis, but this seems not to be the priority of that Ministry. We should look at issues in relation to the liability of key services, not only the provision of electricity, but how reliable are the electricity services. Is there improvement in the system that would benefit the small businesses and that would help businesses to improve their operational efficiency? These are things that we must be able to address if they are to improve the business environment, especially for small businesses.

The Hon. Minister Sharma asked the question, what did we do? I wish to highlight some of the areas that we worked on to improve this environment. One would recall that, under the PPP/Civic Government, we had established the commercial courts; we merged the Deeds and Commercial Registry to improve the speed and efficiency of that service and it brought tremendous improvement in the Global Ranking; we reduced the time it took to incorporate companies to days; we reduced the time it took to register a business; and we had a new electronic database to improve the storing of information and the searching capabilities for business and companies incorporated. We designed and implemented the Single Tax

Identification System. These were some of the things that we did. We also had some key legislation passed and amended in some cases. The Consumer Protection Act dealing with consumer protection, competition laws, the establishment of the Competition Commission and, by regulation, we abridged the time for the issuance of new electricity services to businesses. We had the Credit Bureau established and had the improved access to finance and credit. We had the Small Business Bureau and the Small Business Revolving Fund that gave low interest loans and grants to small businesses so that they could be established and they could grow. We had the Women of Worth (WOW) Initiative that was launched by the Hon. Minister of Human Services then, Ms. Priya Manickchand, which focused on women. Women form an integral part, a main and major part of small businesses. The hairdressing salons and little shops, women... We have to look at reducing discrimination and stigmas, if they exist, surrounding access to credit by women and women leading enterprises and households seeking credit, whether they are treated differently or equally or in the same manner as men. These are issues that are major and are more macro in nature that we have to address as we look at small business improvement.

The WOW initiative was another initiative that targeted a particular group, empowering them and giving small businesses an opportunity to grow. We had the Poor Rural Community Support Project (PRCSP) that targeted rural and small farmers in particular regions and areas that brought tremendous benefits and improved the system of valued-added, creating new opportunities for small farmers, giving them grants and small low interest loans. Of course, the Hon. Minister Valerie Patterson would tell you that she was part of the leadership of one of our programmes, the Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) and the Linden Economic Advancement Fund (LEAF) programme in Linden that brought direct benefits to small businesses, which saw the creation of many new small businesses in Region 10, in Linden, for example. These are all initiatives that directly targeted the creation, improvement, expansion and safeguard of small businesses and the small business environment in this country.

As I said earlier, we have no hesitation in supporting the initiative. But, as I said earlier, there are the concerns that the Hon. Minister should address, that is the timeframe, whether there is an expiry date for the amendment and, secondly, whether there is a definition for small businesses, especially given turnover as a component of that definition.

With these few words, thank you. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Jordan (replying):** I would first like to thank the three speakers on the Bill: Hon. Jaipaul Sharma, and Hon. Members Juan Edghill and Irfaan Ali. I would like to thank the Members of the Opposition for supporting the Bill. I did not think that it would have been anything otherwise. I am sure all of us listened carefully to the Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, extolling, in his words, what his Government did. Like you Mr. Speaker, my patience was tested as to whether he effectively dealt with the Bill. I was happy towards the end that the Hon. Member came back with the two points he wanted me to address, which were the expiry date of the amendment and the definition of small business, which I gladly accept and will give an answer.

I do not think at this stage that we need to put an expiry date to the amendment because given, for example, only the numbers that we trotted out just now, it will take quite a while. We all admit that there are kinks in the system. There is still a high level of bureaucracy, which was inherited from since colonial days, and which, perhaps, has gotten worse overtime. We are seeking to reduce that bureaucracy. I do not know that we have said within x-time that this bureaucracy will be as such that everything will be moving seamlessly and paperless, and that we would not, for example, be in Parliament with this amount of paper around us, but that we would instead be with our laptops and moving a pointer from here to there, thereby saving the lungs of the earth, which are our trees that we seem to love to cut to produce these hard copies.

At this stage, I do not think that it will do any violence to the Bill if we do not put in an expiry date. It will recognise that we do have some ways to go in putting ourselves in order. We could always come back or the Bill itself will become redundant, once efficiencies are put in place, so that people can get their licences within the shortest possible time.

I think there is a definition for small business already that was put into the Small Business Act; that has not changed. I think that it is under consideration for an amendment, given what has evolved since the Act was put in place more than a decade ago. I believe the Minister of Business will soon be taking that into consideration.

*3.54 p.m.*

I assume also that there can be lots of rebuttal to what the Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, has said. But, like I said, this is about providing a provisional licence to a certain set of businesses that we

understand want to put themselves in order, but have problems in doing so, given the multiplicity of licences which they have to have from other agencies.

Every so often, we come to this House and we hear about “Make certain that we are going to be fair and equitable, about ethnicity and so on”. I very often wonder what the thinking is behind the bringing of those principles and issues up to the House. I could only suggest that the agencies, in particular, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), especially under the current leadership, have been putting in place the systems that would allow for fair and equitable treatment and that it has in place a number of Appeal Tribunals for those who would have experienced, in their sense, unfair treatment. I am sure that we have all the different commissions that have been put in place that people can go to if they say that they have been unfairly treated.

I think that we should adopt a more positive approach to a number of these things and not see a dark side behind every simple amendment that comes to the House. This is an Amendment purely to recognise that there are problems with people bringing themselves into the formal system - of people legalising themselves. This is where the Government is saying that it understands their problems, but that it recognises the role that small businesses are playing in the country, especially in the rural areas as the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, has mentioned. We do not want to close you down, so we will give you a temporary legal structure by providing you with a provisional licence. Also, since it is also provisional, we are cutting it in half, so you would only pay half of the existing licensing fee.

I believe that, like I have said, it is supported by all sides, notwithstanding some of the grandstanding. I thank the Members of the Opposition for their support and I commend this Bill to the House for passage.

Thank you very much.

*Question put and carried.*

*Bill read a second time.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are in the middle of concluding this matter. I will suggest that we press on, notwithstanding the hour.



*Assembly in Committee.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, there are two clauses to this Bill. I propose that we take both clauses at the same time.

**Clauses 1 and 2**

*Clauses 1 and 2, as printed, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Bill considered and approved.*

*Assembly resumed.*

*Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed as printed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I propose that we take the suspension now and return at 5.00 p.m.

*Sitting suspended at 4.01 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.17 p.m.*

**ADJOURNMENT MOTION ON CRIME**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, you would recall that an Adjournment Motion has been agreed to for presentation to the House under the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira. This will take place from now and, formally, could last as long as until 9.00 p.m., assuming that there are speakers.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you very much, Sir. I wish to assure you that it would not go until 9.00 p.m. We have three speakers, so it should not go that long. It is nevertheless an extraordinarily important issue. When you talk to citizens in the country, taking taxis, when you go to the market and to the supermarkets, people have things on their minds – basically the economy and how they are stretching their dollars and the other one has to do with crime.

Crime has to do with how people perceive their lives and how safe they are - if they feel that they are in danger or not. This motion follows an earlier one in 2016 that you allowed, which had to do with the alarming crime situation in Guyana. It was brought by my Colleague and Comrade, Mr. Rohee. That motion stated and pointed out that the A Partnership for National

Unity/Alliance For Change's (APNU/AFC's) 2015 Elections Manifesto formulated a 27-Point Action Plan to address the breakdown of law and order. We also called on the House and the Government to immediately report to the House on what measures were taken to bring the escalating crime situation under control and to provide a safe and secure environment for citizens. That was in May, 2016. A little more than two years later and three years of the Government, we still have an extraordinarily disturbing level of crime in our country.

Years ago, crime was located in certain areas and so certain villages felt very safe that certain things would not happen. What we are seeing with the level of crime in the country is that there is almost no corner of Guyana that is really safe, when one looks at the interior, the mining camps in the interior, villages, Lethem, Mabaruma or on the East Coast Demerara, the East Bank Demerara, Regions 5, 6, 10, and it goes on. In fact, the popular view of citizens is that the criminals appear to be getting bolder and braver. This has created a situation that has very much to do with peoples' sense of safety and security and whether the Government is tackling the issue of public security.

I have seen statistics put out by the Guyana Police Force (GPF). I was there as the Minister of Home Affairs and I find the figures very interesting because the police no longer put out numbers. They put out percentages. It makes it a little more difficult to analyse.

The comment made in the June, 2018 report that went up to the end of May, serious crimes have declined. What are you calling "serious crimes"? You said that murder has declined but that armed robberies have increased. Robberies with weapons and firearms have gone up by 7%, as of May, 2018. There has been an increase in robberies with no weapons or with no instruments as they say in the Guyana Police Force. We have seen an increase in rape which is a serious crime and an increase in burglaries which is also a serious crime. All of these are serious crimes, yet, there is an overall view that there is a decrease in serious crimes.

Whether the figures are true or not, the Government cannot move away from the reality that the majority of people in this country feel threatened and unsafe. They feel that they do not have confidence that they could go about their business safely. Perceptions are very important. Even for me, as a relatively hardened kind of person, sometimes I do not want to read the newspapers or certain sections because the crime pages are terrible. It is not only that people are being

robbed, these people are being brutalised. People are being gagged and tied up, beaten, shot and chopped. Whilst people may say that some of these things have to do with inter-personal violence, it is still crime. There is something wrong.

When one reads the number of murders, the police have said that the numbers have dropped. The murder rate is always very fickle – it could go down and then suddenly something happens and it starts to go up. You might be happy that the figures have gone down between January and May, but, in the last few days, we have seen women brutally murdered and matched with suicide. This seems to be a trend in Guyana that we have to really address. I am not saying that this is only a Public Security Sector issue. It is an issue which requires a combination of forces to be able to start dealing more frontally with domestic and sexual violence in our country. It was very much a platform with programmes and interventions.

*5.25 p.m.*

There is a law and so on, but somehow in terms of the Government persona out there, one hardly hears the Government or Government officials talking about it and trying to work in a very concerted way. It is because it is a very complex social issue. It is not only crime; it is a social issue.

I went to an area and a social worker, not to be named, was extraordinary worried about the level of incidents of sexual and physical violence against children, and, in her experience, that was on the increase. Again, those figures are not in the 10 top crimes that the police list off. I know that there was a time when the figures were disaggregated that one could have seen the type of data and even the age range and, sometimes the geographic locations. Those issues are not public anymore.

The Government, as I said, made promises in 2015. You said as a Government that you had the answers, and that the PPP/C did not have the answers - we could not do it. When we go to the Mid-Year Report 2018 which the Hon. Minister Jordan has tabled today, it is a sad reflection of the Public Security Sector. Mr. Jordan has put a very sanitised report, but nevertheless, I think I know a little about budgeting to know that, from his perspective as a Minister of Finance, who is concerned about expenditure and people using the moneys that are allocated to them, that, in this report, on page 56, headed - “Security” of the Mid-Year Report 2018, you are just seeing

“underperformance”, serious underperformance of the Public Security Sector - terrible underperformance. The Government has expended, we recognise that you have put a lot of money into the Public Security Sector, more than before - congratulations. However, we are not seeing the results.

