

Official Report

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

9TH Sitting

Wednesday, 19TH August, 2015

The Assembly convened at 1.01 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Nomination of Members to the Committee of Supply and Business Sub-Committee

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like to announce that on tomorrow, Thursday, 20th August, 2015, the Assembly will meet to nominate Members to comprise the Committee of Selection. Thereafter, the Committee of Selection will meet to nominate Members to comprise the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

Reduction in the prices of gasoline and dieseline

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Earlier, in my Budget 2015 presentation, as set out therein, are measures that are essentially pro poor. I indicated then and I want to indicate now that those were not the be-all and end-all of all our measures, and that we continue to look for ways in which we can help, particularly the poor and lower earning people. I am pleased to announce today, Sir, that with effect from tomorrow Guyana Oil Company Limited (GUYOIL) will be reducing its prices for both its gasoline and dieseline products. Gasoline at GUYOIL, with effect from tomorrow, will retail at \$168 per litre from \$174.70 currently. Diesel will retail at \$199 per litre from its current \$210.

It is hoped, Sir, that these decreases trending in the right direction will be passed on to the consumer, especially in light of the impending opening of school, where schoolchildren in particular will have to be using public transportation.

False allegation by the Opposition

Vice-President and Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs [Mr. Allicock]: In the course of the general debate on the Budget 2015 several Members from the Opposition benches have alleged that A Partnership for Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Government is practising ethnic cleansing. Specific mention was made that 2,000 Amerindian youths, who were Community Support Officers (CSOs), were dismissed from their jobs. I wish to place on record that my Government has not fired or dismissed the estimated 1,972 Community Support Officers, as is being falsely alleged by the People's Progressive Party (PPP), Opposition.

I would like to allow the nation to know that this is very misleading. The former People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government had made no financial allocations for CSOs beyond April, 2015. By Cabinet's decision, dated 18th March, 2015, the sum of \$234,240,000 was approved for 1,952 Community Support Officers, as stipends for the period of January – April, 2015. It is clear that there is evidence that the former PPP/C Government has severed or cut lose the CSOs. The CSOs need to know that the PPP/C regime had made no provisions to pay them stipends beyond April, 2015. I need to say it again - the CSOs need to know that the PPP/C regime had made no provisions to pay them stipends beyond April, 2015.

It is evident that these Amerindian youths have been recruited under a political scheme called Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP). They were not employed as

contracted employees or public servants. They were not provided any guarantee to employment or legal protection as workers. All that they were offered, on a periodical basis, was a stipend of \$30,000 each month without any stipulation that it was being made to persons engaged in training for a specific period.

For more information, it appeared that the PPP/C Government had shut down the programme and had left the CSOs exposed, exposing them as political activists in a so-called ‘red shirt brigade’, to join picket lines and campaigns for the PPP. You know it, over there.

The APNU/AFC Government is committed to training and job security for all of our young people, not only 2,000, including Amerindian youths. As it was enunciated by His Excellency President David Granger, in his address to the National Toshias Council’s meeting on the 18th August, 2015, “Young people want permanency, not adversity. They do not want to be placed on a hinterland dole, they want careers.”

Towards this end, with effect from 1st September, 2015, the YEAP will be replaced by the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, can I be recognised?

Hon. Members (Government): Continue reading.

Mr. Allicock: ...and all former CSOs will be eligible to...

Mr. Speaker: I recognise the...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, with due respect to you, as you are a new Speaker of this House...

[**An Hon. Member:** That is insulting.] I do not in any way mean it to be insulting.

Mr. Speaker: I would thank the Hon. Member to stick to the Point of Order.

Ms. Teixeira: My Point of Order, Sir, is that any Minister of Government can make a right to reply under the Standing Orders at any time during the debate. Therefore the Point of Order, Sir, is that they should be using a different Standing Order at a different time, and it is not “Statements by Ministers...” to correct what was said before, Sir. That is not under the “Statements by Ministers...”

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member, and Minister I thank you to continue.

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your consideration.

Towards this end, with effect from 1st September, 2015, the YEAP will be replaced by the Hinterland Employment and Youth Services. All former CSOs will be eligible to be enlisted for training to receive relevant skills, so as to enable them to earn an income in the pursuit of suitable livelihood and a means to enjoy the good life. Under the new initiative we hope to train thousands of young people while paying them a stipend. We do have more than 2,000 Indigenous People in this country that we have to take care of. We will bring an end to the abuse of our young people for the political purposes.

We reject the allegation of ethnic cleansing as false and mischievous and dangerous peddling of racism and division.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

WHEREAS Standing Order No. 81(1) makes provision for the establishment of a Standing Committee to be known as the Committee of Selection, as soon as may be after the beginning of each National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order No. 81(2) provides that the Committee of Selection shall consist of the Speaker as the Chairperson, and not less than six (6) or more than ten (10) Members to be nominated by the Assembly;

AND WHEREAS at the 2nd Sitting of the National Assembly of the 10th Parliament on the Friday, 10th February, 2012, the majority Opposition amended the composition of the Committee of Selection to be reduced from ten (10) to nine (9) Members, namely, five (5) representing the Opposition and four (4) representing the Government.

AND WHEREAS in this 11th Parliament, the Government is in the majority and the Opposition in the minority;

AND WHEREAS the Government is desirous that the Committee of Selection should be constituted to reflect the majority held by the Government in the 11th Parliament,

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves that the membership of the Committee of Selection be five (5) representing the Government and four (4) representing the Opposition.” [First Vice-President and Prime Minister]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have given consent, in accordance with Standing Order 28 (2), for the following motion to be proceeded with at this sitting. Hon. First-Vice President and Prime Minister will move the following motion

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]:

“WHEREAS Standing Order No. 81(1) makes provision for the establishment of a Standing Committee to be known as the Committee of Selection, as soon as may be after the beginning of each National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS Standing Order No. 81(2) provides that the Committee of Selection shall consist of the Speaker as the Chairperson, and not less than six (6) or more than ten (10) Members to be nominated by the Assembly;

AND WHEREAS at the 2nd Sitting of the National Assembly of the 10th Parliament on the Friday, 10th February, 2012, the majority Opposition amended the composition of the Committee of Selection to be reduced from ten (10) to nine (9) Members, namely, five (5) representing the Opposition and four (4) representing the Government.

AND WHEREAS in this 11th Parliament, the Government is in the majority and the Opposition in the minority;

AND WHEREAS the Government is desirous that the Committee of Selection should be constituted to reflect the majority held by the Government in the 11th Parliament,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly approves that the membership of the Committee of Selection be five (5) representing the Government and four (4) representing the Opposition.”

Motion proposed.

1.16 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, are you not allowing any discussion on this Motion? I am just seeking your guidance because a motion has been put to the House and it is normally debated. So could you please advise me, are you going directly to the vote without a debate?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. The motion is proposed. Do I have any speakers on the motion?

Ms. Teixeira: In the last Parliament, the Opposition combined had one seat more and they brought amendments to the parliamentary committees to give themselves a majority by four seats for A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), one seat for Alliance for Change (AFC) and four seats for the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). The motion was sent to the Standing Orders Committee. Except in the Committee of Selection, a decision was made which was improper, as the Committee of Selection cannot change the representation at the Committee itself.

However, we had argued in the last Parliament on the floor and in the Standing Orders Committee that the issue of the Government’s representation should remain as it was and had been practiced; that the Government got a majority and the Opposition had the minority. However, in the discussions in the Committee of Selection and in the Standing Orders Committee, the proposal was made out for 4-4-1 because at that time, there was no APNU/AFC coalition.

We warned at that time that this would come back to haunt them, that whenever this Parliament had a majority Parliament, one would have to revert and change the parliamentary committees, which had been changed in the last Parliament. So what we predicted the last time has happened this time, that is that the arbitrary willy nilly behaviour of the last Parliament, in the exuberance

to ensure that everything was locked down tight and that the allusion of the one seat, which I will speak more about later in this Parliament, lead to this situation. So 4-4-1 was the last one. All they have done is changed it to be 4 plus 1, that is, APNU/AFC and 4 for the Opposition.

I am not opposing the motion, but I am saying that the unwillingness of the then Opposition to listen to us in relation to the Standing Orders and upholding the Standing Orders and being able to reach consensus on issues, were thrown out the window in the last Parliament. I hope and I am watching trends and tendencies of doing that us so again.

We have warned that this would happen. It has happened. They have had to come back to Parliament to reverse what they have done and they will have to reverse it for all the Committees. But I assume that this is the way the new Government will operate. Thank you.
[Applause]

Minister of Governance: [Mr. Trotman]: Hon. Speaker, if I may in response to comments made by the Member of the Opposition. During the currency of the last Parliament, in fact at the commencement of the last Parliament, the exigencies of the situation and the realities of the situation dictated that the Committees be adjusted to reflect the majority of the Opposition. That was done and the matter was taken to the High Court, in I believe an action, the first of a series of such actions by the then Attorney General against the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Leader of the Opposition.

The High Court, through a ruling of the Hon. Chief Justice, ruled that this House was within its right to make the adjustments. So the pronouncements about predictions and things coming to past is quite disingenuous because as a matter of right, the adjustment had to be made, and now, today, as a matter of right, the adjustment has to be made again. There is nothing about a prediction and prophecy and so forth. It was done because it was necessary for the conduct of business in the House. So, again, as a matter of necessity, the adjustment has to be made and I believe the record ought to reflect what happened and that the very argument posed by the Opposition Member was raised in the High Court and the Chief Justice, again, as we already knew, ruled in favour of the majority. Thank you Sir.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Actually, I was about to say the same thing. I have represented this matter in the Court when the past Attorney General took it

in the face of the decision and ruling in the honourable House. The point was emphasised, the court had no jurisdiction that is what we had submitted because this was an internal matter for the Parliament. The Parliament is independent and the Parliament's decision must be respected. What we find happening now is there is an attempt to disrespect the decisions and the procedures of Parliament and that of the majority in the Parliament. This is our situation. We are quite in order on a majority vote to make decisions in this honourable House.

Ms. Teixeira: Maybe we are talking two different things. I never raised a legal argument or an issue of High Court. I am talking politics. Clearly, what I said had to do with the ability of the two or three parties at that time to negotiate and reach consensus on these matters.

I did not bring in the High Court nor did I bring in any legal argument. I am speaking on the floor on the 19th August, 2015. I am saying I will not be misrepresented. I said we will support the motion, so I do not know what all this nonsense is about. However, I said very clearly that these are matters that are politically dealt with and that we had warned the last time that were the situation in Government to change, they would have to go back and change the Standing Orders. That is all I said. I did not say anything about prophecy and all that nonsense the Hon. Member said.

Therefore, we made it clear. In other words, what we said the last time was right. To uphold the situation as was right the last time. You will have to come with all the committees because you changed all the Committees.

Vice-President and Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: We are a majority Government now, so it has to change.

Ms. Teixeira: By one seat...

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, that is right. One seat is good enough, to keep you over there.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member who has reclaimed her seat. Is there another speaker on the motion?

Mr. Nagamootoo (replying): Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence as the mover of the Motion. I suppose I have a right of reply, though the Hon. Member of the Opposition, Ms. Gail Teixeira, seemed to have wanted to take away that right from me.

I just want to say this, in the last Parliament there were three sides. Things have changed. On that occasion, I recall that a warped concept of proportionality was raised and the court ruled against that matter, where the doctrine of proportionality was raised. Today, it is a simple straight forward, arithmetical equation, two sides. One has the majority and one has the minority. Any child would know that the majority should have the right to have more representation on a particular committee. I am very appeased that the Hon. Member had said that that side of the House will not oppose this motion.

I want to take the opportunity to say that, in all of our dealings on this side, we will like to have amity in resolving some of these matters. As I said yesterday or the day before, we would like to work in cooperation, we cannot do this alone. While the arithmetic of four versus five may appear that it empowers one side, as against the other, most of the work of these committees would have to be dealt with by consensus. It is what politically is important at that stage, that we bring to bear our resolved that we have to work together for a Guyana and not simply who have a one seat majority than the other or who is more preminent than the other, in terms of these committees. I ask that we not allow bitterness and acrimony to frustrate us going forward into these committees, as presently being asked by the motion.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister for his statement.

If there are no other speakers on the motion, I will now put the motion.

Question put, and agreed to

Motion carried.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2015 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2015

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

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

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the financial year 2015 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2015-08-10;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

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

[Minister of Finance]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Damon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and Leader of the Opposition, Cde. Bharrat Jagdeo, congratulations to you both for acquiring responsible offices. I trust that you both will serve with the guidance of the Almighty and with dignity. To the Hon. Catherine Hughes, I extend my sym-brated sympathy to you and your family on your tragic loss.

Mr. Speaker and all other Members seated on both sides of this honourable House, the budget we debate in this Parliament is one that is immature and lacks the ingredients that should have been

injected into it for the masses and various regions and sectors of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

In Region 2, our original projects have been cut by almost half. The people of Region 2 would be starved to have enough moneys to clean all the drains, and to complete all the roads, revetments, sea sluices and buildings.

1.31 p.m.

But we will try to survive and hope that someday we will have the Government of the PPP/C returned to its rightful office. From the day the APNU/AFC came into office, through rigged elections, Region 2 has been shouting foul, but 80% of the people in Region 2 have continued to stand solidly behind the PPP/C and the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, who, we are very confident will be the next President of Guyana.

Mr. Ramjattan must understand that he needs to address the crime situation from left, right to centre. The Hon. Member must put systems in place to stop criminals from cutting into people's homes with power saws. I wonder if they thought the Hon. Member was in that house. The crime rate has increased in all the regions, including the gold mining areas, as the Hon. Member is still planning how to curb crime in Guyana. I wonder why, in the Tenth Parliament, we heard that the Hon. Member Clement Rohee must go and this very Hon. Member of the AFC engineered that call. The crime rate was 40% less in the Tenth Parliament. On behalf of the masses of Guyanese people, I am saying that the Hon. Member has no plan to fight the surge of crime and the senseless killings of our businessmen and women. The Hon. Member Ramjattan must go before we lose our businessmen and women. It is impossible for the Hon. Minister of Public Security, who represented some of the most dangerous criminals, including bank robbers, to have any control over the crime situation. Once again, this is not the Tenth Parliament; this is not about the Hon. Member Clement Rohee. The Hon. Member Ramjattan must go before it is too late.

Rice is the main stay of Regions 2, 3, 5 and 6 and without markets for this perishable crop, it spells doom for farmers and businesses in these regions. This APNU/AFC Government would have been held accountable if rice failed under PPP/C, but we had the PetroCaribe Agreement and we brought it back. Those agreements died a natural death because of a bone in the President's throat and a monkey on his back.

During the campaign of the APNU/AFC, \$6,000 was promised to our rice farmers, that was an election con. The people of Region 2 are tired with bones in their throats and monkeys on their backs. We want to hear this APNU/AFC Government renegotiate the deal, through cooperation, with this side of the House, especially with Cde. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo and Cde. Seeraj, who know about these rice agreements better than anyone else. These Hon. Members would be of great relief and help to the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. Rice farmers owe large sums of moneys for their combines, tractors, and other forms of equipment. If rice is not addressed now by the Government, it spells doom for every sector of Regions 2 and 3. Stop spiting and marginalising the people of these regions. Why and how could the Hon. Member Cde. Seeraj have been removed from the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) by a set of nearsighted persons. It is a shame. The Hon. Member Seeraj must be on the Board.

Our farmers are the main forces in feeding this nation and the world. I am shocked and surprised at the Hon. Member Dominic Gaskin who made a mockery of our plantain farmers. Please, Hon. Member, without the farmers, we all will perish from hunger. I wish the Hon. Member's appetite for plantain returns.

Our First People are mourning the loss of their stipends. It belongs to them; let them have it back, through their programme of learning and on-the-job training. Wakapau, Bethany, Kabakaburi, Ackawini, Mashabo, Mainstay, St. Monica and Karawab in Region 2 and **Wakaribi**, Kuruabo, Assakata, Moruca, Kwabanna and other Amerindian villages demand that their children must be given back their jobs. They have a right to be paid from the taxes of Guyana. I wonder where were the Hon. Members Allcock, Garrido-Lowe, Hastings-Williams and Norton? *[Interruption]* Comrades, you do not listen. When that decision was made, did you all fell asleep?

The Hon. Member Mr. Felix made mention of private bank accounts. The Hon. Member did not name the banks. This is nothing else but speculations and an act of deliberate intrepidity by this Hon. Member. The Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott went at length and spoke about the APNU/AFC Government creating housing schemes and house lots. The Hon. Member sounded like he flew in from the lost world. It is a known fact that the PPP/C has built housing schemes in almost every region in Guyana. Thousands benefited, including Members across there, under the last Minister of Housing, the Hon. Irfaan Ali. The Hon. Member should have been telling this

Parliament of the continuation of the schemes. Every turn, in almost all the regions, the PPP/C Government has left its mark in housing.

Some of our Amerindian communities also benefited by having free houses and let me name some of those Amerindian villages in Region 2 that were the recipients of houses: Mainstay, Tapakuma, Akiwini, Mashabo, and others.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have eight minutes left.

Mr. Damon: I wonder why President Granger did not take a page from Cde. Donald Ramotar's book and invited Cde. Dr. Ashni Singh and others to help them craft a budget of maturity, which would have spoken volumes of Guyana's development and its people, but the APNU/AFC went ahead and created a budget which is sloppy and yokeless. So many promises were made to the masses of people in Guyana, but almost all migrated from the budget. Sloppy because Hon. Member, it is impossible and imposturous that this budget can be exhausted in three months. The Hon. Finance Minister crafted a humongous budget with little time to expedite it. I wonder which planet this Hon. Minister came from with this budget. I believe only Houdini might be able to expedite it the three months. What are we deliberating? A budget that is impossible and imposturous and the legs of this budget should be removed.

When a budget is crafted or compiled the Hon. Minister of Finance must use his instincts to craft a budget that will cater to be exhausted in the time remaining for the year. It is a reality and a known fact and the Hon. Minister knows it is impossible to expedite that amount of money in four months. In a budget, one caters for the time remaining. One does not craft a budget to go over to 2016 and onwards.

I sat here and I heard statements made by the Hon. Attorney General, Mr. Basil Williams, about the Hon. Member Mr. Jordan being very skilful, what has happened now? Is it a case where the Hon. Member gave his friend, the AG, all his skills and forgot all his expertise?

Finally, we need a budget that will speak to the four months remaining in 2015. We do not need one that came from the planet where a year is longer than 12 months. The PPP/C Government has trained hundreds of doctors, engineers, and technicians in Cuba and other countries and the past Minister was instrumental in this.

Whatever helps this nation's people to become economically viable under the PPP/C, we advise you to not cut it out. I refer to the \$10,000 grant per child. The Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine was confronted in Dartmouth about that \$10,000 grant per child; the people were actually annoyed with him.

