

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

45TH Sitting

Monday, 8TH April, 2013

Assembly convened at 1.14 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY SPEAKER

Rescheduling of the sitting to facilitate funeral arrangement of the late Dr. Dale Bisnauth

Mr. Speaker: Good afternoon Hon. Members. It is by way of announcement and the first being that Members are reminded that the funeral of the late Member of this august House, Dr. Dale Bisnauth, is at 10.00 a.m. Burns Memorial Church which is Irving and Anira Streets. There will be as well the cremation thereafter at Good Hope crematorium. I have discussed with the Whips, and we have agreed, that we will commence tomorrow sitting at 2.00 p.m. to allow Members of the House, who wish to attend the funeral, and perhaps the cremation, to do so without let or hindrance.

Death of Former Member of Parliament, Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud

Mr. Speaker: The second announcement is on, again, a very sad note that is not to announce but mark the death of Mr. Reepu Daman Persaud, Order of Roraima (OR), Justice of the Peace (JP) who, we learnt, died early in the morning on the 7th of April at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. Pandit, as he was known, served in this House, first of what it was known as a

House of Assembly, from the years 1964 to 1966. It was on the 31st of December, 1964 that Parliament recalled and had its first meeting and it was on the 18th of May, 1965 that Pandit Persaud took the oath of office and became a parliamentarian. After Guyana gained independence on the 26th of May, 1966 he was named as a Member of Parliament, in the First Parliament, which lasted from the years 1966 to 1968. He was also a Member of the Second Parliament from the years 1969 to 1973 and took the oath of office for the Third Parliament on the 24th of May, 1976 and remained there until 1980.

Mr. Persaud was designated as a minority Chief Whip during the Fourth Parliament, which was from the years 1980 to 1985 and designated Deputy Speaker of this National Assembly in the Fifth Parliament from the years 1985 to 1992. In the year 1992, Mr. Persaud was designated Senior Minister of Agriculture in the Sixth Parliament, from the years 1992 to 1997, and during the Seventh Parliament which last from the years 1997 to 2001 Mr. Persaud was again designated Senior Minister of Agriculture and later in that said Parliament he was given responsibilities for Parliamentary Affairs. In the Eighth Parliament, spanning from the years 2001 to 2006, Mr. Persaud was designated Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. Our former colleague also served as Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee from the years 1968 to 1974.

On a more personal note, I would like to say that I first got to know Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud in the Seventh Parliament and had the good experience working alongside him on many critical matters that occupied our time and attention, in those days, such as political dialogue between the parties to resolve differences and constitutional and parliamentary reforms. In Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud, I found an astute, sometimes wily, but always formidable politician. He was an epitome of the gentleman parliamentarian who was always gracious, respectful and extremely knowledgeable of the Constitution and Standing Orders of the National Assembly. To those who seek to uphold the Westminster-type tradition of parliamentarianism, the Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, I thought, was the best example I could offer. He had style and panache. I believe that if it was only once in the many years that I came up against I saw him losing his calm and collected demeanour. He characterised the way we ought to practise politics in this Chamber and that is with decorum and dignity.

I am extremely happy that in 2012 this National Assembly was able to recognise and honour the Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud for his long and outstanding contribution to the democracy of Guyana. It is always better, I think, to say thank you to someone in life than posthumously in death. I leave the Chamber with the words of the poet Robindranauth Takur: “Death has not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come”.

I invite you all to stand as we observe one minute silence of the passing of Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud.

One minute silence observed.

May his soul rest in peace.

Thank you Hon. Members, kindly be seated.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Reports were laid:

The Police Complaints Authority Annual Report for the year 2011. [*Minister of Home Affairs*]

The Guyana National Insurance Scheme Annual Report and Audited Accounts for the year 2011.
[*Minister of Finance*]

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[Written Replies]

1. IMPACT OF THE ‘NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND POLICY’

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister of Education inform this House whether an evaluation has been conducted to ascertain the impact of the ‘No Child left behind Policy’ on the delivery of education in Guyana?

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: An evaluation of the “Grade Repetition/Retention and Automatic Promotion” policy is currently being undertaken. This fact is public knowledge as is evidenced by the dozens of news reports on the said ongoing evaluation. Examples of the

said news reports can be found in the *Guyana Times*, Tuesday, January 24, 2012 and the *Kaieteur News*, Thursday, May 24, 2012.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ‘NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND POLICY’

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister of Education inform this House whether the Hon. Minister considers an assessment of the ‘No Child left behind Policy’ a necessity in relation to the improvement of the quality of education delivery in Guyana?

Ms. Manickchand: The Hon. Minister considers assessment and evaluation necessary tools in the management of any system if quality output is the desired end result. The Grade Repetition/Retention and Automatic Promotion Policy is currently being assessed as may be evidenced from news reports such as *Sunday Times*, February 10, 2013.

3. PAYMENT OF CLEANERS BY PARENT TEACHER’S ASSOCIATIONS (PTAs)

Ms. Hughes: Can the Hon. Minister explain why Parent Teacher’s Associations (PTAs) are being asked to pay cleaners employed at senior secondary schools?

Ms. Manickchand: The Government pays cleaners and sometimes where more cleaners are needed PTAs meet that need. In any event, the general issue of cleaners at schools is presently being reviewed.

Mr. Speaker: May I take the opportunity to welcome back Mrs. Catherine Hughes.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

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

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

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013 of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,873), excluding fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now resume the debate on the budget for the year 2013. I am advised that the first speaker to commence today’s debate is the Hon. Ms. Amna Ally, Opposition Chief Whip and lead spokesperson on education.

Ms. Ally: I rise to make my contribution on Budget 2013 under the theme “*Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*”. This budget is crafted for the rich and the not so rich. It is crafted for the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) cronies. Certainly, it is not crafted for the working class people of Guyana.

In introducing Budget 2013, the Hon. Minister of Finance in his opening remarks, at page 1, made reference to the one-seat majority in this new dispensation and alluded to parliamentary actions of the past 14 months which was occasioned by the one-seat majority. The Hon. Member cited cutting essential budgetary allocations; denying and elected Member the right to speak in

the National Assembly and passing of motions and Bills to defy reasons among others. Having assimilated that, I wish to point out the following:

- The one-seat majority is a telling reality of the new dispensation the people of Guyana wanted. Prior to 2011, the PPP/C had a five-seat majority and it did whatever it had wanted to do, right or wrong, but the Guyanese nation disagreed with its approach, hence this new dispensation.

I want to advise my dear comrades that they will have to live with that for a little while more, after which we will exchange sides and fully take the reins of Government.

- Secondly, the temerity to speak about cutting essential budgetary allocations.
 - Why would the Opposition agree to have the *National Comedy Network*, I mean, Sir, the National Communications Network (NCN), which is classified as the mouthpiece of the PPP/C, to spend taxpayers money for the advocacy of PPP's propaganda?
 - Why was an investigation triggered for NCN and its finances?
 - Why did staffers services dispensed with?

Those are questions that must be answered by the Hon. Minister of Finance.

- How does it put an end to contract holders who are not on the job and who are receiving huge sums of money as their salaries from the Office of the President?

Those are only a few to mention.

- Thirdly, a very sensitive issue in which the Hon. Minister of Finance referred to the denying of the right of an elected Member to speak in the National Assembly. We in the Opposition do no deal with petty politics. We deal with issues and the Government side must understand the issues. We moved the motion of no confidence in that elected Member. We believe that under his watch crime escalated, murders increased rapidly and public security was dismal. We felt that if at minimum our country is depleted further of its essential human resources it is time for us to save it. If the PPP/C feels that we should not save it then it is playing petty politics.

I will now turn my attention to the education sector. I am totally disappointed. I listened to the Hon. Minister of Education and expected her to adumbrate education policies intended for the year 2013, but, no, this House was treated to the story of the dream boy. I cannot help but to say that our education system in Guyana sucks. Its focus is on the wrong ball. The Government's thinking on education is that the more money it puts into the system, it is the most improved one. We heard from the Minister of Finance about the largest budget; we see an increase by over \$2 billion in the education sector, but we are not getting value for money. I will venture to cite some examples to substantiate my statement.

One, according to the budget, some \$3 billion is budgeted to be spent on infrastructure and repairs, but a big chunk of this money is to construct new schools, among other things. I believe and I recommend that the focus should be on the following:

- (a) Repairing and maintaining more of the existing schools so that more of our children can benefit and be safe.

How can we have schools that have, for example, industrial arts centre and no electricity to make it functional. Where children will get real benefit?

- (b) How can we have schools where adequate text books and furniture are absent?

I have just returned from Region 9. Let me point out that there are four children sitting in one bench at the St. Ignatius Primary School. It is across all the regions. I hope that Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett is very proud of that achievement - four children sitting in one bench.

- (c) How could we have new schools when the existing ones do not have furniture to accommodate all our children?

Education is not about tinkering with people's mind or with politicking. We must get it right. I urge the Hon. Minister of Education to get it right and to focus in the direction where our nation's children will benefit.

I cannot help but to allude to teachers' training. At our teachers' training institution, here, again, the Government focus is dilated. I have been making this point over and over again, but someone is either not listening or not hearing. Government's focus is on quantity, not quality. It must not

be a matter of how many, but how good they may be. This Government gloats by going to public fora, including these hallowed halls, and speak of large numbers graduating, but if our teachers are poorly trained then our children in turn will suffer. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether the professionals have done an assessment or an analysis of the content of teachers' training at regional centres as compared with that of the Cyril Potter College of Education.

I would like to bring to the Minister's attention that the teacher trainees at the regional centres are robbed of time for lecture series, exposure, opportunities and generally the content. These factors contribute to the poor quality of teachers' training across regional centres. I call on the Government to address the core of the problem.

I believe in giving credit to where credit is due. I believe that we have seen improvement at the National Centre for Education and Research Development (NCERD). It is good when the Minister can take on board recommendations made in this honourable House and implement them. I note, with great appreciation, the improvement of the learning channel, which I raised on the last occasion, and its programmes, and the exams operations at the examination section of NCERD. Towards this end, I would like to offer congratulations to Minister Priya Manickchand for allocating a portion of professionalism to her dictat. Thanks for accepting A Partnership for National Unity (APNU)'s recommendations. I want to alert her that, in case she does not know, literacy educators have not been paid through the NCERD programme from January until this month of April, and something should be done about that very quickly. **[Mr. G. Persaud: It is as soon as the budget is passed.]** We cannot wait on the budget to eat. You do not wait on the budget to eat.

More germane to the delivery of education would be what we do to improve our education system. Here, I will like allude to the following:

- One, recognising the fact that pass rate in English and Math, a meagre 31%, Government made an intervention and injected \$80 million and invested it in photocopied text books, geometry sets, and what happened? The pass rate was reduced to 29%. That must have told us that the intervention was not the answer, but was it? There is a shortage of competent lecturers at our training facilities. We have to solve that problem and we can solve that problem by improving training and giving a significant increase in their

emoluments. Lecturers cannot give of their best because they are not properly remunerated. They will not spend quality time to deliver. They have to concentrate on sub jobs to make a dollar to be able to cope in Guyana where the cost of living is extremely high.

- Secondly, injections cannot be given at the secondary level; it has to be at the primary level. If there is not, for example, a proper foundation when building a house the entire house will collapse. If we cannot fix the bottom then the top will collapse. There are several methods of teaching reading, for example.
 - Are our schools implementing them?
 - Are there any considered incentives for improved performance?
 - What additional inputs are given to schools and teachers to address our literacy and numeracy?

I urge the Government to use some pilot schools in every region to start, as a base, with new methodologies. These are the nitty-gritties that we have to look at if we want to improve literacy and numeracy.

In our education system, how about if we try a salary injection for our teachers and see whether it will improve our children's performance? I know you will want to argue about the union's multi-year agreement but it is worth the try. I call on the Government to give the teachers the salary increase injection and improved working conditions. I am positive that there will be improved performance.

Preparation for industries and the world of work: Government has been touting about developmental projects and to name just two. The Members spoke of Marriott Hotel and the extension of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. I have to point out that it would appear that our education system is not geared to prepare anyone to work on those developmental projects.

- (i) What then are the roles of schools with industrial arts centre?
- (ii) Are not the technical institutes preparing anyone for the world of work?

(iii) Is it that Guyanese have to go to China, India, Brazil or some foreign country to learn masonry and carpentry or how to fetch a bucket of bricks?

We heard of the thousands being trained, according to Ministers Gopaul and Juan Edghill, Hon. Members.

- Where are they?
- Why do we have to have to resort to importation of human resources to do those jobs at those developmental projects?
- Is it that our education system is only concerned with academics or exam oriented people?
- Is it that the Government is losing the opportunity of preparing student to have rounded personalities?

1.44 p.m.

Indeed, the Government has lost that golden opportunity to develop our nation's children so that they can become good men and women of tomorrow who can develop Guyana. I urge you, Hon. Minister, to rethink your strategy. The writing is on the wall. Let us not create the scenario of exam oriented students only, but let us build around making our children functional in today's society. Let us work towards making our children with rounded personalities.

Schools in the regions: If we take a look at the schools in the region, we will see how they are overwhelmed with problems – dropouts, vandalism, crime, drug abuse, children wanting to beat teachers, only to mention a few. These atrocities are growing daily. Is there a plan by the Ministry to grapple with these problems? The Budget is silent. I recall in my younger days as an educator, the People's National Congress (PNC) introduced Guidance and Counselling as a compulsory subject. But true to form, this Government believes that they must undo everything that was implemented by the PNC Government. There is so much to learn from Guidance and Counselling. I believe it will help to mould our nation's children.

For years, we have also been talking about dropouts at the school system. We do not want to solve those kinds of problems. Sir, I ask the Government a few questions: what has happened to the idea of welfare officers or social workers, and I mean adequate welfare officers and social

workers? What has happened to security in all the schools? Is there any consideration for risk allowances for our teachers?

Finally on this topic, let us look at the schools across the regions carefully and we will see that children from level one to Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) level go to lessons. The majority of children writing Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations are going to some lesson or the other. Whether the students are from the great schools like Queens College, St. Stanislaus College or Bishops High School, they are no exception. Mr. Speaker, does it not bother you as to why this is happening now in the education system? These are some of the things we must seek to find out – why – and seek to grapple with them.

Technical and Vocational Education: Technical and Vocational Education has always been close to my heart and I will keep it there. The world over it is widely accepted that our children have varying abilities. Not everyone can be gifted academics. We must recognise the importance of making provisions for those who are academically challenged. I do not want to speak of Leonora or Mahaicony Technical and Vocational Training Centres. But I ask the question: what has happened to our technical institutes? What input, if at all, is necessary for their viability? And what is the output, among other things? This Government is not serious, because they are allowing these institutes and other technical and vocational facilities to fail.

I referred earlier to a centre, for example, built - and I will call the name - the Stewartville Secondary School, with no electricity. How could this Government be serious about technical and vocational education? I trust that the electricity will be put there soon. I want to urge the Hon. Minister not to be clouded by big money. She must address her mind to real growth and development for our Guyanese young people. Let us prepare those young people for employment opportunities.

Finally, for the sake of time, I wish to ask the Minister to examine the programme offered by the Leonora and Mahaicony Technical and Vocational Training Centres. Also, the Ministry must investigate the extent of the benefits of those who attend those institutions.

University of Guyana: The Hon. Minister of Finance, at page 34 of the Budget speech, indicated that \$1.7 billion is being invested in the University of Guyana, including \$450 million in loans for 2013. The loan scheme is still to be operationalised as a revolving loan scheme after close to

20 years of existence. Of the \$500 million that the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan announced as the Government input, \$450 million is now the sum poured into the scheme annually with no reference to an effort at loan recovery, while the Government brazenly refers to the loan as a subvention to the University, albeit this money only becomes available to the University when individual students take loans. Notably, less of the University's population is opting to take the loan, hence some of the so-called subvention is never disbursed after the Government uses that sum in its propaganda to pad the amount of money supposedly allocated to the University.

The Budget, for years, has been devoid of any policy initiative on tertiary education. Even the US\$10 million which will go to the University under the World Bank loan is insufficient to address the woes of the University. This sum only became available to the University as leftovers from a project which initially did not include the University in its profile.

Under capital estimates, \$50 million has been allocated for distance education by the University. Although there is no project that has been developed to cater for distance education at the University, this may yet be unspent monies at the end of the 2013 fiscal year, although it will be used to enhance the sum that has been termed "the largest budget ever".

With all the talk about the education sector and millions spent under the Henry and Baksh regimes to enact modern legislation for the education sector, the Education Bill is still to be brought to the National Assembly and may well remain where it is right now - a touted reform or a reform which would itself require reform.

I would like to refer this honourable House to a principle outlined in the Constitution of Guyana, Article 27. (1) states:

"Every citizen has the right to free education from nursery to university as well as at non-formal places where opportunities are provided for education and training."

My understanding is that the Constitution reform has proposed a change from university to secondary. Oh, Forbes Burnham, I wish you could come back to save this nation's education system.

Firstly, I call on the Government to use the principle in Article 27 as a guide.

Secondly, the Hon. Finance Minister alluded to a growth rate of 4.8 per cent in his Budget presentation, which illustrates that Guyana is doing well. So, Sir, if that figure is reliable then I am sure that this Government must not increase the fees for our young people to be denied tertiary education at the University of Guyana. There has been a lot of talk, in and around, about raising the fees at the University of Guyana. I call on the Government to relinquish the idea and thought of any hike in fees at the University of Guyana. Our young people need a chance for their upliftment.

Conclusion

A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) certainly is not optimistic about the 2013 National Budget. This Government's self-centred and autocratic approach to the carving of Budget 2013 is unacceptable. It is not only what you want, but it is what we want together. I urge the Government to desist from the fluff it has been grown accustomed to for the cameras, that is the talk of working together and consultation. I give you a gentle reminder, Hon. Members, that '33' is greater than '32'.

Having identified the misdirected focus of the Government, I would hasten to reiterate the following recommendations:

- Change your strategy of only building buildings and strive to adequately equip them for genuine use;
- Start meaningful injections for improvement at the primary level, not the secondary level;
- Increase teachers' salaries for improved output;
- Enhance teacher training with improved methodologies via lecturers who must begin to enjoy improved working conditions.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has elapsed.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put, and agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed please, Hon. Member.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

- Equip technical institutes and industrial art centres with adequate equipment;
- Reintroduce the subvention for the Critchlow Labour College in order to give a second chance to our Guyanese youth;
- Establish in every Region a pilot project and experiment on new methodologies in the teaching of reading; and
- Consider establishing technical and vocational institutions in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9.

We need to prepare our young people in our interior regions and not only those on the coastland.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to go on and on but, for starters, I urge Government and, in particular, the Minister of Education to not only spend money, but to work towards getting value for that money. Hence, I commend those recommendations for action in order to improve the education sector.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I invite the Hon. Member, Minister Norman Whittaker, to address us. He is normally a very flamboyant debater. We look forward to your style.

Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Whittaker]:

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker and colleagues on both sides of the House. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate on Budget 2013 presented to the National Assembly by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, our Minister of Finance, on Monday, 25th March, 2013, under the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*.

Budget 2013 arose out of our commitment to the Guyanese people, with whose support we of the PPP/C Government have been able not only to overcome the challenges of the hostile political climate of the post November 2011 period, but also to have the Budget cuts restored. Indeed, these challenges only serve to intensify our resolve as a people and our efforts as a political party and as a government to ensure that the wheels of progress continue to turn. Those of us who not only read the Budget, but study the Budget, would realise that the wheels of progress have been turning all along, perhaps too fast for some of us.