We saw 17 men killed, then the Camp Street Prison burned down; then we see the Lusignan Prison where there were disturbances; and the Mazaruni Prison where there were disturbances. Something is wrong and the Government has to stop pretending that it is alright, that these percentages of 11% down are okay. It is not okay. If you are victims of these crimes, it is not okay. If you are family members of these victims you are not okay.

You have to stop living in and move out of this ivory tower, this bubble that you are in because, when there are women who are murdered; when there are elderly people whose houses are broken into, and they are beaten, gagged and tied up, and things are stolen from them, the repercussions are not just on those two elderly people who would probably be traumatised for the rest of their lives, who knows what kind of maiming has happen to them, but also what happens to the whole community or to their families. This is a social issue. It is a moral issue. It is not just about putting up the statistics and telling the police boys to put the statistics. “You see, we are doing alright guys.” and pat yourselves on the back. It is peoples’ lives.

The number of people who are injured by criminals and are in hospitals and in medical centres; the number of people who have been shot, broken arms, broken wrist, stab wounds, there are many, just go into the wards of the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). Just go to some of the hospitals and see some of these victims - men, women and children. They have moved from the page of being a statistic to human beings who have life and breath. This is what we are talking about in this motion.

Hon. Ramjattan, I have been on that side too. I know what is like to be there. You have my sympathy and my empathy. *[Interruption]* Thank you. My Colleague next to me has also been a Minister of Home Affairs. We have gone through the rough times too, but we are saying that we could all look at statistics and feel better - this is going down. But, the problem is that every part of Guyana is being affected. We see reports of miners being attacked and killed in the forest and in the bush; we see businessmen and women being attacked, doing their business, walking on the

streets or in their own little businesses. I would just give you examples in two to three weeks, there are a number of things that have happened, and this was in 2017. A robbery under arms committed on a Corentyne couple; five men attacked and robbed persons at a supermarket at Good Hope, East Coast Demerara; armed robbers robbed the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) branch at Mon Repos twice and another branch at Parika; the murder and robbery of a Chinese businessman at Tuschen; three armed bandits attacked a father of five in front of his home at Better Hope; the murder of a man in Berbice; the robbery of a popular café in Georgetown; the battered and unconscious body of woman found alongside the Ogle Public Road; the armed robbery of E-Networks office at Vreed-en-Hoop; a nephew decapitated his uncle at Better Hope; a businessman shot and robbed in broad day light at a Georgetown traffic light; a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) staff robbed on her way home in Queenstown; and the murder of a 16 year old teen in Berbice. Those are not statistics my dear Friends – this is reality.

You said that you had the answers; you said that you knew what to do and that we did not know what to do. You said that the United Kingdom (UK) Security Sector Programme would bring in all the technical and other support that would help you. You have a report from Mr. Russell Combe, who is a Presidential Advisor. He has sent in his report, proposal or draft, whatever it is, to you now for several months. Have you finished looking at it at Cabinet; will there be a declaration at Cabinet? What are you going to do about the crime that is taking place in the country? And what is this comprehensive plan? You are three years into the whole thing. You only have two years more left you know. It is actually less than two years because elections are not going to be exactly in December, 2020, according to the schedule. So, you do not have a full two years left. You have gone pass halfway and you have not been able to make an indent into the Public Security Sector issues in our country. The crime wave is one.

Let us look at some other issues that relate to it. The police force of this country is made up of good men, bad men, rogue cops and guys who do not do their jobs well, but in my experience as a Minister of Home Affairs, a lot of the men and women I have worked with, who are in the police force, were decent hardworking people trying to make a living and trying to do best with what they had. I do not paint a brush to say that all the police are rogues.

However, for the last three years, the police have not had a salary increase. The thirteenth month salary they used to get every year as a bonus, annually, based on the salary they were getting,

both for the disciplined forces - that is, the army, the police, the prison service and the fire service - have been withdrawn. We have men in 2015 getting paid at a certain level and, in 2018, with valued-added tax (VAT) and other increases, they are getting paid less - taking home less, in other words with VAT on GPL and water. Yet, the crime situation is one that challenges them all the time.

We have a police force that is being demoralised; we have a police force that came under the Commission of Inquiry in which they were targeted as having not acted appropriately or whatever, in relation to what was the intention or an objective to assassinate the President. The person who was the Head of that Commission of Inquiry, who was very clear when one read the reports in the newspaper, is now and will be, I believe, the Chairman of the Police Service Commission. You are on a road where the women and men you depend on, your frontline people to deal with crime, are the ones who are being demoralised. You cannot run a security sector like that, no thirteenth month, no salary increase.

We debated in this House, the Commission of Inquiry - the Public Service Commission, the Report on the Public Service, in which it was raised here, in-House, that the salaries of the Guyana Disciplined Forces would be contingent and tied to the equivalencies of the Public Service and until that is done, they do not get anything.

The teachers have not gotten anything, but I would not go into the teachers' direction today. We have a police force, a prison service and you are asking wardens and everybody to take care of the prisoners in very difficult conditions, in which every time there is a raid, you are finding weapons, cell phones and *ganja*. There are even parties with foreign liquor for Mother's Day - Johnny Walker, I guess, [Mr. Rohee: And Ciroc.] I do not know what Ciroc is; he is saying Ciroc. I do not drink, I am sorry. [Interruption]

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

There is the Police Complaints Authority. One of the issues is where do the citizens of our country go when they need to have recourse? Let us examine that. There is a lot of under reporting, in fact, a numbers of reports that have been done by international bodies - the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank and so on - have stated that there is level

of underreporting of crime in Guyana, part of it is because of the lack of confidence in the Guyana Police Force.

What are the other avenues for the citizens of this country? Is it the Police Complaints Authority? Well, you removed the gentleman who was there because he was 80 years old; you said he was too old. He has not been replaced - an honourable man, a man who has served with distinction at the Police Complaints Authority. Then you put a man older than him to be Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). I cannot figure out that mathematics, my brain is not complicated as that to deal with that mathematics that you have incurred.

However, the Police Complaints Authority is one avenue that citizens basically had some confidence to go to. There is no Chairman - no Head of the Police Complaints Authority. People have to go to the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). Again, this is not a place where people have great confidence and they are not unjustified in being dubious about making reports to the Office of Professional Responsibility. Then, on top of that, there is what appears to be the police getting confused about who they are taking orders from.

So, there is this conflagration which you have created, where the Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) that is under the police is now somewhere else. There was an event that happened that was reported in the press and had affected one of our Members of Parliament (MPs), where his wife was chased down the road by a strange vehicle, which ended up where three people died as a result. No investigation, no commission of inquiry, so who is running the show? When the questions were asked, who gave the order to do this, there were no answers, the only answer that was public was that there would not be a commission of inquiry; there would not be investigation. An Army Officer and his wife died, a man who was driving a vehicle, an innocent man, was killed, and a young woman could have also died. The issue is that you have started to unravel. *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]*

The one thing about the security sector in all parts of the world, they work with hierarchy and they work with rules and regulations. These are considered professionals who need to do their work in a particular way. When you start to tinker with this and eek away at the hierarchy that is in the security sector, you begin to unravel the whole order of business. So, you now have what

you deserve; you now have Government officials giving orders to policemen and telling them who to charge and who not to charge, and who to release and who not to release.

*5.40 p.m.*

Why the Government does not comprehend that it is unravelling the Public Security Sector of this country to the detriment of the citizens, to the detriment of the economy and to the detriment of people who just want to stay here. Another Member of Parliament (MP) wrote a long letter in the papers, too, about an experience that he had.

We spoke, a few weeks ago, about the state of the interior roads. At first, I think the Government thought it would just have been on the infrastructural issues. The interior roads have to do with the economy, forestry, timber and tourism.

There is a United States of America (USA) report of this year which points out that crime is still a critical threat in this country. In fact, I will not quote from the whole report, which states that people should not go certain places.

I saw Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon, the other day - I do not remember what event it was - talking about geospatial maps, if I understood him correctly, to show where the target areas are and where the areas that have high crime rates are. In other words, it was where persons should stay away from. I am paraphrasing what he said. How does that imbue confidence? You put up a map that shows this street corner and that street corner and you say, "Don't go near there." You are turning communities into crime zones. If they are crime zones already, then it is going to get worse.

I understand geospatial observatories and crime observatories. I understand all of those concepts very well. Those are used internally. They are not to be on a website so that when people come to visit Guyana they could say, "Should we go to Leopold and Bent Street or George Streets? Should we go there?" That is where I come from, George and Bent Street. Do not go there. Do not go to Dennis Street. Do not go to this street. What is that?

The whole geospatial mapping, as far as I know, in my time, was to help the Police Force know which areas were vulnerable, at risk and where there were limited resources with patrols, manpower and equipment. It was so that they would do more in those areas that were high risk or



were at risk. So, I do not understand putting up some geospatial map, showing which areas are flashing red, or I guess green because your colour is green. You will not want to use red. I understand that you are so preoccupied with colours that, in Union, you made the contractor take down the red fence and put up a green one. Maybe it is just a rumour, maybe it is not true, but I saw some photographs and so I will leave it at that.

When we came to this House in 2016, it was to say to the Government that it should tell the people, because you were new in the Government, what measures it was going to take to bring the escalating crime situation under control. In this motion, we are not asking you to do that anymore. After three years, you should know what you are doing. Clearly, the public does not know what you are doing and the public does not have confidence in what you are doing.

The Government has to sit down and look at it. When we were in Government, as the Minister of Home Affairs I was the chairperson of the National Security Committee (NSC), and so was Mr. Rohee. I notice now that National Security Committee is directly under the President and it is meeting once a week. We used to meet once a month. The Guyana Defence Board is under the President as well. So, I am not sure where the Minister of Public Security fits in.

It therefore means that the issue is at a very high level. That is fine, but then you have to show, produce. *Your proof of the pudding is in the eating.* Do people in Guyana feel safer? Yes, or no? If we were to walk outside of this Chamber and go in the market and go in this circle around here and ask people, “Do you feel safer now as compared to a year ago?” Many people will say “no”.

[**Mr. Hamilton:** Ask L. Seepersaud if they feel safe.] Thank you, Mr. Hamilton. L. Seepersaud in Stabroek Market has been there forever, for 50 years or longer, and they have never been robbed. There are robberies every single day in the Stabroek Market; many of them are no longer reported to the Police.

One can say that maybe some are inside jobs and so on. There are people going into the banks, taking out their money from the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) and they are followed and attacked. So, people are also now concerned about how to carry money. Every time you go to the bank, you have to be concerned about whether someone is following you when you come out. Is someone going to be trailing you? What is going on?

Again, I go back to perceptions. I have an idea of what my Colleague on the other side, Minister Ramjattan, is going to say. I have an idea. I have heard him speak before; I heard him two weeks before on questions that were asked. The issue is that Minister Ramjattan is only one leg of the entire public security sector strategy. He is half a leg, maybe. There is Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon, the super Minister of all, who is involved in the Guyana Defence Board and in the National Security Committee. The current situation requires a joint effort by many agencies cooperating and collaborating, trusting each other to get the job done, sharing intelligence and sharing information. Information sharing amongst agencies is important. You have dismantled a number of the intelligence bodies.