1.46 p.m.

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

Mr. Damon: The Hon. Member, Comrade Priya Manickchand, former Education Minister, valued success as an importance of the \$10,000 per child school grant, but A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) saw it differently. I wonder where the President, the Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, and Hon. Member Basil Williams are taking this ship named Guyana that they got as a gift through the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM).

This Guyana has been sailed into deep and dangerous waters and will encounter very rough seas and will eventually sink with all its Ministers, who turned sailors, on board and that will be the end of the APNUAFC. The monkey on the President's back and the bone in his throat will be lost forever and the PetroCaribe Agreement will return.

Why victimise and marginalise our indo-Guyanese and then talk about *One People, One Nation, One Destiny*? Shame on you, AFC!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Mr. Damon: The Hon. Member, Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, and Hon. Member Ramjattan cannot say a single word on this issue. The Hon. Member, Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo, what about the Cummingsburg Accord where the Prime Minister should be chairing the Cabinet and not the President? Hon. Member, you also have been marginalised.

We, in the People's Progressive Party/Civic, have always stood the test of time and refuse to crumble. We, the PPP, have a fraternity of youths who are willing and ready to lead the PPP in a new era. We will continue to nurture the goals and aspirations of the masses of this country.

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

Mr. Damon: Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Allen: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to speak on this Budget, the first Budget of the APNU/AFC Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, first, let me say how pleased I am with the Hon. Minister, Mr. Jordan, and his team who put this Budget together. Without them, we would not have had such a document. I am also pleased with the Ministers and other staff of the various Ministries across the length and breadth of Guyana. Thank you for such a budget that was presented to this honourable House.

I want to make a statement which the President of Guyana said to me the day after he was sworn in: “Richard, hard work does pay off.” I say to the Minister and his team, your hard work has paid off.

I want to look at education. This APNU/AFC Government in office... I stand proud to promise all Guyana and all of Region 1, which I represent, that this Government will not allow your children to go to school with buckets to prevent rainwater from wetting them in the classrooms or have them look through the ceilings at the sky for years.

It is sad that our children had to suffer in this manner under the hand of the previous Administration. Our children attended school where there was no teacher for a year for a main subject like Mathematics. This Government will not allow such to happen anymore; it will be looked after. It is not just a shortage of Mathematics teachers but other main subjects, and this was known to the previous Administration because, when I checked with the Head Teachers and the various Regional Education Officers, they said that they had written about those matters.

As I speak now, we are trying to ensure that, come 31st August, teachers will be in the schools. We would like to send a message across to all of our teachers in this country, not just Region 1, assuring them that their hard earned salaries will not have to be used to repair the Government’s schools or to make the school a friendly learning environment. Our teachers have been using their moneys to provide for classrooms. This will not

happen anymore under this Government.

The long wait for help for our miners in this country has come to an end and it is mentioned in this Budget. Miners of Mining District No.5 have called me saying, “Mr. Allen, Member of Parliament (MP), let the Government know that we are thankful because they have given us something to help us [*inaudible*]”. Miners have been suffering the heavy costs they had to bear to produce gold. The past Administration boasted about the gold and the revenues it received from it but nothing was given back to the miners. The APNU/AFC Government will ensure that miners receive help in a tangible way.

The roads will be looked at. I heard my good Friend crying out to say that he has not seen capital projects. What I can assure him is that this Government will no longer have rollover projects. We will give projects that are achievable within the given timeframe; projects will be given to persons who are capable of doing the job.

Our pensioners have rejoiced. I heard the cry that the Government has robbed the senior citizens, but nobody said that the thousands of citizens who were supposed to receive that money... No one made a package to be taken into Region 1 where subsidies were never received; no one said to take this to the villages that never received electricity or water but, when the moneys were being checked for, they were all gone; the moneys were used.

Looking at our health sector, in this year’s Budget, I see over \$500 million allocated to my region. I can assure the citizens of this country that this money was given for the improvement of health and medical services within the region. When I looked at this, my heart said something different to me.

In the 2014 Budget, a large sum of money was given to the region. I wonder if my Friends are going to say that this Government is witch-hunting because it is looking for accountability. In the month of August of 2014, the health sector had no money to use. This is in the records and I am making it known in this record here.

We want to assure persons that this Government will have every officer accounting for whatever finances have been put into the Ministries. This Government will not cover up our Colleagues for stealing the people’s money.

I heard comments about our Interim Management Committees (IMCs) that the Minister... I, who was a Member of a Neighbourhood Democratic Council (NDC), a legally elected and constituted body, was removed by a Minister without notice. When I questioned the then Minister in a public meeting he had, he said, "Do not ask me any questions here. Go to the Parliament and ask the question." Further, the officer who was placed in the office of the IMC, after he moved, millions of dollars disappeared.

2.01 p.m.

When I asked the Minister, he said, "Do not ask me. The police are investigating the matter." Well, I can assure you, sir, that the police will investigate the matter and that justice will be given under this APNU/AFC Government. Our teachers, students and our citizens will receive the best treatment that they deserve under this APNU/AFC Government.

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

Mr. Allen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have no fear or doubt in recommending this Budget which was presented to Guyana with the title, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*, to this noble House. For us, this Budget is the best that we have seen over the decades. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence to make an observation and a request. Firstly, it has been brought to my attention that visitors to the House are making recordings of our proceedings. I would ask the visitors to desist from that practice.

Secondly, I ask visitors not to cheer, scream or make sounds during the course of our proceedings. Thank you.

Mr. Rajkumar: Mr. Speaker, I wish to first congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker of this noble House and I wish to also thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in this House.

I stand proud on this side of the House, representing Region 2, and my contribution, today, is towards the support of the 2015 Budget that was presented to this House by the Hon. Mr.

Winston Jordan on the 10th August, 2015 under the theme, *A Fresh Approach to a Good Life in a Green Economy*.

This is the first Budget presented by the APNU/AFC Government in this House. It is a comprehensive and well-crafted document that can be described as one of the best budgets in many years. This 2015 Budget, to my mind, illuminates the path to economic recovery and prosperity of all of our citizens of Guyana.

Prior to the 2015 Elections, the APNU/AFC coalition recognised that our citizens in this country were not happy; they were disgruntled with many things. They were not comfortable with the pensions that they were provided. Our public servants complained about their wages and salaries. While the cost of living increased, their salaries remained stagnant. They complained about the poor health services provided and also about the educational system.

Our citizens yearn for a good life. The people of our country wanted a better life - good jobs, decent homes for themselves and their family, pure water to their homes and better education. The people of this country wanted a change, a change that they fought for and got on 11th May, 2015. The majority of our citizens wanted the APNU/AFC coalition to govern them.

We stand proud in this House. We have delivered on what we had promised. On the 10th June, 2015, His Excellency the President, David Granger, addressing the Eleventh Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, reiterated our policies, and I wish to quote from his speech:

“Your Government will ensure that as a general rule, people who are paid only the national minimum wage will not be required to pay income tax. We shall ensure, also, that there will be no increases in income tax rates, value-added tax or national insurance contributions for this financial year (FY 2015). There will be moderate increases, however in salaries paid to public servants and pensions paid to seniors.”

I am proud to stand here today to tell this House that I am proud to know that, under this 2015 Budget, this promise has been fulfilled. These things that I am speaking of, the 100-day plan that was in our Manifesto, each promise will be fulfilled by this APNU/AFC Government before the end of the fifth budget debate. The Berbice Bridge toll, come 1st September, 2015, will be

reduced not only for public transportation, but also for private cars and other private vehicles. It will be reduced by 10%.

Our senior citizens are also happy with the provisions of this Budget. They appreciate the efforts being made by the APNU/AFC Government in providing a good life for them after retirement.

From the 1st September, 2015, 4,000 men and women over the age of 65 years will benefit from a 30% increase in their pension and public assistance has been increased from \$5,900 to \$6,500. I have heard the comments about the removal of the subsidies but we must understand that, out of the 40,000 pensioners, only a minimum of 6,000 persons were benefitting from the subsidies. A pensioner in Pomeroon River met me to enquire why it was that he could not have benefitted from the subsidies given for electricity. I had difficulty in understanding him because, in the Pomeroon River, there is no Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) supply so he could not have benefitted from the subsidy. And so I asked him, “What can the Government do to make you happy?” Do you know what he said to me? He said, “All I want is a little assistance to buy some gas to put in my generator so that I can get some current.” Today, that pensioner is happy because he will receive \$4,000 extra come September.

I wish to also recognise, in our Budget, the fulfilment of the promise made by His Excellency that there will be no increase in income tax, value-added tax (VAT) or national insurance contributions. The people of our country welcome this action by this Government to improve their lives in whatever little way; they have much appreciation for what we are doing.

In addition to the increase in salaries and pension, there is the removal of VAT on essential consumer items. The citizens can now purchase things at a reduced cost. A packet of chicken sausage indeed has moved from \$250 to \$210 and chowmein has been reduced from \$300 to \$250. We must understand that, for our Guyanese people, the poor and the less fortunate, every single dollar counts and what they save on one will be spent on something else; the spending power would be increased. Our people understand and appreciate the efforts of this Government, what it is doing for the betterment of their livelihood.

I wish to point out as well that the APNU/AFC Government has fulfilled its promises in the 100-day plan. The people expect us to do so and we have done so. They have their trust and belief

that all the promises that we have made will be fulfilled soon. The APNU/AFC Government, when we make a promise, our word is our bond and we will always deliver.

No Government can provide for its people unless there is viable means of generating revenue to offset its expenditure.

We, in Guyana, depend heavily on our industries and we have recognised the importance of our agricultural sector to our economy. We understand that the sugar industry is facing some difficulty at this moment but this Government has recognised the importance that sugar plays in the life of our people and the APNU/AFC Government will inject \$12 billion into this industry to make it viable.

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

Mr. Rajkumar: Thank you very much, Your Honour. The rice industry is doing well. Region 2's people depend on the sustainability of rice - their lives depend on rice - and the rice farmers in our Region have been experiencing difficulties in receiving their payments for paddy sold to the farmers. Our Government has injected over \$23 billion which was allocated in this year's Budget to support further payments for the 7,000 plus rice farmers we have in this country.

2.16 p.m.

The payment to the rice farmers is assured and will be done in a timely manner. The agriculture industry sector in Region 2 has been benefitting from voluntary allocation, in excess of \$120 million from the 2014 allocation.

The Government has recognised the importance, in this region, of the need to maintain proper drains, irrigation canals, roads and other structures. The rice farmers depend on the reliable supplies of water and timely irrigation for their crops to be produced.

We, in 2015, have provided these facilities; we are encouraging the farmers to produce. The APNU/AFC Government also recognises the fishing industry which has been in a decline. It recognises the importance of the fishing industry to our economy.

During the years, our fishing industry has been attacked by piracy. Many of our fisher folks were unable to go back to sea to earn a livelihood. Many persons were afraid but, today, our Government has removed the consumption taxes on engines, boats, nets and other fishing equipment, encouraging persons to go back to sea, encouraging persons to be their own bosses, work with themselves, and encourage local entrepreneurship. This is a vision of development for our nation and its people.

The mining industry will also benefit from provisions of the Budget - small scale and medium scale mining. Persons going into and investing in this industry are given tax reduction. Consumption tax has been removed on fuel, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and other essential equipment in this industry.

In order to provide a good life for our citizens, we must ensure that our people remain healthy and strong, free from disease and sickness; we must ensure that our citizens receive a high standard of health care. The budgetary allocation for the health sector, this year, has provided over \$23 billion. Of this, over \$5 million is allocated to Region 2. Mr. Speaker, \$500 million over...

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

Mr. Rajkumar: Thank you very much. I am happy for this contribution. Our health system in Region 2 is in dire need. Pensioners and poor people cannot receive basic medication at the hospital pharmacies. With the injection of this amount of money, I am certain that the people of Region 2, especially the pensioner and the less fortunate, will get the required treatment at the hospital.

I wish to recognise the increase in the minimum wage to our workers and an increase in salary, where the salary has been raised and the minimum wage has been raised to \$50,000 per month. That is, indeed, a great step in improving the lives of our workers - paying them more.

I have great pleasure in recognising and congratulating the Hon. Minister of Finance for a job well done. It is worth its effort. Our citizens are happy and, indeed, it is *A Fresh Approach to a Good Life in a Green Economy*.

Mr. Speaker, I support and commend the Budget to the House. Thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Adams: Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, I rise to make my contribution to the debate of *Budget 2015* presented to this honourable House by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan. Mr. Speaker, kindly permit me to offer my congratulations to the Hon. Minister of Finance on his presentation for many APNU/AFC budgets to come.

Budget 2015 can be titled, ‘a people’s Budget’ since it places much emphasis on the development of our country’s most valuable resource, the human resource. *Budget 2015* seeks to make the small man the real man, for it gave more to the low income earners. The theme for this year’s Budget, *A Fresh Approach to a Good Life in a Green Economy*, signals our Government’s intention to deliver the many promises made during our campaign to citizens of Guyana.

The phrase “A Fresh Approach” tells the Guyanese nation that the APNU/AFC Government, led by the Hon. David A. Granger, will do things differently. Guyanese expect a different and better style of leadership and governance; hence, the approach must be a fresh one. This new and fresh approach to governance will provide a good life not for some, but for all Guyanese, irrespective of race, religion, colour, class or creed.

Budget 2015 contains a myriad of measures that will aid in the creation of the good life it speaks about. The removal of VAT from some 20 essential items will bring some measure of relief to all and sundry. This measure will allow every Guyanese to have more in his or her pocket.

The 30% increase in old age pension will benefit every pensioner, from the Rupununi to the Corentyne. It will benefit every pensioner and they are most grateful, for they will now receive some \$17,000, which they never did before. This is an indication of the value the APNU/AFC Government has placed on our senior citizens. It is only the beginning of what is to come for our senior citizens.

The APNU/AFC Government, being cognisant of the fact that the less fortunate will always be with us, has increased the public assistance by some 10%.

The removal of taxes on spares, fuel and equipment for small miners also signal our Government's commitment to ensure a level playing field for all categories of miners and that all are equal and must be given equal opportunities.

The minimum wage being moved from \$39,000 to \$50,000 signals our commitment to providing a good life for all Guyanese. It seeks to close the gap between the rich and the poor.

I must say that my Colleagues from Region 3, who spoke before me, are much pleased with the allocation earmarked for the various programmes in the region, namely administration, education, agriculture, health and public works. Our Region will see the rehabilitation of the West Demerara roadway, a farm to market road from Parika to Ruby Backdam and the construction of a road link between Parika and Goshen. We will see the strengthening of our river and sea defence, among others. These projects were not PPP/C projects; they were Government projects under the PPP/C Government.

Region 3 is known for its agriculture produce, with rice and sugar being the largest. Our Government must be commended for its approach to these sectors and it is evident, in the Budget, that some \$31.5 billion has been allocated to these sectors. Being cognisant of the dilemma sugar is in and the plight of our rice farmers, Government organised two conferences with the main players in the sectors which seek to find a fresh approach to save these industries.

Much is left to be desired of the health sector. When our Government came to office, the Minister of Health, Dr. Norton, visited the West Demerara Regional Hospital and was appalled, for we know much was spent in this institution, but much was wasted. I can assure you, though, Mr. Speaker, under the APNU/AFC Government, a new approach to healthcare delivery will be taken.

The Elections are over; the people have spoken. Like our campaign's theme, it is time. It is time that we get on with the business of nation building. *Budget 2015* caters for the remaining four months of this year and we, as Members of this honourable House, need to take a fresh approach. Guyana belongs to all of us. Despite which side of the House we sit, change has come and we must now work together to build a better and brighter Guyana. Let us cooperate for Guyana. Let us cooperate for our land. Let us resolve to fight together. See we do it right together. My

brothers and sisters on the other side, can we do it? [Members: Yes, we can!] It is my pleasure to commend the 2015 Budget to this House. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. The next speaker is Hon. Komal Chand. I recognise the Minister of Public Infrastructure. Do you wish the floor, sir?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for indulging me. I just thought it may be the most appropriate arena to make a public advisory. I am sorry if you [inaudible]. There has just been an advisory from the Weather Bureau that, within the next four hours, we will be having two and half inches of rain, which, unfortunately, will continue onwards into the evening. So, anybody in low lying areas can take the necessary precautions. Thank you very much. [Applause]

Mr. Chand: Cde. Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment to this high Office of Speaker and to follow the rest to express my condolences to Comrade Catherine Hughes on her recent bereavement.

I rise to make my contribution to the APNU/AFC Government's maiden Budget which continues the trend of growth in projected expenditure when compared to the previous year's Budget.

2.31 p.m.

After the almost three hours and forty-five minutes of Minister Winston Jordan's presentation, I, too, am of the view that the Government is not going to live up to and deliver on many of the promises that were made to the electorate during the recent general and regional elections campaign. I must say that the length of the presentation is no substitute for the expectations which, certainly, will be unfulfilled.

My contribution to these debates will reflect mainly on the sugar industry. The Minister of Finance, in his budget address said, among other things:

“The economic well-being of the sugar industry is critical to the protection of jobs and growth of the economy, as well as the contribution it makes to GDP, exports and foreign exchange.”

Later, he went on to state:

“Whatever path the industry takes, it is vital for the sake of the national economy that it remains viable and able to compete in an increasingly competitive and volatile global market.”

Indeed, our sugar industry is deeply rooted in our society and it continues to be one of the main pillars of our country’s economy. The Minister correctly recognised this. I recall, some years ago, when the then sugar factory and cultivation of Versailles and Schoonard Estates were abruptly closed; there were severe consequences for the field and factory workers, despite the absorption of a small number of them in the employ of the Wales Estate and Versailles Dairy Farm.

I draw attention to this experience to remind us of the disruption and harsh results that await workers and their families, if this industry is not safeguarded. I have expressed before, and do so again, that the sugar industry in the past, has confronted very difficult challenges and has demonstrated its resilience in rising again and again. I am confident that it will do so again, despite the challenges in past times, whether under private ownership or in the post-nationalisation period, whether it was under the respective PPP/C or PNC Governments, the industry was supported and overcame its difficulties and it thrived. And, when it thrived, the records will show that it made a substantial contribution to our economy and our national life, generally.

I do not think that I have to belabour the point of the importance and of the contribution of this industry to our country, during colonial times and also since our independence 49 years ago. All our previous Heads of State have acknowledged this fact. The APNU/AFC Presidential Candidate, now President David Granger, on the campaign trail, is reported to have said, in reference to the sugar industry:

“There is no quick fix but we are not going to dissolve the industry... it is too big to fail”.