We have been able to mitigate and successfully resist attempts to usurp the mandate given to the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government by the electorate to govern. Guyanese have been noticing, feeling and benefiting from our gains under the PPP/Civic Government even as they come to the realisation that my friends on the Opposition side do not even have a development plan for Guyana. I offer you \$208.8 billion dollars and ask you to prepare a plan and show it to the Guyanese people. Their focus has been on making our country ungovernable, on getting even, and on targeting individuals within the Government. My Friends, your time could be better spent.

I exhort the Opposition not to go down the road of budget cuts again. There is obviously no need to do so at all. Guyana's economy is doing well. Revenues continue to increase perennially and, consequently, more resources are available to provide more goods and services for our people, and that includes you. This improvement necessarily confirms that we have been making wise choices. How is it that we are able to garner more revenue? How is it that we are able to provide more goods and services? How is it that our people are able not only to enjoy, but be very vocal about enjoying a better standard of living. Our decisions in terms of allocation of resources have been very good ones.

Support Budget 2013. It is the best contribution that you could make at this time for further development.

Guyana is a nation on the rise. Our people are enjoying a better standard of living today than they did two decades ago. I challenge you to refute that. There has been improvement in the areas of education, health care, electricity, roads, bridges, housing, communication, et cetera. All of these have touched our people not only in the urban, not only the rural, but in the Hinterland areas.

I am not about to stand here and say that we have done all that needs to be done, but I say to you that you do not measure progress only in terms of what is achieved. You do not measure progress only in terms of the heights attained. You have to examine the depths from which we started: d-e-p-t-h-s. The Guyanese people know what that was in October 1992.

In the process of these developments I have just alluded to, we have significantly reduced poverty and achieved universal primary education. We have come very close to achieving

universal secondary education - access. We have reduced child mortality and provided housing for thousands of our people, more so our young people, and earned the respect of millions not only across the Caribbean, but across the world. Today, I see young people owning their own homes and driving cars and I reflect on my days as a youngster growing up when one could have actually counted the number of young people owning their own homes and count the number of cars traversing the roads.

Coming on the heels of Budget 2012, we have again put together, in collaboration with the Guyanese people – this is not the PPP/C alone – another annual budget for a country that enjoys the unanimous support of a significant majority of our population. I challenge you to discredit that with evidence. We have allowed nothing to daunt our efforts to work towards improving further the social services and sustaining the economic growth we promised all Guyana in our Manifestos of 1992, 1997, 2001, 2006 and 2011. It came out of our Manifestos which, in turn, came out of our dialogue, consultation with the masses of the people. These are reflected in our Poverty Reduction Strategy. They are reflected in our National Competitive Strategy/National Development Strategy (NCS/NDS) and improvements which we have been enjoying since 1993.

Opportunities were presented to all Guyanese who came forward and advanced their views on what should be priority budgetary proposals for the 2013 Budget. Some chose not to see this consultation process as urgent and important. Hence, they did not avail themselves to play a meaningful role in the determination of the basket of measures and interventions that have gone into the 2013 Budget. If they did not and if they behaved as irresponsible Guyanese, who is to be blamed? These anti-working class opportunists are now seeking to undo the results of what is a democratic, consultative process which saw thousand of our people proffering their views on the menu of measures that should go into Budget 2013. We could not allow them to do that. We must not allow them to do that. They focus on what we did not do, not what we have done. They will have some believe that there has been no development. Those who have eyes to see, let them see.

My friends, I implore all on the Opposition side to come and work with us so that we can further reduce and remove the pull and push factors that threaten to erode the opportunities we have created and the gains we have made as a nation under the PPP/Civic Government. Together we can provide more goods, more services and more opportunities for all our people.

In a most difficult period, Guyana, this little nation in South America, has weathered the difficult global financial storm, and Dr. Ashni Singh did focus on it in his Budget. We have achieved impressive financial growth relative to what we see happening in the Caribbean, South America and other countries. Guyana's US\$1.7 billion debt, which is one of the issues the Opposition keeps referring to, today remains a significant achievement when compared to the US\$2.1 billion owed in 1992. Do you know why? Then there was nothing to show for the money borrowed; there was nothing, just a document that evidenced indebtedness - nothing to show. Today, there is glaring evidence of the progress and development attained by this nation of ours with that money. Today we are no longer a highly indebted poor country where we feel embarrassed to travel and embarrassed to identify ourselves as Guyanese. The minute a child is born that child is indebted with some US\$200,000 plus. Today we are no longer considered a highly indebted poor country, but a middle income developing country. I am proud of that. Are you?

Continuous shortages of food, fuel and medicine were the days of the PNC, the *Burnhamism* that they want to re-invoke. We are not dealing with Obeahism today. We have gone bigger than that. We are not dealing with that. Indeed, the World Bank has predicted - somebody mentioned it - that Guyana's economy will grow; somebody mentioned by 4.9 per cent, but the information I have is 5.6 per cent in 2013. [**Member:** It is accurate] Thank you, it is accurate. This prediction is premised on the fact that what we have is a sound economy with consistent growth.

Budget 2013 channels our continuous focus on preserving the macroeconomic stability which we have enjoyed over the past decade.

My brothers and sisters from the opposite side of the House, I exhort you. Guyana's future continues to look good. Our credit worthiness has been restored. New schools, hospitals, health centres, roads and houses are being built. Our Gross Domestic Product and our external reserves continue to rise. I feel good when I read that the present figure stands at US\$862.2 million; I feel better when I convert this and I understand and appreciate that that is equivalent to four months' imports.

2.14 p.m.

Do not be left behind or left out. Join us, those on the opposite side. I want you to benefit from the major projects that are being implemented and will continue to be implemented. I want you

to benefit from the success story of Amaila Falls. I want to see you on the four-lane highway, driving your cars, made possible because of the prudent economic policies of this Government. I want to see you in your nice homes.

We recognise that our efforts to maximise the use of the National Assembly to advance our development agenda, through motions and bills, are being stifled by the Opposition, in some ways, but we are determined to improve the quality of life enjoyed by our people and to manage the economy so that economic growth will accelerate and, in the process, jobs will be created and workers' interests will be advanced.

What is important, also, is how far our economy is able to provide for the needs and well-being of our people. We have a society of which we are proud. We have a society in which free education, healthcare and many other social programmes are available to our people. Whilst we advance arguments that there is still a lot to be done and whilst we advance arguments that there have been deficiencies in some areas, we must also recognise that as a Government we have been able to make available free education, free healthcare and many other social programmes to our people.

We have a society in which our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) continues to rise annually, in which interest rates and inflation rates have reduced appreciably and credit is now available.

We have a society in which, unlike the budgets of the 1990s...and this is something that I want to recall. In fact, I want to share it with you because I do recall it. I do recall, as a little boy, my parents glued to the radio as they listened to the Budget presentations of the 1960s and the 1970s. It was not with any measure of excitement that they listened, because those Budgets were mere horror stories with measures such as higher taxes. When last have you heard of a Guyana budget with higher taxes? There were measures such as rising prices for basic food items. Of course, there was the perennial devaluation of the Guyana currency. Instead of feeding the population's stomach with food, people's stomachs were fed with slogans: "Tighten your belts" until there was no waist left to tighten; "Tighten your belts. Prepare to eat less and work harder."

Compared to those days, the People's Progressive Party Civic's Budgets have perennially exuded the confidence of our people, providing opportunities and a recipe for improvement of our country.

The 2013 National Budget is about continuity of our development plans. That is what it is about. We have recognised that development is a process. As some other speaker said, no budget can turn a country around or allow us to satisfy all of the individual and composite demands in one year; it cannot happen. We have been focusing on continuity and consistency of policies and programmes which have been working for us. They have been working! The social and economic indicators reveal that. The comments of external observers and the comments of international financial agencies affirm that. We have been getting positive results as a result of the measures that we have been taking.

The 2013 Budget, my Friends, allows us to maintain our momentum and to continue or socioeconomic and infrastructural development. It is intended to and will, in my humble view, impact on the poor, impact on the young, impact on the elderly, and impact on the vulnerable, and will advance our development agenda for Guyana, for it addresses not only socioeconomic growth but the plight of the vulnerable. It places more disposable income in the hands of or people through a range of relief measures and a range of fiscal measures. There is something in the 2013 Budget for all of us, now and for tomorrow also.

As I said earlier, Guyana's economy is predicted to grow; I used a figure of 5.6 per cent. I also have figures from a Report of the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC). This Report states precisely the same thing. This is a report titled, *Preliminary Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean 2012*. According to the Report, Guyana will see the highest growth...

Mr. Speaker: What year is it, Hon. Member?

Mr. Whittaker: The name of the Report is *Preliminary Overview of Latin America and the Caribbean 2012*. It was written by Alicia Bárcena. According to the Report, Guyana will see the highest growth in the Caribbean during 2013 while most other Caribbean countries will remain fiscally fragile. That is what the Report states and that paints a picture. That says something.

I want to deal with the hinterland region of Region 1 but, before I do that, I want to deal a little bit with the municipalities, the local government organs, for which we, at the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, have responsibility.

Local government is integral to the development of our country. In fact, local government is part of the implementation of the Budget measures that have been set out in the 2013 Budget. At the level of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, we have received \$282 million and this amount of money is made available to 65 Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) at \$3 million each. That is \$195 million. Also, for six municipalities there is a total of \$65 million.

It is not my intention to stand here and say that that allocation is adequate to address all the needs of the various communities. I am not about to say that. But it does allow the local government organs and the people in the various communities across Guyana to have a say and to have an opportunity to be a part of the development that takes place in the various communities across Guyana.

For example, the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) for Regions 1 to 10 have been allocated in excess of \$20 billion and this sum is intended to assist in delivering goods and services across Guyana under the various programmes – education, healthcare, and public works and, in some Regions, agriculture.

We, at the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, have determined that there have been some areas of weakness that we needed to address and, indeed, we have been working feverishly to address those in terms of monitoring of projects that have taken place in the various communities across Guyana, in terms of our solid waste management and, also, in terms of garbage collection and disposal across our country.

At the level of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, our efforts to empower our staff at the Ministry, RDCs, NDCs, and municipalities have been bearing fruit as evident from an examination and review of our 2012 achievements. This shows that 90 per cent of the capital works in the ten Administrative Regions were completed. The RDCs of Regions 1 to 10 were able to successfully implement more than 90 per cent of their work programme for 2012, and this is commendable.

In terms of the NDCs, a tremendous amount of resources have been made available in the area of road maintenance and rehabilitation. Some \$136 million has been spent across the ten Administrative Regions. In the area of bridges, \$11,253,000 has been spent. In the area of

\$34,280,501 has been spent. This is quite apart from other works done by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), the Community Drainage and Irrigation Project (CDIP), the Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary (MMA) project, and other authorities. A total of \$194,883,000 has been spent by NDCs; that is from the subvention made available to them by our Government.

But these local government bodies do not depend on subvention only. These local government organs garner their own resources, primarily from rates and taxes, but also from other sources such as market revenue - abattoir. This additional revenue makes it possible for them to be able to do additional works.

In the municipalities, we have made available a total of \$65 million and this has been used in the municipalities as follows: \$17.5 million on roads; \$19.1 million on drainage; \$24.1 million on asset acquisition such as compactor trucks to deal with the issue of solid waste collection; and \$14.6 million on drainage. From these figures, you can garner, Mr. Speaker, that resources have been made available to a number of these local government organs across the country and they have been able to utilise these resources to bring some improvements, in some small way, in the lives of the people within the communities for which they have responsibility.

We have also been compelled, in our efforts to improve the quality of leadership delivered in the NDCs and the municipalities, to reinvigorate some of these NDCs and municipalities by, in some instances, including public servants and, in other instances, at the request or petition of people within the municipality and NDCs, by way of the Interim Management Committees (IMCs)

During 2013, we will work to empower and build capacity in those local government bodies so that they can be better placed to deliver services. We, at the level of the Ministry, will continue to focus on outreaches, reaching out to the people. We will continue to focus on our record keeping so that there will be greater value for money in terms of what we do in those communities.

I have responsibility for the Regional Democratic Council, Region 1, as the geographic representative. Quite recently, because of the fact that there was an outbreak of diarrhoeal illness in some sections of Region 1, people used that to generalise and say that Region 1 has not been accessing the kind of development that we would have wished them to access. But I am in a position, having lived and worked there for in excess of 30 years, to know what I saw when I

went there 30-odd years ago and to look at the present situation in Region 1 and see the improvements that have been realised over the years.

I do recall going to the Barima/Waini Region, the North West region, as it was then referred to, and finding that most of the communities did not have a primary school. I do recall that. I do recall that there were only two secondary schools in that Region and that the number of students who had access to those two secondary schools was well below 200, and those 200 were drawn from the centre. For the children who resided in the riverain areas, the numbers who had access to secondary education could be counted on both hands. I do recall that.

I do recall that most of the teachers who staffed those schools came from the urban areas because there were not people with the necessary qualifications and training to teach at those schools. I do recall that more than 90 per cent of the head teachers and administrators of those schools came from the urban areas. What is the situation today?

I mention these things because, as I have said, to understand improvement one has to appreciate the depths from which we had to start. Today, there is a situation in which more than 90 per cent of the children of primary school age are attending school because the facilities are available.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, one second. Mr. Prime Minister, could you move for an extension of time for the Hon. Member?

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

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Whittaker: I do recall that over the years we have been building schools where there were none; we have been extending schools where they exist; and we have been rehabilitating schools where they have been rundown, and many of them were rundown buildings. I do recall all of that.

If one goes into any village, even the most remote village – Baramita – one will see a more than significant number of the children in school. I do recall, also, that a significant number of our young people who have gone through our school system have themselves gone on to further

training so that they have become teachers and have returned to the Region to serve. Today, more than 60 per cent of the teachers who teach in the primary schools in Region 1 are from the very communities. Indeed, a significant number of the heads of those schools are from the very communities also.

I recall with pride that the Regional Education Officer (REO) and the District Education Officers (DEOs) are from Region 1. When one looks at what was in 1978 when I, for the first time, went to Region 1, none of these officers hailed from the Region. Therefore, I emphasise the point that all of this was possible because significant attention and resources were given to education because we, as a party and as a Government, always knew that education was very, very important to bringing improvement in the lives of people. For reducing and ultimately removing poverty, education was very, very important.

Today, there is a scenario in Region 1 in which all of the key players in education hail from that Region, where a majority of the heads of the schools hail from that Region, where a significant number of the teachers who are trained hail from that Region, and very importantly, also, where more and more of the children of school age attend school.

I am happy to know that Budget 2012 allowed us to construct a new school in a newly established community called Powaikuru. I am happy to know that Budget 2012 allowed us to make available to the school children school uniforms, juices, biscuits, exercise books and textbooks. I am happy to report that Budget 2012 allowed them to access the Guyana Learning Channel (GLC). I am happy to report that Budget 2012 allowed them to establish learning resource centres in some new areas like Wauna Village, for example. We were able to procure some additional outboard engines and that made it possible to move children in the riverain areas of Aruka and Waini so that they can get secondary education.

I am happy to report, also, that the 2013 Budget will allow us to extend what we have been doing so that, during 2013, additional schools will be built, additional teachers' quarters will be built, and additional teachers would be trained. In other words, additional resources for the improvement of education would be made available in Region 1 in all the various sub-regions.

I will touch a bit on healthcare. Region 1 has 41 health posts, three health centres, three cottage or district hospitals, and one regional hospital. This is the extent to which the Region has

improved over the years. I do recall that in 1978 there were only the Mabaruma Hospital, Kaituma Hospital, and Matthews Ridge Hospital. I do recall that they did not have the kind of staffing and facilities that are there today. Today, there are health facilities in all the villages. There are health workers who have been trained and who operate in all the villages. In fact, for given clusters of health workers and for given clusters of health centres, there are medics who have responsibility.

We have been able to extend the service that we provide and to improve those services so that in the areas of malaria treatment and microscopy, there has been improvement. In fact, that is reflected in the fact that the morbidity and mortality rates have been declining for both of these. We have been able to reach out into the riverain areas with outreach programmes so that we no longer sit and wait for people to come. We have a proactive approach which sees us reaching out into these various areas.

Presently, laboratory and x-ray facilities have been established in the Mabaruma, Moruka, and Port Kaituma Hospitals so that a significant number of people can access those facilities. I would also like to say that residents are able to benefit from some amount of surgery being done in the Region. Patients from all sub-regions are screened at the respective district hospitals by the General Medical Practitioners and then transferred to the Mabaruma Hospital where there are scheduled surgical outreaches during the course of the year. There are surgeries for gallstone, hernia, et cetera.

Added to this is the fact that the immunisation programme continues and it continues to target more and more areas. The fact is that more health care is being made available daily to a greater number of the population over a much wider spread.

In addition, lots of resources have been put into linking communities and that is by way of providing roads and improving on the roads that exist. Today, one can move from Mabaruma and go to Yarikita by road; one can leave Santa Rosa and go to Kwabanna by road; one can leave Port Kaituma and go to Baramita by road. Those were areas that were not accessible many years ago.

Besides the roads, communication by radio sets, cellular phones... Communication has improved tremendously. Recently, I was in the Moruka sub-region and was taken aback by the tremendous

increase in the number of vehicles in terms of minibuses and cars that traverse the roads in that sub-region.

In the Mabaruma sub-region, the same thing is replicated; people are able to move freely because of the improvement in transportation, made possible because of the tremendous amount of resources that we have put into improving the roads that exist in Region 1.

In other infrastructure – electricity – there has been a lot of improvement, not only in terms of electricity supplied by way of generator at Mabaruma, Port Kaituma, Matthews Ridge, and Santa Rosa, but also by way of solar energy. All the titled villages have access to solar energy and I feel very happy going into those villages today and being able to hold meetings with the people in the evenings, being able to converse with them, being able to dialogue with them because of the fact that they are able to stay up a little longer because of these facilities that are there.

The area of computers is another area. [**Mr. B. Williams:** Do you know about Region 9? You just spoke about Region 1.] I am the geographic representative for Region 1; there is a geographic representative for Region 9 who will tell you about that.

Computer technology is now made available in a number of schools, homes, institutions, and, very shortly, the North West Secondary School will be a hub of Information and Technology Communication (ICT) activities on the completion of that building.

2.44 p.m.

I want to deal finally with agriculture. Northwest was at one time the breadbasket of Guyana. I want to say that it is not that the people have given up on agriculture; there has been diversification so that no longer do people merely cultivate ground provision and ginger, but people have gone into other areas. People have gone into pineapple on a large scale because the Amazon Caribbean (AMCAR) Company provides the market for pineapples. People have gone in to crab culture; people have gone into lentils; people have gone into poultry rearing, and this is because of the fact that mining activities have resulted in a larger market and so the demand is out there.

This year, Government has provided a significant amount of funds to continue the drainage and irrigation work in the Aruka and Barima riverine areas. Scores of farmers will be benefiting from

this important activity. Those of you, who are familiar with Region 1 and with the Aruka and Waini Rivers, would know that these areas are subject to periods of flooding from time to time. As such, this investment in drainage in those riverine areas, one square mile in each of the two, will bring appreciable relief to the farmers in those areas.