I had quoted from Mr. Liverpool, former Guyana Defence Force (GDF) Officer, who said that one of the dangers he has seen in the Caribbean, including Guyana, is the silo approach to crime and security. You have created a silo called Special Organised Crime Unit (SOCU); you have created a silo called State Assets Recovery Agency (SARA); and you have created another silo called the Guyana People's Militia. You have created other silos here and there and they are not working together.

You have an Anti-Money Laundering Authority which you proposed. Actually, the combination of the characters in it and the heads of services made sense. You came last week, you threw it out and now you have put in a much weaker and much worse situation. You do not even have the Minister of Public Security, Minister Ramjattan, in that Anti-Money Laundering Authority. You do not have the Commissioner of Police in it, but you have the Minister of Legal Affairs and Attorney General. So, you are creating silos all along in relation to fighting crime. This cannot work.

This is not the advice of Ms. Gail Teixeira. I have some experience, but there are other comrades who have been in the security sector and there are people outside of Guyana who have been in it, and they have given advice. Scotland Yard and others who have worked with the Government of Guyana, whether it is with the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) or the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change (APNU/AFC), have come up with a variety of proposals and recommendations, some of which you may or may not agree with. The issue is that the Government, more and more, is showing total incompetence to deal with the public security sector.

I do not want this to be seen as a “Mr. Ramjattan attack”. It is not an attack on Mr. Ramjattan, as the Minister. I am attacking the whole Government. I am criticising the whole Government because everyone is responsible. I remember Minister Trotman speaking here...and Minister Ramjattan too, by the way, when he spoke on this side of the House about “collective responsibility”. Do you remember, Mr. Ramjattan? He spoke about collective responsibility and ministerial responsibility. The *Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana* talks about collective responsibility for the Cabinet.

The crime situation, the level of availability of guns in the country, the erosion of law and order... Everyone thinks that when there is the erosion of the rule of law, somehow it is only in relation to bandits. In most countries where there is the erosion of the rule of law, it does not start with the bandits and the criminals. It starts at the political level. It starts at the governance levels when the erosion of the *Constitution* and the institutional structures of the country begin to go on very *waffly* ground. That is when the other forces of the State, the coercive arm of the State, such as the Disciplined Forces, the Police Force, the Prison Services, watch for signals of what is going on and realise that it is open season and they can have fun too.

This adjournment motion, in the last BE IT RESOLVED clause, calls on the Government to effectively manage the public security sector. You had, according to Mr. Jordan, \$30.7 billion in 2017 and, by half year, only \$14 billion was spent. There was the modernisation of the Guyana Prison Service, which was operating below its full rank. There was money to build the prison and you are not doing it. Bids for work on police stations are now being done and so on.

In the entire report, what it is not related to is the impact on tourism and on the business sector. That is why more and more people get very cagey about people knowing how much money they earn. There is the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) watching persons like a dog on top, watching every cent and looking for payment, for taxation, for income tax and everything else. But people are becoming more and more reticent, not because they do not necessarily want to pay their taxes, but because they do not want people to know what they have.

Years ago, when people won the lottery, the person was there with a big cheque with their name on it with plenty of cameras flashing. The crime wave began and they started putting that aside because people felt targeted. That was a number of long years ago and it still cannot take place.

People do not want disclosures and access to their personal information because it would make them vulnerable. I am talking about a perception of vulnerability. If you have money in the bank account and you go and take it out, people are now even sceptical. Sometimes somebody in the bank is relaying information out to know which person to follow because the person just withdrew \$1 million or \$2 million dollars. This is all crime. It might be white collar crimes, it might be blue collar crimes or it might be serious crimes, the point is that it is crime.

The Government has shown, after three years, it is not making a dent. You cannot complain that you do not have financial resources. You have that. You had a gift from the Chinese of US\$17 million, I think, worth in vehicles. You are buying more vehicles.

How can you ask the men and women in blue, as they say, to work and when you go to stations - as was reported in this House when the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Security Sector went to Mabaruma and other parts of Region 1 – there are absolutely horrendous conditions that the policemen have to live and work under? Yes, you can say that we did not do anything. That is fine. You can criticise us on that. But then you cannot live on the laurels of that. You have to be able to say what you have done in three years. Since we were wrong, we were bad and we were wicked and did not do anything right, what have you done?

It is because you had more money for the public security sector than any other time in the history of this country. So, you are not short of money. Of course, I am sure that the Minister will say that we are always short of money and I can live with that. But \$30 billion in 2017 and more in the 2018 Budget is a nice increase for the public security sector. You are not floundering and you are not stretched, like in 1992 when we got into Government and I was running the Ministry of Health on \$200 million.

*5.55 p.m.*

Right now, it is \$32 billion for health and \$34 billion for education.

What was the Ministry of Home Affairs running on in those days? The Ministry of Home Affairs did not even reach a billion dollars. It was not even near \$1 billion. **[An. Hon. Member:**

*Inaudible.]* I am only doing a comparison. If you cannot understand comparisons, that is not my problem. If you cannot understand comparative analysis, it is not my problem.

What I am saying is that there is a difference between having limited resources and having one, financial resources. If you cannot put \$30 billion to work in the security sector, something is wrong with you. If you can only spend such a paltry sum of \$14 billion out of \$30.7 billion on capital and recurrent projects in half of a year, knowing the needs of the sector...You are going to come for 12-month budget in December because you want the full year to execute and yet by mid-year, you cannot make it. We are in August.

The Minister, in his document, under security, has not really...I did not get time to read it properly - we just got it today - to see, in fact, if he has indicated how much money the security sector actually expended by the end of June this year. It is not in the document, but if I am wrong, I stand corrected. I could not find it, but I did a quick search only.

I am asking the Government, as a woman and as a citizen of this country, if it could please, from a humanitarian point of view, from a rights point of view and from a human point of view, pay greater attention to the issue of femicide. People do not always know what femicide is. Femicide is the murder of women, sometimes by persons they know, sometimes by ex-lovers or husbands and sometimes by strangers. The figures for women being murdered in this country is going up, and the brutality and the anger that is vented upon these women in the way they are murdered means something and requires further analysis and attention. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister of Social Protection, Ms. Amna Ally, who deals with sexual and domestic violence, and the Minister of Public Health, who deals with the mental health issues, to work in partnership with the Minister of Public Security.

As I said that there is too much siloing in this Government. Everybody is creating their own silo - their own territory, and their own demarcations - so as not to work as teams.

One of the challenges for the Government is that one in Government can get very caught up - and I know about this. I have some familiarity with this - with studies and consultancies in order to access money. The Citizen Security Project at one time became...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not want to break your train of thought but you have been speaking for 39 minutes.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Thank you. I should be able to finish in two more minutes. The Citizen Security Projects, one and two, were attempts to try to address some of these issues. I do not know where those are now but I am sure that the Minister would talk about it. I want to appeal to the Government to not be defensive on this issue and go into siege mentality, as it normally does on these issues. This is not a siege mentality issue. This is about citizens. It is the responsibility of whoever is in Government. We took the licks when we were in Government and we took the attacks for the responsibility to protect and safeguard the safety of our citizens.

In doing so, you would reduce the levels of crime. To quote from a speech President Granger made on October, 2017, “the levels of crime are eroding public trust and lowering the quality of life in our country.”

I bring this view to you and I hope that it would be understood that this issue is an emotional one, it is one that concerns everybody’s lives and it needs to be treated in a much more humane way than the way it has been dealt with so far. The Government must become more effective and much more efficient in the manner in which it manages the public security sector so that it could be to the benefit of our people.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I do not have a list of speakers. I assume that is the only speaker for this matter.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am sorry. We held a discussion in the Member of Parliament’s (MPs) Lounge. Mr. Rohee would speak after me, then Minister Ramjattan and then I would close.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Rohee:** Any discussion or debate on the crime situation in any country, and in this case Guyana, our country, at this level ought to be welcomed. It shows that there is concern by the Members of Parliament. The fact that you, Mr. Speaker, have approved the motion for discussion

is an indication of the importance that the National Assembly attaches to the crime situation in our country.

The problem, however, is that there has been a lot of talk about the crime situation in Guyana. There are tonnes of documents and studies and the *Hansard* is replete with debates and discussions on the crime situation in Guyana. The debate, for example, during the consideration of the Estimates, and even in the Committee of Supply, occupied a tremendous amount of time on the security sector and resources allocated to the security sector. In all of this, I believe that the people out there look forward to action and they look forward to results. They recognise that huge amounts of resources have been allocated to the public security sector and they look for value for money and this is what the people, I suppose, are concerned about.

The worse thing that could happen in a country is when an incoming Government wipes the slate completely clean, that is to say the antecedents in whichever sector they are working in, and imagines that nothing existed before. And not only that nothing existed before, but the propaganda that they had waged, while they were in the Opposition, they had begun to believe. When they got into Government, they were caught in this situation where, having believed a lot of things that they thought to be true when they were in Opposition, they were now confronted with a reality that those things were not true. The difficulty, however, is how to save face. This goes back to the question of going into the mode of being defensive; going into the mode of still believing the propaganda that they peddled when they were in the Opposition; and being unable to reconcile reality with myth. This is the difficulty, I believe, the Government is facing in this situation.

Any discussion on the crime situation has to be situated in a context and this is another difficulty the Government is having. It is not seeing crime and security as part and parcel of the systemic problem and part of the social fabric. It is being dealt with in isolation from the general malaise and the general problems in society.

Many studies have been done by the donor community showing that crime and security cannot be isolated from the problems that are inherent in a country that is pursuing a market economy. The market economy by itself throws up these challenges and, therefore, it behoves the Government, which is operating in that situation, to come up with solutions and policies.

Recognising it has certain constraints, it has to come up with certain policies to address crime and security in the context of the society in which we operate. That is why I agree with the point that was made by my Colleague, Ms. Teixeira, that, unless there be interagency collaboration and cooperation, you can forget it.

The Guyana Police Force is just an institution that has been there for many, many years to 'police' the situation so to speak. The Ministry of Public Security is the civilian oversight apparatus to ensure that the Guyana Police Force, in keeping with the Police Act, is given general directions and orders on how to address the situation. So, if you have a Ministry of Public Security that is not fulfilling its mandate, *vis-à-vis* the Police Act, to give the appropriate general directions to the Guyana Police Force to formulate the policies which the Guyana Police Force and the security agencies ought to follow, it would end up *like a dog chasing its tail* and we would be spinning in mud so to speak. That is precisely the situation in which we find ourselves.