This is a positive approach to the industry in our given circumstances and a clear commitment of support at this time. It is within this context that I believe the budget has allocated the sum of \$12 billion to the sugar industry this year. This boost, on approval by this National Assembly, I urge

should be promptly released to the ailing Corporation to assist it to cover and defray its several expenditures. As is well-known, the PPP/C has a consistent record of support of the industry, resulting, over recent years, in an improvement of the life and working conditions of its workers. Now, too, the PPP/C would readily support assistance to the Guyana Sugar Corporation.

Importantly too, I recognise that the industry needs adequate resources to return it to a self-financing state and, later, to profitability. With this in mind, I reiterate the call for the sum of \$4.7 billion, arising from the European Union (EU) sugar sector budget support programme, to be transferred to the sugar industry soon after receipt for it to be used to improve the industry's capacity.

Concerns about the industry's future have re-emerged at this time. Will it be truncated or will the current Commission of Inquiry (COI), which is tasked to "investigate and inquire into the current state of cane cultivation, production and marketing of sugar, molasses and other by-products including power", come up with realistic proposals to make the industry once again buoyant? Our concerns relates to a letter on the Commission's work in one of the newspapers, where the writer stated, among other things:

"Recently appointed Chairman of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) is of the opinion that the \$200 million estate..."

He was referring to the Skeldon Estate.

"...should be sold or used for other purposes".

Coupled with what the Chairman of the Board of GuySuCo said, I have sensed that the Minister of Finance, in his budget address, seemed to be uncertain of the path of the industry. Such statements do not provide a feeling of confidence in the industry's future. I should point out that the unions in the industry as well as us, on this side, do not agree, with the divestment of the industry, fully or partially. It will not even be economically sound in today's circumstances. Challenging as the situation is, I believe that with the commitment and adequate resources, there are quite capable Guyanese in the existing workforce who can surely turn the industry around. We insist that this industry, as a State entity, has a positive future and its viability can be secured.

The industry has great potentials which need to be pursued diligently. Cogeneration is one such

potential. In India, Brazil and several other countries, electricity generation is the main earner for many factories. Such investments make sense as they provide electricity at a reasonable cost, while being a renewable source of energy – a real contribution, not only to a green economy, but, above all, to a green Guyana, very much in keeping with this year’s budget theme. With the seeming and unwise abortion of the Amaila Falls hydropower project, the sugar industry’s wasteful bagasse can play a major role in supplementing our nation’s energy production. Importantly, the Skeldon cogeneration facility is testimony of the value of cogeneration and I welcome efforts for this facility to be returned as a Corporation asset.

I believe that the industry, too, should increase its output of direct consumption sugars for sale in the local, regional and diaspora markets. The Corporation has the possibility to have no less than 45,000 tons of value added sugar available, at this time, for sale from its Blairmont and Enmore packaging plants annually. The prices for this type of sugar in those markets are by far greater than the price for our raw sugar when sold in the EU market.

Refined sugar also has a big market within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region, where as much as 200,000 tons of refined sugar is imported extra-regionally, per annum, for use mainly in the beverage and food industries. Other opportunities related to diversification also exist in the areas of alcohol, ethanol, and liquid sugar, which could be examined. In maximising the opportunities from diversification, GuySuCo should not fail to embrace the public/private partnership concept. I believe that these practical proposals can be the basis for and effectively serve to bolster the industry’s revenue.

Those who are obsessed in taking the denationalisation route, let us be reminded of the industry’s importance to our country: One - it employs the largest number of workers in the country, some 16,000 persons; two - its factories facilitate the canes grown by about 2,000 farmers, all told; three - about 120,000 Guyanese, whether employees, cane farmers, suppliers of materials or service providers and their dependents benefit tangibly from the industry; four - as the largest net foreign exchange earner, the industry accounts for a significant portion of our country’s annual foreign exchange earnings; five - a significant proportion of the industry’s revenue is circulated locally, thus enhancing all businesses; six - the industry’s expansive drainage network throughout the sugar belt facilitates the drainage of many surrounding villages; seven - the yearly training of skilled graduates from the Port Mourant Training School benefits many enterprises in

the country; and eight - what future would our famous Demerara Rum have without our sugar industry?

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

Mr. Chand: Thank you.

This demonstrates the industry's enormous reach and some of its interest spread throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. Maybe, this is what prompted Prime Minister Nagamootoo to say at the National Cane Farmers Conference on 14th August, 2015:

“The focus is to make sugar work. We have too many workers who stand to lose with the collapse of the industry; so it is no question that we have to make it work”.

I wish to emphasise that the sugar industry ought not to be seen only from a bottom line dollar position, but from a comprehensive, macro and holistic position of what it contributes to our social life and the nation. This fact justifies our financial intervention, which is not unusual, as several developed and developing countries subsidise, as necessary, their vital agricultural industries.

Cde. Speaker, fellow Members of Parliament (MPs), an internet search on State support to sugar industries will bring up some really interesting information such as:

“Today, Brazil spends at least US\$2.5 billion on sugar subsidies. Brazil has repeatedly bailed out a domestic sugar industry that struggles despite all subsidies. Thailand, another major exporter of sugar, pursues similar policies.”

And another statement states”

“There are more than 100 countries that produce sugar and subsidise its production and export”.

Those who refer disparagingly to our sugar industry need to remember the sugar levy, when GuySuCo, for two decades, between 1976 and 1996, forked out US\$286.49 million or G\$58.73 billion in today's terms, to the State as levy.

2.46 p.m.

Before the nationalisation in 1976, a significant sum, as a sugar levy, was extracted too. Moreover, some \$25 billion would have reached the Government's coffers, arising from the European Union (EU) sugar sector budget support, some of which is yet to reach the right place — the sugar industry.

Cde. Speaker, Comrades, we should not be short-sighted and go for unsound solutions and support miniaturising or downsizing our sugar industry. Instead, as Guyanese, let us seek to save it and let us build on the economic foundation that was created, especially over the past 23 years.

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

Mr. Chand: Comrade Speaker, as a regional Member of Parliament representing Region 3, it will be remiss of me should I not reflect on this important region.

I must express my disappointment that the region, which is the third most populous in our country, boasting some 107,416 residents, has its capital programme unnecessarily curtailed this year. According to the Estimates presented, approximately \$202 million was allocated for this purpose. This is a significant decline from the Regional Democratic Council's (RDC) revised budget in June of \$306 million. Instead, the dramatic cut would tremendously hamper the region's capital work and prevent it from adequately fulfilling the demands of the many residents. Due to this reduction, we can expect to see deterioration of our roads and bridges, and, in the health sector, purchases of important medical equipment will be affected.

The slash will also affect progress in Region 3. I must mention the state of the main access bridge to Patentia Housing Scheme, which collapsed in May this year. I understand that a residents petition seeking the construction of a new bridge was sent to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. I wish to take the opportunity to urge the responsible Minister to heed this request and to ensure the necessary funding to have a new bridge constructed as soon as possible.

I also wish to request that immediate attention through remedial work be executed on the roads along the West Bank of Demerara, including the two Canals Polder. I urge the Government to work towards the complete rehabilitation of the entire West Bank Demerara road through follow-up work that has been already done by the PPP/C.

Cde. Speaker, over recent years, Region 3 had economic expansion and growth, resulting in a robust and thriving economy. This was due to the work of the Regional Democratic Council and the encouragement and inputs of the PPP/C Administration. This is a trend that should continue. I, like other citizens of that Region, would remain alert to ensure that the gains made thus far in raising the people's living standards do not unravel due to neglect and for whatever reason.

In conclusion, before I end my contribution, Comrade Speaker, allow me to comment on the old age pension issue which was also referred to by my many Colleagues.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Mr. Chand: Let me just say this important point. I am very despondent and displeased that the Government has indulged in a give-and-take approach. This is not any new approach. This is reminiscent of the age-old capitalist trickery. What appears to be an increase in the layman's calculation represents instead a shortfall of \$1,333 every month for every pensioner, if we take into account the promised \$15,000 and the withdrawals of electricity and water subsidies.

Comrade Speaker, I just have a few lines more. The Budget address, though long, is very short on fulfilment of promises to the Guyanese people. I will skip a little part, Cde. Speaker.

Already, certain tasks confront us. Our important task being to ensure the return of democratic elections — a task, if not achieved, will almost certainly affect our national unity, our prestige abroad, our development performance and our dignity as a people.

Comrade Speaker, I look forward that this new Parliament will take the necessary steps to correct our democratic deficit and set about on a new, independent course of progress and prosperity.

Thank you. [Applause]

Minister of Tourism [Mrs. Hughes] Mr. Speaker, let me first thank my Colleagues in this honourable House for their kind words of comfort and expressions of condolences to me and also my family at this very difficult time.

On a brighter note, let me welcome the Members of the Opposition to this esteemed House and I say that I look forward to us working together, yes, seriously working together, in a vibrant and

hopefully productive exchange of ideas, views and information. This, after all, is clearly the will and hope of the majority of the Guyanese people.

Most of all, I would like to congratulate the Hon Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan, for delivering a well-crafted 2015 National Budget and for giving an unprecedented stimulus to the growth of Guyana's tourism sector, as evidenced in the increased allocation to the Guyana Tourism Authority's (GTA) budget which increased by 25%. With a further commitment to doubling the Ministry's marketing budget over the next five years, it is a tremendous boost for us all. One had to admit that that is a great way to start in just the few months that we have been in office.

When it comes to developing tourism, *Guyana, South America, undiscovered* shines as well as beckons to become a transformational economic, social, and cultural growth area. Guyana has unique nature-based tourism product, with pristine rainforest, exotic wildlife and a vibrant indigenous culture. Guyana's nature based tourism is exceptional because of its rich natural resources which provide an extraordinary adventure for nature lovers. Tourism has the greatest potential, as a rapidly expanding and emerging export oriented industry, to create jobs in a short space of time; to generate foreign currency; to improve livelihoods and to improve Guyana's image; to empower rural communities; to conserve and protect our environment; and to contribute, significantly, to Guyana's gross domestic product.

Our APNU/AFC Government's commitment and priority to tourism is undoubtedly evidenced by the fact that tourism, today, is a separate ministry with responsibility for consumer protection, and, for the first time in history, has given unwavering focus for this sector to grow as an independent, stand-alone ministry. Tourism, therefore, is best poised to deliver to this nation on our 2015 Budget theme by journeying on a fresh start to the good life in a green economy. Tourism is poised to provide the good life by our unique tourism product and experience which we can build on a foundation of a green economy that supports conservation, sustainability, care and respect for the environment.

Policies and Initiative

Given the importance of tourism in Guyana and its ability to attract foreign investment and to create jobs, especially within the Indigenous communities and in order to realise the sector's full

potential, the Ministry of Tourism will embark on the development of a national tourism strategy. It is a saddening reflection that, after 22 years in Government, the former Administration did not see the need for a national tourism policy to guide tourism development, its operations and management.

This APNU/AFC Government has recognised the importance of and the need for a tourism policy which will address tourism constraints and challenges and identify opportunities and benchmarks for future growth of the industry. This policy will also address legislation and regulations on tourism investment, incentives and concessions, and ensure that these incentives are distributed on a more equitable footing; marketing, product development, human resource development, infrastructure, aviation sustainability, best practices and more are all part of our vision. This policy will focus on establishing and promoting specific niche markets which research shows we have a competitive advantage as a country.

The first niche market is birdwatching. Guyana is now being compared to Peru and Ecuador, and is the hottest, newest, birdwatching destination. I know the former Minister is agreeing to that as he grumbles across the room. Guyana has gained international attention and, with a widespread knowledge of our 830 species of birds, our potential in this area as a niche market is real.

Today, one of our foremost birders will arrive in London to join a team for our Guyana summer evening event which we are hosting. The team will then move on to Rutland in the United Kingdom (UK) tomorrow to participate with members of our private sector in the British Birdwatching Fair. At this Fair, we have a booth and business-to-business meetings are set up with international tour operators and tourism related companies.

Ecotourism is another important niche for destination Guyana. Endowed with massive pristine tracks of tropical rainforest, high species diversity, amazing wildlife, majestic rivers and waterfalls, mountains and savannahs, wetlands, and Indigenous communities with a low carbon lifestyle, Guyana's ecotourism potential is unsurpassed.

Adventure tourism is another important niche. Mountain climbing, trekking, canoeing, jungle survival, safaris, river trips, fishing and cattle ranching are all important aspects of what we can enjoy in this niche market.

Wildlife Watching

Guyana is known for its rich and viewable wildlife. Tourists are often fascinated by the opportunity to view our amazing diversity and, of course, Guyana has become known to the home of the greats of the Amazon such as the harpy eagle, the anaconda, the blue caiman, the arapaima, the giant anteater, the jaguar and not to forget the Victoria amazonica, the lily of course.

Community Based Tourism

More communities are turning to tourism as a sustainable means of livelihood and employment. I have already hosted consultations with stakeholders from Region 8, and plans to improve this region's tourism product in a public-private partnership are moving apace. It is our intention to carefully identify tourism potential areas in all regions as we feel that that is an important approach that we must take.

As we know, some of our Indigenous, Amerindian communities have received international tourism awards in 2009, including Surama which was awarded by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation's (CTO) Sustainable Tourism Conference in 2012 for community-based ecotourism.

Community tourism is testimony to the public-private partnership that exists among stakeholders in our industry in which local organisations, regional and international agencies, all have been working hard with a collective approach to expanding possibilities.

Sports fishing is another area that has tremendous appeal and approach in Guyana. Of course, we are home to the largest fresh water fish, the arapaima. Our creeks, rivers and lakes, over the years, have provided a great opportunity for sports fishing.

3.01 p.m.

Sports Tourism

Guyana has been attracting a number of tourists by hosting sporting events - cricket, motor racing, football, horse-raking, horse-racing, hockey, and rugby. If we take a closer look at motor racing, for example, as I did recently, we will discover that more than 15,000 visitors come to

Guyana for that single event in November. This is a great contribution to our economy, to our restaurants, to our entertainment spots, and we have pledged support to the Guyana Motor Racing and Sports Club (GMR&SC).

Yachting and Cruise Visits

This sector has a great potential, over time, to expand and just last weekend I did a presentation in Trinidad to more than 50 yachties from more than six countries across Europe and the Guianas. Yachts continually arrive in Guyana, especially into the Essequibo and Berbice areas.

What is exciting is that we have begun to explore opportunities for the development of a marina and the opportunities for the maintenance of yachts, especially for yachts that would want to come and rest in our waters because we do not have the challenges of hurricanes, tornados and those other weather events. So yachting is another possibility that we think that we can develop.

Entertainment and Events

Guyana has evolved into a city that attracts international and regional shows in music and the arts. This form of tourism has seen enormous financial contributions for local businesses like hotels and restaurants. But more importantly is the development of our own music industry; we recognise the power of music to attract visitors to a destination and the various music festivals which can see up to 9,000 visitors as is the situation with St. Lucia over the period of a weekend is testimony to the success of these programmes.

Heritage and Cultural Tourism

Guyana's composition and rich cultural heritage includes aspects such as the history of its people, their art, music, architecture, religion and other elements that offer a unique experience of Guyana and it is a wonderful thing for our tourists to come and enjoy. National buildings which have their origins in the colonial era when the Dutch, English and French were present in our country have left Guyana with many structures to fuel heritage tourism. One of the things we also intend to do is to explore, once again, attempts to have the city of Georgetown and some specific locations registered as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) heritage sites.

Tourism Satellite Accounting Contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

This Administration is committed to implementing Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA) to capture the real contribution to Guyana's GDP that this industry can make. We feel this is very important as the Ministry defines its way forward and formulates a five-year strategic plan.

The effective marketing of Guyana as a tourism destination is a priority which has eluded us and the development of our industry for far too long. This Budget delivers on our promise to provide more funds to market destination Guyana, which is the foundation of our plan to realise the potential of this industry. I remember just last year begging my Friend, the former Minister of many industries, including tourism, to increase the funds allocated to marketing and even expressed my willingness to back him up in this House. Well, it is not yet 100 days of this Administration and the budget for the GTA, the agency charged with reinforcing standards and regulations and marketing, has been increased by 25% or by \$30 million over 2014, from \$120 million to \$150 million, the largest percentage increase ever in a tourism budget. Our Administration is committed to doubling the marketing budget over the next five years. This budget delivers on our campaign project and promise.

The Ministry of Tourism, through the Guyana Tourism Authority, will implement the Acorn marketing plan which I plan to speak about more in the future in the public as well as our digital marketing strategy. The Guyana Tourism Authority will continue to create awareness of Guyana's tourism product and will promote destination Guyana as a premier, nature and adventure destination with the following goals in mind:

- To reposition the destination under a new brand, *Guyana, South America, undiscovered*;
- To present a clear and distinct image of Guyana's tourism product in the target markets;
- To create, extend awareness and appeal of Guyana as a tourism destination through advertising, marketing, promotion and the distribution of collateral materials;
- To expand our sales and distribution network;
- To engage in more value-added promotions and market research;

- To expose selected international media from world renowned magazines, news agencies, travel trade writers and the diaspora to Guyana's product through Fam Trips;
- To support and encourage awareness of our local attractions through promotions; and
- To increase domestic tourism opportunities.

Our marketing plans as well as the digital marketing strategy will achieve the following objectives:

- Increase visitor arrivals and visitor expenditure in our country;
- Increase destination awareness and demand; and
- Increase brand visibility and image.

All of these we feel will increase employment in the industry and occupancy levels in hotels, which have been challenges in recent times. We are abducting a market-led and driven strategy which is targeted for and for which Guyana has a competitive advantage. Tourism is a key driver for Guyana's economy and this injection of funding would boost Guyana's tourism growth and expansion.

The previous Government did not provide the level of funding required for tourism marketing, expansion and growth. Our strategy will see increase in participation; a key travel trade; consumer and diaspora shows and events; increased and expanded digital presence; increase and expanded trade and media Fam Trips and also advertising marketing; facilitation of films and documentary productions; and production of a distinct destination promotional video.

I heard my good Friend, the former Hon. Minister, complaining about the Marriott. We are not only concerned about the Marriott Hotel, but we are concerned about our other locally run hotels that have been the foundation of this industry for the last 20 years. Therefore, we are happy and excited that this Budget gives them the opportunity to grow. **[Mr. Jagdeo: Marriott is local too.]** It absolutely is and, unfortunately, in the past, as you will well know, the conditions and the incentives that have been given to the Marriott Hotel have not been given to local hotels

and I can speak from personal experience; small hotels in Guyana continue to get little or no support. Let me go ahead.

During September to December, two trade shows, namely the American Birding Expo and World Travel Market, will be attended to promote the destination. As we have said, just a few weeks ago, we put our stamp on Last Lap Lime in Toronto, Canada, which has been the largest collection of Guyanese in any single event in Toronto, Canada but which the Government never attended.

Branding advertising would be done in the upcoming World Travel Market and a range of other bird shows and also in the Guyana what and where magazine, the bird-watch magazine and several other publications.