The budgetary allocations provided by Budget 2013 and other budgets before are a prime source of funding for regions like Region 1. This allows the region to provide more services and opportunities for the people in the region. Presently, those opportunities relate primarily to education, healthcare, agriculture and infrastructure works. However, we are seeing increases over the years in terms of the amount of resources made available. We have also seen increases in terms of the number of persons who can benefit from the resources made available. The people of Region No.1 have therefore been able to improve the quality of their lives. I want to use this opportunity to thank our Government for making this possible.

Mr. Speaker, who will use and benefit from all the investment in people's development reflected in this Budget? Who will benefit from the Lethem to Linden road, the Amaila Falls project, the electricity project and the Kato Secondary School with dorm facilities? Who will benefit from a new Demerara Harbour Bridge? Who will benefit from more investments on our public roads including our four-lane highway? It is the Guyanese people, all of us, on this side and that side of the House. The People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) has stood by its commitment to the Guyanese people. We are not saying that all is well. We are not saying that we have achieved all that there is to be achieved, or that we have attained all the goals that we have set ourselves. What we are saying is what was emphasised before: we have made substantive progress. There is a verifiable plethora of examples and measures of achievement, which I, and other speakers before, have adumbrated. Guyana, under the PPP/C is on an irreversible path to more progress and development. Every major business in Guyana has been showing a profit. Ask Mr. Yesu Persaud from Demerara Bank and ask Banks DIH. I am confident that 2013 will see us continue along the path of the socioeconomic growth and development that we attained in 2012 with an even better performance in 2013 so that come Local Government Elections or National Elections, the Guyanese people will be happy to place those who continue to place obstacles on the path of our progress in the abyss of political history where they rightly belong.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I invite Mr. Christopher Jones to address.

Mr. Jones: *[Stretched and began to sing]* Wide awake...

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Jones, I understand that the Deputy Speaker warned on Friday evening that this is not the Stabroek Market or a rum shop, neither is this a choir hall or a place for singing.

Mr. Jones: So noted Cde. Speaker. I just wanted to assure the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water that we are on this side of the House, wide awake, while the Hon. Minister and his colleagues are asleep and are dreaming. Before I go into my speech proper, I would like to inform the Hon. Member who just spoke that perhaps for the initiatives he placed on record, that his Government has achieved in Region No. 1, he could encourage his Government to do the same in Region No. 5, more particularly at No. 30 Village, Back Street, where the youngsters are asking this Government to initiate a project and they have so dubbed this project the “OLPF Project,” not the project they are aware of but rather the “One Lamp Per Family Project”.

Nin hao zhu xi he Ren min Wei yuan Hui (同志议长，议员的这所房子。). I repeat that, *Nin hao zhu xi he Ren min Wei yuan Hui (同志议长，议员的这所房子。)*.

Yes, Cde. Speaker and Members of this House, I have been taking lessons in what may soon be Guyana’s native tongue.

Mr. Speaker: Let me just remind you though, that the language of this Assembly is always going to be English.

Mr. Jones: Very well, Sir. The translation for that simply means Cde. Speaker, Members of this House. I rise to make my contribution to the 2013 Budget, presented under the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*. It is evident that there is a stark contradiction in what is suggested by the theme of the 2013 Budget and the actions, once again, perpetuated by the PPP/C Government. The mere notion of overcoming challenges together indicates a need for consultation and collective bargaining. It was expected that at the engagement which involved both Government and Opposition, challenges would be discussed and amicable solutions found to those challenges. Certainly, there has not been a real meeting of the minds.

This 2013 Budget, like the Budget of 2012, had no input from the Opposition- the majority- despite the calls made by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. David Granger, to his Excellency President Ramotar on 12th December, 2011. Then again on 13th April, 2012 during the Budget debate the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence made another plea and even before the presentation of this Budget, those calls have been reiterated three times now.

There is the saying, once is an incident, twice is a coincident, but three times is just downright disrespectful. Contemptuous!

Contemptuous to the Constitution of Guyana which clearly articulates in Article 13 that citizens and their organisations should be afforded opportunities to participate, meaningfully, in the decision making processes of the state. Was this done? Contemptuous!

The people of this country spoke loudly through the ballot at the last General and Regional elections. Had this Government moved from their contemptuous ways, we would have seen a 2013 Budget by the people, for the people and for all the people of Guyana.

The Hon. Minister of Natural Recourses, Mr. Robert Persaud, gave his account of former Presidents Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan's move to establish a government of national unity. One wonders; was Minister Persaud present at the Cabinet meeting after the results of the 2011 Elections were declared? Those results provided this country and the People's Progressive Party/Civic with the greatest opportunity of bringing about a government of national unity. Instead of that, what did we get?

“I will be putting together a PPP Government”.

So said now President Donald Ramotar.

And we have seen just that. Throughout 2012 and even now in 2013, inclusivity is just a dream or maybe a nightmare, but you decide. So much so for this Budget theme *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*.

I take this opportunity to indicate that, after thorough scrutiny of the rhetoric by the PPP/C Government, I cannot support this Budget in its entirety. I believe that to do this will be a total betrayal of the Guyanese populace who have entrusted me and every other legislator in this

House with the inescapable responsibility of nation building and the insurance of a good life, not only for them, but for their children and their children's children.

I turn my attention to Region No. 2. This region, as many may know, is dear to me, not only because it is the geographical constituency that I represent, but also because I spent several years there as a child and I take every opportunity to revisit my roots. Region No. 2 is not without its share of challenges. There is great need for improvement in all sectors if those challenges are to be overcome. The problems of unemployment and underemployment, especially among youths, poor health facilities, poor sea defences, schools with inadequate facilities and teaching/learning materials, problems in the agricultural sector, to name a few, are a part of the plight of the residents in the Pomeroun/Supenaam Region.

On 23rd August, 2012 the Essequibo Coast was in a state of unease as inmates of the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) broke out of the facility. To quote the *Kaieteur News* 24th August, 2012: *Unrest turns nasty at NOC*; "Panic continues to grip the Essequibo Coast as inmates of the New Opportunity Corps (NOC) at Onderneeming intensified their rampage, setting fires to a dormitory and other buildings in the compound last night. This was after dozens, broke out from the facility on Wednesday".

In his 2013 Budget speech, the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Dr. Frank Anthony, under whom this facility falls, stated and I quote:

"We continue to work with the children at NOC to give the skills that will make a better life."

One line.

The Hon. Minister somehow conveniently neglected to provide this House with any plausible information as to the state of affairs at the NOC. In the said newspaper interview the Hon. Minister is also quoted as saying:

"A Commission of Inquiry will be set up to examine the circumstances that led to the break out and to make recommendations."

However, even as we await the report of this inquiry it is our hope that these questions will be answered. One; why were armed ranks deployed at the Onderneeming location? Two; was it necessary for live rounds to be used? Three; did the police act in accordance with their standing operation procedures?

In the 6th February, 2013 publication of the *Kaieteur News* an article was carried under the caption *NOC Commission of Inquiry...Final report is to be presented this month end*. That article also quoted the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony, as stating his assurance that “any staffer found guilty of abusing the children when the report is presented this month end, will be dealt with accordingly”. That was 6th February, it is now Monday, 8th April, and we await a report. Perhaps the Hon. Member is wide awake in a dream while the inmates at the NOC are still living a nightmare.

Correct me if I am wrong Comrade Speaker, but is the NOC a correctional institution? What is the purpose of the NOC? If it is not to provide opportunities for rehabilitation of those inmates, then what?

There are countless reports by former inmates of the NOC of the abuse that they have endured during their time at the institution. What is even more alarming is the fact that the care givers at this institution are the persons engaged in those abusive practices.

To detract from Region No. 2 and come closer to home for a bit, we see a similar practice at several correctional and care providing institutions, places like the Palms Geriatric Home, the Sophia Training Centre and the Drop-in Centre - just to name a few - of inmates being abused by those individuals who have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring they are cared for, their rights are upheld and they are well taken care of. How much more must they endure? It is my humble recommendation that the relevant authorities take immediate action to correct those ills at the NOC and all other care giving and rehabilitative institutions so as to ensure that the rights of all Guyanese, whether young, old, or differently-abled, are upheld.

I come back to Region No. 2 under Health. During the presentations, I pleaded with the Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Ramsaran, Minister within the Ministry of Health, Mr. Hamilton, and the two regional Members of Parliament (MP's), Members Baksh and Damon, “tell us something about the Suddie Hospital” and all, to no avail.

On a recent visit one resident of that Region said, and I quote “this is what they call a modern state of the art Hospital... boss man this place is the pearly gates terminal, yuh either going to meet yuh maker or you going to be referred to Georgetown”. And throughout the length and breadth of that Region, I have encountered dozens of residents that share similar views. They talk about receiving what we refer to as General Purpose Tablets (GPT) or General Purpose Liquid (GPL), chlorophan.

The poor and deplorable condition at the Suddie Hospital has further been compounded on April 1, 2013 with Guyana’s latest maternal death. I am certain that the family of Sharon Edwards, 42, of the Amerindian reservation at Capoey stood in wait, hoping to be told that it was all an April fool’s hoax, but sadly, this was not to be. She met her untimely demise after she checked into the Suddie Hospital for what was to be a relatively simple procedure, a C-Section. *[Interruption]* Cde. Speaker, the Members are saying... well, indeed it may not be a simple procedure, but when you have a government that tells you that next to slice bread, the health care system in this country is the best thing ever you have to consider a C-Section in Guyana, a simple exercise. According to the Edwards family, as published in the *Stabroek News* of 3rd April, 2103:

“The staff of the Suddie Hospital should take some responsibility for her death.”

The newspaper also quoted the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Shamdeo Persaud as saying, and I quote,

“The findings on some of the maternal deaths indicated that there was laxity on the part of doctors as patients were not managed according to protocol”.

That interview, of course, was done last year.

The United Nations Resident Representative in Guyana, Ms. Musa, at the launch of the State of the World 2013 Report, told *Stabroek News*, and I quote:

“Maternal mortality is one Millennium Development Goal that seems difficult for this country to achieve by the 2015 deadline”.

The Suddie Hospital in Essequibo is considered to be the pearly gates terminal. Is this the dream that the Hon. Members are talking about? This is a nightmare.

Agriculture - there is a small riverine community along the Essequibo river called Aliko, there are some small farmers who want to expand their operations but they are encountering problems and are calling on the Minister of Agriculture to address them.

According to the March Edition of the *New Nation* which carried an article on the community, I quote:

“Twenty-five year old farmer Mervin Russell is cultivating several acres of bananas. He was preparing to cultivate more but his work is being hampered by, and amongst other things, poor irrigation and not having his own land.”

He told *New Nation* that because the main Aliko irrigation canal was blocked during the failed construction of the koker, he was forced to transport his bananas by land; a system which damaged the fruit forcing him to sell at a reduced rate.

Its efforts like these by young Mervin Russell that should be applauded and encouraged. I hereby call upon the Minister of Agriculture to move with dispatch to bring relief to the residents of Aliko on the Essequibo Coast.

I turn my attention to youth. In his Budget presentation, the Hon. Minister of Finance stated, and I quote:

“During 2012 over 1,700 people benefitted from training under several programmes.

In 2013, over 2,500 young people will benefit from similar training programmes, equipping them with the skills that are needed to enter the world of work and to embark on entrepreneurial ventures of their own.

An amount of \$65.2 million has been allocated to equip and rehabilitate our training programmes.

In addition, a sum of \$200 million has been allocated for youth entrepreneurship and apprenticeship programme targeting hinterland youth.”

Again, in 2013 we see the allocations of resources for training of youths at various centres throughout the country, commendable this is. The lingering question remains, what happens after

these trainings have been completed? We are never told how many of those persons who were graduated from those programmes now enjoy gainful employment. We were never told. For this reason this Government should hang its head in shame, because this Government would have produced the largest number of certified unemployed people in comparison with their Caribbean counterparts.

A further \$300 million for the development and upgrading of sporting facilities and infrastructure countrywide. While we note the allocation of funds to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and we are hesitant to approve these moneys to the said Ministry that is still to this date unable to craft and present a National Youth Policy. What is a National Youth Policy? A national youth policy is not only in itself a document, but a guide that sets out clearly and articulates the developmental initiative for the youths of the country, over a given period. When questioned about the said document in the Ninth Parliament by the Hon. Member Africo Selman about its existence, The Hon. Member Dr. Frank Anthony responded, “we do not have one.” Why should there be allocations by this House to a Ministry that clearly does not have a plan. It would be, to quote the Hon. Member Carl Greenidge “throwing money into a black hole.”

For this reason, I hold the belief that the output of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports should be described as visionless, lacklustre and even laughable to some extent.

However, we are told by the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport that discussions have been concluded with Ms. Ellis of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and her department has agreed to fund a consultant to update the National Youth Policy. Now, after more than a decade of no National Policy and billions of tax payer dollars being expended, we are now going to update what does not exist.

In the area of Sports, the same debacle that plagued youth for more than a decade exists, that is the absence of a clear vision and structure for National Development. Thus, we have seen over the years such projects as, and I brought these to the House last year; the market basketball tarmacs and to date not one single basketball hoop has been erected at any of these facilities. Yet, during that parliament, this House allocated over \$100 million. The market tarmac initiative and upgrading of community grounds, unseen and unheard of. However, the Hon. Member

Neendkumar, last year in his budget presentation, assured me that he has a long list he can make available to the Hon. Member, Cde. Chairman, to date I have not seen such a list.

3.14 p.m.

Yet, we see in the 2013 Budget that there is a request for over \$100 million for the upgrading of grounds. Unfulfilled promises: one such promise came from none other than former President, Dr. Dr. Dr. Dr. Dr. the Hon. Champion of the Earth, Bharat Jagdeo, to members of the Golden Jaguars, Guyana's national football team. He stated to them and I quote:

“If you are successful at making the cut, I will ensure that house lots and other perks are available to you.”

To no avail—the Golden Jaguars are still waiting. [**Member:** Gaff.] The Hon. Member says gaff, I say fluff.

Earlier in the year, I raised a question in this House about Guyana's National Sports Policy, after which, I received this document, albeit at the Cricket Administration Bill Committee level... [**Interruption**] Comrade, there is no need to go further, I will explain in a short bit.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you are right because you will need an extension to continue.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and carried

Mr. Jones: Thank you Cde. Speaker. I have here the sports policy document that I had subsequently received at Cricket Administration Bill Committee level. We see on the front page that it says quite clearly, *A proposal*. This document was drafted in the year 2010. When we turn the first page, it says:

“This document represents recommendations made by a consultant to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport on actions required to modernise sports and physical activities over the next five years.”

This document expires March, 2014 and has not seen the light of day. Why should we allocate moneys to this Ministry? Fluff, Cde. Speaker.

In 2016, as all of us in this House are aware, the Olympics come to the South American Continent. I was hoping and praying that when the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport did his Budget presentation, he would outline to us clearly Guyana's plans to ensure that we have persons participating in those Olympics, but he said not a single word about the Olympics. This, as I have mentioned earlier, shows us clearly that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport does not have a plan for youths in this country.

It is my humble suggestion that in speaking, we refrain from referring to "Youths are the future", lest we continue to think that only at a time hereafter and ignore the present needs and concerns of our youth. Instead, let us in our speeches and actions say that the youth matters and we must prepare them now to assume leadership roles in the not so distant future.

In 2013 thus far, the single most outstanding individual in Guyana, in the area of youth development in my view, is no other than the leader of the majority, the Hon. David Granger. Since the genesis of this year, he has dedicated his efforts and the efforts of the parliamentary majority to the development of Guyana's youth. The Hon. Member has declared that 2013 be the year for Guyana's youth. Focusing on the areas of education, employment and empowerment has made attempts for the Guyana's PPP/C led Government to do same. The PPP/C's Government blatantly disregard to accept this offer. It shows us clearly where their priorities lie.

What is the Guyana dream? I believe the fact to be truth that a picture tells a thousand words. I now hold in my hands the Budget Presentation of the Hon. Minister of Finance. [**Mr. G. Persaud:** You got that?] Got that! Let us examine it. There is an elderly man holding grains of rice in his hand. Like many Guyanese mothers, fathers, teachers, farmers, public servants, this picture seems to suggest the question, "Is this all?"

Let us go to the left of that picture, another gentleman holding sugar; he seems to be saying, "After this Government spent over US\$200 million dollars on the Skeldon Sugar factory this is what it produced, a handful of sugar".

Let us go above that picture. Look at the picture...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have seconds with which to wrap up.

Mr. Jones: Let us go above to that picture. We see a young lady representing thousands of Guyanese, who, almost on a daily basis, she represents the average Guyanese, unemployed public servants. Just to think she is having her blood pressure checked. Indeed it should be noted that the fact that the Hon. Minister of Finance placed this picture on the front page of the Budget, he has clearly indicated that the 2013 Budget is a pressure budget on the Guyanese people.

In conclusion, since we are talking about Youth and Sport let us look at this 2013 Budget presentation as a game of cricket being played in the jungle. Cde. Speaker, you are the umpire. Cde. Speaker I call upon you to inform the Hon. Minister of Finance that this 2013 Budget is a no ball. In fact, I call upon you to ask the Hon. Members of this House to hold some strains, inform the Minister of Finance that the Budget is a no ball and he will have to bat again.

Cde. Speaker, thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Member. Hon. Members, I invite the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs to address the National Assembly.

[Interruption]

[Some Opposition Members withdrew from Chamber.]

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would like to dedicate this presentation of mine today to the memory of colleagues of mine, friends of mine and former Members of our Parliament, Rev. Dr. Dale Bisnauth and Pandit Reepu Daman Persaud.

I would like to also congratulate the Minister of Finance and his team for being so consistent in presenting a budget which I believe, will accomplish the targets that has been set for 2013 in the same way as it did in 2012.

The Hon. Colleague of mine, Minister Irfaan Ali described the Hon. Member, Carl Greenidge's contribution as rambling and what appeared to be feeling his way around in the course of his response to the Hon. Minister of Finance. Soon after Mr. Greenidge's intervention, I had cause to travel into the countryside where I met with some senior citizens, one whose name was Mr. Rampersaud; who in his own style drew a parallel with Mr. Greenidge's presentation, having

regard to what he saw on the television. I was amused with the way in which he drew the parallel or made the analogy. He said that it appears as though Mr. Greenidge was *feeling fowl batty for eggs*; consistent with feeling his way around for an answer to the Minister of Finance. I also met an elderly woman whose name is Kowsilla and who give me her view on Mr. Greenidge's presentation. She said it reminded her of Nat King Cole's famous song, *Rambling Rose* - so much for the opening batsman from the Opposition's benches.

The world in which we live, as I listen to the contributions, it occurred to me that all the political parties in this House are committed to market economy. I have not heard one single statement that departs from the orthodoxy of market economics. We have little or no differences in respect to market economy being the path for the economic development for Guyana. It seems that from all that have been said, we are also all committed to the role and place of the private sector as the engine of growth for the national economy.

We all appear to welcome foreign direct investments, as well as local investments, as well as foreign and local investments in partnerships in our economy. I must confess that it appears to me that we are all committed to the diversification of the agricultural sector. We are all committed to sustainable development of the forestry, mining and of the natural resources of this country. At the international level, there is little that separates the parties in this House, having regards to the end of the cold war; the virtual disappearance of the non-align movement and the emergence of a global village that is driven by the dynamics of globalisation and the emergence of the Brazil, Russia, India, China (BRICS) countries.