The National Assembly, in a debate like this, must end up with this being talk shop. Crime and security require action, but, like I said before, all we hear is a lot of platitudes, a lot of excuses and a lot of defensive rhetoric coming from the Government with no action behind it. The action has to be on the law enforcement side, as well as on the civilian side because the law enforcement officers and agencies do not sit here. The Minister that has the responsibility to find the resources for the law enforcement agencies is the one who has to be made accountable. At the law enforcement level, for example, the Guyana Police Force, which is the premier law enforcement agency in this country, and the various levels of the structure, persons have to be made accountable too. It is not only a question of the Commissioner of Police but it is also at various levels of the Force. All the officers at the divisional and sub-divisional levels have to be made accountable because, at the end of the day, it is the people who are affected and they are all paid by the people. So, they are accountable to the citizens in the various communities where crimes are committed.

*6.10 p.m.*

One of the greatest deficiencies of this Government that we have in place is the total alienation and non-acceptance of the reality and of the fact that there is a role for civilians in addressing



crime and security in this country. This Government, as far as I could see and from what I have read, has totally marginalised and left out the civilian component from those bodies that could play a role in addressing the crime and security situation in our country.

There are antecedents. There was a National Commission on Law and Order and the Minister scrapped that. Thus, the National Commission for Law and Order was a body, the only of its kind in the country where law enforcement and the civilians sat together in a body to see how best civilian and law enforcement could work to deal with the crime situation in the country. That was totally scrapped by Minister Ramjattan.

In addition to that, we had a crime and social observatory, where the law enforcement agencies and the civilian component, together with elements of the Judiciary and the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP), sat and collaborated and discussed the crime situation. They are talking now about hotspots. I read it in today's newspaper, I think it was. We had long before, at the Ministry of Home Affairs, a body that was established to deal with crime mapping. That body was generating reports on a weekly and monthly basis. The intention was for the reports to be generated on a daily and hourly basis at police stations so that the ranks at the police stations would be able to react almost immediately to reports of crime. That was not to our satisfaction because that was more reactionary rather than *pro-actionary*.

What is required, which the Minister keeps telling us has happened when, in fact, evidence shows that it has not, is the placement of neighbourhood police in the various neighbourhoods; the placement of community policing. We are hearing a lot of talk about these units still being in existence. If, in fact, they were in existence and if, in fact, they were effective... that is the word we are looking for. How effective are the neighbourhood police and the community policing units? How could they be effective when they have been totally decimated by the incoming administration? There is evidence to attest to this.

The motion that we have before us raises a whole host of issues, but the bottom line and emphasis of the motion is, as far as my interpretation, the human factor. The human factor is the bottom line when we come to discuss anything to do with crime and security. How is the human factor being addressed? How are the concerns of the human factor being represented by the Government, by the specific Ministry that had the portfolio to deal with crime and security and

by the law enforcement agencies? To what extent is there a connection, psychologically and otherwise, with the human factor? Too often, the relationship is seen as one that is bereft of any, for want of a better word, feelings whatsoever. People are seeing in terms of numbers. But the connection between law enforcement and the Ministry that has the responsibility to ensure that people are safe and secure is seen as something that is abstract. That has to be corrected.

The motion raises the question of domestic and sexual violence and the murder of women under brutal circumstances. It speaks to gruesome cases of women being permanently maimed and murdered, incidents of rape, *et cetera*, some of the most heinous crimes in the country. Let us reduce these phenomena to the people's aspect. When a woman is raped, when a woman or a mother, whether it is a single parent or otherwise, is murdered, maimed or disabled, there is cost that springs from that. If that woman is, let us say a security guard, or if that individual is the sole breadwinner of the home, and she suddenly, as a result of a crime, becomes physically unable to earn, to work, obviously that affects the entire family. How does that family survive? If the father is affected physically – maimed and disabled or shot and killed or murdered, and that father is the sole breadwinner of the family and therefore he is removed completely from the situation as a result of that crime, that entire family is devastated economically and otherwise. It is because the woman or the mother of that family is now forced to look for a job for which she may not be suitably qualified and, in looking for that job, that by its very nature becomes a challenge. The challenge in that situation means that she has to spend less time with the children. The children, as a result of the parents not being there or one element of the parents not being there, are left on their own. That creates its own problem.

When we are discussing the crime situation we have to break it down to the lowest denominating factor. This brings us back to the human factor. There is a social cost to crime, a heavy social cost. Who bears that cost? Who bears that social cost to the crime that was committed and affected a home, a family?

The motion before us also draws attention to the psychological impact, the traumatic effects on children as a result of crimes committed. What about the counselling? Where are the institutions to counsel families affected by criminal activities and children affected by criminal activities? Where are the traumas centres? We have to reduce this big problem to, as I said, the smallest factor, which, in fact, is the human factor in the society.

The motion also refers to criminals becoming bolder and more brazen. At one time, the Comrades on the other side of the House kept telling us that they had the solution to these problems. When the shoe is on the other foot, it is a totally different situation altogether. The problem is, I come back, without repeating myself, what was there before...*we cannot throw out the baby with the bath water*, and this is what the Government has apparently done. They have thrown, entirely, the baby with the bath water. They are pretending as though nothing positive existed before when, in fact, what they should have done was built on what existed before, take what was good and build on that. Do not come and tell us that this is being created and that is being created when we know, as fact...because we had been there for 23 years. We have been in the system for 23 years. [Mr. Ramjattan: We have 20 more to go.] I do not know about you having 20 more to go. I know what we had.

Properties have been lost. Break and enter and larceny: the Government has been unable to grapple the whole question of break and enter and larceny. Poor families have been losing properties as a result of break and enter and larceny and they cannot afford to buy back these things. What they have to do is go to Courts Guyana Inc., do a hire purchase and end more indebted than they were before. This is an additional cost to a family.

In addition, property is stolen from the family that they have not paid off for. Who bears that cost so they do not have to be paying for a piece of furniture or some flat screen television that was stolen by the criminal which they cannot enjoy any longer? That is a cost they have to bear. All we are hearing is that investigations are continuing. Nothing is returned and there is a loss.

I would like to place emphasis on the social cost of crimes committed in our country and the fact that poor and working families... A young lady gets a job for the first time; she purchases a phone; and she is right by Stabroek Market, and by the way Stabroek Market is one of the hotspots. Someone said that persons must avoid going to the hotspots. How the hell could you avoid, sorry Mr. Speaker, going to Stabroek Market square?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am sure you will withdraw that remark.

**Mr. Rohee:** I do withdraw it.

**Mr. Speaker:** And you will apologise to the House for using it.

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes. I would have preferred to use purgatory.

**Mr. Speaker:** Whatever you would have preferred, Hon. Member, you should apologise to the House for using what is near profanity in this House.

**Mr. Rohee:** Okay. Let us use the home of adage.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am interested in an apology to the House and then you proceed.

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, I withdraw that word, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Mr. Rohee?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** You will apologise to the House for the manner in which you expressed yourself.

**Mr. Rohee:** I already withdrew the remark, Mr. Speaker. I would like to proceed, with your permission.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Speaker awaits your apology to the House. If it is the case that you have nothing further to say, then I will proceed to the next speaker.

**Mr. Rohee:** I did not say that I have nothing further to say, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Then you will do what you have been directed by the Speaker to do.

**Mr. Rohee:** What is that, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. Speaker:** Apologise to the House for the language you used in this House.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, is that for using the word “hell”? Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark and I apologise, Sir. Could I proceed?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you may proceed now. Hon. Member Mr. Rohee, before you do, would you claim your seat for a moment please?

I want to say, for the general interest of all Members, it is not a difficult thing if an error is made, intentionally or otherwise, to apologise for making it. Leaders in this House are required to show the example. Hon. Mr. Rohee, please proceed.

6.25 p.m.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, a robbery takes place and the savings and the jewellery are gone. And this is savings that have been accumulated by very poor families. This is jewellery that has been handed down from one generation to another. That is a social cost. This is why I am emphasising that we cannot only deal with the macro picture, that we are having this and doing that; we need to bring it down to the level of the ordinary man and woman. This is the reality. Yes there are hotspots. But I want to suggest based on my knowledge of the situation, that all the hotspots have been identified and these are traditional hot spots. The data are there to establish and to verify statistically where the hotspots are. I have a great difficulty when we hear that these hotspots are being identified for public knowledge so that they could avoid them.

Mr. Speaker, let us be practical. If you are to stand at Regent and High Streets between 3 and 5 o' clock in the afternoon, you will see scores of people from all over Georgetown streaming into the direction of the Stabroek Market square. Why? This is because Minister Patterson has been unable to decentralise the transportation centres of this country, so everyone has to go to the Stabroek Market square. People who are living in La Penitence, people who are living in Alberrtown, people who are living in Kingston, people who are living in the eastern part of the city have to go to the western part of the city to get transportation to go back to the eastern part of the city, thousands of people. All these talks we hear from time to time, why we did not do this and why we did not do that, you have time to do it so do it now. You have all of the answers. Do it. Since we did not do it, you do it. *[Interruption from the Government Members]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Rohee, let us stay on point.

**Mr. Rohee:** I am trying my best to do that, but I would be happy if the other side could control themselves with your assistance.

It is true that the budgetary allocations for the Ministry of Public Security has increased exponentially. The kind of resources that Minister Ramjattan has, we never had that, but where

did this money come from? In three years you were able to get those billions of dollars. Mr. Jordan, you were able to generate those billions of dollars in three years to be able to form it out to various Government agencies and departments. It did not happen in three years. It happened over a period of time. That is why the incoming Government was able to use the resources that were in the public treasury generated by the People's Progressive Party/Civic - the money that they said that we stole; the money that they said was freighted overseas; the same money is now being spent. In 2016, \$14.5 billion, 2017, \$7.3 billion and 2018 \$18.7 billion, that was a lot of money, but are we getting value for this money? All we are getting is talk and more talk. [Ms. Ally: Mr. Ramjattan is coming after you, you know.] It does not bother me. I am happy to know that he is coming after me. It means he is coming after something good.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have been speaking for 27 minutes.

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes Mr. Speaker, I am about to conclude. I am also timing myself. [Ms. Ally: Are you sure that it is working?] I can assure you that it is not a *kanta* one. I can show the Hon. Members that it was not bought from under the clock, as we know some of them buy their watches from under the clock as well - under the clock, the hot spot.

The problem is a systemic one. The Government, so far, has failed to situate the crime situation in the context of the social faculty that it is confronting the country in which we do, the sociality fabric in which we are operating.

I was happy to read in the newspapers, because this is not anything that is confidential, the media, that His Excellency the President of Guyana has suggested for talks that we deal with environment, we deal oil and gas and we deal with security which sends a message that this is the problem. I would be disappointed if Mr. Ramjattan, the Hon. Minister, is to get up here in this honourable House and pretend to us that he does not have a problem. Let us hear what are the problems and what are the solutions that you are proposing. Do not wait on this talks that the President spoke about to come up with the answers. This is the Minister of Public Security but we are not getting any answers from him. Every time we ask about the Combe's Report, we keep hearing that it is coming, but it never comes. It is never there.

To conclude, this honourable House has established an oversight committee on security sector. The Minister spends a lot of time whenever the committee is convened to talk about visits to

police stations. Forget about visits to police stations. That is not going to deal with the crime situation. I told the speaker, myself, that I am not interested in visits to police stations and trips in and around the regions.