Product Development

A tourism destination needs a good product portfolio and a strategy to develop and to refine the existing supply of the destination as well as to develop new products and to cater to the trends, needs and demands of the growing market. The Co-operative Republic of Guyana would be employing an integrated and inclusive approach to tourism development and it will involve all the respected Ministries and regions. So we will look at developing infrastructure, facilities and amenities that will foster and improve product readiness and marketability.

In the area of product development, the Ministry is projecting to complete key activities in institutional development and here we are talking about staff capacity building, regulations, tourism awareness month, tourism industry training, development of the hinterland tourism development plan and tourism circuit development and investment projects.

It is intended that there would be increased work in the areas of inspection and certification of tourism businesses, with special emphasis on outlying areas, especially the Rupununi, Linden, Berbice and Essequibo.

In order to enhance the quality of tourism in Guyana, a number of activities are planned not to only build capacity, but to provide a consistent level of quality service, guest satisfaction and the overall improvement of the visitor experience. The areas of focus for training between

September to December are customer service, frontline training, boat operator training, first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

The topic of customer service will examine employee performance, deportment, hospitality services, housekeeping, sales and marketing as well as front office management.

The development of the hinterland tourism plan will enable communities to become self-sufficient, create employment opportunities, preserve heritage and habitats of our people, while promoting environmental education within hinterland communities.

As I mentioned, circuit development will be something that we plan to focus on and we will ensure that tour operators would be able to promote new areas of tourism in Guyana. Also, with our new profiles on niche market, we will be able to produce successful marketing tools for our trade exhibitions and trade fairs.

Tourists Arrivals

We are optimistic that arrivals will increase by 3% over the 205,000 visitors recorded in 2014, despite it being an election year. Our aggressive marketing strategy will attract an additional 25,000 visitors, we feel, in 2016, our golden jubilee anniversary year.

It is difficult to talk of increasing visitors' arrivals without mentioning the debilitating impact crime is having on our country, its people and the potential of our tourism product. This is a tragedy that we must fix and I am confident that this Government will fix it. With the plans we have, our acceptance of assistance from our international partners, who are skilled in this area, assistance the last Government refused to accept and with the support of the Guyanese people, we will succeed.

Let us not forget how we got here. It was under the former PPP/C Administration that crime escalated; drugs started leaving Guyana in every inconceivable way and we became a trans-shipment port.

3.16 p.m.

A long list of friends of the last administration, who operated businesses supported by the last government, has been implicated, charged and, in some cases, convicted in international courts

for a range of illegal activities. The saying goes, *show me your company and I will tell you who you are.*

The recent public declaration by the former Minister of Home Affairs that the police now have information on who killed our former Minister Satyadeow Sawh, was shocking for me to hear. The fact that this former head, who clearly was in possession of such information while in office, did nothing with the information is horrifying, but indicative of the lack of interest that was portrayed, and the lack of interest that that government gave to solving crime in Guyana.

On a more positive note, air connectivity is critical to tourism's expansion and growth. We will continue to aggressively and proactively engage airlines to attract new services and routes, and for existing airlines to increase frequency and routes.

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

Mrs. Hughes: Thank you, Sir. This Administration is working assiduously to achieve Category 1 status.

Tourism is a labour-intensive and competitive industry. This Ministry and the Government are committed to establishing the Hospitality Institute. Here, I would like to pause to give credence to the former Minister of Tourism, who started and initiated this programme; it is a good programme. It has been spoken about in the past, especially within the private sector. I want everyone to know that we are looking at it, we are adding some new positives to it, and we will be proceeding with it.

The Ministry is embarking, also, on hinterland internship programmes, where tourism training and attachments are being provided to build capacity in the hinterland region. We are going to be doing it specifically in that area because we recognise that a lot of the training tends to be done in Georgetown and its environs. That is why we are placing a special emphasis on the hinterland.

Just recently, there were some trainees – staff from a range of hotels in Guyana and from the Carnegie School of Home Economics – who were able to go on a three-month internship programme at the Crane Hotel. My Ministry will continue to work with investments in these areas and we will partner with the Guyana Office for Investment (Go-Invest).

A competitive and world-class tourism destination is built on quality and standards. In Guyana, we want to ensure that we promote those standards.

In the area of domestic tourism, we want to work with the private sector to ensure that we can come up with a programme that allows local Guyanese to access our tourism product at a more affordable cost.

At this point in time, I want to go to the other areas of my Ministry, which include the Guyana Consumers Association (GCA). Before I go to that, actually, one of the things that we are going to do as part of the Ministry's plan is create some tourism information offices. They would be located not only at our new office in Georgetown but also in the Berbice and Essequibo areas, Moleson Creek, Lethem in the Rupununi, and the Cheddi Jagan and Ogle International Airports. The thinking behind it is that those are locations where lots of tourists come through and we want to make sure that the requisite information is there.

Information technology (IT) is an important area that we are going to look at. In this regard, we are talking about growing our Facebook pages and Twitter account, and also ensuring that we revamp our website so that we can have a greater niche. We intend to fully utilise the internet and online communication as a strategy to increase our visitor arrivals.

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

Mrs. Hughes: The Ministry will continue its support to festivals such as the Rockstone Fish Festival, the Rupununi Music & Arts Festival and, of course, the Rupununi awareness programme and the Rupununi Expo.

Under the Ministry falls the Guyana International Conference Center (GICC). I am happy to say that that continues to grow and provide an important facility, and at that facility several private and public sector events are hosted. We anticipate that, this year, the use of the facility would continue to grow.

And as we know, the Conference Center, just recently, was renamed in honour of our First President, Mr. Arthur Chung, and it is now the Arthur Chung Convention Centre. **[Ms. Teixeira:** It has not been gazetted, so it is still not *[inaudible]* The Chief Whip on the other side is correct. We are going to be doing the necessary legal documentation for that.

Consumer protection is an important aspect of my Ministry and the Consumer Affairs Department is working assiduously to ensure that we provide information to consumers and protect them against unscrupulous business people.

Another important area is, of course, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission (CCAC).

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please allow the Minister to complete her statement. Thank you.

Mrs. Hughes: The CCAC operates under two Acts; namely, the Competition and Fair Trading Act of 2006 and Consumers Affairs Act of 2011. Its mandate, really, as I mentioned, is to promote and to protect the consumer.

In closing, I want to respond to comments from the Hon. Mr. Ganga Persaud, who I was honoured to have remind me of my words. Dear Hon. Member, I want you to know that I stand by those words. I would like to remind you and I wish to say that if in the first four weeks of this Administration's term in office it was not forced to support the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) to the tune of \$12 billion and a further US\$17 million for the problems with the rice farmers and PetroCaribe, our pensioners would have definitely gotten the \$20,000 that we spoke about.

In my own Ministry, I entered to face a long overdue bill of half of a million dollars for the Caribbean Premier League (CPL). Those are the things that have hindered us from delivering on our campaign promises. As we said, we are going to deliver on those promises in a phased way.

To both the Hon. Harry Gill and the Hon. Selman, I quote Mr. Gill, who stated in his presentation:

“We are under the grand illusion that we are ready for tourism”

I say to both of you, check the statistics and you would see that over 200,000 people visited this country. Destination Guyana, according to the *National Geographic Traveler*, in its ‘Best of the World 2014’ series, is the best kept secret in South America. No less than the Cable News Network (CNN), in its series ‘The Big Earth’ features and lists Guyana as one of 101 amazing destinations in the world to visit.

The Hon. Ms. Selman referred to the strides that the sector made under the People's Progressive Party/C (PPP/C) Administration. I would say that the private sector slowly moved ahead in spite of and with moderate support from the PPP/C Administration. From 2011-2012, the Budget to the Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA) increased from \$6.2 million or 6%, in 2012, to \$9 million or an 8.4% increase in 2013. I want to remind us all, as I close, that in 2015 the increase over 2014 is \$3.4 million, a 25% increase. This is only in the first few months of this Government in office. The *Budget 2015* allocates \$154.2 million to the Guyana Tourism Authority for it to do its work.

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

Mrs. Hughes: In closing, I want to say that in the Tenth Parliament it was regrettable that we did not focus more on working together, and I hope that in the Eleventh Parliament we will recognise that the people of Guyana put us here. Therefore, although we may have our banter, I think it is important for us to deliver to the people of this country. So, I ask us to be constructive, to work together, and to deliver to the people of this country.

To the Hon. Minister of Finance, I am excited by your Budget. I support it and I commend it. I thank you for the support that you have given to the development of the tourism sector. I know that, together, the private and the public sectors would guarantee that we do well.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mrs. Persaud: Hon. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you to your ascension to this noble office of Speaker of this National Assembly. In the same vein I would like to offer my condolences to Hon. Member Mrs. Hughes, on the passing of your mother-in-law. Also in the same vein, as someone who has workers at heart, I seek to offer commendations to the employees, workers, of the Ministry of Finance for having put together this budget because without them it would have been impossible for us to have this document to peruse in our hands.

The national budget of 2015 captioned, *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*, under the heading, "Creating A Must-See Tourist Destination", sought to outline the Government's plan for the advancement of the tourism sector. However, apart from indicating that Guyana should take advantage of its anonymity as a tourist destination, a required

prerequisite for the collection of good source data, improving product development and enhancing visitor experience, developing and enforcing service standards and hospitality training, the establishment of a tourism hospitality school and the expectation of generating over 1,500 jobs in the next five years, a concretised and sustainable plan of action for the advancement of the tourist industry in Guyana is completely invisible. I am, however, pleased to note that the Hon. Minister of Tourism has finally accepted the figures for tourist destination arrivals and that for car racing events here in Guyana, since I am being informed that by my honourable colleague that in Budget 2014 when those figures were given he was laughed at.

Despite Guyana's vast forest, mountains, rivers, wild life, our pristine environments in the world and a fascinating window into indigenous cultures, in the forms of dozens of Amerindian communities, no feasible plan has been mentioned to tap into this eco-tourism treasure chest.

3.31 p.m.

May I point out that the aspects of training in the area of hospitality and the establishment of a Hospitality Training School are all crafted projects of the People Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration. Hence, one needs to ask what is new in the tourism sector other than making it a separate agency.

Under the PPP/C Government tourism in Guyana came into its own and it was under the PPP/C Government that Guyana regained its status of being considered a prime tourist designation. The Hon. Minister of Finance stated in his presentation of the Budget that, for tourism to flourish, a cross sectoral effort is required among Government, the private sector and civil society to ensure a visitor experience that relates in repeat visits and positive stories here and abroad. Let me refresh the Hon. Minister's mind that it was under the PPP/C Government that the Cheddi Jagan International Airport's Arrival Lounge was often transformed on many occasions to afford both Guyanese returning home on holiday and tourists alike, the true experience of a warm hospitable Guyanese welcome, which showcased our rich culture and the local delicacies.

The mention of providing 1500 jobs over the next five years is nothing in comparison with the thousands of jobs lost by way of the dismantling of the various projects established in the various Hinterland communities and which provided a livelihood for our Amerindian brothers and sisters. Further, there is no mention in the Budget of the Amerindian Development Fund, the

career programme which was launched to support small businesses and the Rural Development Fund which was set up to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across Guyana. The tourism industry, apart from providing an avenue for leisure education via research and adventure, is also one of the main sectors for the provision of the good life by way of creating employment for many persons across the length and breadth of Guyana and across the wide expanse of service areas. These areas, once properly harnessed and guided, will become the facet of income generating activities, which will not only see the rapid advancement of tourism, but also the enhancement of labour, as it relates to gainful employment, job creativity and unemployment reduction. Hence, the sectors of tourism and labour, even though separate, are linked together in a common purpose that of ensuring that the well-being of persons are realised.

Budget 2015 sought to address the needs of the nation's most valuable resource, the workers, under the heading "Labour". It is indeed a most welcomed gesture that public servants will be receiving the much anticipated, even though it has been reduced from the position of substantial to modest, increases in wages and salaries, the part fulfilment of this campaign promise is good.

Another good gesture is that of the returning of the subventions to the Critchlow's Labour College (CLC) and the Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC), the implementation of the granting of a subvention to the Federation of Independent Trades Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and to other registered trades unions. The fact cannot be denied that these allocations will go a long way into ensuring that there is enhancement in the work of these unions. Once again, I find it heartening that there is to be the restructuring of the Labour Department aimed at enhancing the performance of this very important component of the public service. I note that the Hon. Member, Mrs. Simona Broomes, in her presentation, bemoaned the fact that the Labour Officers lack the necessary skills and training to effectively tackle the issue of trafficking in persons. I have no doubt that, with the Hon. Member now in control, this deficiency will be something of the past and we can all look forward to witnessing the complete extinction of trafficking in persons from our dear land.

Notwithstanding, the fact that these increases, allocations and restructuring are applaudable, they are some grey areas that must be addressed by this Parliament, if the intended goals are to be realised. It cannot be dismissed that the factors of labour are very important to the sustainability of our country, hence, the rationale why this Ministry is usually separate and apart from another

agency. However, it has been noted that this Ministry has been absorbed in a very miniscule way under another Ministry. This is a matter of great concern, since it has created a vacuum where the functions of this Ministry are concerned. The Labour Act, Chapter 98:01, No. 2 of 1942 states that:

“An Act to provide for the establishment of a Department of Labour, for the regulation of the relationship between employers and employees and for the settlement of differences between them.”

The Act provides for the Appointment of the Chief Labour Officer and Staff, the statutory responsibility of the Chief Labour Officer and the Permanent Secretary.

The Act also provides for the conciliation in industrial disputes; defines the powers of the Minister to intervene in trade disputes and to establish advisory committees; procedures for the regulation of wages and hours of work; rights and obligations of employees; and the status and enforceability of collective agreements. The following questions need to be asked, so that the citizens of this country can have a clear perspective of the following, since the absorption of this Ministry have created great confusion: Who is the designated Minister of Labour? Why were the responsibilities of Labour not gazetted under an appointed Minister? To whom does the Labour Department answer to and forward critical cases? Which Government personnel will be responsible for the filing of legal matters of a labour nature? Which Government personnel will be responsible for representing the Government on labour matters in a court of law?

The annals of our history, since the post-emancipation era, will show that there has always been an independent agency and personnel responsible for our country's labour affairs. To reduce this very important Ministry to a Department within another Ministry is not only unacceptable, but also disrespectful to the work, struggles and sacrifices of Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, the father of trade unionism in Guyana, whose statue stands proudly in the forecourt just outside of this honourable House and to all trade unionists and workers across this country, that a Government will see it unimportant to continue with this tradition of labour. It leaves one to wonder, if this is a signal that the workers of this country are, in a like manner, unimportant subjects of our society, hence, their contributions to nation building are also unimportant. If this is the manner in

which labour is viewed by this Government, then the salary increases are mere window dressing paraphernalia.

It must also be noted that the recent increases in wages and salaries for public servants mentioned in Budget 2015, are by way of its percentage value incorrect. For the full percentage to be in its true value, these increases must be retroactive from 1st January, 2015. It is the working knowledge of all trade unions and employers alike that at the negotiating table, all increases are effective as to the anniversary date of negotiations, as stipulated in their collective bargaining agreements.

Since it is now public knowledge that no consultation took place between the Government and the recognised trade Unions, let me remind the Government of the Trade Unions Recognition Act, Chapter 98:07, No. 33 of 1997, which provides the procedures for determining appropriate bargaining units and for certifying trade unions as recognised majority unions for collective bargaining purposes by a seven member Trade Union Recognition and Certification Board, a corporate body.

“An Act to provide for the improvement and promotion of industrial relations by the establishment of procedures for the certifying of trade unions as recognised majority unions and for the matters connected therewith”

The Act also defines the composition of the Board, their appointment by the Minister, the Secretariat of the Board, the duties of the Board, the procedures for hearing and determining compulsory recognition and the duty to treat and bargain in good faith by employers and Trade Unions.

In the absence of the due process of collective bargaining, then it is no wonder there exists the gross inaccuracies, as it relates to the computation of these salaries - these increases. Had there been the involvement of the trade unions, this humongous error would have been pinpointed and avoided. If per chance those on the Government side find offence with this observation, then this issue is not an error by chance, but rather a calculated attempt to rob the workers of much needed finances by knowingly providing inaccurate information to the said persons, without the knowledge and approval of their representatives.

The Private Sector Commission (PSC) has commended the 2015 Budget. However, in like manner, it is hoped that they in turn will honour their commitment to their employees since wages and salaries increases in the public service is the catalyst by which negotiations in the private sector are formulated. Hence, it is assumable that expectations are at all times high amongst private sectors employees and their bargaining agencies.

The Hon. Minister of Finance, during his presentation of the Budget of 2015, did speak to the return of the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College and the Guyana Trades Union Congress highlighting the fact that these subventions were withheld by the People Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) while in Government. It must be clarified that the withholding of the subvention was not done by mere whims and fancies, but rather that this was as a result of the inability of the said institution to provide accountability for the subvention allocated for many years. This issue to which I speak is also known to some Hon. Members on the Government side of this House. I was dismayed at the comments of the Hon. Member Mr. Basil Williams on this issue, of which he is very much aware, of an old nightmare that some persons, including the Hon. Minister of Education, Dr. Roopnarine, who was at that time the Principal, had to endure while trying to resolve this issue, due to the stubborn and obnoxious attitudes of some of the institution's officials. So irrational, unprofessional and disrespectful were their attitudes to anyone who did not support their position and was, in the most demeaning way, dismissed from the College, exempted from Board meetings or forced to resign, as of in the case of the Hon. Member Dr. Roopnarine.

Therefore, it is important that on the returning of the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College, there must be the insistence of the provision of accountability of expenditure. There must be scrutiny of the policy as it relates to the composition of the Board of Governors, as it relates to its trades' unions composition, scrutiny of the Board of Trustees, its composition and accuracy.

3.46 p.m.

The allocation of a subvention to registered trade union to assist with local training is complementary, however, it must not be overlooked that the issue of accountability rears its head once more. This time in the sense that unions must be sensitised, that the submission of their

accounts for auditing is the number one criterion in this instance, so as to qualify. I hope that the Government will find it possible to offer assistance in this area by maybe utilising its team of audit specialists, since this exercise is very costly and many unions have not had their accounts audited for many years.

The transformation and advancement of the labour environment is critical to sustainability in a competitive global environment. It is therefore irresponsible of any Government to set its benchmark far away from its attainability. It must not be forgotten that it is the workers, who by there their blood, sweat, and tears, keep the wheels of industry turning. Therefore, it is only just that their efforts be rewarded in a sustainable and realistic manner.