If there is any difference between the Government and the Opposition benches, it is obviously at the political level. Politics it is said is a concentrated form of economics. It is to be noted that this is where the crux of the matter is. The question of mutual trust is at the knot of the issue and at the political level. Our differences seem to be more of a tactical and methodological, rather than a strategic approach. We differ here and there on issues of methodology and tactics in respect to the perspectives for the future of Guyana. It is not uncommon that in an emerging democracy, the most democracies that is, this is the norm.

In addition, in most democracies charges about corruption, lack of inclusivity is quite common place and Guyana is no exception. The point however, is that both Government and Opposition need to fight these social maladies, whether they are real or imagined.

From a class perspective, the classes and social strata, which the Opposition represent, are not dissimilar from the classes and social strata represented by the PPP/C. The strata stratification of our country is quite easily discernable and does not require any deep or profound analysis. The nature of the State that currently exists is one that defends and represents the interest of all classes and social strata in our society. That is why we have in the PPP/C patiently and persistently work to establish a national democratic state. This national democratic state that I speak of is reflected in our country's consistent struggle for economic independence against the pitfall of globalisation and marginalisation, existence of the broad democratic rights and freedom of the people and participation in policy making.

The PPP/C, as a political party, represents all social strata and classes in our society: the workers, farmers, progressive business men, progressive intellectual, military and police men and women. The middle strata that we have spoken so much about has a place in this national democratic state and this budget is a good example that demonstrates that this is indeed the popular acclaim by many, that there is something in this budget for everyone. A true reflection of the national democratic pathway the PPP/C started out since 1992.

Mr. Speaker, let me have your attention on the question of public safety and security. Public safety and security is a very broad and all embracing concept. It has many components. It has a component to deal with policy at the level of Cabinet, administrative and executive levels, the legislative parliamentary, the criminal justice system, law enforcement, popular support or the support of the people, international cooperation; all of these make up the various components of what is known as public safety and security. It seems to me that if we are to pluck one of the components out of the concept of public safety and security and dwell dedicatedly and primarily on that, we would have a total misguided picture of the concept and the practice of public safety and security.

The question therefore would be asked, if we are to approach public safety and security from this perspective, is it correct to say we have a break down in law and order in Guyana? Is it correct to

conclude that crime is out of control? These questions may seem rhetorical, but it is important that we delve deeply into these questions in order to find the correct perspective.

If the situation is so bad as is made out by some, then there is a total breakdown in law and order and as the crime situation has spiral out of control the question must therefore be asked, how is there consist growth in the economy? Mr. Speaker, I want to submit respectfully that you should not have economic growth in the sectors where we have seen growth taking place, if there is a total breakdown in law and order.

Moreover, how come the Government was able to provide so much additional resources to the security sector, placing it as number three in order of priority, if the country is doing so badly? For a country's economy to be performing, it must mean that the workers, the farmers and all those who are in the various productive sectors are producing, notwithstanding, the industrial situation in sugar and bad weather. Sugar workers nevertheless delivered a total of 218,000 tonnes of sugar. Rice farmers came out and produced 5% increase in the production of rice. Cattle, pig and sheep rearers produced 14% increase in livestock production. Fishermen produced 15.5% increase in fish. The workers in the mining and quarry industry produced 14.8% more than they did last year. The pork knockers, the small and medium scale miners produced a record 20.8% production in gold, higher than 2012. The workers in the factories, particular in the manufacturing sector produced 2.4% more of manufactured goods. Finally, buyers and sellers in commerce and in the consumer industry, the wholesale and retail trade, grew by 6.7%.

What do these things mean? In a country where there is no law and order; in a country where crime has spiral out of control, there is no way that the workers, the farmers, the fishermen, the miners and the pork knockers would have come out in such numbers to produce. It shows that they have a tremendous sense of safety and security of their presence. I would argue that if the worker, the farmers and the fishermen were living in fear of their lives; were living in fear in respect to their property, we would never have had such significant increases in these productive sectors because for these sectors to grow it means that the people are coming out and producing in their numbers.

I used that argument to show that even in respect of investments, when persons invest in this country, whether local or foreign, it is a sign of confidence in the economy. I believe therefore

that it is from that perspective we must place our analysis or we must make our analysis as regards the public safety and security. Whether by extricating just one aspect of the many components and dwelling only on crime, we can make the true analysis and draw the true picture.

I believe that we have to be careful and draw the right balance between law enforcement and human rights. This critical balance is to be found first and foremost in our Constitutional arrangements, in the Laws of Guyana and in the expressions of governance by the Executive on a day to day basis, as regards the lives of our people. I would like to submit that any radical shift in this balance between law enforcements and the fundamental rights of the people can result in on the one hand, the trampling on the rights of the people and on the other, abuses by law enforcement against the people. This is indeed a delicate balance which those who holds the reins of power have to ensure. Sometimes I fear, in the limited experiences I have had in the security sector, that if we were to disrupt this delicate balance between enforcing the law and upholding the democratic and human rights of the people, which I glean is what I am hearing from the Opposition benches, that we may well return to a situation where the National Security Act and many other similar draconian legislation that was passed in this House, to put greater emphasis on law enforcement rather than greater emphasis on observing the human, democratic, civil and political rights of the people.

The PPP/C has always vigorously sought to maintain this delicate balance between these two fundamental, but critical governance issues. Fighting crime is but one expression of public safety and security.

3.44 p.m.

This is just but one component of a much larger holistic framework in which we must operate. When the crime fighting component is plucked, for whatever reason, from the total picture we will obviously end up with a distorted picture of the true state of affairs in our country. Crime fighting cannot stand alone. It cannot be the only factor to determine whether public safety and security is in good hands. We need to address the totality of the Government's effectiveness in maintaining public safety and security.

When I listen or read Opposition spokesmen and women on the crime situation, I have to wonder which country they are talking about, which country they are referring to, but I also worry, as I said. Why? Because while I accept that there must always be room for improvement, and there will always be room for improvement in the public safety and the security situation. While there is room for improvement we need to be careful that in seeking to improve the public safety and security architecture in our country we do not adopt measures that are reminiscent of the 1977 to 1982 period in our country where we saw certain measures being implemented such as the National Security Act, the Preventative Detention Act and where persons are kept for three months without trial, tried by a tribunal and the continued detention of persons being extended for another three months.

That is why I warned that we need to be careful when – someone said “tinkering” – trying to do better than others in the area of public safety and security. Bringing crime under control is not an easy task. I had asked for all of the Hansard to be sent to my office over a period of time, but regrettably, as you would recall, there were certain Hansard over a period of time that could not be found and so if I am accused of leaving out a particular chapter in our history it is because the records are not available. I have with me here a record of the Parliamentary debates of 1981. The Minister of Home Affairs at that time was the Hon. Mr. Stanley Moore. In the course of that debate our parliamentary spokes person for Home Affairs at the time, Mr. Clinton Collymore, had this to say:

“I will like to bring to the Minister’s attention that robberies appear to be very prevalent and according to last year’s report, which was submitted to this Assembly, it seems as though the vast majority of robberies are committed in urban areas. It means that the Police Force should be more equipped and more alert in urban areas. The figures show that 88.4% of robberies are committed in these urban areas. We also note and we acknowledge that the police have been doing something because we note that the bandits their base of operation to rural areas.”

Now Mr. Moore, in his capacity as the Minister of Home Affairs had this to say:

“It would be puerile, [I am quoting here] it would be simplistic, it would be naive to assume that even with the most vigilant and resourceful Police Force in the world we

would eliminate crime, as my friend on the other side is attempting to suggest. In the wealthiest countries in the world, the most powerful nations on earth, there is crime and the police can do no more than to contain crime to acceptable limits. Some of the rascals will always slip through.”

He went on to say, I quote:

“Crime prevention committees do exist. There was one which the Commissioner and I met on the West Coast of Demerara...”

He went on, I paraphrase what he said. He wanted to invite the people and in this presentation he invited the people, at that time, to form themselves into Crime Prevention Committees to help the police fight crime. The police, obviously, since those days could not do it alone and there is not going to be any time when they can do it alone. It was in that epoch and so it will be in any other epoch.

I brought with me some newspapers and in order to try to be objective I brought not only the state-owned Chronicle Newspaper. I believe that the people of our country feel safe and secure because they did not have a feeling of safety and security in what I would refer to now; it would hardly be the case. I refer to the *Kaieteur News* of Sunday, 24th February, where it reads:

“2013, another successful year for Mashramani in Guyana.”

Thousands of people were out on the streets. *Guyana Times* says:

“Thousands celebrate Guyana’s rich cultural diversity.”

“Essequibians celebrate Mash in grand style.”

Then we come to the Phagwah celebrations:

“Thousands celebrate Phagwah.”

Including the President and the Opposition Leader. All the newspapers are screaming headlines of the thousands who came out on the streets to celebrate Phagwah.

Then we come to the Easter celebrations:

“Thousands at No. 63 Beach on Easter Monday.”

“Thousands at East and West Coast Demerara.”

“Bartica Regatta 2013 rocked.”

“Thousands celebrate Easter...”

The point that I am making here, that which I am respectfully submitting, is if this beloved country of ours had a situation that is constantly being described by the Opposition and some sections of the media that law and order has totally disintegrated and that crime has spiralled out of control, I respectfully submit that we would not have seen thousands of people leaving their homes, leaving the comfort of their homes, travelling far distances, leaving their homes for days and nights...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you allotted time has elapsed, but you are entitled to an extension if it is made on your behalf.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Members, I need to hear the Prime Minister move the motion.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am talking about people. I am not talking about people who sit in their offices and formulate policies and issue press releases. I am talking about people coming out in their numbers and feeling safe; so much for that.

I have heard a lot about this Government not involving others from an inclusive point of view in consultations. I have a long list here but in view of the time being limited i would only refer to a few. Consultation for us is not only around the time when the budget is being prepared. Consultation for us is not only at a time when we are having elections. Consultation goes on 365 days per year for the PPP/C Administration and our Party.

The Ministry of health initiated public consultations on a number of matters relative to that Ministry – national consultations on national health and consultations on the strategy as well. The Prime Minister initiated consultations also on the workers of the Trade Unions and the Marriot Hotel, also on the electricity sector. Minister Pauline Campbell-Sukhai initiated consultations in a number of areas as well. Minister Irfaan Ali initiated consultations on the number of strategic plans on standards and the housing policy and so the list goes on. Our colleague, Minister in the Ministry of Finance, initiated a consultation in Plaisance the other day and, notwithstanding the difficulties, the fact of the matter is he went there to consult with the people.

We have no difficulty in taking our “licks”. We have no difficulty in facing the wrath of the people. We have no difficulty in correcting errors that we make from time to time but the fact of the matter is that we consult.

I hear constantly reference being made to the performance in the Home Affair Sector but let me quickly refer to what we have done between 2006 and the current. Never in the history of this country has the security sector undergone such transformative processes; never.

The institutional modernisation of the Ministry of Home Affairs: When I went to the Ministry of Home Affairs, at the Ministry, itself, there were 12 staff members, those were who were put there for me to work with. The membership of the staff rose from 12 to 127; 118 additional staff members to the Ministry of Home Affairs. These are not people that are sitting down and drinking scotch. These are people who are working.

We have established the Task Force on Narcotics and Illegal Fire Arms, a Task Force on Smuggling and Contraband. We have established a security arrangement for the Cheddi Jagan and Ogle Airports. We have established a crime observatory. We have even gone so far as to establish a stray catchers’ programme, where so far we have impounded over 2,817 animals at police pounds so for those who think that this is a joke it is not. It is very effective. We are moving to computerise to General Register Office and in the not too distant future we will be producing birth certificates electronically. We have established in the Ministry a task force on the trafficking of persons. We have adopted an anti-piracy policy. We are now training traffic wardens. We have expanded neighbourhood police we have expanded the ranks of community

policing. We have established a Firearms License Approval Board. We have provided skills training for 1,377 young people with 24 skills. We have introduced the Electronic Crime Reporting System where persons using Black Berry Messenger (BBM), Facebook and the internet can report crimes. We have introduced a hotline. We have launched a campaign against noise nuisance and, so far, between 2008 and 2013, 465 cases have been prosecuted in the courts. We will soon launch an innovative website called *I Paid a Bribe* where persons who paid a bribe would be able, on the basis of anonymity, to report this on the website. We have begun the formulation of another drug strategy master plan. We are soon to complete the state of the art forensic laboratory and we will soon establish 10 House of Justices across the country. Soon we will establish the National Computer Incident Response team at the Ministry. The list goes on, simply to say that never in the history of the Ministry of Home Affairs...

Talk about incompetence. Call this “incompetence” and I will call “competence” by something else. Never in the history of the Ministry of Home Affairs, never in the history of the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Prison Service, not the Guyana Fire Service...

Let me quickly say to Mr. Felix, the Hon. Member, who spoke about the Guyana Fire Service. The Guyana Fire Service, when the PPP/C came to office in 1992, had four fire tenders, two pickup trucks. There were only four fire stations and there were 184 men out of an establishment of 368. What do we have now, Mr. Felix, Hon. Member? We have 15 fire stations. We have, instead of four tenders we have 44 fire tenders. We now have Guyana Fire Service Outstations at Mahdia, Lethem, Kwakwani and Port Kaituma. The fixed establishment of the Guyana Fire Service is now 411.

These are significant achievement that cannot be ignored or cannot be wished away. Over the last eight years of the PNC, from 1985 to 1992, they spent \$2.2 billion on the security sector. The first eight years of the PPP/C we spent \$14.8 billion on the security sector; from \$2.2 billion to \$14.8 billion. Now there are some who say that we must not talk about big numbers and that this is fluff but I want to say that, fluff or no fluff, this is real money. Were we to spend, were we not to spend, it would still be “damned if you do, damned if you don’t”.

Mr. Felix made mention and I think that this was a very divisive statement that was made and I have to correct it for the record... The Hon. Member sought to insert or create division between

the Guyana Police Force and community policing when he said that we are purchasing more and more vehicles for community policing to the disadvantage of the Guyana Police Force. This is a blatant untruth. We have indeed been procuring vehicles and equipment for the community policing but by no stretch of imagination, unless we want to make political propaganda, but the political propaganda would fall on its face because the facts attest differently because when one looks at the money spent for the procurement of police vehicles over the years, one will find that these allocations have been increasing significantly over the years. One pickup truck and a bus for the Police Force cost \$12 million and for the entire community policing we would traditionally allocate between \$18 million to \$19 million.

The Opposition Leader, the Hon. Member, has now shifted his position from casting me as the rogue in four one-act plays. The first play had to do with the allegation that \$10 million could not be accounted for at the Ministry of Home Affairs for moneys spent by the police for elections. The Auditor General carried out a report and was able to show that all of the moneys were accounted for. That was the first salvo that was fired at the credibility of the sitting Minister of Home Affairs; accusing him of misappropriating \$10 million. The next salvo that was fired had to do with the events at Linden, alleging that I was directly involved in this matter. In the same way when the Hon. Member, Mr. Neendkumar, made a statement about the involvement and I think the year before the Hon. Member from Berbice made a statement, of either the People's National Congress (PNC) or Mr. Granger in the events that led to the shooting of three persons in Berbice the Hon. Member, Mr. Granger got up and distanced himself from it by referring to a report that was published having investigated the matter. I think that it is fair game for me to refer to the report that was published by the Commission of Inquiry (COI) exonerating me from that matter. If the Hon. Member, Mr. Granger, could seek refuge in that report, exonerating himself and his Party from that matter, i believe that in all fairness and honesty, I should refer to the COI report exonerating me from that incident.

Then came the allegation or the attempt to stop me from speaking in this National Assembly. The court pronounced on the...

Mr. Speaker: Time is of the essence here, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Rohee: The court pronounced on the matter and the Speaker of the National Assembly pronounced on the matter. This is the first budget debate that is taking place since those sordid occasions. I wish to rest my case and simply to say as I quote from I think it was in an Indian movie called Sholay which is associated with the celebration of Phagwah where one friend tells the other that if he wants to be an honourable man he has to pay a price. That price, I am prepared to pay. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Members, it is 4.10 p.m. It is a convenient time for us to take the suspension so we will suspend for one hour and resume at 5.10 p.m. at which time the Hon. Member, Mr. Nagamootoo will address the House.

Sitting suspended at 4.11 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I now invite the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo to address the Assembly now on Budget 2013.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is a truism that “man cannot live by bread alone”. When young Minister Dr. Frank Anthony spoke, he took us momentarily to a celestial plane where our Guyanese civilisation could bask in reflective glory in the finest tradition of literature and art. His was a breath of fresh air. I felt a soothing balm of hope that we could all discover our better angels, and that we could, in our lifetime, show “what Guyana sons and daughters can be”.

It is a lofty dream to enrich our civilisation with cultural and intellectual values, whilst we pursue economic security. But, in this land of *cuss-down* politics, our masters “watch us sleep and aim at our dreams”, to paraphrase our national poet, Martin Carter. Our dreams could soon become a nightmare if this Government does not come off the cliff of delusion and bombastic boasts that Guyana has arrived; that Guyana is the land of milk and honey. Instead, we should wake up to the opportunity for dialogue and reconciliation and rescue our Guyana from impending danger.

This budget by itself will not take us to the Promised Land, though, indeed, it is being touted as a massive *go-dy* budget of \$208.8 billion and deceptively it paints subliminally the image of Guyana as an Asian tiger or jaguar.

Look at the top, at the far left of the cover page of the budget speech, ironically and cynically, we see, what it appears to be, two cats. I cannot say “fat cats”, Sir, because you have restrained me from saying that. They appear to be prime, plump, perhaps pretty cats, proverbially the PPP/C. But, look again, there can be seen the sad, haunting, melancholic look on the face of a schoolgirl, the yellow-sand, Fip Motilall-like, road to nowhere, a disabled rig in which its only ray of light seems to be coming from the bottom of the disabled structure and the calloused hands of our glorious rice farmer, and we know we are back in Guyana.

Indeed, this minority PPP/C Government has tailored the budget to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the parasitic and bureaucratic class. In defiance of this National Assembly, it has revised upwards and restored the cuts made for contracted employees, many of whom are the super-salaried, million and multi-million dollar cats on sinecure employment. Last year, they got an additional \$100 million. This year, Government has up the lottery for contracted employees to \$7.8 billion. The number of PPP/C activists on Office of the President payroll has certainly increased. Defiance is compounded with insults in this National Assembly, as cuts for the PPP/C propaganda machines, GINA and NCN, have not only been restored, but increased. A gauntlet of arrogance and defiance has been thrown into these hallowed halls of the National Assembly. This type of reckless use of our people’s money has characterised all post-Jagan PPP/C Governments. They have spent money as if it were cheap as *bussie* (rice husks).

In the past 13 years between 2000 and 2013, the PPP/C Government proposed budget allocations amounting to one trillion \$588 billion - over one and a half trillion dollars. Assuming we have a dollar bill measuring six inches – they have gone away with that - and given that the circumference of our earth is 1.6 billion inches, the budget sums, dollar-on-dollar, would wrap the circumference of the earth some 6,000 times.

What have we to show for this colossal amount? Today, the PPP/C comes here and boasts that we are fixing old roads and building new ones; we are breaking old bridges and making new ones; we are scrapping the new airport and building a newer one; we are fixing our broken down sugar industry; we are fixing the failed electricity system. This PPP is a Government of *we bruk am; we fix am*.