The Minister has to bring to the oversight committee precisely the problems that are being raised almost on a regular basis in the House and this is what the people are concerned about. That is what that oversight committee was established for, to find solutions, the problems affecting the ordinary man and woman who suffers on a daily basis at the hands of the criminals in this country when the Ministry of Public Security has failed abysmally to deliver, notwithstanding the huge amount of resources he has at his disposal to address crime and security in the country. The Minister must stand up this evening and admit that he has failed and that is willing to do like the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman, give up a certain section of his Ministry and to hand it over to Ministry of the Presidency.

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

**Mr. Rohee:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

**Vice-President and Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]:** I must say that indeed I am glad that we are debating this motion this afternoon, so that I can again, after twice in the last two months, deal with issues of crime and security. Firstly, as you recall, Mr. Speaker, the motion in relation to piracy and that which happened off the coast to Suriname and, secondly, a number of questions that were asked to be wholly answered, by Mr. Clement Rohee, addressing growing fears with the crime situation only two weeks ago.

A number of the things that I have stated there in both the motion and in answering the Oral Questions without Notice are what I am going to repeat here. They are largely to do with the truth and the fact that there has been a decline in crime. If you do not want to believe that, well there is absolutely nothing that I can do, because you have literally characterised and typified yourself just now when the Speaker said the “ayes” would have it and you all jumped up as though you did not know that was happening. That is the problem with you over there. You just got up. You do not even want to listen to the truth, when we give you the statistics...

**[Mr. Greenidge:** It is an echo chamber. They listen to themselves.]                      That is right. They listen to themselves, so they go. That same police force started the statistics in relation to the

serious crimes, the serious crimes include murder, robbery, robbery under arms, with instrument, with violence, aggravation, larceny, rape, burglary, break and enter and kidnapping. That is what we have here as the serious crime and that was all the time and that is what is at the side here.

There were, in 2013, 4, 204 serious crimes, 2014, 3,688, 2015, 3,925, and then it declined, the same police force giving the statistics, 2016, 3,300 and in 2017, 3,076. It had a decline.

The murder rate in 2013, murders, 155 for the entire year, in the year 2017, it is 115. It is from 155 to 115, so when they give the impression of all the robbery and violence with firearms used... By the way the highest was in 2014, 823, in 2016, 774, 2017, 673 and we are catching more of these criminals. **[Mr. Greenidge: Are you not ashamed?]** That is the word. I would not use it, but they are going to say all of that. When it...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, if you are referring to Members opposite, then you would refer to them in the appropriate matter.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Speaker, my apologies. Immediately I would say that the Hon. Members, must appreciate all the piracies that were occurring prior to 2015 when we took office. What have happened to them? When you want to believe the truth you have to look at it and say that it is compared to what we had in our administration, and that is in the PPP/C's administration. What were the statistics? They are not being made up here. I could say this, it is till bad, too many robberies, too many burglaries, too many rapes, too many sexual assaults and, of course, too many murders. It is 115 less than in 2013.

*6.40 p.m.*

It important to understand that there are less and that is what we are doing with the resources. We are training policemen. We have more patrol vehicles and we are ensuring that the patrols be done to the extent that there is this decline and reduction. Even horses and dogs, the Canine Section and Mounted Branch have managed to be utilised to the extent of catching and also being patrols in those areas where they are. **[Mr. Greenidge: What about the water cannon?]** Well, I do not know. The water cannon has been a decrepit, derelict piece of thing.]



It is not as if we do not have a handle on the situation. Honestly, it is high. It is high because obviously there is a lot to say about other factors rather than a law enforcement factor. Let us take, for example, the very important one that I think motivated this motion this afternoon, and that is the domestic type of murder-suicide. It is my opinion that the Hon. Members across the floor did this today at 10.30 a.m. or at 11.00 a.m., I think, because of what transpired recently with the husband slitting the throat of his wife and then slitting his throat with what is called a Martindale 22. [An Hon. Member (Opposition): You are a cane-cutter.] Yes.

I know it good. By the way, I have used it to cut coconuts. [Laughter] It is not a laughing matter and we must not laugh at it. It is a very serious matter. There is something that is there that is very troubling in these communities, especially the rural areas, whereby members are taking the lives of their wives and themselves. [An Hon. Member (Opposition): You said sugar workers.]

You can call them sugar workers too, but it is not exclusively sugar workers. Let us not make a grand sweep because that would be a wrong analysis. It is certainly a problem. We need a lot more than law enforcement.

I do not know from the literature that I have read whether it has to do with the social setting of today. The social setting being that we are so anatomised and individualised. We are on to our computers; we are not there in solidarity. The village elders are not doing the work that they used to do before. A lot of the grievances at the domestic level with wives and the husbands are not being meted out by the elders within the community. Probably, it is a problem too with the church, pastors, moulvies and pandits are not doing their jobs. As a very famous author out of America writing about it all, Robert D. Putnam said, “We are bowling alone and we are not bowling with the village, we are not bowling with the community.” It is an extremely difficult situation. [Mr. Dharamlall: Are you closing the church?] We are not going to

close the church as you would do. Do you see the Hon. Member’s deduction – close the church? Just as what he did just now when you said the “ayes have it”, he stood up, and was going to quote Standing Orders. [Mr. Greenidge: He asked for it and when he got it, he stood

up.] That is them over there. Those are the Hon. Members. You did not make yourself very honourable there just now. [Interruption]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, it is good if we return to the issues.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I want to also state that it is absolutely not true that we have not been collaborating with all the units and the agencies which are dealing with national and public security. Every Tuesday morning, there is a meeting of the National Security Committee that has the head of Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU), the Commissioner of Police, and more than the Commissioner, the Crime Chief and a whole host of people who deal with this crime situation. They would state the position of the previous week which I have to report to Cabinet. They map the country in relation to where the crimes are occurring. **[Ms. Teixeira: It is**

**for the first time.]** It is not for the first time, but the impression is given as if we have halted it. As a matter of fact, we have even fine-tuned it better and that is the larger country and east of the region, we have the maps of them where they are occurring. It is for Georgetown.

**[Bishop Edghill: We want a map without any occurring.]** Well, that is an impossibility and probably when you can get that...*[Interruption]*

I do not know if we are being idealistic here but we have to be realistic. In an area that has a high level of guns - this Latin and South American area and the Caribbean, lots of guns and lots of narcotics - it breathes a lot of crime. That is the report coming from the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE), the Caribbean body that deals crime and security and also the Latin American body. We have huge porous borders whereby guns can come in. Again, you have to be realistic. We cannot...*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are getting to the stage where the speaker is competing with Members who are not speaking, or at least not speaking by my authority. I would advise that we remember that when a Member is on the floor and is speaking, we should do the courtesy - it is an obligation we have taken - of letting that Member says what he has to say. Always remember that you do not have to agree with it, but we must allow him to say it. Please proceed.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** All these agencies have been collaborating and integrating their information with the central body, the Commission of Police, the Crime Chief and all of that. **[Mr.**

**Rohee: Civilians do not sit on that body.]** Civilians do not sit on that. It is a National Security Committee. If you would want them, I would probably call you as the first civilian. It is something that is exclusively the executive function. We have, however, civilians in the management of police stations. The civilians are there within their localities at all of the police stations. Some civilians just do not want to deal with some of the police stations and they have

literally walked away. Very many of the police stations have management committees made up of civilians. The Community Policing Groups (CPGs) are all over the place. The same person who was appointed by Mr. Rohee, Mr. Pompey, is managing as the administrator of CPG. Thousands and thousands of hours of patrols with vehicles that they were given and also walking the streets. That is why over the last two months they have been awarded three times for the good work they did, in the first instance, for catching, on the East Bank Demerara, the persons who were stealing, the carjackers. It was the persons in the CPG. They have also done number catching of other bandits around the place that have caused the police to arrest them. They also prevented, by virtue of their night patrols... and so it important that you now get a feel of it. Indeed, we are civilianising these police stations. When you give the impression that okay it is...

Moreover, the police community groups are also getting what is called lectures on anger management. Within the communities we are talking to a lot of people, especially from the police community groups when they say that this person here has a domestic problem. We have been getting the police community groups', the elderly people, to talk to them. We have got two or three lectures done to police community groups at the police training centre: anger management and violence at the domestic level. We are saying that all of these are the methods of the police to deal with the civilians to ensure that these things are minimal and they have been declining because of those efforts.

What magnifies it is those big titles in the morning newspapers, daily newspapers and the Sunday newspapers that another crime has been committed, and indeed, another crime has been committed and it is there. If you see that every day, it magnifies the whole thing to the extent that when you are making progress and the declination, you all of a sudden feel that it has increased, and that is what we are talking about here. The actual statistics tell another story. The facts and the sordid details and the sensationalist titles and all of that and the photographs of the gruesome..., but, of course, in this country, it is a democracy, you cannot tell the press not to put that. It does have an effect. I want to let it be known that the truth is that we are doing the mapping. We have the observatory.

The observatory at the Ministry is a big part of that Ministry that is now going to take on the CariSECURE Project whereby every police station will have a computer and every single instance of serious crimes or any other crime will be electronically placed in there.

[**Ms. Teixeira:** That is Mr. Rohee's project.] We know that, but not all of the stations have that. We are doing it now and it is going to be part of the CariSECURE Project. More than that, the observatory is going to be trained to do the analysis of all of these statistics. We are also going to collaborate with the judiciary as to where it is that the case stands, whether at the magistracy level or at the indictable level at the high court, so that we will know, and even a collaborative effort with the prison to find out if they have served their sentence, what they are doing, if they are of good behaviour and all. We will have comprehensive holistic picture of it. We are going to benefit, I think, in the vicinity of about US\$4 million for that project, the CariSECURE Project.

We feel that this is the way we have to go. [**Mr. Rohee:** What about the cameras you were to establish...?] That is coming. Minister Catherine Hughes and I, tomorrow, are going to talk to some people who came from Estonia and they are going to talk about how we can put it up to the extent of ensuring that it is the experimental stage of Georgetown. Now, this is a very complicated piece of project. It is not as if it can be done overnight, my Hon. Members. This is going to be a very big project. We have the funding from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as part of the Citizen Security Strengthening Programme (CSSP) to start that. We need the experts to design the project because the next thing you are going to come and say, if we do it too fast and we just start putting up cameras all over the place with the command centre not properly placed and all of that, that we can have complications.

Although, it was a part of the project that I have spoken about since 2016, the people are here dealing with the issues. I, myself, and Minister of Public Telecommunications will be speaking. These things take some time. It is not as if we are not going to have them. Yes. Well, what is it?

[**Mr. Rohee:** It is three years.] You took 23 years and you could not have got a smart city. Well, we have taken two years, Hon. Member Mr. Rohee, and we are going to get it.

[**Ms. Campbell-Sukhai:** You need some anger management training.] Please, I do not need any anger management. I think you need it. You call people parasites. You go and you and say...[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you are being encouraged to depart from your script.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Speaker, I humbly apologise and I withdraw that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I withdraw that Hon. Member Nandlall.

I would want to say on the issue of the point made by both speakers before me, that it is creating so much fear that people do not want to come to Guyana. She quoted a passage that was so incoherent from the media report. I want to quote the passage that is very clear.