It would be unpardonable of me, if I close without mentioning the unjust transgressions that were meted out to the thousands of public servants, who were dismissed from their jobs after 11th May, 2015. These individuals have done nothing wrong to deserve such wanton and inexcusable treatment. Many senior public servants were told that the reason for dismissal was due to their active involvement, during the last election campaign, which should not have been. Is this to mean that once you are employed by the Government you have no right in active politics? Then I ask this question, how come politicians are made Ministers of the Government and, in like manner, some are appointed to other senior positions, such as Advisors? Somewhere along the line they had to be involved, and very actively, in the operations of their political party, so as to be recognised for their work. This lopsided explanation is unacceptable, since there are those public servants now on the Government side whose political participation during the campaign was very visible, active, and open, as it relates to their support to the now Government and who have been retained on their jobs, some even benefiting from promotions.

The last act of victimisation is being against the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, where the attempt is being made to remove him from the position of speaking in the penultimate position to that of speaking before four other senior Ministers of this debate. I forcefully denounce this attempt and I see it as unethical and disrespectful to a former President of this country.

Let me put the Government side on notice. The Hon. Members of this side of the Opposition, do not suffer by the muzzle me maneuver, neither will we concede to the fear frenzy factor. Even though we were cheated, we are not defeated.

I know that the Hon. Member Mrs. Simona Broomes, in her presentation stated that the Government will be operating from a platform of integrity. To have integrity is to be fair. Where then is the fairness in these acts of victimisation, discrimination, and violations of workers' rights. The arbitrary dismissal of these workers is a violation of the Prevention of Discrimination Act Chapter 99:09 No. 26 of 1997, which:

“Provides for the elimination of discrimination in employment, training, recruitment and membership of professional bodies.

The Act also:

“Provides for the promotion of equal remuneration for work of equal value.”

It further:

“Prohibits discrimination, defines unlawful discrimination and protest against discrimination in employment and protection against discrimination in other areas.”

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under Article 19 states:

“Everyone has the right of freedom of opinion and expression.”

Meaning that one has the right to think what he/she wants and say what he/she likes and nobody should forbid him/her from doing so. Article 21 states:

“Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

Meaning, one has the right to take part in his/her country's political affairs, either by belonging to the Government of his/her choice or by choosing politicians who have the same ideas as he/she. The caption *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy* is indeed a fresh approach by this Government to being deceptive and vindictive. The good life only to the chosen

few who are prepared to blindly and willingly bow down at the altar of self-aggrandisement of this Government.

A green economy indeed, since our country's economy is on a rapid decline and since the plagiarising of all PPP/C projects mentioned in this budget, is valid proof of this Government's greenness in their ability to conceptualise progressive economic ideas of their own.

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

Mrs. Persaud: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The presentation of Budget 2015 is a desperate attempt to hoodwink the people of this nation. Since, this very important document on which our day to day survival and livelihoods are dependent upon is filled with inaccuracies, plagiarism, unrealistic and unattainable goals, misinterpretations, misconceptions, and miscalculations. Indeed, they have missed the mark on this budget.

Finally, it is important that as the Budget of 2015 is captioned *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy* that these words, pronounced by the Government, must not mere verbal expressions of their campaign promises or fictions of their imaginations, but it must be the pronouncements of carefully crafted possibilities that will indeed become realities.

In closing, I will refer to an extract from a letter written by Dr. Cheddi Jagan to Mr. Peter D'Aguiar, the then leader of the United Force (UF), that was published in the *Daily Chronicle* of Saturday, 15th October, 1960.

“You state that your policy of economic dynamism is a plan based on the least and soundest western economic ideas that is especially suited to a country like ours. A country which has made little or no use of its greatest economic advantage, namely its huge land area, a country whose people suffer from unemployment and low standards of living and, yet, has within it all the basic essentials for a full and dynamic development. Economic dynamism will help everyone in British Guiana. To the workers without work it will mean work; to the workers at work it will mean better wages; it will mean homes to those who need homes and land to those who need lands; for those who have farms or businesses it will mean expansion and prosperity; for everyone it will be a place in the sun. Economic dynamism will mean the most rapid advancement for all people in British

Guiana. Now all the above sounds very well, but it is only a lot of words. Please illustrate with precise fact and figures. Assuming that you were the premier of the new Government what will you do? What will be your five year or ten year development plans to achieve all the things which you mentioned above?"

To this Government this Hon. Member who stands in this honourable House as a representative of the party founded by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, I am saying that *A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy* is as Dr. Jagan said 55 years ago "sounds very well but it is only a lot of words." It is a budget that is lofty, but lacking. What is your true one-year plan for its realisation and substance? I thank you Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

Sitting suspended at 3.58 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.01 p.m.

Minister within the Ministry of Communities [Mrs. Hastings-Williams]: Hon. Members of this House, I consider myself honoured to make my contributions to the 2015 Budget from this side of the House. I am humble by the confidence placed in me by His Excellency President David Arthur Granger and the people of Guyana. Allow me to join with my Colleagues in expressing my sincerest sympathy to my sister Mrs. Catherine Hughes on the passing of her mother-in-law. Having said all of this, I must commend the Hon. Minister of Finance and his competent staff for putting together a people's budget.

It had to take a fresh approach after realising that the PPP/C regime, for the past 23 years, was unable to deliver to this nation a budget that was people oriented. Here is a budget that is evident, one that caters for future generations and speaks to an accountable Government. Working together, we are confident that we can take Guyana through difficult times to better days ahead.

Permit me to briefly respond to some of my Colleagues on the opposite side of this House. Had they taken heed of the results of the 2011 Elections, which warned them that they would have been merely squatting on this side of the House, if they were wise enough, they would have taken time to deliver to the people of Guyana.

5.05 p.m.

However, they opted to prorogue the Parliament, which led to its dissolution. This uncaring action driven by the former Administration has immensely caused negative impacts on the lives of people throughout the length and breadth of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to make reference to the Kato Secondary School Complex which has been boasted as a brainchild of the previous Administration, yet remains unserviceable to over 300 students who are expected to return to school on 31st August, 2015.

However, the results of the General and Regional Elections have brought hope, once again, to the Guyanese people. Whilst some may want to say that the APNU/AFC Government is a *de facto* Government, others may say that it was not a vibrant victory and others may say that they were cheated. The fact is that we are the Government of the day and that fact will remain for a long time; we are not squatting so we will remain in Government for a long time.

Our intention is not only to deliver goods to the people, but to ensure that the goods are properly utilised and maintained when necessary. I say this based on the information I received of what existed under the previous Administration, where two tumble dryers were found lying in the bond at Fort Canje compound. They were delivered in 2011 and were not used for four years. In fact, one was still in its packaged case. This discovery was made by the Health Sector Development Unit (HSDU) during an investigation process of this year. Tell me: where was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo, who spoke so passionately about what the former Government did in terms of delivering health services to the residents of Region 6? Again I say, this Government will not only deliver equipment, facilities and buildings, but we will ensure that the resources given be utilised properly for the benefit of the people.

Our nation's health is our nation's wealth. Health, to us, is seen as a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being; it is not merely the absence of disease, injuries or infirmity, according to the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO).

Our vision for health, therefore, is to transform the system from the position it is in today to one where everyone has equal access to needed health services throughout the 10 Administrative Regions of Guyana. We will collaborate with the Ministry of Public Health to

strengthen the primary healthcare system in the Regions in order to achieve universal health coverage. In doing so, our focus will be on the social determinants of health.

We will work towards strengthening management and development of our health workers. Our health professionals are people and we will take pride in ensuring that they receive special care by improving their living quarters, better pay, reward systems, scholarships and other benefits. Take Region 8, for example, at the Kato Hospital where doctors and medics were deployed to strengthen health services delivery for residents. However, the living accommodation for these health professionals could not be dealt with this year because of the prorogation. The Budget for the funding of these quarters was delayed. The services the community needed were directly affected.

For this APNU/AFC Government, condition of service for our professionals serving in the Region is of priority. We will reform the public service. The Minister of Finance stated this priority in his speech on page 65 at paragraph 4.135:

“...it is important to have an efficient public service that is responsive, relevant and reliable...”

These are pivotal elements for the building of cohesive, empowered and sustainable communities and not just a few, *Pradoville 1 or 2*. What we will do is to take some of our *Pradovilles* into the hinterland, reform them and develop them so that the people of our hinterland can enjoy the benefit of a good life.

We intend to recruit, to train, and to retain professionals and to give them full opportunity to develop their managerial capacities to deliver on priorities. This Government will improve the income and social status through sustainable communities by providing more economic opportunities.

Health literacy: With this, persons will be able to make informed decisions about their health; healthy living conditions: healthy environment through our integrated waste management programmes; strengthen life skills for individuals to live risk free and healthy lifestyles and adopt safe behavioural practices: we will make health service available, accessible, and affordable to all through our inter-sectorial collaboration with other agencies; work towards

diminishing health inequalities within the regions: bridge the gap between the haves and the have nots, the coastal and the hinterland.

This Government will reduce the risk and burden of diseases through strategic planning and management, research and development, performance, operations and prudent financial management and good governance. The APNU/AFC Government will supply chain management, that is, timely supply and delivery of drugs and medical supplies to our health posts, health centres and district hospitals.

Water Supply: For far too long, our far-flung hinterland regions have been greatly disadvantaged by the absence of adequate, safe and clean, potable water. River mining, logging and other intensive activities, which were permitted by your Ministry when you were at the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, have been polluted and the very rivers and creeks our hinterland families depended on for their day-to-day, essential activities.

The current APNU/AFC Government continues to reiterate that high quality water is more than the dream of the conservationists, more than a political slogan. High quality water in the right quantity at the right place and at the right time is essential to health, recreation and integrated water resource management.

In the 2015 Budget, over \$252 million is allocated for the provision of improved water supply systems which will benefit our hinterland families within Regions 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Six new wells will be filled; seven new photovoltaic systems will be installed; and four water distribution systems will be upgraded and extended across our hinterland regions.

Ensuring that every Guyanese has access to high quality education and learning opportunities is one of the major priorities of the APNU/AFC Government. We, therefore, work towards laying the foundation for competitive and socially cohesive communities. There is no doubt that the Ministry of Communities will capitalise on opportunities for collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the United Nations' organisations and the private sector in providing the best possible quality education for our children throughout the hinterland regions.

Under the APNU/AFC Government, regional development is of paramount importance for national development. This was made clear to Regional Chairpersons by His Excellency who

challenged them to develop action plans for regional development. We are of the conviction that strong regions lead to a strong country. Regional development is important for sustaining critical Government services in the various communities across Guyana. The recently held Regional Leadership Forum was undertaken to convey a new vision for regional development to ensure participation of the people's representatives not just at the National Assembly, as we are here today, but also for regional councillors to understand and actively participate and take up their roles in service to the communities.

I know what the previous Administration is accustomed to. After the regional elections and the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) were installed, the officers were taken for orientation sessions and then left on their own, but this Government has budgeted money for ongoing training sessions for our Regional Democratic Councillors.

This Budget takes the focus back to the people and represents investments in their socio-economic development and a good quality of life for every single Guyanese, more specifically the Community Infrastructure Improvement Project (CIIP).

The Ministry of Communities will assist our regional administrations to fulfil our vision for a good life in cohesive, empowered and sustainable communities. We will work with our Regional Democratic Councils to better supervise at the regional levels to provide quality and equitable opportunities for all relative to coastal and hinterlands.

Our teachers must be equipped to guide, instruct and inspire our children. Children must benefit from affordable access to the best learning resources that are available.

5.20 p.m.

Today, the APNU/AFC Government has begun by distributing school boats and buses where necessary so that children can have access to free transportation to have quality life and education free of cost. We have also had an increase of money for uniform. Under the previous Administration, the children were given one uniform each. Could you imagine a child walking from one settlement to attend a school, sometimes being soaked with rain, having to wear that same uniform? This Government has promised to provide more than one uniform and has also increased the stipend for the persons who will be contracted to sew the

uniforms. *[Interruption]* I am glad that I am getting attention from the other side of the House.

Hinterland Employment and Youth Service Programme: Our hinterland youth will benefit significantly from the Hinterland Employment and Youth Service Programme, as they will be trained in appropriate skills, for example carpentry, joinery, masonry, motor mechanics and garment construction, to name a few, which will aid in the sustainable development of their communities. No longer would our hinterland communities have to rely on external capacities to develop their communities. An estimated 2,000 plus young people would become employable at the end of this Programme. The young people who were employed as Community Service Officers (CSOs) and who wish to join will be registered and will continue to receive their stipends. I am quoting from *Stabroek News*, page 2 of today's edition, in which the President said:

“...this programme will replace the Youth Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeship Programme (YEAP) initiated by the previous Government and which he said expired in April.”

That was months before we took up office. **[Mr. Nandlall:** The payroll was already prepared.]
The payroll ended in April.

To conclude, let this Budget be measured by the positive impacts it will make on the lives of the people. I thank you. *[Applause]*

Mrs. Pearson-Fredericks: Mr. Speaker, I stand here to raise my contributions towards the Budget of 2015. I wish to take this opportunity to say congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your ascension to your Office as Speaker of this honourable House. Please permit me to make a few remarks. I must say thanks to Almighty God for allowing me strength and courage to be here in this honourable House today. I also want to say thanks to the executive members of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) and the more than 200,000 voters who voted for us at the 11th May, 2015 Elections. We recognise their support and it must be noted that 80% of the Indigenous peoples or the Amerindians of this country gave us that support.

Truly, this is a historic day for me because it allows me to make my first ever presentation in this honourable House. I join with my Colleagues on this side of the House to fully represent the

people of this country and, more particularly for me, the Indigenous peoples, the first peoples of this country. It is recorded in the history of this country that we were the first peoples to arrive on these shores; our footprints are etched on 83,000 square miles of this beautiful land. In this regard, I wish to say, may the great spirit give us wisdom and guide us along this path. As the path is rough and treacherous, we need the guidance of the great spirit in this House.

The 11th May, 2015 was a day of the past. It is now time to move forward for we have a nation to build; we have a country to develop. In this regard, I wish to turn my attention to the 2015 Budget. In the 2015 Budget, under the caption of *A Fresh Approach for a Good Life in a Green Economy*, I wish to say that it is not a fresh approach – no. It should be labelled as ‘building on a strong foundation that was inherited’ because I have seen no fresh approach. What happened? Why are we fading? Why do we not want to accept that, under the PPP/C, there has been tremendous development? I would like to say, as I have said before, that I speak from the point of the Indigenous peoples. I wish to read what the Preamble of the Constitution states:

“We the Guyanese people value the special place in our nation of Indigenous peoples and recognise their rights as citizens to land security and to their promulgation of policies for their communities.”

This is the Constitution of our country so when I focus on Indigenous peoples, I am not being bias because I stand firm, tall, courageous and proud to be the descendant of the first peoples of this country, coming from the Carib nation and so the Carib blood runs in my vein. I stand proud today to represent our people. What happened under the PPP/C, the previous Government? Was there not development in the education sector? What happened there? Today, this new Government can boast and say what is happening under education but it started under the previous Administration. More secondary schools, dormitory facilities to house our children, scholarships, school feeding programmes, *et cetera*. Why are we failing to acknowledge that these things happened? While I might say that it is not perfect, because we are not living in a perfect world, things did happen. Evidence is there; the proof is there. We can look around in Guyana, today, where never before in the last 30 and 40 years...you can look now and see Amerindians in all spheres serving our country with dignity and pride. There is evidence right here in this House where we have doctors, two Ministers and myself standing here. Even in the Opposition bench, I am proud because I represent half of Guyana. Acknowledge it.

I need not be ashamed because today I am afforded this opportunity to speak in this honourable House but I have been speaking for many years. The motto states, “Be the change you want to see.” And I have been a part of that change. It is with great pride that I speak on behalf of our people.

In the area of health, yes, we have doctors, nurses and qualified technicians, and we must be proud of that. We must not pretend that nothing happened within the past 23 years or so. No. We must build, so it is not a new approach; that is my point. We must now build on the strong foundation that has been set.

Infrastructure: We can go to Regions 1, 2, 3 and 4. We can name it in the 10 Regions of this country. We have had development in infrastructure in our villages and our communities throughout the length and breadth of Guyana.

Most of all, when we talk about development, we also must talk about a good and healthy environment - freedom of speech. Today, I have freedom of speech; I can speak my mind without feeling intimidated. Yes, it was brought back; democracy returned to Guyana in 1992. Do not let us doubt that. I am old enough to remember and, sometimes, I do not like to remember because it is like a nightmare. Today, we, on both sides of the House, can speak because we have freedom of speech in this democratic country. We have freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom to do whatever. That is why I can challenge and say that it is not a new approach. It is building on the solid foundation that was inherited and what was set by the PPP/C.

5.35 p.m.

I would like to move on because I know my time is limited. As I look at the Budget of 2015, presented by the Hon. Minister, Winston Jordan, there are lots of things missing there. Let me just say that, while I notice the new programme, “one laptop per teacher”, which is not bad - it is a good thing - my question is, what happened to the One Laptop Per Family project? My other point is that there are 100 places, accommodation hub we call them, that are already prepared to house laptops within Amerindian villages and communities. So, what will happen there? Are we being left out? And, if we are being left out, why? It is because we saw it fit to throw most of our support, 80% and over, behind the People’s Progressive Party/Civic. Are we paying the price for making our own choice?

I wish to bring to this honourable House that, during the campaign, during the time when everybody was making promises, with regards to Indigenous peoples, on page 19 of the APNU Manifesto, it states:

“APNU/AFC in government will:

- Uphold all International Treaty obligations.”

Article 3 of the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is international, clearly states:

“[All peoples have]...the right to self-determination of all peoples, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,”

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

Mrs. Pearson-Fredericks: Okay. So, why is it now that we are being left out? I am going to rush through. Nothing is being said about the Hinterland Electrification Programme, the solar panel which started under the PPP/C. Nothing is being said about the presidential grant that villages receive, on an annual basis, to help in economic development because we have a right to choose what we would like to do. So, we are left at a loss.

I would like to make a quick comment, since my time is limited, Mr. Speaker, on the presentation that Hon. Minister Sydney Allicock made this morning. In his announcement, he said:

“The CSOs needs to know that the PPP regime had made no provision to pay them stipend beyond April, 2015.”

This discussion just took place yesterday. An announcement was made to reinstate the CSOs but I would like to say that it is damage control. Why was not all this discussed before sending home or firing 1,000 plus CSOs? Our people, our young people...the APNU said that it would provide jobs for young people. Maybe that is excluding Indigenous young people. I, therefore, say to the Hon. Minister that I do appreciate that announcement, but make it a reality. Make it a reality so that our young people can earn. It is very small. Hon. Minister, I would call upon you to ensure

that you raise it; everything is rising. Raise the number of young people that we would employ now. My only concern, though, is that everything started under the PPP/C. The name is changing because it would now change from YEAP to something else. It has changed. It is changing, but do not change the people in the community or allow the Council to decide who must be employed.