There is no doubt that our growth rate has been positive over the years, an averaged above 4% annually. I wish I could say the same about budgetary allocations. In the past six years, between 2007 and 2012, total budgetary allocations were \$825 billion as compared with \$471 billion in the previous six-year, 2001-2006 inclusive. Those allocations increased by \$373 billion or by 126%. The least that could be expected was a reasonable return for the people's moneys and a 4% cent growth could, dollar for dollar, be a very modest, if not disappointing return.

This year, it is asking for \$208.8 billion, \$85 billion of which would be for new projects, without addressing concerns of transparency and accountability. The Alliance For Change (AFC) is not against projects, but it needs to see the feasibility studies, and to know if these projects are the best alternative use for our money.

We have to ask the hard questions: Do we need a new airport costing \$30 billion when only 12 years ago we modernised the existing airport at a cost of \$6 billion? Should our Government not try to get reliable and affordable airline services before pouring billions into a new airport? With Delta going soon, air transport would be a nightmare. Price gouging has started. Even with a new airport, not having a viable aviation plan, Timehri will continue to be an airline cemetery – Universal, Travel Span, Red Jet, Easy-Jet and soon Delta.

It is evident that the post-Jagan PPP/C Governments lack vision, proper planning, and has abandoned all claims to have really sustainable development strategy. The Government has plans that are eclectic, that shift and change, to suit prevailing opportunistic needs for enrichment of a few.

The Government wants support for its spending spree but has failed to deal effectively with corruption. It has not addressed the vexed issues of putting surpluses from National Industrial & Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL), Lotto Fund and Wildlife Fund, and moneys from dead bank accounts, into the revenue stream.

The good Bishop, the Hon. Bishop, spoke about a code of conduct, Bishop Edghill, for Ministers. Where is this code? I call for appointment of a Chairman of the Integrity Commission, and for the secretariat to be fully staffed and equipped to conduct investigation into the assets of all office holders. Let us make public these assets. A code not enforceable in law, it cannot work. It is a recipe for a massive cover-up. We call for the composition of the public Procurement

Commission, for the appointment of an Ombudsman, for confirmed appointments to the posts of Chancellor of the Judiciary, Chief Justice and Commissioner of Police.

We need also to implement the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Act and to give teeth to the toothless poodle styled the Intelligence Unit. Not a soul has been investigated, much less prosecuted, for money laundering and Guyana is wrongly being seen as a haven for money launderers, drugs trafficker, and so on.

Minister Ali invited us to dream, but he ought to have known that the sad story of failure to realise the Guyana dream has to do with lack of accountability, lack of transparency and poor governance practices. Professor Clive Thomas in his article titled, “Uncertainty and Risk: Guyana’s Troubled Projects”, *Stabroek News*, March 24, 2013, had this to say. He identified as reasons for the failures:

“...lack of systematic planning, poor project selection and design; even poorer execution and implementation; as well as weak monitoring and lack of transparency”,

He added waste, corruption and mismanagement.

This PPP/C Government has stolen the thunder of achievement in the traditional private sector and re-packaged it as its own progress and development. It claimed credit for the hard-working rice farmers and it snatched the golden trophy from the hands of the miners. We, on this side of the House, salute our miners and rice farmers and assure them of our support for their investment, risk and sacrifices.

The PPP/C Government should instead bark in its own yard. The State and governmental sectors are poised on the brink of financial disaster. Instead of progress, many public corporations are a liability to the people, estimated at some US\$281,794..., estimated at roughly \$57.2 billion last year. I give the figure \$57,204,276,395. These include the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL). The Member will see the total. The couple over the road where I work...

Ms. Teixeira: I would appreciate your assistance in asking the Hon. Member to quote the source of those very interesting figures that he produced.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, it is not the practice but the requirement that we cite the sources of our material. However, Members have, in the past, provided their sources, if not immediately but they have. Only recently Mr. Greenidge had supplied some sources to me. If the sources are available... If not immediately, it is to have an undertaking that they will be available...

Mr. Nagamootoo: I will make an undertaking to produce the source. The source is an official source. They are just trying to take away my time. I was saying that the couple...

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, even if the Hon. Member is unable, at the current time, to provide the source, would he be kind enough, because I think he repeated and corrected the number on a few occasions, to repeat what exactly it is that he is describing and what the amount concerned is? Would he indicate when the source will be supplied?

Mr. Speaker: You are asking the Member to repeat what was being said?

Hon. Members (Government): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: That is fair

Mr. Nagamootoo: The amount is \$57 billion [Mr. Nandlall: You do not even have a good track record.] Yes, I know I do not have a good track record. [Dr. Singh: What is it?] It is G\$57.2 billion and that is the public corporation liability.

We have here a classical example of a liability...

Dr. Singh: I do not...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Member is quoting some figures. He is going to, as a Member of Parliament, provide them and that is good enough for the Chair.

Dr. Singh: May I ask, Sir, with your permission, when he will supply us with the source?

Mr. Speaker: I will undertake that. Whenever Members from both sides, but particularly from the Government side, have undertaken, sometimes they are asked within a reasonable time. If the Member is prepared to give that now he may, but I am not making it compulsory for him to give that now but within a reasonable time, I believe, to be within 48 to 72 hours.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Sir, I think I am striking the bullseye and I know they are filibustering me here.

Right over from my chambers there is a couple selling water coconuts. They bring their coconut all the way from Charity but they make a profit. On the side of the road, there is a girl who sells sweets and aerated drinks off an old fridge, she makes a profit. GPL is a State Corporation... That is what I am talking about...

Mr. Speaker: One second Mr. Nagamootoo. I think what we are contending with now is when you might be in a position to supply the sources of some of your... If not immediately, it is if you can give us an idea.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I will supply the information tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: That is more than adequate, I believe.

Mr. Nagamootoo: They are here. These are Government's figures. This is the only giant monopoly owned and run by the State and this State has to guarantee loans to the GPL, amounting to \$23 billion for infrastructural works and equipment. [An Hon. Member (Government): Black hole.] Now this is throwing water on duck's back. GPL is a huge - I repeat what my learned friend had said on this side - black hole. It is inefficient; it mismanages; it wastes and it squanders.

Last year, taxpayers gave GPL a bail out of \$6 billion. I understand Government Members are against the words "bail out". This year the bailout will be an additional \$11.2 billion and still no one can guarantee us that there will be light at the end of the dark tunnel. The PPP/C comes here and threatens us that if we do not pay up, consumers have to pay hike in electricity tariff. This is shotgun, economic blackmail and banditry to come and try to intimidate this National Assembly that it must give or else it will penalise the people, but this is a state-run corporation. It not rice; it is not mining, but the Government claims credit for that. It should equally claim, with fervour, credit for the failures.

Workers told me, in Bath, that I should not call it GuySuCo. It is the *Guyana Funded Corporation (GuyfuCo)*. This Government has also guaranteed loans for modernisation and

cogeneration in the tune of \$29 billion. This, I believe, forms part of the estimated \$47 billion that it had spent in support of recapitalisation.

Last year, the Minister promised that Skeldon factory would run at full capacity by the second crop of last year - I hope the Minister does not ask me for the source for that too - yet the Skeldon factory is still limping. According to some estimates the factory was grinding 196 tons of cane an hour, instead of 350 tons. It takes Skeldon factory 16.29 tons of cane to make a ton of sugar, whilst Albion takes 10.52 tons. Instead of 100,000 tons, Skeldon factory produced 33,309 tons of sugar as compared to Albion with 54,022 tons. This is a factory into which we pour the taxpayers money, a public entity enterprise that could not even perform as well as Albion that has been there for a dog's age. In all, 218,069 tons were produced which was the lowest in 20 years. The Government Members blame the weather and they blame the sugar workers and then when they are ready they also blame the union.

It is to take another state-run entity, the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU). Now there are all of these radio, cable and television frequencies which are going out and we find it very strange that the NFMU will be spending \$1.9 million this year. In the year 2010, it spent \$351 million and \$604 million last year. We want to know why it is that, if the revenue stream of the NFMU is looked, it is projecting a loss in its operation. Perhaps, Government will bail it out in the tune \$1.5 million.

We know that it pays rates and taxes for the use of mass, but I do not understand why this year we are spending \$944 million to do subvention and rates and taxes when the private sector seems to have now taken over the entire spectrum. Last year we questioned where the money went - \$500 million. Now we find that operating expenses for the NFMU went from \$18 million in the year 2010 to \$21 million in the year 2012. This year it will be \$826 million. We want some explanation as to why we are pouring money in these state-operated and State institutions?

Guyana Geology and Mines Commission is another amazing institution that is sitting on a gold mine. Yet this gold mine, gold which accounts for one-third of our GDP, the single most precious asset about which this Government boasts, private sector asset, we find that this year GGMC is projecting a loss. We exported \$716.9 million in gold, so we cannot see why an operation dealing with the gold sector, providing services for which it charges, is making a loss.

It is the same with the Guyana Gold Board, again sitting on the gold mine. This year it is expected to make revenues of \$102.5 million, but it would spend nearly \$100 million. If a mauby shop can make some profits, why is it that with the gold prices going up and declarations higher...? In fact, it is not even the declaration, but those that escape the net seem to give an indication of US\$11.5 million gold, in Curacao, off of a boat emanating from Guyana. We seem to know that there is a preponderance of gold and the Guyana Gold Board is making \$3 million profit, I was told, this year.

The Guyana Lands and Survey Commission is another state entity that should have been making much more than it is making, but what does it do? It brings in revenue, in terms of state lands, and collects rents and fees in the amount of \$462 million but, sadly to say, it spends all out on expenses. Why is the State sector under this Government not performing? Is it because of bureaucratic lethargy? Or is it because of malaise? Is it because of paralysis? Yet, we talk about the rise in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

We have a similar sad story of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport. We are told about all of the flights that are coming in. We are even told by Minister Ali that we are having re-migration in Guyana. I think he is confusing re-migration with the deportees. We had, last year, 705 deportees who came from North America and the Caribbean. Here is it that there is the Cheddi Jagan International Airport which is going to make, this year, \$840 million but the costs of the service at the airport would be \$739 million. Last year it made \$241 million. Why is it projecting a \$100 million this year when we are saying that more traffic is coming Guyana's way? What is happening here? It makes a large sum of money – 15% air tax on tickets, \$4,000 for each passenger going out, landing fees and even airlines charges.

The Demerara Harbour Bridge is another of these entities. It is providing a service, but that is a monopoly. There is no rival to the Demerara Harbour Bridge. Why should this bridge be making losses? That is a viable business. A man has a rig shop and he makes a profit. We have a bridge with thousands of commuters using it and still it is hardly making anything. The Government, from taxpayers' money, has to subsidise that bridge. This year it is voted \$300 million dollars for that bridge. Why, if it is so concerned about the people, it does not give \$150 million for the Berbice Bridge crossing? Why does it want with one hand to give and the other hand to penalise?

It has to be equitable and fair-minded and just. It you cannot have solicitation for one bridge and have penalty for the next.

The Transport and Harbours Department, we know, just had some boats, roll-on, roll-off. We know that they are new boats but yet for all when one looks at the budget there is nothing there that says the revenues profit margin but it collects fees for the boats, and so on.

I now come to the next sector, the State. These are institutions connected with the State. Most of them are staffed and the boards have selected people by the ruling party in Government.

The Central Housing and Planning Authority: The Minister has talked about all of those house lots that are being giving away and yet it gets \$2.2 million from operations. It is making money but where has all of the moneys gone for the land sold. Sugar workers are paying \$700 000 per lot. We say that the state sector has to be the shining example of financial rectitude, fiscal management, efficient organisation, profitability and so on. [Mr. G. Persaud: We agree.] Yes, but as the saying goes *a fish rots from its head*.

Apart from gold, rice and sugar remain our raw material primary producing tri-sector and keep our GDP afloat, one of our bigger is Guyanese. The Minister did not tell us that. We earn consistently, over \$400 million, from this commodity which helps us with the favourable balance of payments - remittances. Remittances from Guyanese in the diaspora accounted for US\$469.3 million an increase by 13.9%. [Mr. G. Persaud: It is right here in the budget speech.] It was mentioned in the budget speech but it was not mentioned that it was coming from the exportation of Guyanese, our people who go there, abroad, to send money back.

5.50 p.m.

This is part of the story that when they boast about GDP and favourable balance of payments we must talk about the sources from which the revenue is coming to make this GDP floats.

All though there is gold price, there was Hugo Chavez, God bless his soul, and our diaspora, to thank for our good luck last year. We should be advised that unless we have new markets, price sustainability and job security of Guyanese in the diaspora, we cannot be guaranteed that gold, rice and remittances would remain stable indicators of our GDP.

The most dastardly example of the rot I spoke about in the year 2011 has to do with radio frequencies to cronies of the regime, dealing with assets. It is clear that the allocations were lawless and discriminatory and the process was not transparent. The Broadcasting Bill was passed in this National Assembly on the 28th of July, 2011, and assented to in September, 2011. Then there was subsequently 9/11. President Jagdeo distributed the frequencies days before the November, 2011 Elections. Did the Members figure that they were going to lose the elections, and lose the Government, and decided that they were going to grab as much as they could at the last moment? Was that the motivation?

One recipient, Telcor & Cultural Broadcasting Inc. was granted five radio frequencies in November, 2011. New Guyana Company Ltd., publishers of *Mirror* newspapers, got five frequencies. It is the company in which I worked for over 22 years. It never paid me a gratuity. My National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contribution was huffed. It was broken. The press was non-functional. The *Mirror* newspaper has been outsourced for printing by *Guyana Times*, by Mr. Ramroop, the former President's friend and the printery has been given to Ed Ahmad, either sold or rented, a convicted felon in the United States of America, another friend of Mr. Jagdeo. What a shame!

The New Guyana Company Ltd. was first registered in 1959 and all the directors, I have their names, are deceased. The only two names, when I have been at the *Mirror* newspaper company, that are still associated with it, at that time, were one Mr. Harripersaud and the other Mr. Donald Ramotar, the secretary of that company. We will investigate more and we will see where this incestuousness has led us.

In addition, we know it is public knowledge, but I want to place in the record the multiple frequencies that have been given to other persons who, it is claimed, to be all friends of the former President, Mr. Jagdeo. Cable licences were also given out, and except for a few, all the recipients - I am going to skip the notes of calling names because I still respect some people - are connected with the PPP/C, are themselves high state officials, and are associated with Government leaders as comrades, friends and relatives.

In all these allocations, there is a serious conflict of interest. It is disgraceful and scandalous. This is naked nepotism. These frequencies ought to be withdrawn immediately. There will be no compromise on this matter - none at all.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you proceed, your time has elapsed. You will need to have a motion for an extension.

Mr. Ramjattan: Hon. Speaker, I move that he be granted 15 minutes to conclude.

Ms. Shadick: It is five minutes.

Mrs. Backer: No.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear Mr. Ramjattan.

Mr. Ramjattan: It is that he be granted 10 minutes to continue.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nagamootoo, it is to conclude.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Sir, I would not refer therefore to what you have said, “the decency, commonsense and good governance dictate the reversal of the allocations”, in the March 24, 2013, edition of *Stabroek News*.

I just want to say that the spectrum is our limited national resource, and this is a serious business, a public property. It could be a great money earner. It must not be abused or given away willy-nilly. In India, auction of wireless broadband brought in US\$12 billion in the year 2010. Before that, in the year 2008, 2G spectrum frequency allocation for mobile telephone was handed out to friends in a massive scam. Big people went to jail. The *Stabroek News* on the 2nd of April, 2013 reported that the Supreme Court of India declared that the allocations were unconstitutional and arbitrary and quashed all the 122 licences issued in 2008. The court found that the Minister “had gifted away an important national asset”. The scam of India is now haunting Guyana.

Last year when I raised the debt sustainability issue in the National Assembly, albeit on the nominal Guyana dollar debt being the biggest ever in the history of post colonial Guyana, all hell

broke loose. The simple point that I made was that the nominal Guyana dollar debt was bigger than it was in the PNC days.

On the 30th of September, 1992, the total debt stood at G\$263,086.5 million. At 31st of December, 2011, it stood at \$350.5 billion. By March 31, 2012, it jumped to \$355.5 billion. Those figures were provided by the Minister of Finance himself so he cannot accuse me of mathematical default on this occasion. I feel vindicated as I stand here today. I think the man in the street would be asking really who is civilised and who is the...

This year, the debt external debt alone was placed at US\$1.4 billion or more than \$280 billion. No figures were given for domestic debt. I combed these, I did not see them, but I am informed that it was in June, 2012 some \$93 billion which could reach as much as \$100 billion. I am hoping the Minister would contradict me.

The Minister of Finance has since issued a rejoinder that the traditional measure of debt is the debt to GDP ratio and assured that our national debt is sustainable. This Government has a knee-jerk reaction to the debt issue - sorry to say that - and discounts all notion that we could face the risk of debt distress. But we must take timely warning.

David Jessop, Executive Director of the Caribbean Council, in an article, "Lessons for Caribbean from Europe Debt Crisis" wrote, *Sunday Stabroek*, March 31, 2013:

"The Caribbean is, of course, not Cyprus, but there are worrying signs that the indebtedness of an increasing number of Caribbean nations is now reaching crisis proportions... Government debt in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU) averaged 94 % of GDP last year, putting it as Moody's stated 'on par with distressed Euro area sovereigns'".

Moody is the United States of America credit rating agency. Moody's Investor Services, that is what it is called, which has warned about Grenada's current distress resulting in World Bank suspending disbursements to Grenada, and Taiwan has judgement against Grenada for millions of US dollars.

Alarm bells are ringing for tourist destinations, and this will be copied here. We are talking about Marriot Hotel; we are talking about the new airport and tourist destinations with blue waters,

white sands such as such as St. Kitts-Nevis, Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Dominica which have resorted to emergency credit facilities from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In Guyana, external debt stood in the year 2012 at \$1.2 billion, which was 16% more than in the 2011. That debt was 47% of GDP. Whilst no ratio was given in this budget, it is estimated that at over 70%, and climbing. The last report I have seen was from Dr. Clive Thomas quoting some officials statistics in 24th February, 2013 when he stated that the debt to GDP ratio fell from 97% in 2006 to a low of 61% in the year 2010 and 67% in the year 2011. However, he added that official figures on Guyana's outstanding public debt "are an unreliable indicator of its true indebtedness".

Whilst Government received hefty budgets amounting to \$825 billion during the years 2007 to 2012, it still could not balance the budget, resulting in more borrowing. The external debt stood at US\$1.2 billion at the end of the year 2012, as compared to \$719 million in the year 2007. Interest on external debt increased by 30% or US\$787 million. This year debt servicing could exceed G\$10 billion.

When all new debts are computed, the total national debt is at par or has exceeded the 1992 level in US dollars. Literally, we are like a *dog chasing its own tail*. We are back to where we have started.

After our partially successful agitation last year on behalf of old age pensioners, the Government announced top up on supplements of \$12,500 per month in allowances for water and electricity. Our Member of Parliament Eula Marcello already said that old people in Amerindian communities are left out and only a few pensioners, who are paying bills, would actually get the droppings.

It was most amusing how the regime tried to perk up the small perks. Minister Ali said that the top up would give pensioners a total of \$18,745 per month. The Math does not add up, Mr. Ali. Some pensioners may get \$20,000 per year for energy and \$5,000 per year for water. At most, it is an average monthly subsidy of \$2,085. Then Bishop Edghill embellished the story and added other supplements. He concluded that pensioners actually get \$50,000 a month and above. Are these people for real?