6.55 p.m.

Hon. Member Ms. Gail Teixeira quoted. It is on page 53.

“Guyana continues to show potential as a prime tourist destination, in the first half of 2018, tourist arrivals increased by 18.3% to 134,347 visitors.”

**[Bishop Edghill:** That is for the Cubans.] Yes. Whatever it is. It is 134,347 people came by the time half a year was gone. This is a mid-year report. We spent \$14 billion out of \$30 billion and it is half year, what is the big deal about that? We are going to spend the rest of the money out. It is important then that you do not give a false impression, Hon. Members, that it is so bad in Guyana, that people do not want to come. That is what you are giving. **[Ms.**

**Teixeira:** Tell the USA’s Ambassador.] The United States of America’s Ambassador knows that advisory has been there for some time. They always come on and indicate as such. They tell their citizens what they feel, in their opinion, is there. **[Mr. Rohee:** Tell them

to pull it down.] We cannot tell the Americans to pull down. Could you ever tell them that? You could not do that. This is the attitude of the Members of the Opposition.

**[Mr. Greenidge:** They get up and vote against the same thing they ask for.] Yes, exactly but we are not going to furiously blast the Americans. They are our big brothers around this territory in geo-political states.

It is that we work in collaboration with them like we are doing with the Drug Enforcement Agency. **[Ms. Teixeira:** You stopper.] Yes. We are stoppers. That is right. We

also see them as friends and big brothers in the territory because they are also helping us to do a number of things: catch aeroplanes that are landing with a big set of cannabis and cocaine, and whatever else. They are doing it. They are helping us with certain boats in the marine section. The marine capability is being enhanced because of - what do you call it? - the iron-something.

[**Mr. Rohee:** The iron curtain.] The iron curtain is where you came from, the Soviet Union. They are liberal democrats. If you could understand what that means, that is democratic centralism, so let us not go there.

We are also getting help in relation to a number of other things, such as trafficking in persons. That is why we have managed to go to tier one for two years now. Yes, it is important that you understand we are making movements forward. It is important that, that be known, as a fact.

Every complaint that is made against the Guyana Police Force (GPF), notwithstanding that the head of the Police Complaints Authority has not yet been appointed, must be investigated by the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). The reports are then sent to the people who made the complaint. If the complaint was made that a policeman treated me this way or that and did not do that, it is made public, and you would know about it. The police force has to be scrutinised. It is scrutinised by the Office of Professional Responsibility, the Police Complaints Authority and the Minister who has an overarching policy orientation over them. It is important all of that is being done.

There is the training that is being done in relation to so many aspects of the police's work. I have here their achievements by the justice education programme from Canada. It did a report in relation to what they have done, all the major achievements done by them from 2015 to 2018. Thirty-three persons were trained as trainers, in relation to video analysis. [**Mr. Rohee:**

That was not published.] You wanted the answers and now when you are getting them, you are saying that was not published. [**Mr. Rohee:** Put it in the press.] Yes, this

was in the press. [**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** We are getting it now.] Yes, if you did not read it in the press, you are getting it now. Two property rooms were established for the video analysis. We had units established in both the Guyana Police Force and the Guyana Forensic Science Laboratory (GFSL). We had 631 participants in these programmes. The point is that our policemen are being trained to have the capacity and capability that is superior to when the Hon. Member was the Minister. It is both of them.

We also have a Strategic Management Unit that has been also established as a result of...

[**Mr. Rohee:** That was there before.] We have an efficient one here. I do not know what you had there before. We are doing a number of reviews of training programmes by the Guyana

Police Force, analysing training needs and capabilities to train for new recruits, specialist and senior command levels. [Mr. Damon: We had those positions before.] Okay, you had them before but we are going to enhance and continue them because you gave the information to this honourable House as if we cut them off. We have not cut off anything. We are going to utilise that which was there and was beneficial to the GPF and that which we have to cut off, we would cut off. That is my opinion of that body. We got the recommendations and we are implementing them. The human resources policies and practices that are going to be more relevant to the pending Security Sector Reform Programme are all going to be dealt with by that Strategic Management Unit.

More than that, we have from the crime prevention strategies... I would mention that again because apparently the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee did not listen to me when he asked his question. His question then was what measure or strategies we are doing. As mentioned by the Commission of Police, acting, and the Crime Chief, Mr. Williams, they are doing robust investigations into every crime. They are using information and intelligence to conduct covert and overt operations. They are doing sting operations; they are doing snap and deliberate roadblocks upon information. That is why when you see the snap roadblocks some of you feel that it is for other purposes. They are doing random stops, search and raids with big results. We have managed to, by virtue of some of these stops, catch persons with about 28 guns. We stopped, searched and found guns. Is that not something productive? We are conducting raids, high visibility patrols, cordon search operations and the maintenance of the social crime prevention and community relation whereby every Commander of the division must have a set of young people from that division doing certain community relations and focusing on youths.

Collaboration with appropriate and relevant stakeholders: This is where the civilians are part and parcel of the management of the police stations. There is open-sourced monitoring of print, electronic and social media. Again, the final one, every complaint must be investigated thoroughly, a written report made and that written report will be sent to the complainant. That is what we are doing. That was a big investigation conducted. That is true.

Apart from that, as part of the strategy, we would still have crimes being committed. Whenever there is a society, community and human beings, crimes will be committed. I do not know of a situation where crimes in a society have been minimal to the extent of what Hon. Bishop Edghill

is talking about, or when there is zero. I do not know but whatever it is, we are striving for that. These are some of the programmes and policies that we have. We need to train. We need better recruits and we need to train them. That is a big part of the continuing education of the policeman.

Notwithstanding all that they have been doing and reducing the crime, we are still having this issue of the problem of people not wanting to believe. That is why the former Commissioner of Police Mr. Seelall Persaud had to tell me, as Minister, that this is one job where you have to do the impossible for the ungrateful. No matter what you do, somebody is going to be critical. It is important then that captures what it is because we have been giving all of this. Moreover, he reached his age of retirement and he left. He left very cordially, at least with me.

We also have a major reform that is completed now by Mr. Russell Combe. As I have said, and what I think His Excellency the President has said that will also come to this National Assembly at the appropriate time. I have been very open with the Members of the Opposition in this National Assembly. In the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on the Security Sector, the visits that the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee is now condemning, it was the Members of the Opposition who asked for those visits to the interior. It was Hon. Member Mr. Gill. It is because of their scorched-earth policy. Everything that we do is wrong, even if it is coming from a Member of the Opposition, Hon. Member Gill. He asked and we said fine, we have the funding. We came to you, Your Honour, and we went to Region 9, I think at three police stations. We also went to Region 1, I think, visited four police stations there to see for ourselves. That was after they asked to go to see the Brickdam Police Station. We went and saw the very bad conditions. Some of these police stations were in bad conditions, but immediately after visiting, there was some quick reaction to get things done. That report from the Commissioner of Police would be handed to the oversight committee on the policing as soon as it is completed, as to what was done there.

We want to ensure that all our policemen are in comfort. We also want to ensure that our policemen have the assets at their disposal. Notwithstanding that we have got lots more assets, we still need more. There are some generators that are needed there. Mr. Gill knows about that. We indicated that because we are going green. We are going to get the solar panels that are going to be on the roofs of these police stations in the interior so that they could provide electricity.



That is important.                    **[Mr. Rohee: What happened with Mr. Dookie?]**                    Mr. Dookie  
has been sent home for good reason.

It is important then that this resolve clause could be somewhat mistaken in that it gives the impression as if we have not taken urgent measures. It is the urgent measures that we have taken that a lot of other people - I do not know who the Hon. Members of the Opposition speak to - have been indicating to me that indeed we are doing a good job, a far better job than what used to happen when we pulled the statistics. That is why 134,347 have come into the country in the first half of this year. It is far more, about 30,000, as against last year. What is it that you are trying to be critical of? We also know that it always has to be on the agenda. Crime in the Caribbean, as Consul has indicated, crime in this part of South America, where there are heavy murder rates in Brazil, Venezuela and Columbia, gun crimes and all of that add to this geography and to this condition whereby we, in this part of the world, have the highest crime rate in the world.

*7.10 p.m.*

Even more than the Middle East countries and those that are at war, and the reports are all there. I can quote extensively from them, like I did at the last meeting that they were in connection with the Caribbean Crime and Security Conference. It is not as if we are not taking urgent measures. I supposed that Members on the other side really did not have anything to say on this last day, prior to us going into recess, and they wanted to come with something to say.

I want to urge that we act together. I agree that the PPP must take up the piece of...  
*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am hearing a voice that I know I should not hear while the Hon. Member is on his feet. I will suggest that I do not hear that voice. Hon. Member, please go ahead.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I am closing now. The People's Progressive Party that is in the Opposition - the Hon. Members there - listen to what our President has to say. Come and speak to him on those two other issues, plus crime and security. You might help because, indeed, you were there for 23 years. You could now probably recognise that, which were mistakes that were done, so that you could ensure that they do not reoccur and, to that extent then, you could be of some help.

We are not going to be critical to that extent, but we would like you to know that, as far as we are concerned, we have moved forward, crimes have been on the reduction and we feel that we have taken the urgent measures and a lot more measures that we do. We collaborate all the time; we have the set of reforms from Mr. Russell Combe, which we are studying. As soon as a date comes, I will share it with you so that we could start the implementation. As a matter of fact, just before I close, the implementation of some of the reforms has started. In the aviation sector the marine capabilities have already started, also the strategic management and the training. So, it is not as if nothing has been done.

With those words, I want to say that it was indeed a good thing to debate this motion and, also, to say that we have taken all the urgent measures so far that are possible and that is clearly the case with this Government. If you could give us some more measures that we ought to take, we certainly would take them provided. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. member Ms. Teixeira, do you wish to speak on the motion?

**Ms. Teixeira (replying):** Yes, Sir. First of all I find it rather... **[Mr. Nandlall: Abusive.]**  
Yes, abusive. Thank you. For a motion of this importance to be made trite by the comments made by the Hon. Member that this was just a last minute dish for the Private Member's Day and it got in 10.30 – 11.00 a.m., after some other crime was committed. Just for the knowledge of the Hon. Member, there is a deadline for when such adjournment motions have to reach this House and it is before 10.00 o'clock in the morning. We met that deadline and it was stamped with the correct time, even long before. Just to not make this issue trite because, as I have said before, this is about humans, it is about people and crime. Therefore, the issue is not about the triteness that this issue has been tried to reduce it to. That it is because we saw something in the newspapers and we reacted, or that it is because it is Private Member's Day that we reacted to it.

The fact is that we brought one in 2016, that was two years ago, where a similar motion was debated right here in this House and one could go in the *Hansard* and read the report. There were the same two debaters, Mr. Rohee and I and the same debater Mr. Ramjattan. Read what has changed in the last two years. The Minister can give himself solace.