I wish to bring a critical matter to this forum and I wish to say that this new Administration has displayed gross disrespect for our people. And I am talking about the National Toshaos Council (NTC). More so, I am referring to the recently concluded elections of Toshaos and Councillors. I wish to say to Hon. Minister Sydney Allicock, you now have a legal advisor and many advisors that we have never heard of before. I am happy that you have all those advisors, but it is stated in the Amerindian Act that the NTC must send an observer to observe village elections and district councils elections.” Mr. Speaker and Hon. Minister Allicock, you know that this was not done at the last Toshaos and Councillors Elections. So, it is a breach of the law and the rights of our people.

I would also like to bring to the attention of this honourable House, further discrimination and further violation of our rights.

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

Mrs. Pearson-Fredericks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NTC that is presently ongoing at the Arthur Chung Conference Centre can be deemed illegal because, according to the Amerindian Act, No. 6/2006, section 43:

“(3) The National Toshaos Council shall

- (a) publish notice of its meetings in at least one national newspaper at least one month in advance;”

This was not done. I wish to let this honourable House know that Toshaos were not included in the discussion and this is an activity of the NTC, a legally recognised body, recognised by the *Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana* and has a law that gives guidance.

These are the changes and these are the things that we are fearful of. If this happened within the first 100 days of the new Administration, I am thinking now, what else? What next? Maybe this is the new approach and, if this is the new approach, then it is unacceptable.

There are so many things that I would want to say in this honourable House but, as time would not permit it and I do not want to go over my time, I do hope that I will have more time to express myself on behalf of the Indigenous peoples of this country. But I wish to say that, in all my writings and poem, many years ago, I said:

“This is not a fight with arrow and bow; that was a thing for long ago. Time has changed and we must know that the place to fight is in Parliament.”

The journey has started many years ago. I have arrived in Parliament. I want to thank the PPP for giving me this opportunity to speak in this honourable House, and I want to thank God for the battle to come later on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is, indeed, an honour and a distinct privilege to stand here, today, to speak on the 2015 National Budget, from this side of the House, in the Government benches. There has been a lot said from the other side, but we need to put the record straight. Unto now, the Opposition is not aware that it has lost the Elections.

There was the statement by the Hon. Member, who made mention of freedom of speech, but I am not certain she remembered Mr. Crum-Ewing, when he was campaigning. They did not give him that freedom.

The most dynamic thing in God’s world is politics. Although many had lost hope - however, lifting the yoke of oppression from around their necks - the majority persevered. The result of the steadfastness of the majority is that we are here today and I have been given this great honour.

All of Guyana and our Indigenous brothers and sisters embrace this *Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy*. It is no secret that the Indigenous peoples of Guyana have been held hostage to the political machinations of the PPP/C over the past two decades. Of course, there were some physical developments in some communities. These development projects were,

however, premised upon the unconditional support of the communities being pronounced publicly in favour of the PPP/C. Those who did not support or pretend to support were ostracised. Those communities that did not publicly commit to supporting the PPP/C soon found that the communities were ignored when these projects came around.

5.50 p.m.

Indigenous peoples were battered, physiologically, into submission. It was either they were for or they suffered.

Village leaders were instructed, during the 2015 Elections, to put people out of communities. Just imagine that that is what was done.

Those who did not buckle under the pressures of the PPP/C dictatorial dictations were threatened and sidelined. But, as fate would have it, there was a reawakening. This was evident all over Guyana. The Indigenous communities were not left out. There came the glorious day when the results of the General and Regional Elections were announced. Guyana breathed again. Young people dared to dream again. Hope was restored, as fear faded into the darkness past.

When the Hon. Member, Mr. Charlie, spoke on Monday evening, I saw shades of that dark past creeping back. How fortunate, I thought, that he is on the opposite benches. I shuddered as my Hon. Friend chose to ignore the last 23 years or so and sought to find refuge in the years long before that. Relying on irrelevance cannot help the development cause. This is why we must move along, leaving Brother Charlie and others like him in this hopeless historical slumber. There is an old saying, “Where ignorance and arrogance is bliss, it is folly to be wise.”

There was a lot of talk about young people, in general, and young Indigenous peoples, in particular. Many have made huge meals of the suggestion – false though it is – that the Government of Guyana fired 2,000 young people. The hard truth is, if these young people were at all employed, it was the People’s Progressive Party/Civic that really fired them. The record will show that the last authorised activity date for the YEAP was 30th April, 2015. We all know that the General and Regional Elections were held on 11th May, 2015. There is the evidence. Had the Hon. Member, Mr. Dharamlall, made this declaration when he spoke, I would have taken his presentation seriously. He was the chief cook and bottle washer in the mischief of hoodwinking

our Indigenous youths. He and the Hon. Pauline Sukhai distributed stipends to our young people on a quarterly basis, arranged by political demands. These two Hon. Members utilised state resources in the name of fortifying the PPP/C youth arm. In the process, they divided and hurt our young people. Today, our young people are divided; they are hurt. Our people are accustomed to togetherness, but the Hon. Members destroyed that love of togetherness. We are going to bring it back. We are going to show them. These two Hon. Members, if we could call them honourable, should be made to apologise to these young people for destroying their future.

[**An Hon. Member:** Tell us what it is that you will do now.] It is because of these actions that you are over there, sir.

If we are talking about firing, the people of Guyana fired the PPP/C. In anger, the PPP fired the Civic component. After that, the PPP fired its dear presidential candidate, Mr. Donald Ramotar. The PPP then went on to fire its prime ministerial candidate, Mrs. Elisabeth Harper. Ladies and gentlemen and Mr. Speaker, this is firing. If you do not believe it, ask the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The good news is that the depressing issues are behind us. It is time to look to the future. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that a programme, which takes skills training and life skills to our young people where they live, will be launched on 1st October, 2015. This programme is to equip our young people with the skills of trade of their choice, an opportunity to earn as they learn. With the tools of their trade, at the end of this training, they will get an equal opportunity to bid for jobs and projects, even as they are being trained. They are going to be trained to be specialists in these various fields, not to be politicians alone.

Education has the ability to meet life's situation, according to Professor John Abraham, with which I agree. The Bina Hill Institute Youth Learning Centre will benefit from an allocation of \$40.5 million from this Budget to support its programmes which are geared to prepare our young people for employment in the areas of tourism, forestry, agriculture, leadership, marketing, accounting, first-aid, management, *et cetera*. This is the first of many such interventions of this nature. This Government will, in the coming years, seek to replicate the Bina Hill model in other regions so that our young people can access training in their own geographical space.

The Government will make available a significantly greater number of scholarships to the Kuru Kuru Training Centre and other institutions that offer a high level of skills training. This will complement the other scholarship programmes that will, over time, also be expanded.

The Amerindian Land Titling (ALT) Project, which is currently under review, will recommence on 1st September, 2015 to coincide with Heritage Month. Indigenous peoples who have already been trained in Geographic Information System (GIS), mapping and successfully surveying their communities will be employed to help the process because they know their areas best. Our young people of the Upper Mazaruni, North Rupununi and the Deep South come to mind right away for these opportunities. We will be able to accomplish the remaining 80% of deliverables in the remaining life of the Project. Less than 50% of the life of the Project remains. This is what we inherited, but we have a team that will rise to the occasion and fix the mess.

No longer will our Indigenous leaders be given worthless pieces of paper with no signatures to make them believe that they are being given land titles. It is as if it was given and taken back. This is what the PPP/C did in 2012. It gave our Indigenous leaders pieces of paper purporting to be land titles, had them pose for photographers and then took back the papers immediately. I have these papers right here for all to see. This is the respect and love for our Indigenous peoples of which the PPP boasts. I challenge them to deny the fact.

I listened intently to the glorious stories of massive development undertaken by the PPP/C while it was in government. I listened also to the bashing that the People's National Congress (PNC) got for its term in government, which ended almost a quarter of a century ago. That the PPP presenters are finding it difficult to remain politically relevant is obvious. It is clear that if someone does not look bad, he or she cannot look good. The confusion is glaring. They claim, on the one hand, that the Budget is all bad. On the other hand, they are claiming that it is a carbon copy of the PPP's plan for Guyana. They cannot have their cake and eat it too.

The Government has laid out a plan which will see significant development, aimed at improving the quality of life for Guyanese, generally, and Indigenous peoples, in particular. There is provision for the revival, promotion and preservation of our cultures. This includes the commencement of the reconstruction of the Umana Yana at its original site.

There is provision for the improvement of the electricity distribution system at Culvert City, Mahdia, Port Kaituma, Wauna, Sugar Hill, Hosororo and other areas. Government proposes to spend \$700 million on the rehabilitation of roads linking Indigenous villages and communities in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. After waiting for several lifetimes, bridges will finally be constructed at Sand Creek and Wichabai.

Government also proposes to spend more than half of a billion dollars to fix the North West ferries, MV Kimbia and Barima. We propose to spend another \$160 million to rehabilitate the airstrips at Eteringbang and Mahdia. The villages of St. Ignatius, Aishalton, Mahdia, Waramadong and Sand Creek will benefit from a large chunk of the proposed \$1.8 billion to be spent on schools, Information Technology (IT) laboratories. Schools in Port Kaituma, Warapoka, Fall Top, Hobodia, Yarikita, Santa Rosa and Mabaruma are also budgeted to receive significant improvement. The schools at Chinowieng and Kartabu will be completed.

6.05 p.m.

The Primary School at Agatash will be extended and living quarters will be constructed at Waramadong. There will be a new nursery and primary school at Moraikobe. A health post will be constructed at Powaikuru and an x-ray room at the Kumaka District Hospital will be rehabilitated. The Waramuri Health Centre will be extended. There will be improved electricity supply to the Kumaka District Hospital and the Mabaruma Regional Hospital. The Bartica Hospital will be rehabilitated and extended. This is just about a sample of the developments which will flow from the budget and positively impact the lives of the Indigenous People.

In addition, we have a ten-point strategic plan for the hinterland. This will be followed up... *[Interruption]* Those who see it as fluff may not have been around the last 23 years to get a full appreciation of what fluff really is. This budget is the foundation upon which reconstruction of Guyana will rest.

We have a Government that is thinking of each and every Guyanese. We are even thinking about the Opposition, because it needs people to think for it. For the sake of the Indigenous People, the Opposition has always taken us as though we are things to be treated as if we cannot think. It wants to think for us. There has been intimidation; our young people could not even speak. The CSOs could not speak; they were directed. They had to do what they were told, and that is bad

for our young people. I do not see that as development. We need to break the back of intimidation and that is what our young people will do.

As we have our Toshaos here, we waited for them to come to help us to make that decision. If we did not invite them, how are they here? This is common sense. What has happened was that the Opposition did not invite them but want to take control of them by going and intimidating them. Our Toshaos are not taking that. We need to move on and that is why this budget is catering for them. We are going to look after our people the right way.

I want to commend the budget, and I am certain that each and every one of us here will benefit, even Mr. Dharamlall.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Speaker, first, let me congratulate you for your election to speakership of this honourable House. At the same time if you will permit me, I wish to also extend my greatest sympathy to the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Mrs. Catherine Hughes. We have been friends for a while. Indeed it was a tragic accident. Also it is very refreshing, for me, to welcome back the Hon. Member Dr. Jagdeo.

The budget speech is devoid of reference to the Indigenous People and merely offers a passing reference to the hinterland. There is no genuine recognition of a group of people who have contributed greatly to our beautiful country - its culture, arts and also its social and economic make-up. It is important to note that the Indigenous People were the first people to arrive here. With not an iota of significant reference to them, this very important group, in the budget, I believe, it is an oversight. If it is not an oversight, then it is a blatant deliberate act to keep us in the background. Failing to provide genuine recognition to Amerindians is, for me, as I speak on behalf of the Amerindians, like all my other indigenous brothers and sisters who occupy seats in this Parliament,... I am sure this occurrence has dulled our expectations with respect to the budget of 2015.

This budget is a PPP budget. Most of the proposals contained in the budget are roll-over projects and initiatives that the PPP/C Government had not only on paper but many of them were in progress. Therefore the changing of names and project titles is not going to do us well. I will

mention my friend's words in this House, the Hon. Mrs. Catherine Hughes, Minister of Tourism. She said, maybe not in the same words, that this is the time for us to work together. She even pointed out the stakeholders that can work together to move this country forward. Therefore we must be fair to the Guyanese nation. We must not be only egoistic to say this is yours and this is mine. Comrades, and friends, and Hon. Members in this House, this budget is actually a roll-over from the PPP/C, when we were in Government. Therefore we will obviously give credit to the success of that budget when we experience the achievements as targeted and contained in the budget, because the budget makes reference not to achieving much of what it states. It keeps repeating, all the time, the words "in the next five years, by 2020." This sends a signal to this nation that we are not serious; that the budget, despite the good proposals that are contained in the speech, if we are not careful, will remain rhetoric, rhetoric as much as we look at this "Fresh Approach to a Good Life." If rhetoric is the "fresh approach", then I believe that all the electors of this country should be fearful because we will not advance with rhetoric.

I was listening to my honourable friend on the other side of the House, on the Government side, and I admire Hon. Ms. Dawn Hastings. I believe that the APNU and the AFC together committed a grave oversight again, that is, I expected that in the line-up of vice-presidents there would have had at least one female. My choice for a vice-president in Ms. Dawn Hastings would have been a very fitting position for her. Ms. Dawn Hastings just displayed the level of discipline, the level of merit, to also have been the Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs. It is not only about her discipline and her ability to demonstrate in this House, but she worked hard and she won her region. It was also an oversight that she was appointed only after long consideration, and she was appointed to a position in which she will do well. [**Mr. Greenidge:** It is patronising.] It is not patronising; it is speaking the truth.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I will ask you not to leave the Chair out of your presentation, but to address the Chair.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has left a legacy of success that is now inherited by those sitting on the Government benches. In the indigenous sector, we have left a list of transformative projects which I will be watching very closely on how the Government proceed to implement these projects. I am already appalled at the way and the treatment it has meted out to the Toshaos. I have a very good

relationship with Toshaos. Last Wednesday when the National Toshaos' Executive (NTE), just a handful of them, was notified to come to the Ministry to discuss the National Toshaos' Council (NTC) meeting the Toshaos did not have the opportunity to even have an audience with the Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs who is an *ex-officio* member of that executive. I consider the NTC conference, which is taking place now and for the next couple of days, to be an illegal conference. I will tell you why Hon. Member Yvonne Pearson has already outlined the legalities of how it is illegal. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the bastion and virtuoso who always speak about consultation deny one of the greatest opportunities for consultation.

6.20 p.m.

They did not even give the Toshaos one week's notice. The Toshaos were not even able to meet the community members to provide them with a direction, to come to discuss their affairs at the NTC. I have heard, in every community where Hon. Member Allicock and others have gone, that the first thing that they teach the residents is the acronym FPIC - Free, Prior and Informed Consent - and they have thrown FPIC out the window.

FPIC is a very important component of governance, and I expect that the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs will take good note of that. The NTC must have been going through hell because the Toshaos could not even set their own agenda. They were dictating agenda by some advisers. If it was not for the good relationship, when the Toshaos arrived in town they indicated that they wanted to meet with me. I want to clear this, that there was no manoeuvring to bring them. I cannot manoeuvre to bring 130 Toshaos to meet me. They came; they are leaders; they make their own decisions and we must respect that. If they want to meet the former Minister, that is their democratic right. If the former Minister sends them an invitation, indeed, I know that they will come. If we are to work together to represent Indigenous Peoples, then there should be no peddling on mischievous untruth in the media to ensure that we do not embarrass our leadership. Our leadership has that opportunity to make decisions.

The Hon. Minister spoke about land. He lifted two titles up and tried to create an embarrassment that we issued title without signature. It is because of that consultation that matter occurred. It is because of those other stakeholders who raised the issue about not fairly being treated and they

also have at stake in this country, that those titles were held. It was held so that every single stakeholder would be able to validate his or her claim.

It was not that we did want to give them their titles, but it is because we have consulted and we did not want to make any mistakes that we decided to have a second round of consultation. The Toshaos were told that it was a public and every single one knew what was happening. Therefore to bring those old titles to create an embarrassment in this House is a low blow by the Hon. Minister.

I would like now to move on to another issue, another vexatious issue which the Toshaos raised with me. I looked in the budget to see whether there was any allocation for this matter. The Hon. Minister laid in this House, very quickly, before the debate started, a policy statement. He slipped it in. If it was not the pressure brought to bear by People's Progressive Party/Civic Government, we would not have had a commitment to reinstate the 2,000 CSOs. Change the name as you wish. It is important to understand that we must not put pressure on vulnerable youths, particularly those groups that are looking towards the leaders of this country to represent and support them.

This matter of the CSOs is a messy one caused by the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs because even before the Government Members came into office they did not want to see young Indigenous People shape for themselves a comfortable and good life. They did not want to do it. In fact, I read a number of media reports by the Minister on this issue and he did mention, up to very recently, that this concept is good on paper, but the operation of it was not as expected. That is what he said. **[Mr. Greenidge: Who said that?]** I will tell you. If the Minister believes it is a good concept, what would it have taken for him...? He is now in Government; he needed to sit and look at it. He has that latitude to review it, to sharpen the mechanisms and put in place the things that would make that successful to his expectation.

Mr. Speaker, you do not play games with young people's future. That is why the Hon. Member Charles Ramson earlier in the debate said that you are laughing at the youths now, you are doing anything you want with the youths, but in the next five years many of you will probably be laughed by the young people. The matter that the CSOs will now be reinstated does not take away from the difficulty that has been brought to bear on those young people. I fully support The

Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (TAAMOG) and the case that it brought against the Government and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs.

I now turn to the political will of the leaders who will now be responsible for delivering to the Indigenous People. I peruse the budget presentation and, as I have said, there is just a mere reference to indigenous, but I need to leave on record a few things.

The People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has left an Amerindian Development Fund project which will be funding community development projects to communities across the hinterland. I expect that this US\$6.7 million will be used for the benefit of the communities.

I will also wish to say that this side also left an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) project. I will implore on the Minister to use both positions, which he now holds, to ensure that the hinterland access to internet and the hinterland opportunity for becoming computer literate is followed up, and that he would not sit silently and let it pass him, because with the budget he has already sat silent. I have heard that the 10,000 computers, which are coming, are not going to Amerindians. Sitting here today I am imploring the Minister to at least request of his Government 3,000 of those computers to be put in the hubs that are awaiting to be outfitted with computers.

We have also left a very good project which offers economic funding for small projects for the Amerindians, the Presidential Grant Fund. I noticed that the Government has not dropped it because that funding is very critical to assist the Indigenous People to vitalise the economic activities with respect to the resources that exist in every community, including social and physical infrastructure. Since its inception, it has been a visible project where many of those projects can be pinpointed. If the Members do not believe me, I think they have travelled and they are now seeing for themselves that it makes sense. Maybe that is why the Government did not drop it.