We welcome the relief however for first time homeowners. We believe that the allowance, Income Tax would be paltry, but they would nonetheless we are grateful for small mercies.

This budget is meaningless for people in the public service. They are the working poor. The public sector minimum wage in the year 2012 was \$37.667. They got a 5% in the year 2011, which was \$1,700 more per month, or about G\$60 a day.

This year, they have *go-dies* coming - big *go-dies*.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nagamootoo, I caution you that I think it is the second time it is a slip. To use Mr. Jones's reference, the first time it might be considered...

Mr. Ramjattan: ...coincidence.

Mr. Speaker: No. The second is coincidence, but the third time will be definitely raising a matter of privilege.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my mispronunciation.

With another 5% they would get \$63 per day, hardly enough to buy a green mango, or a bottle of water.

Government announced goodies - I have to be careful here - in reducing the income tax rate from 33 1/3% to 30%. For the person earning \$60,000, he or she gets a discount of \$333 or about US\$1.70 per month. The person working for \$80,000... **[Mr. G. Persaud:** What about the persons who are working for \$300,000.] Those I know, the *Pradovillers*, will get \$10,000. ...gets a relief of \$680 or US\$3.40 per month.

This working class Government must be having fun, dangling as a carrot, allowances of between \$300 and \$600 per month to our Guyanese workers. The security guards, the store clerks, the salesgirls & boys, office assistants and sugar workers who earn \$55,000 per month, would take home just over \$160 dollars as a relief if they get it - Hallelujah indeed!

Sir, I have to come to the serious part of the contribution. Last year when he wound up the debate, I think you would be interested on this the Minister of Finance recognised the right of this National Assembly to cut budgetary allocations. He said:

“It is, indeed, the legitimate right of the Opposition to propose any change within the boundary of the Standing Orders, to any of these numbers. The PPP will always defend that right.”

The Attorney General thought otherwise and hauled the National Assembly before the courts. Now, we are in a legal and political mess, and the question to be resolved in the next few days, is whether to “approve or disapprove” the Estimates.

For the AFC, there must be protocols guiding cuts. Unless forced to disapprove the entire budget, AFC would not cut allocations that are in the national interest, say wages and salaries for the non-contracted public service and for essential services, including social sector spending for education, health, housing & water. We will cut bad project allocations, waste and extravagance. We must ask, for example, why we allocate more than \$350 million dollars for presidential excursions overseas. Can we afford this? That is one of the areas we would probably look for to cut, allocations that hurt the national interest. The subsidies for the state-run propaganda machines that continue to lock out the Opposition and refuse to give fair and reasonable access to the public should not get a single cent. A demand priority must be for the opening up of the state media, and the recall of new radio and cable frequencies from cronies of this Government.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, the gentleman, who is talking so much about cutting, has far gone over his time and I would plea that we do exercise some cut on him.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you can wrap up please.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Thank you very much Sir. I am grateful to you. I think if the Prime Minister succeeds in cutting me, we would lose the essence of what I want to say.

This minority Government has lost its way. It seeks its own interests even when it clashes with the national interest.

As I speak, my thoughts are on *Madiba*, Nelson Mandela, who undertook his *Long Walk to Freedom*, as we know he is not well and he has said, as the Mahatma, that his service was what he did as duty, as a patriot. Something has happened here in this House. I will quickly recall this vulgar exploitation of people’s illness for glorification of the regime, and I found that to be in very bad taste.

Many of us have long shared the dream of a free, united, loving and happy Guyanese people. I dare to dream even in the dreary, dead decades of dictatorship and I still do, even under this extravagant and arrogant autocracy. Our dreams, as far back as 50 years ago, were lofty. Today, we are still dreaming. It is only that we are, as of the song, dreaming our lives away.

The clear streams of our dreams have become polluted. When we see in this very House, a challenge as to whether or not a Minister could drink water from the tap in Georgetown, our people have reason to feel unsafe. When we hear from sugar workers in Canje that they have to drink 'blood water', and we heard about water-borne diseases in the north-west district, our people are bound to feel insecure.

When we see the garbage pile up in the city, and we seem to be indifferent about it, we feel very insecure than agonised.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Nagamootoo, you will have to wrap up, please.

Mr. Nagamootoo: One minute Sir. On Friday, I picked up *The Parliamentarian* and read a mind disturbing, revealing article by Dr. Steven Ratuva, titled, "Fiji's illusive Democracy: Paradoxes, Dilemmas and Hopes". It referred to the Pope praising Fiji's in 1986, only to discover that there had been coups after coups in Fiji. Unlike Fiji, we have kept the lid on social explosion. We too have to sit down and work out practical resolutions of the Guyana ethno-national dilemma, whereas, now in Fiji, it is looking for constitutional reform and a formula for power sharing. We say today we can use our national budget to enlarge and make the elite comfortable. We can dish out social bribes, to carve out territory and make, as one Minister said, Rupununi as a PPP territory, but it would not take us away from gridlock.

I want to say something that I have bottled here for a long time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you have gone over the time requested by four minutes. I did ask that you wrap up.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I just want to say this. I will say that the elections for the year 2011 was not a defeat for anyone - the people triumphed; they have emerged victorious from their ethnic cocoons and they opened wide the political door.

The Opposition has placed several issues on the table. For the AFC, we remain firm on a 10% wage increase for public servants and sugar workers, reduction in the Value Added Tax (VAT) or enlargement of the zero-rated basket and reduction of the Berbice River Bridge toll.

We need cooperation and we can do so over this budget. This is the time for real tri-partite engagement - nothing else will do.

It is for us, as leaders, to map out a new Guyana political civilisation based on negotiation, consensus and reconciliation. I say here that we need to heed to the advice of the former Speaker, Mr. Ralph Ramkarran to fix our broken political system. I will call now that fresh election is not an option before us because we have in this country cynicism, apathy, withdrawal and therefore we need to sit down and discuss the budget and the Estimates and work out a viable solution at this time.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, we have had 53 of the 67 Members of Parliament spoke, as of the last speaker, and every single one on the other side of the House, all three sides of the House, has been disciplined and kept to his or her time. That was the first person who was just not listening. I am just cautioning that there are two more days to go and he has now set a precedent which will cause some problems for some of us who are Chief Whips.

Mr. Speaker: We have had a very good debate, in terms of timing. I can say here that many Members have gone over their allotted time and I have not intervened. Some have come in short to the time allotted to them and we have made up, but I do note that this Member had gone five minutes beyond the time allotted. I would ask that Members stay within time, but in an effort to be fair and balanced I may have to, if I see,... I am saying that in fairness if I can extend the same courtesy to another speaker I will do so.

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: For about 17th or so budget presentation, one of the things I enjoyed most is actually listening to the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo. I must confess to my Hon. Friend out of all the budget speeches I have heard, he certainly lost his way this year. It is one of his worst presentations.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, Minister Dr. Ashni Singh and his team have crafted a plan that keeps Guyana on a trajectory of development in meeting the needs of our people and in meeting all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This budget has been crafted along the trajectory of bringing Guyana to a high middle income country. It is a comprehensive budget; it is a people-centred budget. There are many plethora of measure, pro people's measures, in this budget. After spending so many years in this National Assembly and paying attention to other budgets I cannot recall any budget with as many pro people's measures as the Budget 2013. For this, I want to congratulate the Minister and his team. In congratulating them, I also want, I do not think it can escape anyone of us, to made mention of the many young professionals, Guyanese professionals, trained in Guyana and working right here in Guyana, producing incredible results. I will return to that. We salute them.

The talk of being a high middle income country used to be an ambition that appears far out of reach, not so long ago. We remember 20 years ago, when we were languishing in the category of a least developing highly indebted poor country, people thought that the ambition of being a middle income, much less a high middle income country, was unrealistic and utopian. Such idealism was unthinkable. Indeed, given our performance and our growth and development in the last 20 years, we can all now believe that we can be a high middle income country. We believe that it is reachable; it is a goal that we can achieve and I believe that we could accelerate the pace at reaching that goal if we can all work together.

I am not timid in saying that we do have a poor record of working together in the interest of the people of our country. I am not pointing fingers. That is not what I am here for today. At this very moment, it is the truth that we have not tried hard enough. We heard us calling each other names; we on this side have many cronies. What is important is that we still have vast opportunities for working together; we still have the ability to work together. I do not propose to go over my time and abuse my privilege but I can, in fact, list the many things we have worked together and we have achieved. The sad and unforgivable truth is that we do find more often to have reasons to polarise and to work separately, to cast aspersion against each other, far more than we find reasons to work together. Budget 2013 is a good place to build trust and demonstrate that we can work together for our people, in the interest of our people and the

interest of our country. Talk about walking with a scissors and with a hatchet, and so, do not do us any good and cannot be in the interest of the people of our country.

As in any country, in the richest country of this world, our plan is usually constrained by the resources at our disposal. Surely, we can all recognise this fundamental reality. Still the Budget 2013, as presented by Minister Dr. Ashni Singh, is in the rich tradition of the PPP/C Government's budgets. It is one with something for everyone, for every community, for every region of our country.

As I said, a good place to start working together is at least acknowledging that there are many good things in this budget. The Hon. Member Mr. Sharma, in fact, was kind enough to acknowledge that. I sense that the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence also did that.

When I listened to some of the Members speak, it is as if this budget as crafted by devils, with evil intention, but truly, Minister Singh's, it seems to have stumped my colleagues on the other side. I heard very little, in terms of what is objectionable. I heard the Hon. Member Mr. Harmon tried to but he went into non-budgetary criticisms. The Hon. Member Dr. George Norton decided to stay safe, and away from the Budget 2013 debate, and go back to the Budget 2012. The Hon. Member Mr. Felix decided it is time to debate the Firearms Bill that the Opposition Members have refused to debate. I heard my good friend and colleague the Hon. Member Ms. Amna Ally - Ms. Ally I am not offering to take you any place, too many men have done that along the way - and other speakers decided that the budget was crafted for PPP/C cronies.

I ask myself:

- How could the 25% increase in old age pension for more than 42,000 people be for PPP/C cronies?
- How come the \$2.9 billion for electricity subsidy in Linden and Kwakwani is for PPP/C cronies?
- How come the \$400 million for the Amerindian Development Fund possibly can be considered as for PPP/C cronies?

- How come the \$1 billion for school feeding programme could be considered by my colleagues as for PPP/C cronies?
- How come the \$300 million for school uniforms is for PPP/C cronies?
- How could the \$300 million for construction of a secondary school at Kato be for PPP/C cronies?
- How did the \$150 million for hydroelectricity at Kato become budgeted sums for PPP/C cronies?
- How come the \$166 million for hinterland electrification be considered for PPP/C cronies?
- How shameful it is that \$450 million for student loan suddenly is for PPP/C cronies?
- I wondered how come the \$160 million for the hinterland and \$1.1 billion for coastal water improvement become budgeted for PPP/C cronies?

6.23 p.m.

- How possibly could these MPs see the \$850 million for our low income housing and settlements as being for PPP cronies?
- How is it that the almost \$600 million allocated for the Parliament of Guyana be considered for PPP cronies?

The Hon. Member talked about the state sector, public entities like the Airport, the Demerara Harbour Bridge and so on, and never considered the fact that when these were established by previous Governments and by this Government that they were not set up to be profit making bodies. They absorb some of the costs. The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, for example, at a cost of \$5 per acre for land fees cannot generate the kind of money to make profit. I ask myself whether the Hon. Member is serious. Is he asking us to raise these fees, to raise the toll on the Demerara Harbour Bridge and to raise the toll for land fees? These are the things that the Hon. Member needs to consider!

I heard the Member say about the \$350 million subsidy to the Demerara Harbour Bridge, that we could remove \$150 million and raise the toll for the people of West Demerara and all the people who use the Bridge.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I have never said that. That is an invention. I have never said to remove \$150 million from the Demerara Harbour Bridge and take it to Berbice. The Minister should retract his erroneous statement. I know he is fired up but...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I believe that the Hon. Member, Dr. Ramsammy, in his debating style was comparing and contrasting as against saying that you had said that the money should be moved to. I would not recognise that as a Point of Order.

Go ahead Dr. Ramsammy.

Dr. Ramsammy: Time does not permit me to go through the billions of dollars being budgeted for the citizens of Guyana to make my point. But, if we listen to these MPs, there is nobody left in Guyana that is not a PPP crony. It would have been good had the Opposition took more of the line of Mr. Sharma, that whilst we would have gone in the right direction... I would have understood if they had said, "You have gone in the right direction, but it is not far enough." I think that would be a legitimate point. Take the old age pension; there are many people on this side of the House who would like to see the old age pension go up even further. Take the \$1 billion for the School Feeding Programme; we would like to see all the schools with a school feeding programme. Take, for example, the \$500 million allocated for the agriculture facility; I would have liked to see it be \$1 billion.

We have reduced the tax rate. I listened to Mr. Komal Chand and many of us agree that maybe we should work even harder to reduce the tax rate in a progressive way. When you are in a position like the position Minister Ashni Singh and his team are in, where you have to make things happen and balance your revenues with expenditure, you are constrained by what is prudent and what would not cause us to become once again one of the most indebted countries in the world.

Given all the things we need to cater for in the development story of our country, given the balanced development that we must pursue, the Ministry of Finance with the abled leadership of

Minister Ashni Singh has done us all very proud. I am disappointed, therefore, that the Opposition Members have found nothing good in the Budget to commend, that they have pronounced that the Budget is dead on arrival and that they find no good reason to support it. I would hope that in the interest of our people we would all support Budget 2013.

I must also confess that it is good for all of us to acknowledge that there are pockets of people in every country, rich countries and poor countries, Europe, North America, CARICOM and in the rest of Latin America, who have not been able to escape the anguish of poverty. That is why there are in many countries, including Guyana, poverty reduction programmes. Guyana must take pride in that we have significantly reduced poverty in Guyana. A greater proportion of our people today compared to another era in our history are better off.

The truth is that alongside the fact that there are pockets of people who struggle to attain a decent standard of living, it is also the reality that more of our people are living better today than ever in the history of our country. No matter which side we are on, we must feel some degree of pride. The truth is that when we look at the trajectory of development, we find... [**Mr. B. Williams:** The masses are poor people.] And, yes, there are poor people. The people the Hon. Member James Bond spoke about, there are such people in our country. [**Mr. B. Williams:** The majority.] No matter what anybody does, here are the facts that there are more homeowners today in Guyana than at any time in the history of this country. The Guyana dream of owning our own homes transformed from a dream to reality.

More of our people are vehicular owners than ever in the history of our country. Young people and young professionals are making dreams come true. More of our people are owners of computers. More of our people, in their home settings, are connected to the world through the internet. More of our people enjoy the use of what used to be called luxury items, smart cell phones, air-conditioning units, washing machines, et cetera. These are dreams that are coming true. Not everybody enjoy these things, but more people today than ever in our history.

We must acknowledge and cautiously celebrate the fact that we have accomplished significant improvement in the social and economic conditions, the human conditions, in our country since 1990. We live better lives and we live longer lives. Life expectancy today exceeds 70 years. Child mortality rates have significantly reduced since 1990. More people have access to safe

water and sanitation. We have attained universal education. We have made considerable progress; the per capita income of our people and living standards are better. These are inescapable truths but none of this means that we must not work together to ensure that the plethora of improvements in the social welfare status of our society reaches everyone and no one is left out. We, in the PPP/C Government, will continue to craft budgets that will reach every citizen of our country, in particular those most vulnerable among us.

This Budget must not be the end of our discussion on how we could do so better. We have to do better in meeting the most vulnerable. Agriculture continues to be a significant part of Guyana's development. It is an incontrovertible fact that in the last 20 years agriculture was one of the main vehicles that moved Guyana from a GDP of less than \$300 per capita to more than \$3,100 per capita in 2012. It is agriculture more than anything else that has moved Guyana from a least developing, highly indebted, poor nation to a middle income country. It is agriculture that has seen Guyana with GDP growth in 17 of the last 20 years, with the reduction of poverty and a decline of debt servicing. This is a remarkable story for our country.

Let me address some overarching issues. Firstly, by the end of July, we will publish the Agriculture Strategy 2013/2020 that will go along with sub-sector strategies for rice, sugar, crops, fisheries, et cetera.

As I listened to the Hon. Member, Jennifer Wade, the other day, one of the things we need to address is access to land and the land tenure issues for agriculture. We need access to land for other crops, not just for sugar and rice. We need access to land for livestock. We need to develop a cohesive policy that will support agriculture by making land accessible to the small and large investors. I have instructed my staff to prepare a paper for us to present to the Cabinet.

When the Hon. Member, Ms. Wade, raised this issue, she was referring to a specific problem in the MMA. I do not intend to go into the details, but I think Dr. Rupert Roopnarine and Ms. Wade, who speak to agriculture, among my colleagues on the other side, are familiar with the issues. I have tried, as Minister, to be fair. I have tried to address the concerns that people have. All of us need to ensure that one, when people have access to land and are given the right to use land that they use it properly and that they pay whatever those charges are, and, two, the habit of some people taking the land, renting it out and living abroad is not fair for those who need the

land to use in Guyana. I do not know the right answer and how to fairly deal with that matter, but I think this is something we have to address.

CARICOM has been talking about a policy regarding genetic engineering (GE). They have been doing so now for about 15 years, and they have not yet been able to finalise that document. Guyana is developing and my staff is developing a GE product policy paper, and we hope to encourage CARICOM to complete that document. I make reference here, at this stage, to the comments from the Hon. Member, Mrs. Deborah Backer, on the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issue because it has a lot to do with the GE issue. Whether we were justified in the action we took on textbooks or not – I am not arguing right or wrong on the textbook issue – we still do have a problem with intellectual property right being used by developed countries to promote poverty in developing countries. That does not mean IPR is a bad thing; it is how it is being utilised by developed countries. I only raised that issue here for example, not to debate the Member on the textbook issue.

There are millions of children who are going blind because of the lack of Vitamin A. More than 14 years ago, German scientist Almonsonto developed a GE product which is called the Golden Rice with vitamin A in it. Many of these children's staple diet is rice. Had we begun to use this rice 14 years ago, many millions of children would not have gone blind; many millions of children who died would not have died. IPR is the genesis of us not being able to use that GE variety of rice. There are two sides to the story. We look on one side, but we must look at this holistically.

There can be no doubt that we need an agro-energy policy. By August, the Ministry of Health will publish an agro-energy policy. We need, in fact, also a common fishing policy which we agreed to at CARICOM. It has been stuck at CARICOM for the last three years. Guyana will try to energise that so that we can have a common fishing policy.

Clearly, rice has been a star performer. Yes, I agree with my Comrade and Friend, the Hon. Moses Nagamootoo, that farmers are the real stars in the performance of rice. They have done an excellent job. But that does not mean Government has no role. Without drainage and irrigation, there will be no rice industry. People must recognise that. In the recent dry weather, the

Government, through the Ministry, had to facilitate us getting water to the farmers so that we could have saved 81,000 hectares, more than 200,000 acres of rice.

I want to publicly acknowledge the support I received from the two Members on the other side who speak for agriculture, the Hon. Member, Rupert Roopnarine, and the Hon. Member, Khemraj Ramjattan. I called them in the midst of struggling for water and asked them that whilst they can be out there and score political points to also work with me, because unless we work together we will not be able to protect the cultivation. They did; both supported me and I would like to acknowledge them. The truth is that we have withstood that challenge and protected most of the 81,000 hectares.