One of the dangers that Ministers need to recognise is the *devil is in the detail*. When the Commissioner of Police come to you and say, “Minister, crime has been reduced” and you then asked if you could see the breakdown in the figures in the top 10 or the top 12. In the June, 2018 report of the Guyana Police Force, it was stated that there was a 7% decrease in serious crime at the end of May, 2018. However, it also pointed out and admitted that there was an 8% increase in robberies where no instruments were used, compared with the same period of last year. A 7% increase in robbery under arms where firearms were used, a 4% increase in rape and 3% increase in burglary.

Now the Hon. Minister can go to bed and sleep very happily because he can say to himself that, “Wow, it is all less than it was in 2014”. I hope you can sleep well Sir. This is because the issue is not about what was in 2014. You know I listen to debates all the time, when anything goes wrong Mr. Trump says it is Mr. Obama. When anything goes wrong with the APNU/AFC Government it is the PPP.

The reason why it is important and again this has been made trite by the Hon. Member, is that, the fact of the discussion between the Leader of the Opposition and the President is that three items, of which one was crime and security, were listed as an indicator that this was an interest of non-partisan issues that were of national importance. It was not to be able to say well, in 2014 there were much more than in 2018. The point is and you have missed the boat on some of the issues that were raised, and that has to do with the public perception. You cannot blame the press all the time. Every time someone goes out on the streets and they get robbed it has a psychological, physical, and financial effect and maybe you do not recognise it because you get into your 4x4s, with your own personal securities, you have your guards at your Houses and maybe you do not recognise that and I understand.

[*Inaudible*] I have no security, so I do not know what you are talking about. The issue is not that I ever had and you can ask the former Commissioner of Police what security I had as a Minister.

[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, let us try some civility even if we feel provoked.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Yes. I recognise certain persons in this House because of their valuable contributions. Others should really reconsider what they are doing here.

The Hon. Member went on to deal with a number of issues, one of which is public perception. The Minister can say that, yes we have all the success, but somehow people do not understand it. He then makes what I thought was a very inelegant quote - another insulting quote to the Guyanese public, by saying that is “an impossible task for the ungrateful”. Is that the people out there that you are calling “ungrateful”, who are complaining about the service they are getting or complaining many times about the number of policemen who are stopping them and want a bribe, and you are calling those people ungrateful?

Sir, you made mention about ‘stop and search’. Well, there are so many ‘stop and search’ around. On certain days, one could tell which ‘stop and search’ is going to take place because of who is looking for a *freck* on a Saturday; who works lunchtime, *et cetera*.

Minister, you do not appreciate that what we are trying to get at is the lack of confidence and trust in the civilian law enforcement and in the Public Security Sector. You could live in your dream world about 2014 versus 2018. Sir, if you are happy with that continue, but the Guyanese people are not seeing the change. So, ‘stop and searches’ have now been thought...In all scientific and police data, when one looks at ‘stop and searches’ it is fickle. Sometimes a person could be there for 20 hours and they might get something. Then they might be there for days and get nothing. ‘Stop and search’ with no evidence, no scientific background or no analysis is just that, happenchance - you get some and you do not get some.

When one is doing searches and raids, one has to make sure that one is following the law and that it is based on intelligence sharing and not somebody who wants to get back at somebody else. This is because the level of distrust of the civilian law enforcement and the Ministry of Public Security is so high right now that, even if the police means well, the strategy is there that people believe that somebody wants to get at them from some direction.

My dear Minister on the other side, you can dismiss all these things, but that is not the intention here. If you feel better talking about “Scorched Earth Policy” - and you and I, Mr. Rohee and the others who know about the Vietnam War and about the Scorched Earth Policy - you might find that some of the people here, firstly do not know what it is and secondly, those who do would

know that you were using it wrongly. I can appreciate that because you just had a press conference downstairs - where you had to say that the AFC will prove that it is not dead. I do appreciate your desire to show that you are very much alive.

The issue that you have also ignored in the comments made, is that, why would you not have the Head of the Police Complaints Authority? It is setup by statute. The difference between the Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) and the Police Complaints Authority is that the OPR is not covered by statute, it plays a role, but the Police Complaints Authority is setup by statute. You removed a man who was there - okay, fine, you are the Government, if you want to change then go ahead change. But you cannot have a body that is setup by statutory means and is empty.

You have not dealt with the citizens' organisations. If the Government is really interested in reducing and solving crime, then it has to get the civilians on its side. It is not an easy task; it is a difficult. If you do not want the National Commission because that is a PPP invention, but actually it is not, it is a CARICOM invention, but if you do not want to go with CARICOM that is fine with us.

You do not want the community policing groups to have some of the facilities which they had before. The neighbourhood police, which were the eyes and ears of the Guyana Police Force at the lowest level, they seem to be not very important to you now. You have secreted the Peoples' Militia with 1600 people. What is their connection with all of this? They are a standby reserve group that does what? Only borders? Then there is a Cadet Officer's group that you are forming with the Guyana Youth Corp. Then you want to bring back National Service. All these issues are para-militarisation of the country.

The Hon. Minister spoke about civilianising the police force. I thought that was a rather strange comment to make. It is because, as far as I know, the Guyana Police Force is the civilian law enforcement authority; it is not military and hopefully will never be. This is because it is the one body that stands between the coercive arms of the State and the people and that the police have to be civilian professionals, who do their work the best they can. We raised the issue of their salaries and you have not responded to that.

Your concerns about the media contributing to perceptions - Minister, as you would have referred to in previous times, if you are concerned about the media reporting today on crime, just

take a memory walk by going to look at the newspaper coverage in 2002-2008. You will see some of the most graphic and horrible photographs of persons who were victims of those crime to the point where some of the religious communities felt that this was having a negative impact on children who were seeing these images on television and in the newspapers. So, just in case you have forgotten how bad persons were and what they did to our people, you have no such problem with the media today, there is no such problem. The media is there to carry out and to expose what is going on. Your responsibility as a Government is to let people know what you are doing, to assure them and to assuage their fears.

If I were in your position tonight Sir, with a motion like this, if I were you and I would not be you, and, that is to assuage the fears of people, to show what you are doing to deal with crime, not to go back to 2014 or 2013.

*7.25 p.m.*

Crime does not survive in a stagnant community or a stagnant environment. Crime is dynamic just as the rest of the society is dynamic. New elements, variables and factors are introduced as time goes on. What was told about 2002-2008 or 2012-2014, there are new factors that have entered into the dynamics of crime, which were not there five or eight years ago. Once you have external inferences, and as the Minister pointed out, weapons coming over and stuff like that, you also have other things, like internal factors that could make crime worse.

For example, when you have 7,000 people losing their jobs within a short period of time or within a matter of weeks, which impacts on at minimum of 35,000 people, then you have 1,972 Amerindian Community Service Officers (CSO) losing their jobs in July, 2015. This means that there is another 10,000 people being impacted by those peoples' loss.

Barama Company Limited and BEV, for example - these places that are closing down; the different night clubs that are closing down. If you do not recognise that there is some correlation, not always direct or not always a cause and effect, but when you have high unemployment, which is what we have, that will impact on the level of social controversies, as well as different forms of crimes. You may see an increase in white and blue collared crimes. You may see an increase in inter-personal violence leading to murders or injuries. Therefore, this sterile approach we are looking at that, what it was in 2014, and saying that we are better now and that we are

fine and that you are making up this thing and it is all about Scorched-Earth and you are responsible for this, that is what you are telling us on this side of the House.

You cannot talk through two sides of your mouth, Minister. You cannot have a President that says let us sit down and talk about this issue and an Hon. Minister on the other side who is saying “oh” everything is fine. Then suddenly realises, as you come to the end of your presentation “Oops, I might have gone a little too far because the President did make this overture, so I better swing back my mouth”.

The issue is that the President has offered to send us the Combe Report and we are waiting and looking forward to it. He has offered to send it to us. Mr. Harmon was present and I am sure he has made a note to make sure that the promise is fulfilled.

The issue is Minister, if you are unappreciative of the fact that people are hurting people. As Mr. Rohee pointed out too, all the social costs, if you do not recognise these things, you are going to end up in a worse situation.

Let me just give an example, there has been a lot of talk about corruption by this Government. We had a website called [www.Ipaidabribe.gy](http://www.Ipaidabribe.gy). It was a project which started in India and has been adopted by many countries. We set up a website and it was very useful to the Government when it started. On [www.Ipaidabribe.gy](http://www.Ipaidabribe.gy), the person could retain anonymity and they could lodge a report that a police stopped them on the Railway Embankment and wanted a *tow* or a Customs Officer... [Mr. Rohee: He wants a ‘Granger’.] That was before Granger’s time. That was around 2012 or something. Granger did not get the tow or the \$5,000 at that time.

This was very useful because they were able to find the vulnerable areas. In fact, with the Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs), which were located in certain areas, they were able to capture some of the unholy activities in terms of bribe, fraud and stuff that were going on particularly with police, Customs, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) and even the contractors. There were things that were done.

I was shocked to learn that the [www.Ipaidabribe.gy](http://www.Ipaidabribe.gy) website, where one could put anything there and no one could trace him/her. It encouraged people and it was very interesting. Ministers went on to it and found what the reports were and they could have checks done internally whether an

officer went up at that point, and to be able to take action and to improve the situation. It also did another psychological thing to the police and to other persons who were involved in bribery. It made them know that they could be found out and that they did not have the cover that they needed. There is a problem with what the Government has done in the last three years. My mother always said, *do not throw the baby out with the bath water*.

What the Government has done, as my Colleague, Mr. Rohee, pointed out, it came in *hot and sweaty*; it figured that it had all the answers because it has all the *top dogs* in the military with it and, therefore, it has to know it because that is where you guys came from. Then, in three years, you find yourself floundering. You took things that were actually working. The point, for those of us who came in 1992 and are still around, was not to *throw the baby out with the bath water* in a number of areas.           **[An. Hon. Member: [Inaudible]]**           I did not. I would say I did not because I know I did not.

In the security sector, all the investments in the Citizens' Security Strengthening Programme (CSSP) and the Criminal Justice System Improvement Project, with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and with the then Government of Guyana and the US\$25 million and so on, were important interventions to help reduce crime and to have a more efficient Public Security Sector. By *dissing* all of that and not recognising that it had any value, you have now had to start all over again. You have to create your own dynamics. Regrettably, you are not succeeding very well.

We go back to the resolution of this, in closing. The Government needs to take urgent measures to effectively manage the Public Security Sector, which is in trouble and to uphold its responsibility to protect the safety of all citizens and to reduce the levels of crime which are eroding public trusts and lowering the quality of life.

I want to close by quoting the President in his speech on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2016, where he said on page 1:

“Citizens, usually, are uncomfortable with high levels of crime... all of which contribute to lowering the quality of life. These conditions should not be regarded as a permanent state but as temporary problems to be solved.”



He goes on to say that:

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

In other words, you have the President making statements and we have Ministers who show utter disdain to have any engagement, even on the floor of this House, that could deal with an issue that should not be partisan and which is the fighting of crime, reducing crime and making sure people live in a safer environment. If that is it, the people will so judge.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members that concludes our discussion on the Adjournment Motion on Crime. We will now return to the Order Paper.