The other project I want to ask of Minister to deal with is the fact that at every NTC the Toshias come with priorities. They too have a village development agenda and when they have finished deliberating on what is the vision for them in the next five, three or one year the Minister should take seriously their request. Every year, I shall tell the Minister, he should aim to fulfil those requests because it is important for our people. I speak from the Opposition benches today but I

have not forgotten how useful governmental intervention, both resource, goods or even finances, has gone a long way to making our Indigenous People live a better life.

I need to say that Budget 2015 lacks policy directives on some of the gaps that still exist. For example, I heard some mention about education. I would have like, today, for the Minister to lay before this House a number of policy statements, because it is lacking in the budget. For example, he should have been here laying a policy statement to ensure that the hinterland study, which my colleague, Hon. Member Priya Manickchand, started, is finished early, so that the recommendations and the specifics out of that report should have been able to be in the budget now. I remind the Minister that if he reads the budget presentation, there is some timelines. Every sector sets a timeline, targets and objectives it wants to attain in five years. When I looked at the indigenous again, the Ministry did not even represent a single period of a timeline that it would want to achieve certain things.

It took the Head of State, yesterday, to correct some of the Ministry silent deficiencies, to go to that conference and provide an outlay to correct the things. I will say wisdom is a good thing because the Minister has now many advisers around him and should not waste their time. He should take whatever they can offer him and put it to use for the Indigenous People development.

I now turn to the education...

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

6.35 p.m.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Mention was made here of the Kato Secondary School, which they claimed is still not completed. They have to start to behave as though they are in Government. We do not mind criticism when we were in Government and, therefore, I will tell them that the ball is in their court now. There are many children of the North Pakaraimas who would like to occupy that school. I would ask that the Minister works with the Ministry of Education to get that project up and running. I expected that that project would have been serving our children in September, but instead the Minister has been spending his time deliberately cleansing people who can help out in the Government. It is finished and all they need to do is put other things in place and they could have done it in three months.

I now turn to the fact that the budget also is silent on hinterland road network. A few areas were mentioned and I want to say that our Government, when we were on that side, recognised the need to advance the hinterland road network. I would like to see that it is not only the responsibility of the other Ministries but that you yourself, Minister, should take keen interest in lobbying and pushing for those roads to be done. For example, everything seems to be nice, as you were saying, but I will tell you that in North Pakaraimas there are a number of roads that you need to pay attention to. You need to do, for example, the road from Maikwak to Paramakatoi. *[Interruption from the Government Members.]* You are in Government now, so you have to fix it.

The roads from Maikwak to Paramakatoi need to be fixed. The road to Maikwak to Kaibarupai needs to be fixed. The road to Kurupung to Kato needs to be fixed. Those roads, a lot of investment by this Government went into them and I expect that the Minister, sitting and representing the indigenous constituency, will ensure that those roads get attention.

All be it with Region 9, I understand that during the campaign the roads were referred to as 'Biscuit Roads', but the roads are far improved and I am watching to see how much more improvement will be done in the next five years.

Village elections in this year were also a mess. They were messy - very messy. This is the first year that I have read of so many complaints about the way the elections were conducted.

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

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: I am saying that with all the staff that the Ministry has now, the Ministry needs to ensure that you do not make these lapses, because it puts pressure on the Indigenous People; it put pressure on the indigenous leaders. It takes away valuable time from them because it causes a lot of contradictions. The Ministry should be able to provide a level of guidance that they are accustomed to.

I also want to mention on mining and the Amerindians because it is was mentioned by the Hon. Minister Dawn Hastings where she noted that the PPP/C Government allowed mining to be done in the indigenous communities. I would advise that the Hon. Minister read the matter on Isseneru. It is to get engaged in learning about that matter, because the matter on Isseneru, it is the Indigenous People who are mining. The Amerindian Act provided them with a strong tool to

make agreements. I can tell that at the time of that petition they only had four agreements with non-residents. All the mining, which was taking place there, was done by residents. They were hoodwinked to believe that something was wrong and they were misled into signing a petition that today. I understand that they will be withdrawing because they have now realised how misled they were in taking that case.

You speak of Kako, if you enter into Kako Village and you go to the village council office, there is a large chart which speaks about income and royalties for mining.

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

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: That chart is not written by anyone from the Ministry or from the then Government, the PPP/C Government. It is managed and controlled by the village council. The mining in the Kamarang River... Jawalla, for example, the only river which dredges mining there, is done by the brother of the former Toshao who just demitted office. Therefore when the Members want to talk about mining and the environment, as I relate to Indigenous People, they have to understand that if they take away mining from them what happens. It means that they will have to ask the Hon. Minister of Finance for further financial allocation to make intervention to stabilise the village economies of the Indigenous People.

Today, I may be speaking from the Opposition bench, on behalf of the People's Progressive Party, however, I want to say that the PPP/C remains the largest partner, partnering and engaging Indigenous People and we will stand firm to represent them. We will stand firm to continue to not only represent Indigenous People, but we will represent this nation. Someone said that it is not for long because the winnings, which you saw gleefully clapped and thumbed about, is very questionable. That is why the PPP/C Government has moved...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: ...to institute a legal petition with respect to the results. I will tell you, the Government side, that a slim majority may mean the winnings for you but that does not take away the fact that we have won, almost as equal as you, and we will do our job on this side.

If we had the recount, we would have taken Region 8, not only at the Regional Elections, but at the national General Elections.

Thank you Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Ms. Patterson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my commendation to you on the ascension of the office of Speaker of this House and I want to say that you have my fullest cooperation over these five years and onwards.

Since I have given my personal condolences to the Hon. Minister of Tourism, I want to take these few minutes to say to the Hon. Member Mrs. Sukhai that I apologise for the oversights that she mentioned. I want to ask the question, through you, Mr. Speaker, where is your presidential candidate, Mr. Ramotar and where is your prime ministerial candidate, Mrs. Harper? Why are they not in this House? Is it an oversight? [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask back for my three minutes that has just gone.

Since this is my first presentation to this House, I am asking that protocol be observed, and it is to share this quote that my colleague gave me a few minutes ago, which states, “Sometimes the best thing to do is to be silent and watch how things play out, save you from unnecessary arguments.”

Mr. Speaker, permit me to express the sentiments of the people of Linden and Region 10, in support of this national budget for the fiscal year 2015 and to thank the APNU/AFC coalition Government, and more particularly the Hon. Minister of Finance, Winston Mr. DaCosta Jordan, for, indeed, bringing a breath of fresh air to the people of Region 10, and Guyana at large.

This budget prefers the vision of this capable and experienced Government, a Government which has a heart for people. I can understand why the Hon. Member Anil Nandlall cannot comprehend why a nation’s budget of the APNU/AFC Government can commence with a 20/20 vision. I say this because the late Dr. Miles Munroe said, “Sight is a function of the eyes but vision is a function of the heart.” A heartless person is a visionless person. I want to add to that from the King James version, Proverbs 29:18:

“Where there is no vision, the people perish”.

We, at Linden and Region 10, can now understand why we perished for 23 years.

It continues to state:

6.50 p.m.

“...but he who keeps the law is happy”.

I do not have to say to this honourable House how many unhappy people we have on the other side. The theme for this year's Budget is a *“Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy”*. I wish to say to the people of Guyana that this “Fresh” did not start with this 2015 Budget. It started on 16th May, when the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) announced that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change (APNU/AFC) coalition won the national and regional elections. When one looks at the jubilation, one can see fresh because people who have not smiled for 23 years began to smile again. People who did not laugh for 23 years began to laugh again. Deliverance came to Guyana, regardless of race, creed, religious or political association. I repeat, deliverance came to the people of Guyana. Who was the deliverer; who is the deliverer? The APNU/AFC.

I wish to thank His Excellency David Granger and the Hon. Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo for keeping their promise to the people of Region 10. While they were on the campaign trail, a promise was made to create employment for the people of Linden, particularly our youths. By the very act of the amount of \$155 million, appropriated in this National Budget, speaks of that promise being kept. We can say that the Hon. Prime Minister and His Excellency the President are covenant keepers; they keep their word, which is quite contrary to what the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government did in 2014. I want to quote from the national Budget 2014, page 31, paragraph 4.5 says:

“In January, 2014 the Board of the Linden Enterprise Network was officially announced and installed to continue to offer the critical services previously provided by the Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) and the Linden Enterprise Network (LEN) to Linden and Region 10 communities. The services include business development, business incubation training and technical assistance in entrepreneurial skills, product development, employment readiness and business advisory services.”

If we go down to the bottom, it says:

“The initial start-up seed capital of \$50 million for the venture is already available and LEN will be operationalised this year”.

We are talking there about 2014.

Promise keeping is not evident in the PPP/C. I want to say that the \$50 million for 2014 was never given to LEN, and by extension, it was never given to the people of Region 10. The people of Region 10 had high expectations of the fulfilment of this promise but I dare say to this Hon. House that yes, at the time that Budget was read, that was March 2014, the Board was already announced and installed in January, 2014. But the first meeting of that Board was held five months after, which was on 10th June, 2014. During the life of that Board, only five meetings were held, the last being November, 2014. No meeting was held for 2015. Further to that, the promise of the \$50 million, as I said, was never given. We need to launch an investigation. Maybe we need a forensic audit.

It is common knowledge that throughout the history of Linden and Region 10, Linden and Region 10 have always been the strong hold of the People’s National Congress (PNC), the People’s National Congress/Reform (PNC/R), the APNU and now the APNU/AFC coalition. Therefore, I believe it is fair to say that the former Government, by its actions, did not have the political will to operationalise the LEN.

I want to further say, there was an attempt by the former Government to take the LEN money and set up a similar Project in Region 10. If it was not for the quick action of the former Regional Chairman, Mr. Mortimer Mingo and the present Chairman of the Interim Management Committee (IMC) Mr. Orin Gordon, who had to intervene because that money belongs to the people of Region 10 and they wanted to slip it out of our hands and take it to Region Three.

Permit me to give a brief background to the establishment of LEN. In 2003, the Linden Economic Advancement Programme called the LEAP, which was a Government of Guyana/European Union (GOG/EU) Project, was established to aid the diversification of Linden from dependency on Bauxite to a more entrepreneurship-type community. To give a quick synopsis, this Project, through the financing agreement, was signed for seven years and it commenced in June, 2002. The value of the Project was EU\$12,500,000. There were four stakeholders from the community of Linden, the Linden Technical College (LTC), the Mayor

and Town Council (MTC), the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) and the Linden Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Development (LCCID), along with the Department of the National Authorising Office (NAO), the Ministry of Finance and the Department of the European Commission. The objective of this Project was the creation of viable and competitive enterprises, generating new long-term jobs that would contribute to improving the living conditions of the communities in Linden. The Project's purpose was, "The development of the local market for business advisory services and financial services in order to attract new national and foreign investments and increase employment opportunities in Region 10". This Programme had eight components of which component four was what we called the Linden Economic Advancement Fund (LEAF) and the LEAF was set up to provide credit for start-up and existing micro, small and medium sized businesses and to provide training and hands-on assistance to the financial institution managing the fund.

Mr. Speaker, just to let you know that, over the four years, LEAF, being an EU project, performed to its maximum. Out of EU\$1,900,000 that was given for disbursement, which was converted to \$465,200,000, 701 loans were disbursed to the value of \$732,400,000. Because of the nature of the project, of the Fund being a revolving fund, Lindeners were able to take \$465 million and turn it around, meaning that the people of Linden repaid their loans, so that a total of \$732 million could have been disbursed.

I want to say, and this is just to let people understand that it is not that Lindeners do not want to pay back this loan, in four years the repayments were \$358,700,000. According to all of the specialists, that was a commendable performance. In January 2007, LEAP, in conjunction with the consultant for sustainability strategy, undertook an analysis of documents, participated in meetings and site visits and conducted two workshops, resulting in a precise and detailed proposal for sustainability strategy for LEAP and LEAF, beyond 2009. From that Strategy Report, I want to quote two paragraphs or parts of two paragraphs:

"There is a large need for continuing with a business development inclusive of investment promotion and micro credit activities in Region 10. The business community is motivated and with appropriate institution-building efforts, it is ready to play a sustainable role"

The other quotation is:

“The Government of Guyana is urged to continue to make a credit line available to the people of Region 10”

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

Ms. Patterson: Thank you Sir. After several interventions, seminars and workshops, several models of the post LEAP/LEAF were developed by international experts. Finally, in 2009, several rounds of discussions were held with the Advisory Group, the NAO Task Force, the then Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh and the then Minister within the Ministry of Finance Ms. Jennifer Webster. Presentations were made to the Economic Subcommittee. At a meeting of Cabinet on 10th November, 2009, Cabinet approved the establishment of a post LEAP successor entity, which would be called the Linden Enterprise Network. I have a reason for giving that history.

After all of that, this clearly indicates the need for a facility like LEN in Region 10 cannot be overstated. The LEAP Project expired on 31st December, 2009 and so was LEAF. At the closure of LEAF, there was \$53 million in the Government’s coffers, with approximately \$130 million present in three accounts at a commercial bank in Linden, which, unfortunately, the moneys mysteriously disappeared from. I dare say that the former Government seem very reluctant to investigate. That money belonged to the people of Region 10 and I call for a criminal investigation.

Further, a projected amount of approximately \$20 million was collected by the Fund Manager as instalments, but were never deposited to the LEAP bank accounts or the LEN accounts. All of these moneys were supposed to be transferred to LEN as seed moneys for its operationalisation. To complement the financial resources are several fixed assets, furniture, equipment and vehicles which are still in the possession of the Fund Manager, even though the project ended December, 2009.

Of this \$155 million appropriated to LEN by this concerned and visionary Government, \$30 million of this appropriation will go towards enhancing the aesthetics of the building, the Region 10 Business Centre. If one comes into Linden and drives down Republic Avenue and look for a

building with the name Region 10 Business Centre, he or she would not find it because there are two letters, two more missing, three and another. So one cannot find a building with that name and that is embarrassing to us. **[Member of the Government: Change that.]** We are going to change that.

7.05 p.m.

So, \$30 million of the \$155 million will be used to enhance the aesthetics of the building, particularly the frontage. The roof of that building is in a deplorable condition. If anybody comes to use the conference room they would have to jump over water. If one goes to the Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) office to pay his or her water bill there is a pool of water that he or she would have to jump over before he or she gets into GWI.

Added to that, \$25Million of this \$155million will be used towards the repairing of six unsightly, but very expensive vehicles, which were left to the battering of the weather. If one goes to the side of that building there are six Fortuners and Nissan Pathfinders, this and that, parked to the side and they are there since January 2010.

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

Ms. Patterson: Thank you Sir. These vehicles will become serviceable and used as an income generating stream for LEN. The Linden Enterprise Network will pay all of its outstanding debts of over \$7 million. It is very embarrassing to say that the utility service, Linden Electricity Company Incorporated (LECI), owes \$5.6million. The staffs of LEN have been more than tolerant with this situation. They cannot remember the last month they drew their salaries before the middle of the other month. One staff said to me, last Tuesday, “This is the end of adult suffering - this Budget 2015 is the end.” Mr. Speaker, do you know why? This budget guarantees her salary to the end of December during which time LEN will get its act in order.

A good life will be afforded to the people of Region 10. Through the Micro and Small Loan Scheme, \$100 million, as opposed to the meagre \$50 million that was appropriated last year which we never got, will be put into a loan scheme to give the youths; the women who we cherish and respect; and the men, who by now because they cannot get proper paying jobs in linden, many of them are emotionally impotent.

So, I want to say and this is what the people of Linden and Region 10 are saying, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”. This is our morning and the APNU/AFC Government has brought the morning to us.

I wish to turn my attention very quickly to an observation of fact. I cannot recall over the past 23 years seeing the people of this nation so enthuse and a national budget so talked about in a positive way. When His Excellency David Arthur Granger, in his swearing in speech - Inauguration Speech - at the opening to this Eleventh Parliament said that he is a President of all Guyanese, this 2015 National Budget reaffirmed those words. When we consider the new list of items added to the zero rated list of Value Added Tax (VAT), one man, and this is the truth, said to me, “I could not buy cheese and milk for my children, but the extra money in my disposal income will now provide my children. In the past they had to smell the cheese and think about the milk”.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Ms. Patterson: Thank you Sir. The significant increase in the old age pension can now afford the pensioner to buy a bottle of marmite, a supligen, or tonic.

I want to close by saying to the Hon. Nigel Dharamlall, in his presentation he said that an audit must be done of the Presidents’ Inauguration Ceremony and the Presidents’ birthday. I will concede with this, if and only if Mr. Dharamlall agrees that the \$7 million spent on two tickets by a former President is audited and if we also audit my Colleague who spoke before, her smile for \$2 million.

Time does not permit me to deal with the numerous amounts of benefits, but I close with this little exhortation that says...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, the comment made about a former President, it can only be ...
[*Interruption*] I would like to ask the Hon. Member if she could please...

Mr. Speaker: Is this a point of order Madam?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir. I apologise. It is Standing Order 40.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, can you please reclaim your seat? Yes, I am listening to you, Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member referred to a \$7 million in relation to a former President, imputed it against a former President and the former Permanent Secretary, Mr. Nigel Dharamlall. I would like to know what the Member is talking about. If she has no information, could she please retract that information? As far as I know, presidents can travel in this country.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, will you resume your statement please.

Ms. Patterson: Thank you Sir. In conclusion, I wish to, once again, thank the APNU/AFC coalition Government on behalf of the people of Region 10 for a well thought out national budget, which would certainly provide the people of Guyana with *A Fresh Approach to a Good Life in a Green Economy*.

I close with this exhortation from the Book of Nehemiah. When Nehemiah heard that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down he intended to go and rebuild those walls. In opposition were Sanballat and Tobiah who thought that he could not do it. He showed them that, yes with the will, faith, and the confidence he did build back the walls. When they saw him building those walls they sent to call him. He said I am doing a good work I will not come down. APNU/AFC is doing a good work and we will remain doing a good work. [*Applause*]

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Speaker, I hope that we are going to live up to that convention that, in view of the fact, I will be speaking as a Minister for the first time in a budget debate, I hope the Hon. Members Ms. Teixeira, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, Mr. Nandlall and the rest would not heckle. But, you know, that is the least I can expect.