At this moment, we are on pace to exceed 450,000 tonnes of rice, and, for the third successive year, passing 400,000 tonnes. I can report to you that at this stage, 25,000 hectares have been reaped out of the 81,000 hectares. More than 90,000 tonnes of rice have been produced. At that pace, this first crop is said to exceed 250,000 tonnes, the largest ever in any single crop. That would be three times what we produced in 1991.

The same way that we celebrate rice, we must have equal concern for sugar. Sugar has had major problems the last few years. Instead of using up my time, I hope that all my colleagues will permit me to say ditto to the comments of the Hon. Member, Komal Chand, the head of the Guyana Agriculture Workers Union.

I heard Mr. Nagamootoo say that last year I said, "...by the end of the second crop". I know that he did not mean to misrepresent me, but what I said not only in the Budget debate, but in a question that was asked, was that after the end of the second crop, the Bosch Engineering Group will begin some remedial work at the Skeldon Factory, which will bring this factory closer to its optimal operation. That is what I said. I recall saying that when those things are done, which are not all the things we need to do, we would bring the capacity of the Skeldon Factory to about 75 per cent. I can report that of the six things that needed to be done, five have been done and are working as expected. The sixth is not working as expected and that is the cane conveyor belt. We have asked Bosch to come back and rework that sixth activity.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, your time has elapsed.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled that the Budget includes \$500 million for supporting farming. This facility will help particularly cash crop farmers. We will utilise this facility to bring in materials to support new technology for cash crops. In particular, we will assist farmers to expand shade farming, drip technology and hydroponics in a wave of new precision farming for Guyana. In this regard, we will introduce semi-processors for certain products to reduce transportation costs and to support value-added products for farmers. The first such semi-processor will be introduced at Hosororo in Region 1 and will focus on the processing of turmeric and black pepper. The new Guyana Marketing Corporation will purchase these products from farmers and resell to factories in Georgetown.

I would like to highlight two entities, the Guyana *Hydrometeorological (Hydromet)* Service and the Pesticide and Toxic Chemical Control Board. These are important entities for agriculture. I would like to go into details of what they do, because we should all know about them. Both of these are headed by two young ladies, Guyanese professionals who have stayed at home. I have heard throughout this debate of the many young people who received quality training and used their option of seeking fortunes and opportunities in other countries. That is true Comrades but we should never forget those thousands who have stayed and those who are making things better for all our people.

Today I want to introduce them as the focal points for two important functions. Under the Montreal Protocol, Guyana has certain obligations to reduce and eliminate the use of ozone depleting substances; the so-called ODS, which are significant contributors to global warming and climate change. Under this Protocol, Guyana must reduce and eliminate hydro-carbons, the so called Chlorodifluoromethane or difluoromonochloromethane (HCFCs). Guyana has certain specific obligations, and I would like to reiterate the following points: All importers of HCFCs and HCFC based equipment must be registered with the National Ozone Action Unit at the HydroMet Services. Those who want to bring in those things and are not registered should not call me and should not get anybody in this Parliament, on either side of the House, to call me.

They knew of it since 2010; the same people who are not in compliance since last year are now calling and saying that they do not know about it.

All importers must apply to the National Ozone Action Unit for a permit. Based on consumption levels that the Protocol allows for use in Guyana, the National Ozone Action Unit will allocate quotas. The Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) must ensure that HCFCs do not enter the country unless they are imported in accordance with the import permit and the standard the quota allows. The GRA will not allow the release of equipment which is HCFC based, unless the equipment is retrofitted to use ozone friendly chemicals.

The Guyana National Bureau of Standards has a mandate to label all such equipment being offered for sale in our stores. Under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), Guyana has obligations. The focal point to implement these obligations is the Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals Board. I can report to this Assembly that all the chemicals banned under the Stockholm Convention have been banned from Guyana, but there are stockpiles of these through previous usage that we must get rid of.

Let me highlight quickly the fact that a new flagship programme has developed within livestock and this is for embryo transfer. If one visits the Guyana School of Agriculture – permit me to say that the Guyana School of Agriculture this year celebrates its 50th anniversary – one will see a calf that was born out of embryo transfer. There are 20 such calves with farmers in our country. These calves have their genetic origin from purebred animals in the United States of America. Those embryos were brought here and inserted in local cows. We did 31 of them so far; 20 have been successful for a rate of 63%. The global average is 43%. I compliment the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) staff; I congratulate them.

We have to build on empowering and facilitating infrastructure. In 2013, we will complete the tissue culture and bio-control laboratories at the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) and the veterinary lab at the GLDA. These laboratories will further strengthen our ability to introduce better variety for crops and better breeds of animals for our famers. In addition, they will be important in our efforts to produce safe food and to fight against pests and diseases. The Animal Health Lab is already building a local capacity to test for diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, foot-and-mouth disease and brucellosis.

Through an Indian line of credit, we have secured 14 pumps - eight fixed-site pumps and six mobile pumps. Fixed-site pumps should be located at Lima, Windsor Forest, Pine Ground, Number 43, Paradise, Dazzell Enterprise, Skeldon, Rose Hall, Albion and Number 19. More than 60,000 acres of agricultural land and many residential communities will benefit from these pumps.

Let me briefly make reference to the St. Ignatius integrated school farm which is enhancing food security in Region 9. This farm was established in October with modern technology - drip technology, shade technology, et cetera. It has been done as a multi-sector project with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, with help from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

6.53 p.m.

Even though we started in October, by the end of February, we had produced more than 2,500 pounds of vegetables which went into the school kitchen and into the dormitory kitchen. They sold some to the local supermarket with a profit of \$164,000 so far.

This school project is helping more than 700 students to get practical experience for their Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Agriculture Science Examinations, helping the students develop business practices, and it is serving as a model farm for other schools and communities in Region 9. Because of the success, we are now extending that programme to 30 other schools in the Hinterland and throughout the country.

On a visit to Region 9, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Moco Moco community where 30 families will cultivate 41 acres of land, 17 families will cultivate 30 acres of rice and 11 families will cultivate 11 acres of red beans. All the input will be from the Ministry of Agriculture. I think we have all read of Santa Fe which is a living example and a successful example that the Jagdeo Initiative is well and alive. I am glad to say that in the first week of June, the first 120 acres of rice will be reaped from Santa Fe. Already, it has started production of soya bean and corn because our intention is large scale farming of soya bean and corn to replace the 200 million tonnes of corn being imported into the Caribbean.

I wish I had time to talk about fishing and other aspects of agriculture. But this year we will also host the Caribbean Week of Agriculture in October. The Government of Guyana is strongly committed to playing a facilitating and a catalyst role in the development of a sound agricultural programme. But the full realisation of an agro-industrial enterprise for Guyana will much depend on the involvement of an aggressive private sector. We can transform agriculture in the next five years and make Guyana, outside of rice and sugar, a giant in exporting to the rest of the Caribbean and further afield.

I heard many times, in this Assembly, during this debate about the \$11 billion being given as a subsidy to the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL). It has been called all kinds of names – bailout. Whatever you call it, it is \$15,000 per capita that is going to assist the people of Guyana to ensure that we have more and better electricity.

I have heard about majority versus minority. What I do know is that at the last Election the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) got 32 seats, which are more than 26 seats and more than seven seats.

We talk about the majority. The Hon Members, Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Nagamootoo, go to Albion, Port Mourant and Whim to those who voted for the Alliance For Change (AFC) and tell them that they gave you the mandate to join with A Partnership for National Unity (APNU). Go and tell them that! [**Mr. Nagamootoo:** What nonsense!] I am asking you to go. Go! You will have that issue. That is your problem.

I heard about the post-Jagan Government. Mr. Nagamootoo was part of the post-Jagan Government and until he did not become the presidential candidate of the post-Jagan PPP/C, he shifted and that is good. Mr. Nagamootoo talked about the *Mirror* that he was a part of for 22 years and suddenly the *Mirror* is not the great people's newspaper that Mr. Nagamootoo was part of the leadership of.

All the works that were done with the people of Cotton Tree with the contracts for land are things that the post-Jagan Government did.

I am proud to stand here and speak for agriculture and speak for the 2013 Budget on behalf of the PPP/C. I am proud because I do not have to make up numbers. I am proud because I do not

have to misrepresent. I am proud because I am part of a Government which steered Guyana from being a least developing, highly indebted poor country to a middle income country that is making life better for all of our people. So, I can be proud to stand as a PPP/C Member. I can be proud of talking about my sisters and brothers, no matter who they voted for, because I will never call a sister or a brother a crony.

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

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me please, the Hon. Member said that I referred to him saying that the Skeldon Factory would be operational by the second half of 2012. I have not said that this Minister said so. I was referring to the Minister of Finance and I was referring to a speech.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, if, in fact, it was not this Minister, that suffices. There is no need to read the speech. If the Minister of Finance, at some later stage, wishes to...you will make the clarification at that point in time. It is sufficient that you are saying that you were not referring to this Minister. That is noted and accepted. Thank you.

Dr. Roopnarine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise to make my contribution to the debate on Budget 2013, I wish to register my solidarity with those Members on both sides of the House who sincerely made the case for constructive engagement and togetherness - not rhetorically and opportunistically, but sincerely.

I must confess that it was with a sense of some disappointment and even foreboding that I listened to the introductory observations with which the Hon. Minister of Finance prefaced this year's Budget presentation; disappointment that his interpretation of last year's performance of this Tenth Parliament was so one-sided that it evinced the very intransigence and want of flexibility in the national interest that it sought to berate in others; disappointment, too, that his understanding of what transpired over the early months in the life of the Tenth Parliament has led to such a contraction of his vision of the transformative potential of united action. I choose to believe, perhaps in an excess of generosity, that it has been his own disappointment in the dashing of his higher hopes that has led to the reduced expectations we find in this year's prefatory reflections. Let us remind ourselves of the larger, more hopeful expression of the idea of united action in last year's Budget speech:

“The political configuration that emerged from the 2011 elections, whereby the Party in Government does not hold a clear legislative majority, is a domestic novelty even if similar situations have been experienced by other democracies the world over. This arrangement beckons our country into a new political epoch and heralds an opportunity for the nurturing of a new political culture. The prevailing dispensation will test and hopefully prove our resolve as a People, and within this House our respective will to serve as responsible representatives of a deserving People, to work together in service to the cause of national development.”

Not surprisingly, these words drew much comment in last year’s debate from Members on both sides of the House. To appreciate what I have called the Hon. Minister’s contraction of vision, set these words alongside those that seek to speak to this idea in this year’s presentation. The vituperative, tendentious paragraph condemning the “veritable plethora of examples of Parliamentary action, occasioned at the behest of the Opposition’s one-seat majority,” has already drawn comment from my colleagues on this side. I say only that the Hon. Minister should not have expected so much so soon. In answer to the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*, and listening to the unfolding debate, I am strengthened in the belief that the most crucial challenge we face in this House and in the nation is the challenge to forge the togetherness required to confront the challenges of development. We will not overcome challenges together until we confront and overcome the challenge of togetherness itself. It is the prior challenge.

Before I attempt to address some of the policy and operational issues surrounding the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and then the mining and agricultural sectors, it would be useful to look briefly at the fundamental principles relating to land use policy and the management of natural resources.

Budget 2013 gives primacy of place to the multidimensional Low Carbon Development Strategy. In Section B, paragraph 4.2 it is referred to as “the paradigm overarching our policy framework”. Intended as it is to serve as that overarching policy frame-work, the Strategy must be informed by and predicated on an integrated approach to land use management with the following objectives:

- to ensure avoided deforestation and degradation;
- to guarantee the provision of ecosystem services;
- to promote the responsible exploitation of natural resources;
- to invest in the creation and promotion of enterprises which have a low carbon footprint;
- to ensure the conservation of biodiversity; and
- to ensure inclusive and sustained development for the benefit of all citizens and future generations.

For such an integrated approach to land use planning and the effective implementation of the Low Carbon Development Strategy, absolute prerequisites are transparent dialogue and ongoing discussions at all levels so that communities, regions, and public and private sectors are informed and have their perspectives and expectations taken on board. The Parliamentary Opposition must be engaged in an ongoing way by the Government in free and frank dialogue and discussions on the evolution and implementation of the Strategy. This should be done through the Sectoral Committees of this National Assembly and, I would suggest, given the centrality of the Strategy, a Special Select Committee on the Low Carbon Development Strategy. The outcome of such dialogue and negotiation must reflect the nation's interests and the will of the people. After all, land, including maritime assets and air space, is the national patrimony, and use of these resources must, of necessity, generate confidence among citizens rather than promote fear, well grounded or not, that Guyana is being taken over by foreigners or that corrupt and discriminatory practices dictate how land is allocated and resources managed.

Before I leave the issue of land use, allow me to quote from the December, 2012 *Summary of the Report of the Development of Land Use Planning Project*, entitled "Guyana National Land Use Plan". It is a document being circulated by the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. On page 5 of the Report under the head, "Legal and Institutional Issues", it states this:

“A legislative review of laws and regulations related to land use planning found that: Land Use Planning is the subject of obsolete legislation that neither reflects contemporary planning practice nor meets the needs of Guyana...”

And that:

“Guyana is in dire need of comprehensive new Land Use Planning legislation. The development of a national inter-sectoral land use planning system is an obligation under the MoU with the Government of Norway as part of the REDD+ process in pursuing the LCDS. An institutional review concluded that the institutional framework is dysfunctional largely due to ad hoc sectoral legislation rather than legislation to policy. The regulatory and institutional framework is inadequate with missing policies and coordination as well as duplicated regulatory responsibilities. Control over land use is highly centralized and politicized. GLSC is empowered rather than required to do things. It is not guided by strategic level performance measures. It has struggled to achieve financial sustainability and has weak enforcement, giving scope for institutional strengthening and performance improvement. Coordination and communication between Government agencies is not formalised or effective and the existence of special interest agencies such as the MMA further complicate matters. All stakeholders seem dissatisfied with the current arrangements but there is no existing model from elsewhere that fits Guyana’s needs.”

The Budget 2013 speech is replete with the arithmetical wizardry – not to say legerdemain – for which the gifted Hon. Minister of Finance has earned a well deserved reputation. What is missing is a strategic exposition of the increasing problems in key areas such as the chronically underperforming sugar and electricity sectors. Instead, there is an impression of trying to plug holes rather than developing and implementing rationalised route maps to provide long-term development. There is no overall sense of the Ministry of Finance developing and rationalising options, selecting best options according to clearly articulated criteria, and then proposing priorities. If we were following an agreed strategic plan and especially one that was reflective of an integrated approach to development, the Minister should have been reporting on deliverables that ought to have been the targets for 2012, the actual performance against these targets,

explanations for surpluses or shortfalls, and the rationale for adjustments that would have to be made in 2013, thus providing justification for the 2013 Estimates of Expenditure.

In the absence of such a systematic approach, there is a danger of incoherence, in the sense that proposals in some sectors operate directly against other sectors or intentions. This is nowhere more evident than in the competing interests for land required by investors for mega-agricultural projects in the intermediate Savannahs, the Canje Basin and the Rupununi.

The Ministry of Agriculture currently assesses the feasibility of a project but land allocation is the preserve of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, creating an impasse that is frustrating to local and overseas investors. The inherent conflict in the forestry and mining sectors is a legacy of not having a land use policy – it is now being tidied up, I understand – so that logging concessions were awarded without recognising that the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) had already given out mining permits in the same concessions. In the absence of baseline data related to biodiversity, endemism and ecosystem services, the impacts of logging and mining on the environment cannot be accurately determined since there is little or no generic data against which to analyse data now being collected, albeit inadequately and irregularly because of the limited number of field personnel deployed by the GGMC, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The other complication is that there are a number of instances where mining concessions had been awarded prior to the issuance of titled lands to Amerindian communities. This resulted from lack of sharing of information that would have excised such concessions from titled land or, alternatively, through free prior and informed consent and transparently conducted negotiations, a way forward could have been found to allow mining with safeguards and penalties that are enforceable.

While I have some ideological sympathy with the rhetorical insistence that the funds from Norway are payment for services and not development aid, it has to be said that in the absence of a commercial contract, the current arrangement is vulnerable to changing politics in Oslo, and the Hon. Minister of Finance should exercise caution in treating the Norwegian money as if it flows under his control. Because payments are based on the extent to which Guyana has managed the avoidance of or reduction of deforestation and degradation, we need to examine the

extent to which policies and practices have been implemented to reduce forest-based carbon emissions.

I wish to make the point that we need information on what the actual acreage is that will be flooded to form the reservoir of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Plant. Will the area be de-bushed and the trees taken out of the reservoir area? If not, is there an estimate of the greenhouse gases which the proposed reservoir will generate and emit? The public needs to know that the Amaila Falls Hydropower Plant will generate and emit significant greenhouse gases, and will permanently convert areas of tropical rainforest into a lake. This is scheduled to occur at a time when significant de-bushing will also be done for the development of the five new large scale mines. We need to know: what is the acreage which will be disturbed by the five new large scale mines which may be developed between 2014 and 2018? The possible developments are: manganese at Matthews Ridge; bauxite at Bonasika; gold at Toroparu, Puruni, at Kaburi, Potaro, and at Aurora, Cuyuni. What is the value per acre cleared, and how does that value compare with the projections in the LCDS documents? This, I believe, is really vital information which we, in the National Assembly, need and which the public needs to understand exactly what is taking place with the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

While much remains to be done, we do recognise that controls have been put in place to ensure forest concessions are managed based on annual allowable cuts, low impact logging, traceability of forest products, and measures to plug leakages such as tagging and inspections in the field, along routes and the wharves. GGMC's controls are also much tighter in monitoring deforestation and degradation. Notwithstanding these steps in the right direction, there have been reluctance and a lack of political will to increase environmental bonds and penalties which, at the moment, are at laughable levels. Similarly, Guyana has made only very limited progress on improving forest governance. The *Rainforest Alliance Verification Report* of December, 2012 is instructive in this regard. So, I say that the Minister, in section 4.3 of the Budget speech, was over-speaking somewhat.

In section 4.4, we see that US\$7 million was approved for disbursement by the Guyana REDD + Investment Fund (GRIF) Steering Committee in November 2011 – just prior to the elections I might add – for institutional strengthening, including US\$3.1 million for the Office of Climate Change and the Project Management Office in the Office of the President. As far as I am aware -

and can be corrected if I am in error – no accounts have been audited and publicised about how this money has been spent. Contrary to the Norway-Guyana MoU, full disclosure about these expenditures is not available on the LCDS website. Only US\$625,000 to US\$650,000 of the Amerindian Development Fund segment has been approved for GRIF spending – for 25 to 27 villages at US\$25,000 each. The full project cost of US\$6 million depends on preparation of the as-yet-unwritten full proposal by the Office of Climate Change and the delivery partner, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Credit should be given to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs for aiding the development of the Community Development Plans (CDPs) in almost all the Amerindian villages and communities, apparently by using moneys from the Consolidated Fund rather than donor funding. Unfortunately, the CDPs are not in the public domain so their quality cannot be independently checked. But this is a step in the right direction.