Hon. Members, my apologies, I see that we are now at 7.35 p.m. If Members are minded for us to carry through, I would think it a very wise course, but Members may be wiser than I am and they might have other views. I heard no demurrers, so I will proceed.

## **MOTION**

### **AFFIRMATION OF THE PETROLEUM (EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION) (TAX LAWS) (MID-ATLANTIC OIL AND GAS INC.) ORDER 2018 – NO. 26 OF 2018**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance with Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act No. 3 of 1986, affirms the Petroleum (Exploration and Production)(Tax Laws) (Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas, Inc.) Order 2018 – No. 26 of 2018, which was made on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018, under Section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, No. 3 of 1986 and published in an Extra Ordinary copy of the Official Gazette dated 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. [*Minister of Finance*]

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, this motion should be short and should be a simple one by now. I say a simple one because this is not the first time that such a motion is coming to this House. Indeed my predecessor did bring one, too. Two years ago, to the exact date today, Order No. 10 of 2016

was brought to this House where, after a very spirited debate, it was affirmed. That Order had to do with the ExxonMobil Corporation. It has similar wording and a similar section 51.

In going through the *Hansard* of that debate and reading what was said two years ago, I figure more or less that the same would be said today. I do not want to make this motion into the Oil and Gas Sector – who is doing what, the Sovereign Wealth Fund, the Petroleum Bill and Local Content. I really do not want to get there. I will plead with my honourable Friend and Member of Parliament, Mr. Ali, to limit his interventions to section 51, which deals with the issue of Tax Concessions for Oil and Gas Exploration.

The Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas, Inc. may not be the ExxonMobil Corporation or any of the other majors that we are so accustomed to. It is important from Guyana's standpoint, though: it is small; it is unknown; but it is in the Oil and Gas Sector. Importantly for Guyana is that, it is a local company comprising many enterprising and well known Guyanese. The Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas, Inc. was granted a licence, under the regime of the last Government, His Excellency President Donald Ramotar, on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2015 and a Production Share Agreement was signed on the same date. In that Agreement, section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act 1986 allows the Minister of Finance to approve certain concessions. If I may remind the House of the concessions, it states that section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act 1986 prescribes as follows:

“The Minister assigned responsibility for Finance may, by Order which shall be subject to affirmative resolution of the National Assembly direct that in or all of the written mentioned in subsection 2 shall not apply to or in relation to a licensee where the licensee has entered into a production sharing agreement with the Government of Guyana.”

So far, so good: the Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas, Inc. did, indeed, enter into a Production Share Agreement, which was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2015.

7.40 p.m.

“(2) The written laws referred to in subsection (1) are -

(a) the Income Tax Act;

- (b) the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act;
- (c) the Cooperation Tax Act; and
- (d) the Property Tax Act.

Thus, as indicated in subsection (3) of the Order before the House:

“for the purpose of giving effect to the relevant provisions of the Agreement, if so required by those provisions, any or all of the written laws as set out in section 51... of the Act shall not apply to or in relation to licensee or, as the case may be, shall so apply to licensee with all the adaptations, exceptions, modifications and qualities to those laws...”

In terms of equality of treatments for investment, this Act today, and the affirmation of this Order would give credence to that, in that the ExxonMobil Corporation, under the same section 51 was given these identical tax reliefs and a local company, Mid Atlantic Oil and Gas Inc., is also requesting to be given the same tax reliefs.

In the future, Guyana will continue to benefit, given that the basin has now been de-risked and there is competition for the available blocks. We will be returning to this House, from time to time, under the same section 51. Once the Production Sharing Agreement has been entered into, we would be returning to this House with a similar order for affirmation.

Guyana will continue to benefit from the application of the global experience and leading technology of the people who operate in the block. This has so far been demonstrated with the ExxonMobil Corporation’s eight out of ten - that is 80% - success rate, resulting in reserves in excess of four billion barrels in the Stabroek Block alone. The other blocks, like the Canje and Kaieteur Blocks, are going to be explored soon.

So, affirmation of the section 51 Order demonstrates an effective and sustainable investment climate that will ensure Guyana realises the greatest possible benefit from its resources. It also gives confidence to investors, both local and foreign, that we honour the sanctity of contracts and what we said that we were going to do, we are going to do.

For section 51 of the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act, an affirmative resolution of the National Assembly is therefore required to direct that the tax laws refer therein, shall not apply in relation to the petroleum prospecting licenses and petroleum agreements for the Canje and Kaieteur Blocks being explored by the Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas Inc. Therefore, without much further ado, I will ask that the motion be put and affirmed.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

*Question put.*

**Mr. Ali:** The Hon. Minister spoke about equality of treatment and honouring contracts. It is in that context that I wish to examine a few points in relation to the Order that is before us. It is important that we commence this discussion for our acknowledgement by all stakeholders, inclusive of the Government and players within the oil sector. That acknowledgement is that present and future oil contracts should not enjoy similar benefits, conditions and terms as were negotiated in the Post-Oil Agreement 2016.

Since this was a statement made to the public by the Government, a few questions become necessary. The first, Hon. Minister, that I wish to put to you is, did the Government review the ExxonMobil Corporation Production Agreement and identify areas of weaknesses to be corrected in future agreements? After this acknowledgement, I am sure that the Government would have examined the existing contracts and identified the areas of weaknesses, so that we would not make those or have those similar weaknesses in future contracts. If this was done, could the Government share with us that review, and if not, why has the Government not completed this task as we speak tonight?

It is also important to note that the existing circumstances in relation to the industry itself has changed with the discovery of at least four billion barrels of proven reserves, and still counting. This scenario is completely different from the position we were in when we signed the agreements in 1999 and 2015. We have to take this into consideration. We now are in a different situation where we know that we have a reserve that is at least four billion barrels and growing.

The second issue - has the Government developed a new policy outlining terms and guidelines that would be consider now and in the future. We have heard from the Government in public

statements that there will policy guidelines and that there would be specific terms and conditions that would inform future negotiations and agreements. We would like to know whether the Government has completed any document outlining this type of information.

As I said earlier, the condition of Pre-Oil 1999 are comprehensively different from where we are today. The new agreement must, therefore, take this reality into consideration. Any agreement we enter into now must take this reality into consideration. Another key question: Has the Government... We have a proven reserve of four billion barrels and still counting. *[Interruption]*

*[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]*

Has the Government define a framework to guide the negotiations of these new agreements, if so, where is that framework? In addition to these issues, the President has offered, publicly, well, not offered, has stated publicly that discussions and agreements of future contracts will involve all stakeholders. We have also heard statements that major initiative like these would have the input of the Opposition, key stakeholders and would be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny and debates. We have seen earlier the 'Green Paper' being laid. Why are these things important? These are important because they fall into the holistic context of oil and gas and we have to be able to bring these agreements, have them discussed and debated among all the stakeholders, no less than the National Assembly.

We cannot afford to get this wrong and, as such, all of us in this House have a moral and ethical responsibility, a national responsibility and a patriotic responsibility to be thorough, transparent and wholesome in dealing with this matter. We need these to have these questions answered; we need to see the documents; and we need to have the agreement benefit from the wider input of various stakeholders. As such, we would like to propose on this side of the House to the Hon. Minister of Finance that we defer this Order until the information, documents and agreements. It is because you know, for example, one of the agreements would have expired on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2018, so we need these questions that we posed answered, so that we all could move forward in a way that the nation sees the process as open, transparent and thorough.

With these few words, I thank you. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Jordan (replying):** I thank the Hon. Member for his interventions and his statements. I want to say everything that he has said is important and pertinent to the evolving and ongoing discussion on oil and gas. There are a number of statements that have been made by the Government; there are a number of policy positions that have been put out by the Government; there are a number of statements that had been made by a number of international agencies and so on for which the Government is examining. At the end of the day, we have an Order before us that speaks to a specific question, which, I thought, I do not know why it was a bit evasive, but this position - section 51, this contract with Mid-Atlantic Oil and Gas Inc. was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2015. Under the Terms of the Agreement signed by President Ramotar, clauses 15 and 21 exempted the company from paying all taxes. All that section 51 is seeking to do is to give credence to what was signed in the document.

*7.55 p.m.*

It is required, under the law, that we bring an order for affirmative position to give effect to what has been signed by no less than the President of this country. Is the Hon. Member asking us to review a contract that has already been signed? No, Sir!

Section 51 was affirmed on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 after discussions and debate of a similar nature. A small Guyanese company must not be made to suffer by deferrals and delays so that matters extraneous to the affirmation of this Order can be dealt with. I say that this Order should be affirmed, as it signifies that we do, indeed, uphold the sanctity of contracts; it should be affirmed because it gives credence to our equality in investments; and it should be affirmed because it will continue to give confidence to investors and to shareholders that they can do business with a Government that will uphold its end of the bargain.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the motion be put and that it be affirmed and not be delayed.

Thank you very much.

*Question put and carried.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this concludes our work for this Sitting and, indeed, for the next two months. We proceed on recess from 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2018. Let me take the opportunity, first of all, to thank Hon. Members for their support and assistance during the period between the end of the last recess and the beginning of this one, and all of the other ways in which we have been able to, at the end of the day, conclude what we have undertaken.

I wish all Hon. Members a restful and pleasant recess and I hope that we return in October fully refreshed and ready to work.

I will urge you to pay some attention to the references which I made to certain Standing Orders, it was two in number, so that it might help to guide us when we return and we will not have disappointments when the Speaker seeks to reinforce those Standing Orders.

I am to let you know that there are some refreshments available outside of this Chamber, in a place with which we are all familiar, and I suggest that Hon. Members might wish to repair there after we rise.

**Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]:** I am not rising to react to the offer to take advantage of the refreshments that you offered. I thank you, also, for saving me the trouble of moving the adjournment. What I would like to say, to follow those comments, is extend to our Colleagues on both sides of the House as well as the staff servicing the House our best wishes for a fruitful and restful, if that is possible, break. I, like you, look forward to seeing them again rejuvenated when we next meet on a date to be named.

**Mr. Speaker:** I thank the Hon. Vice President, but he is not saved from the requirement of moving the adjournment, or else we cannot leave here.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I would just like to extend greetings to You, Sir, the Clerk and staff of the Parliament Office who have worked very hard in the last year with all of us in this House. We have been demanding many times and difficult customers sometimes, but we appreciate all that has been done to help us to function and to do the best that we can do. To the Members of the Government side too, I hope you enjoy the two months. I know that one of the parties on that side has congress, so I know that you are going to be very busy. Then, we all have Local Government Elections, where I am sure all of us are also going to be busy. I do not think that

many of us will be having the chance to have a two months' holiday, but I am sure that all of us will try to get some form of relaxation from time to time. I wish you all the best of health and we look forward to seeing you, when we come back from recess, strong, healthy and hale and able to continue to do the best that we can in this House.

Thank you.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Greenidge:** I move the adjournment of the House to a date to be announced.

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I declare the adjournment, I will say to Hon. Members that you remember that the Youth Parliament literally commences tomorrow. On Friday, Youth Parliament commences.

*Adjourned accordingly at 8.02 p.m.*