I want to rise on this occasion to commend the Hon. Minister of Finance for a wonderful presentation and a wonderful budget in this year 2015. One could appreciate the challenges he had, these being very constraining times, also the difficulties that obviously came at the fact that a budget of this nature is coming at this very late stage. Having gone through those thick volumes in relation to public security and all, we in the AFC/APNU coalition feel that this is as best in the circumstances as can happen. We are not going to deny the fact, and I will acknowledge here, if it has not been done yet and I rather suspect that it was done implicitly in

fact of title itself, that indeed there were programmes that were adopted and indeed they were things that were done previously that we had to capture for the continuity sake – indeed. And, that is what we mentioned here as it being all about a fresh approach to that which existed before. We are not denying that things existed there. Though there might be a lot of criticisms, some very severe, some not so severe, saying that it is cut and paste budget, Mr. Winston Jordan, do not be affected by that because what you have done was that you have cut the bad parts of that which existed and adopted lots of good things and also your freshness to it. That is what we have here today.

I would wish to say that the challenging economic times of Guyana, the challenging international times, as what you call exogenous factors, have made it all the more trying to have indicated that we are going to have over \$221 billion to spend, was indeed an exceptional effort on your part. Thank you very much for doing all of that. It is indeed an honest representation of what the economy is and indeed an discerning application of all the facts and realities around for purposes of ensuring that we can complete the budget process, notwithstanding, for the year 2015.

Before I go on to deal with my Public Security Ministry, I want to make mention of what the Opposition has been doing in relation to this very sensitive issue, as regards ethnic cleansing. I want to make mention of this fact, that it will do the country no good if the actual facts are not given to the public out there, as regard these 2000 Chief Support Officers (CSOs). Not a single one of those CSOs could be regarded as an employee. If anybody is aware of what a contract of employment is he/she will know that indeed there must be terms and conditions and a salary or a wage, what it is that we knocked and yes indeed. We have been saying that one must not go donning out hand-outs to the Amerindians or we are going to object to it. We objected to it in 2013. We did that. We are not donning out anything, we are indicating now that there is going to be a brand new... [*Interruption*]

We had objected, even on the last occasion, that, indeed, that is not the way to go. One cannot, and especially with an elections coming up, go and give 2000 people \$30,000 each. It is literally buying the votes. We had made it clear that it is not something that we will support. Indeed, the Government of the day saw it fit to give them the \$30,000 but they did it with no contract of employment. When I take on a staff member, I would normally give them a contract of employment as to the period of time and all of that and state what is it that they have to do. Did

the previous Government do that? They did not do anything of this nature. They just wanted to buy 2000 votes and probably the CSOs and their family members, they would be proud and that was it.

7. 20 p.m.

Mr. Ramjattan: We did not indicate that we were going to reinstate the 2,000 CSOs. Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, why, when the Cabinet made the decision to pay the CSOs moneys until April, 2015, were they never paid for that month? **[Ms. Teixeira: [Inaudible]]** You did not. You fooled the CSOs into believing that it was a salary when it was not. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think the gavel is louder than your voices, so I am asking you to tone it down. It is not true that the Hon. Mr. Ramjattan has to compete with the front benches on the opposite side. I am sure that we can manage without that.

Please proceed, Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: Thank you very much. The coalition Government went into Government a week or more after the May Elections. The CSOs were not paid the \$30,000 for April and, to this date, they still have not been paid, but the People's Progressive Party wants to disingenuously say that this Administration has not granted the \$30,000 to the CSOs. We did not dismiss anyone because they were never employed by anyone. Please do not regard it as a contract of employ to the extent that they were employees. And you must never give the impression to the public that the CSOs' jobs were terminated, then, in addition to that, state that it was ethnic cleansing because they are Amerindians. No. They had gone long before we came into the Administration. What we have done is, in accordance with the new arrangement where the YEAP will be taken over by a new programme... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I must ask the speaker to address the Chair.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. The YEAP will be replaced with a new programme called the planned hinterland employment and youth service, where we plan to ask those CSOs whether they want to register to get skills and to go for training and they will then be paid \$30,000. That is the way to go. You just do not dole out for them to behave as if they are Toshaos and they control the village elections and village administration. That is what the People's Progressive Party wanted

and it stopped long before the APNU/AFC came into Government. We are not doing any ethnic cleansing; you were doing vote buying and the Cabinet Paper is here.

I also want to make a preliminary point. It is a good thing that there has been a change in Government. A lot of people are rejoicing in the choice that they have made. Yes, it was close, but the people of this country needed the breathing space for purposes of ensuring they see another Government at work. Indeed, if the public feels that we have not done a good job, then democracy will take its course and we should be dislodged. But the PPP wants to give the impression as if this Government is not here as *de jure*, lawful. It is saying *de facto*; you are saying that we have rigged the Elections. Well, all of the international observers that Dr. Cheddi Jagan called for the 1992 Elections came – the Organization of American States, the Carter Center, *et cetera* – and they said that these Elections were free and fair. You forgot that. The same independent Elections Commission said that the Elections were free and fair. You can bring your Elections petition. There is a Judiciary that will determine it. [Mr. Ali: We called for a recount.] Go there for your recounts. If you are asking for a cross commission, then we will ensure that, and you will get your recount, but you must have some respect for this Government.

This coalition Government will listen to you. You made certain recommendations on certain State boards and this Government will review that. Our Minister of Governance has already indicated that. We are going to listen but the PPP must understand and appreciate that not the arrogance and the pomposity exhibited before will be exhibited here. If there is need for some more women on the boards, we will facilitate that. [An Hon. Member: When?] When? It will come in time. We will find those persons who will fit appropriately in those positions. It is important that you understand that.

A lot of them want to know about the crime. I had wanted to hear the speaker... [Mr. Neendkumar: Yes, you will have to be bodyguard.] Of course. You will hear me now on crime. I had wanted to hear from Jennifer Westford, the Hon. Member, before I speak. I noticed you have caused her to exit. Where is she? I have a list. The Hon. Member, Jennifer Westford, was supposed to speak before me but she is gone.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please focus on your presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: In the Budget, honest words were used to describe the crime situation. It was reflected, in the Budget, that the crime situation is pressing and depressing. The impression, disingenuously, being given by the Opposition is that as soon as the coalition Government came into office, it started the crime.

I have asked the Commissioner of Police to give me the graph with the 2014 and 2015 crime rates. Indeed, this year is still higher than last year, but it is reflected as 359 as against 325 and it was growing since February, long before this Government took office. It was around the same time that the previous Administration stopped paying the Indigenous CSOs that the crime rate started going up. *[Interruption]* I am not making a link at all because the crime rates... It is important...

Ms Teixeira: On a Point of Order, under Standing Order No. 40, I am asking that the Hon. Minister withdraws his comment as the implications are racist and criminal. The Hon. Minister is making a link between the CSOs not being paid and the increase in crime and that is unacceptable in this House.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please proceed and avoid imputations of any kind on anyone.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is right. It is quite clear, from whatever the graphs are, the crime rates and the individual unit statistics, that it is 378 as against last year which was 359. We are saying...

[An Hon. Member: You are racist.] Well, you could say that I am racist, Brother. Mr. Speaker, they could say that I am racist but we are going to do that which is right, and that which is right is to let the people out there know that the crime rate started long before we took office.

In the Hansard dated 26th June, 2015, in an earlier address I made to this House, I said that immediately upon being appointed Minister of Public Security, I spoke to all the Commissioners, Commanders and all other senior ranks, where we came up with some of the causes of the increase in crime. We talked about the increased use of drugs, the ready availability of alcohol...

[Ms. Teixeira: Guns.] Yes, guns, decades of high unemployment in our country, especially in Georgetown where 50% of the crimes are committed, increase in the number of children growing up in violent prone homes, a general exposure to violence by the youths and an increasing sense of frustration and futility of not only the young, but others who just cannot find jobs. This was an analysis done by the Commissioner long before and, when put in caucus and

asked the very same difficult questions, they were well aware of what the causes are. I also informed them that crime comes about as a result of a terrible human condition called greed. **[An Hon. Member: Do you not know about that?]** Yes, I know about it, just like some former Ministers who owned eight cars and huge sums of moneys. There are others who are driven to crime as a consequence of desperation of not doing well in society. This desperation is a breeding ground and we need to bring the climbing rate of crime to a halt. For that reason, there must be a social package for the people so the breeding grounds could die in a phased manner. Employment must be created and it is important that we understand the real true root causes because a lot of people are going to come to the conclusion that this and that must be done, but they must know that it will take time.

The crime rate is not T20 Cricket; it is a test match that we are talking about, and it will take some time before the crime rate goes down. A number of programmes and packages must be put together so that the culture of greed and the culture of wanting to do violence come to a halt.

We also understand that there must be a better Police Force and a better administration of the Police Force to the extent that policemen must not be demoralised. There is no doubt about that. And there was evidence of demoralisation of the Force for a number of years by a number of programmes and practices of certain leadership at the political level.

7. 35 p.m.

I want to make mention of a couple of them. To the end of 2013, five years after the first batch of Cadet Officers was trained, none was promoted because no arrangement was made to accommodate them to the establishment of the Assistant Superintendent level. This was only done late into 2014 but only in relation to a number of almost half of them. Sixteen of them and I also understand a number of over 27 after that were appointed by the Police Service Commission to that position of Assistant Superintendent of Police. Now that we have a situation where the Administration has opened up to all of them, the Police Service Commission has to now formally appoint 19 others so that we can have these Cadet Officers going into positions so that they can do the work at the various stations, sub-stations and technical offices. **[An Hon. Member: What about the equipment?]** I would be coming to the equipment just now.

What I also understand from the senior leaders there at that meeting was that they were entitled to 42 days annualised vacation leave but were forced to only accept 21 days; this was arbitrarily done by the former Minister. This was in breach of the Public Service Rules. I have the names here. It was an entitlement of these senior ranks, all of them who were so disentitled to half of their annualised vacation leave.

There were retired officers being given the royal run around, not getting their payments and gratuity, *et cetera*. And when your existing officers see that the retiring officers are going to get the royal run around, then they are going to be demoralised. I am certain that Commissioner Jameer is suffering this up to now.

In any event, we also have what was demoralising too, a lot of non-training in the sense that when these persons were given scholarships to go overseas, the scholarships were controlled by the Minister to the extent that these names did not get to go. I will call the names of those officers that did not get to go. Since we have come into Government, we have ensured that all of the training exercises overseas, whether it is a little long term, two or three weeks or two to four days for workshops, are being attended. This is capacity building - Narcotics Investigation course...that is very much involved in what I am going to show you just now, the five-point plan that we have to ensure it is going to be implemented.

You need capacity building as part of that five-point plan. If you start taking away all of the scholarships that are being granted to senior ranks so that they cannot go overseas and get some training, what are you going to do? You will demoralise them. Narcotics Investigation course: Sergeant Layne was not approved; Training in Data Protection: Inspector Johnson was not approved; Drug Commanders Conference: Superintendent M. Chapman was not approved. All happened in 2014 and coming down a little earlier into 2015. [*Inaudible*] and Superintendent Brutus were denied to go to Russia for a senior ranking officers course in Management of Police Units, which is a very important course. The then Minister did not send them. Superintendent W. DeHart and Superintendent Ramlakhan were not sent either. Precursor Chemical's Course: Detective Constable Tooknauth was refused and did not attend because he was not approved. Some of these courses, indeed, the Government had to find the money for, but most of them were being sponsored by the overseas people that wanted the training to go on.

All the participants were very angry. And they were all for the year 2013 and going over to 2014. International Policing Women's Leadership: Women's Senior Superintendent Graham was not approved; Anti-Terrorism and Criminal Protection of Transport Infrastructure: Lord Dawson Whitaker was not approved. You could understand that when you deny people their little scholarships for overseas training what will happen to that Police Force. So you reduce, as is mentioned, the skills base, their administrative capacity base and so you are going to have that which we have now. We then will have to ensure that each and every one of those training seminars and workshops are attended by these senior ranks so that they could get the training needed.

What we are also now going to do in relation to training is to ensure that we take on these projects whereby the bilateral arrangements that we have with Canada, especially, and the United States of America (USA) are to ensure the strengthening of the Guyanese criminal justice system. As part of this year's programme and plan to ensure that we train, we are having, from a Justice Education Society, a course which will last two years. [An Hon. Member: What about horse riding?] I will come to horse riding and to dog training. I am going to avoid, however, goats completely.

As part of this training programme for the next two years, in relation to this Justice Education Society Programme, there would be an objective of ensuring that the ranks and investigators do better crime scene management, such as: protection of the crime scene, preservation of the evidence, identification and collection of physical and testimonial evidence, witness taking statements and the whole gamut, including the organisation of the case file right up to testifying in a court of law. Very many of the police witnesses, when they see a good cross-examiner, let us say, Mr. Nigel Hughes or whomever, it causes them to be very intimidated.

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

Mr. Ramjattan: I have 10 minutes remaining. This is an important part of it, Mr. Speaker. We have to talk also about how we are going to procure the hardware and the software to be used by a lot of the policemen of the Guyana Police Force to process the evidence and prepare it for the court. This is a two-year project. As part of the tool box, one tool is a gun amnesty and we are going to ensure that, as of the 1st September, 2015, we are going to facilitate a gun amnesty for a

period of two months as an option. People are laughing at it saying that nobody is going to bring in their guns but it is an option that we are going to ask them to bring in their guns because the guns are too many out there. Such option we are going to employ since it was advised by the Commissioners and Commanders and which I also saw wisdom in.

Of course, I have already implemented that which was always in the law books, the curfew, because of alcohol abuse. Drinking late into the nights causes a lot of accidents. You can say what you want but a lot of people feel that it is an appropriate option that I have employed to ensure that the drinking also comes to an end.

The five-point strategic plan that will take over from what we had from the previous Administration of a Strategic Plan 2011 to 2015 is what we regard as the five-point strategy and action plan. It involves enhancing police administration. We need to see the weekly reports as to all serious crimes. We need to identify the high incidence areas for serious crimes so that we can target a number of these areas with a lot more patrols.

The second one has to do with police organisation and training. A number of the things I have just mentioned there, especially in relation to our criminal investigation department... [An Hon. Member: Did you consult the public?] We do not have to consult the public with this. This is an executive function and, if there are Members like you who we will have to speak to on crime, who are going to laugh the curfew and the use of horses and canine elements, then I would not consult with you either.

Regarding police deployment, we have to deploy a lot more policemen but the deployment is a difficulty because we are short of 1,500 to 2,000 policemen.

Mr. Speaker: You have five minutes more.

Mr. Ramjattan: We also have to have a lot more assets for the Police Force, an increasing use of transportation, especially boats, motor vehicles, ATVs, bicycles and also we are talking about police communication equipment. I must congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for ensuring that we are going to have \$125 million for the next four months to buy a lot of arms and ammunition and finger print and ballistics photographic equipment. Another \$193 million is to deal with vehicles, trucks, and motor cycles and outboard engines which are necessary. What had

happened when I came into the Ministry is that I had noticed that a lot of vehicles were inside of a certain thing called Community Policing Groups and just parked up there for the Community Policing Groups. The Police Force needed these vehicles because there were hardly any for them and that is why we had to do that.

There is an important little point that I would wish to talk about and that is the use of surveillance cameras. Under the Citizens Security Programme, phase two, we have managed to tweak around that which existed prior to coming to office to ask them for what is called an emergency and smart street safe city proposal whereby we are going to have over 100 Closed-Circuit Televisions (CCTVs) in and around the City because this is a City where 50% of the crimes are committed. Also, there will be a command centre as wide as that wall, literally, with all the television sets so that we can see the City during the course of the day as to where and what is happening.

A few of the CCTVs have brought in convictions for dangerous driving and careless driving for hundreds of people because, with those CCTVs, we do a Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) as to how they drive. We manage to see the face of the driver and the car that he or she is driving and we send that same tape to him or her with a summons saying, "You drove badly. Take a look at this DVD." And it has paid off some dividends. We feel that that is going to be a tremendously special thing. There is going to be an infrastructural work for that that will call for a conference room, a monitoring room and so on. I want to make mention...

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

Mr. Ramjattan: I want, in those two minutes, to talk a thing or two about the uses of horses also. This is important because it has an impact. And that is why people in Canada, where Ms. Teixeira came from... [Ms. Teixeira: I did not come from Canada.] ...where she studied, there is something called the Royal Canadian Mounted Police branch, a very important part and unit of the Police Force.

7.50 p.m.

I want to make this very big point: the k-9 section was supported by Mr. Rohee, and I do not know why you, over there, are jumping on me for supporting the k-9 section. Mr. Rohee

supported, in 2013, paying a total of \$13,300 to Global Training Academy (GTA) in Texas to acquire a sniffer dog and train a dog handler. The Minister of Home Affairs never, however... He contracted the said GTA of Texas - over \$15,000 - to come and assess the police k-9 operations and to make recommendations. The contractors came in August, 2014. All of this is important because, in a good police force, you would expect to have sniffer dogs, patrol dogs and tracker dogs, and, as part of the resources, it is necessary to have a k-9 section. And it is no laughable matter. [An Hon. Member: How many dogs are you purchasing?] We have not, as yet, purchased any.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have one minute to wrap up.

Mr. Ramjattan: We have not, as yet, purchased any, but expect, from this Administration, that we are, indeed, going to go that way to ensure that we do because tracker dogs, especially, are important and so are sniffer dogs. As a matter of fact, the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, had five of them at the Timehri Airport and six patrol dogs in and around the city at nights. So what is the big deal?

There are going to be lots of other things that this Administration will do to ensure that the crime is reduced. But, as I have mentioned just now, it will take some time. We need, also, to do away with the rogue cops in the Police Force. But when two rogue cops got promoted and I tried to get rid of them, we got arguments from the former Attorney General that we cannot interfere with the Police Service Commission and all of that. Do you know what signals we are sending when you have a man that is going to be promoted after he would have burnt the genitalia of a vulnerable child? And they do not care. That is very bad for the Police Force.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to commend this Budget to this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: You will need to wrap up now.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes, I am wrapping up now. The Minister, indeed, has made the necessary capital expenses available to the Ministry of Public Security for that four-month period for purposes of enhancing what we have to do during the course of that four-month period. We are going to have lots more other projects and programmes in the 2016 Budget, but this thing takes

time, as I said, and you just also have to bear with us. It is depressing, indeed, and I will be frank about that.

Thank you very much, Minister, for ensuring that you give what you proposed to us. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this completes our programme for today. Before I invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment, I will like to ask all Members to remember that the Members of Parliament's Lounge is intended only for Members of Parliament. I am asking all Members to please remember that in their use of the Lounge; it is for only Members of Parliament.

I think that we can feel pleased that we have completed today's work, but I do not know whether we are treating ourselves badly by the way in which we project our image outside of the halls of this building. And I wonder whether Standing Order No. 45 could be helpful to us. I do not know but it just seems to me that it is a helpful section. Maybe Hon. Members might want to look at it to see whether it can be helpful to us here. Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until tomorrow, 20th August, 2015 at 1.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Sitting stands adjourned to 1.00 p.m. tomorrow, 20th August, 2015.

Adjourned accordingly at 7.56 p.m.