Weaknesses in integrated planning aside, there is little or no correlation between outputs from enterprises and availability of markets, logistics and quality assurance, nor is account being taken of the capacity of target communities to absorb the volume of funding available from the Amerindian Development Fund, the one per cent of the five per cent royalty received by GGMC and paid over to the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs for allocation to non-mining Amerindian communities, and for projects in Amerindian communities funded by the public sector - Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - and these are based on allocation from the Budget.

There needs to be a degree of devolution and decentralisation with adequate governance systems to ensure transparency, equitable access and accountability. The State Planning Secretariat needs to be re-energised and adequately staffed and capacity needs to be built at the local levels to ensure, as far as possible, seamless integration of local, regional and national strategic plans.

Mining: The unprecedented growth of the mining sector, led by the surge in gold production, brings with it new challenges. The websites of some of the exploration companies operating in Guyana set out information on resources and reserves of gold within their respective licence areas. Between 10 and 20 million ounces of gold reserves are estimated to be located collectively on licence areas in Guyana. Between 2014 and 2016, there is hope for the development of large

scale gold mines at Aurora on the Cuyuni River, Toroparu on the upper Puruni River, and in the Potaro area near Kaburi. At the same time, there is hope of the development of a manganese mine at Matthews Ridge, and a new bauxite mine at Bonasika on the lower Essequibo River. There is also advanced exploration on a uranium property in the mid Mazaruni. Each of these developments is estimated to be as large as the Omai gold mine was. What are the implications? Along with the revenue windfall, five new large mines will also demand commensurate responsibilities of monitoring. A risk management approach to monitoring would need to be utilised in order to decide on the number and type of mine inspectors to be added to the GGMC and other relevant agencies.

Then there is the challenge of positioning Guyanese to benefit from the varied business opportunities. I see no evidence that the Government is as alert to the challenges as it needs to be and appears to have limited hope of overcoming them. The University of Guyana, the Technical Institutes, and the Trade Schools would need to be given the resources so as to produce the skills that these new mines will demand.

What is required, above all, is the development of a strategic plan for small and medium scale gold and diamond mining. An update of Professor Clive Thomas's study entitled "Too Big To Fail" would provide a good basis from which to begin.

7.20 p.m.

The production of over 400,000 ounces of gold annually, by the small and medium scale miners raises the question of the exhaustion of these finite resources. Will the resources last for 10 or 20 more years.

We should ensure titling of selected hinterland mining communities. Many interior mining settlements are still classified as unorganized. Miners have settled in areas like Kurupung, Imbaimadai, Mahdia and Issano, and they should be granted long term residential and business titles.

The orderly development of the small and medium scale gold and diamond mining sector must proceed on the basis of economic, scientific, and technical facts. We are prepared to hand over the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) manifesto that details with the types of studies that

are necessary.

There needs to be a review of the outcomes of Government policy of allowing Amerindian village lands to be extended to cover lands currently held by miners. When policies lead to confusion, lawsuits, picketing, blockades, and pits one citizen against another, we must not be afraid to rethink and review the policies.

The present windfall described so fulsomely in Budget 2013 means that the coffers of the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) are sufficiently bloated to release funds for the training for women miners to promote and advance gender equity. Providing funds to the largely self-financing and very active Guyana Women Miners Organisation would assist in providing solutions to some of the most grievous social problems in the interior based mining sector. I notice in a report of the *Stabroek News*, 24th March, 2013 that the Women Miners are hoping to establish a home to deal with people trafficked. They are hoping to build such a home in Bartica. A piece of land has been identified and they seem to intend to approach Minister Irfaan Ali about the granting of this piece of land.

I want to urge from this side of the House that Minister Ali recognise the invaluable work being done by the Women Miners Association and assist them in this noble effort to construct a home in Bartica for the young sisters who have been trafficked in the mining areas.

There should on the whole be better provision, better facilities for women working in, or visiting the interior. This includes toilets as well as transportation. Roads should be good enough to allow mini bus passenger services to be in operation. Mine workers and citizens working or doing business in the hinterland riding to the interior sitting atop of fuel drums or ration boxes must be discontinued, for safety and for human dignity. Only Sunday we got news of a ghastly accident where four people died in the interior when a truck on which they were travelling with crates and boxes overturned. From this side of the House and I am sure from all sides of the House we want to send our sympathy to the relatives of those who perished in that accident. But we must take steps to ensure that we put an end to this mode of travel.

It would be mean-spirited not to commend my friend of long standing, the Hon. Prime Minister and the GGMC for the performance improvements over the last five years, and for winning the award of ISO certification to the Land Management Department of the GGMC. I also wish to

commend the GGMC for winning the Public Sector Award for Excellence issued by the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce in 2011. We encourage the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources to continue the performance improvements won by the Hon. Prime Minister.

We should work to ensure that all miners are treated fairly whether they are Brazilians, Canadians, Russians, Chinese, Americans or Guyanese. When Guyanese, notoriously hospitable as we are known to be, seem antagonistic to strangers in our midst is when we are made to feel like second class citizens in our own country, deprived of fair and equitable access to our own resources, even of the right to work. Blunders such as discriminating against Guyanese workers by agreement cannot be answered by accusations of xenophobia and even racism.

GGMC and the relevant agencies must continue and improve technical assistance programme to miners to help local miners improve recovery systems, environment management, and exploration methods. Given the expanding needs in the sector, these programmes should be stronger than the Ministry of Agriculture extension programme. Consideration must be given to determining the right time for the miners to use improved recovery methods on every operation using excavators. The current sluice box systems cannot give greater than 40% recovery for the grain size of gold being mined by these operators. Improved systems would give above 85% recovery and such systems cost the same as an excavator. Incentives must be put in place to ensure that the equipment is as readily available to the miner as the excavator is.

I turn now specifically to the gold sector, Sections 4.18 and 4.19 of the Budget. Unlike Norway with its gas and petroleum reserves, Guyana has taken no steps to use the windfall of high prices for gold to create a natural resources wealth fund. Why not? The income from the gold declared to the Gold Board in 2012 must have exceeded 416,000 ounces which at US\$ 1,500 per ounce amounts to US\$624 million; of this, the Gold Board revenue is 7%. Of this income 1% is to be returned by law to the Amerindians. What has the US\$624 million been spent on which is durable for the development of Guyana? I am perfectly happy to be corrected where I have erred. Should some of this windfall not be used to develop the infrastructure necessary to provide for settled and viable communities in the mining districts, as well as for development of alternative economic enterprises based on food self sufficiency, competitive market access for agricultural products, tourism, mineral processing and availability of sustainable means of power generation - hydro, wind and photo-voltaics?

I want to quote from a document that came out of the conference of ParlAmericas held in Bogota, Columbia on *Parliaments and Extractive Industries*. They have some recommendations for parliaments in countries with natural resources. They say this:

“All parliaments should seek to update legislation governing extractive industries, based on environmental impacts, the return of the expected benefits, and sustainable development criteria.

Parliaments should seek to ensure the transparency of all processes associated with extractive industries, in conformity with national interests and social welfare.

Parliaments should strengthen mechanisms used to disseminate information and report on regulations governing extractive industries, especially on concessions and contracts involving the national wealth.

Parliaments should strive to standardise control and legislative criteria applicable to extractive industries.

Parliaments should assess procedures so that control and oversight functions make a significant contribution to the fight against corruption. In so doing, they should demand full cooperation from the Executive and other government agencies.”

On the issue of wealth garnered from natural resources, from extractive activities the group recommends:

- “1. Using a portion of the revenues raised from extractive activities to diversify the production matrix with a view to consolidating sustainable economic sectors.
2. Advancing the processes of decentralisation, autonomy and territorial organisation, all of which are essential for improving public administration.
3. Further strengthening participatory processes for budget formulation, transparency and accountability, at all levels of government.
4. Discussing income distribution formulas, considering equity criteria that will ensure equal opportunity.

5. Considering the creation of a stabilisation fund using revenues raised from extractive industries, to overcome contingencies.”

Those are some of the recommendations coming out of the Bogota workshop that our own Parliament can, I think, pay keen attention to. The polarization between the medium scale miners, represented by the Guyana Gold and Diamond Miners Association (GGDMA), and the small-scale miners has exacerbated a fundamental contradiction in the sector. Attempts to organise the small scale miners into syndicates for training, access to credit and use of technologically and environmentally friendly technologies, have been half-hearted and subject to political direction rather than being driven by the sustained efforts of the GGMC, its Board, and in collaboration with the GGDMA, syndicates, commercial Banks and equipment suppliers.

I say briefly on the question of Bauxite, because I am running out of time, that questions need to be raised about the beneficial occupation of the bauxite resources and reserves by Bosai and by Rusal. Are they paying all royalties and taxes on time? Are they hogging land for which they are not licensed? Are they satisfying all the terms and conditions of their respective licences? More particularly, are they meeting obligations with respect to re-vegetation of mine sites?

I turn now to agriculture. These pronouncements are remarkable more for what they conceal than what they reveal. I am referring to paragraphs 4.8 to 4.12. The fact is indisputable and admitted on all sides: low labour turnout has plagued all the estates. My friend, the former Shadow Minister of Agriculture in the Ninth Parliament and the keenest of students of the industry into which he was born, Mr. Anthony Vieira, is on record as stating that in 2012 the industry showed the factories standing idle, out of cane and not grinding, during the first and second crops, a total of 10,527 hours. He went on to state that the actual time the factories worked during the year was 21,623 hours. In other words, the desertion of the cane fields by the workers meant that the factories were standing idle 50% of the time during the crops, waiting for the cane that never came. This must also have meant that during a substantial part of the time the factory workers had to be paid for idling as the factory idled. This migration away from the industry is not a new phenomenon. It has been continuing steadily since 2000 and has now reached crisis proportions.

The chronic state of the financial condition of GuySuCo has become an annual lament. Different time, same song! It remains something of a mystery why the compensation funds from the

European Union are not being dedicated to the sugar industry, including the cane-farmers. Were these funds not intended to make the industry more competitive and more efficient, for instance, by helping to finance the costly process of converting the land for mechanical harvesting, on all estates, to offset the loss of workers? Between 2006 when the compensation payments from the European Union (EU) began and 2012, Guyana took possession of \$24.7 billion dollars.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, my apologies. Your time has elapsed. You may have an extension of 10 minutes to conclude.

Question put and carried

Dr. Roopnarine: Why should GuySuCo be in such a near terminal condition? Whatever the policy is that disperses these funds away from the industry and spreads them around it needs to be re-thought. The situation is described in the 2008 GuySuCo document *Revised Commentary on Capital Budget 2008* where we read:

“The limited availability of funds in 2007 saw the factory investments limited to less than \$350 million instead of the \$1.35 billion requested; and in 2008 the factories asked for \$5.6 billion to do their capital works, but were only given \$2.34 billion, less than half what they needed. The Board of GuySuCo noted in their summary of the 2008 capital cuts that “this starvation of funds will significantly restrict management’s ability to achieve their objectives outlined in the GuySuCo strategy plans”.

I ask, is this the time, with GuySuCo mired in these financial doldrums, for the Government to be actively considering the appointment of the absentee Mr. Raj Singh to head the Corporation at a princely salary of US\$25,000 a month, plus two houses and apparently uncapped perks? How does the Minister expect this largesse to be greeted by the already demoralised managers and restive workers across the Corporation?

Speaking on the issue of sugar in last year’s Budget, I said this: “All verifiable indications in the industry point not to recovery, but to continuing decline.” I said then and I say again that the sugar industry, “for all the well known reasons, remains of properly enduring importance to this Nation.” In the face of this seemingly unstoppable decline, I call again, as I did in my Budget presentation last year, for the establishment of a special select committee to conduct public

hearings into GuySuCo. Subsidy of a vital industry can become necessary for a period. It must however be subject to the oversight of the body that votes the funds. All plans must be reviewed and defended. Failure to meet targets must be explained. Let us draw on all our domestic expertise bar none.

While it is undeniable that rice has shown an improved and welcome production level in 2012, it stretches the truth to breaking point to say that Government's efforts facilitated the process. As we know in the first part of the year there was high rainfall which exposed the numerous flaws in the infrastructure of the coastal plain to grow any crop, even rice which requires much water and very little drainage. There was widespread flooding in numerous areas including the MMA, Mahaica and Black Bush Polder, exposing the neglect of the drainage system. Add to this the impassable backdam roads, the weed blocked irrigation canals, and the porous sea defenses everywhere. To say that the farmers achieved these high levels of production through the Government's diligent care of the infrastructure is to take credit where credit is not due. It would be more accurate to say that the farmers were able to achieve these levels of production through their drive to cash in on the high rice prices currently being paid on account of the oil for rice arrangement with Venezuela. Now that the Venezuela Agreement is awaiting renewal, a wave of uncertainty is sweeping through the industry from the Corentyne to the Essequibo.

The Hon. Minister would have received reports that as of yesterday, long lines of trucks loaded with paddy have been parked outside the mills and combines are backing up in the fields. The price the millers across the country are offering to the farmers has plummeted from \$4000 to \$3000 a bag. All of which makes a nonsense of the measures outlined in paragraph 4.14 of the Budget Speech:

“The favourable business climate put in place by Government also resulted in the milling operations of one of the larger but chronic defaulting millers being acquired by a foreign investor...”

And so on. It seems that the new “favourable business climate” is about to condemn our hard-working rice farmers to a new season of blackmail and bullying at the hands of the millers: \$3000 a bag, take it or leave it!

The Minister spoke of work to advance efforts on livestock diversification to enhance meat for the international markets. Presently Guyana does not export meat and is unlikely to do so in the immediate future as the infrastructure is needed to satisfy international standards for meat preparation for the export market have to be built and certified in the first instance.

The sorry fact is that there is no recognisable coherent livestock policy guiding the work of the National Livestock Development Authority (NDLA), which is heavy on authority and light on development. It all well and good to have an artificial insemination and now an embryo implant transfer programme. However, after the calves are born, what then? Cattle farmers complain of the woeful lack of follow-up. The NDLA needs to follow the process through to the end. We cannot have these expensive calves wandering around the pastures. The artificial insemination and embryo implant programmes, even if it were efficiently implemented and monitored, will not, by themselves, lift the cattle industry out of the present slump. What the cattle farmers all over the country need is pasturage, not just a gene pool. With the boom in the rice industry and the high prices there has been an invasion of pastures by rice-farmers, for instances in the pastures aback of the Black Bush Polder scheme. The Hon. Minister knows the number of representations I have made to him on this issue. Cattle farmers on the Corentyne, West Coast Berbice, the East and West Coast of Demerara, at Turkeyen, have no pastures and are burdened by the \$8000 a head impounding fees as their cattle are left to roam the streets. Urgent consideration must be given to the establishment of communal pastures across the country if we are to come to the rescue of this ailing industry.

On drainage and irrigation I have to say very briefly that the Minister stated that in 2012 Government expended \$7.1 billion on drainage and irrigation systems across Guyana to continue development of drainage and irrigation structures at Hope/Dochfour, purchase of pumps, excavation equipment et cetera.

A breakdown of how the \$7.1 billion was allocated in 2012 should be given for scrutiny before future funding is approved. Such a breakdown will reveal to what extent past funding in the sectors impacted on the development of drainage and irrigation. For example, the farmers in the Hope/Dochfour area had their cultivations disrupted as a result of the construction of the Northern Relief Channel Project, the Hope Canal. Under an EPA approved Management Plan, the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) should have ensured that all D&I

structures which were disrupted as a result of the Hope Canal be replaced to allow for continuous service. In fact, very little has been done in this respect by the NDIA, and the farmers continue to suffer because of lack of irrigation water or flooding, and very little or no work is being done in this respect.

The Minister stated that in 2013 a total of \$6.5 billion is budgeted for final payments towards the completion of the Hope Canal and the associated drainage structures as well as on pumps and pump stations in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6. The National Assembly needs to know, one; how much has been spent thus far on the Hope Canal Project and on what? Two; we need to know the final cost for completing the Canal and ancillary works to make the system operational. And three; we need to know when the project will be completed and flood waters could be discharged from the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) into the Atlantic Ocean.

The Hope Canal Project is being executed under three contracts comprising the head regulator, a road bridge, a sluice across the sea defence and excavation of a 10 km long canal under force account by the NDIA. The total cost of the entire project was expected to be under US\$20 million, but at this point no one knows for sure what the final cost will be and that is perhaps why we are being asked for yearly supplements to keep the project going. Before the project can function as expected, the NDIA has to dig an outfall channel to relieve waters into the ocean. A contract has to be awarded for this work which will be costly but so far no progress has been made to get this work started which must be completed simultaneously with the other works if the project is to be functional. The project is behind schedule and Minister Ramsammy has given the contractors until the end of August 2013 to complete contract works, a tall order.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, allow me to thank my friend, the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water, with responsibility for Tourism, for providing me with the image on which I wish to end my contribution. No, not his invitation to dream, but something altogether less exalted: his brandishing of an empty glass for which he was duly rebuked by the Hon. Deputy Speaker. Thinking of the debate these past days and nights, my mind has gone to that empty glass. Think of Budget 2013 as a half full glass of water. Its defenders on the other side have outdone one another in ingenuity and eloquence to argue that the half full glass is full to the brim, even to overflowing. A few of our Members on this side, in understandable repudiation, have argued that, no, the half full glass is empty, bone dry. And as the argument raged, the half full glass that

is Budget 2013 remains stubbornly half full. It seems to me that if we are to combine our energies to filling the glass, we should begin by accepting all round that the glass is half full – not full to overflowing, not empty and bone dry, just a half full glass. This would be for me a beginning of togetherness, an essential togetherness of perception. If we cannot agree on what there is, how can we expect to agree on what will be and what ought to be? And as we argue, full of passionate conviction on all sides, the most crucial and necessary task of constructing an architecture of national unity disappears over the horizon, a task for tomorrow, if tomorrow ever comes.

I conclude today with the words I concluded with a year ago and, perhaps, I would have to conclude with them again a year from now.

“It is for us in this Hon. House, Mr. Speaker, to decide whether we move forward together in conditions of mutual respect and united in our love of country, or whether we continue to make our people the victims of our own failure to bring an end to political hostilities.

In this new dispensation, there must be no place for the white flag of surrender. As we go forward let the spirit of compromise prevail. Let each side of this Honourable House treat respectfully with the convictions and aspirations of the other side, especially when we most disagree. Let us find accommodations where they can be found.”

Once more, I so urge. It is a modest enough beginning, but a small and necessary step on a long journey.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very, very much Hon. Member.

Hon. Members it is just about 7.47 p.m. we take the suspension now for half an hour. Members of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply are asked to recall that there is a meeting now on the programme for the consideration of the Estimates in my Chamber. Thank you.

Sitting suspended at 7.48 p.m.

Sitting Resumed at 9.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members, please be seated. Members, we are starting much later than anticipated because the sub-committee of the Committee of Supply - the business committee of the Committee of Supply - met for almost one hour and I thought, that should have been about 15 to 20 minutes, so we will resume. I invite the Hon. Member Mr. Odinga Lumumba to address us. Thank you.

Mr. Lumumba: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand here tonight to make this presentation with the intention to convince my colleagues on the opposite side to support the budget that has been proposed by the Government of Guyana, specifically by our formidable Finance Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh. Before I get into the details of my presentation, I must compliment Dr. Singh and his staff and I say this because the burden of justification carries a lot of weight. In essence, credit must go to this unit of the Ministry of Finance, also the President of Guyana, the private sector, citizens and well-wishers.

It is apparent in the presentation, that Dr. Singh could not have pulled this budget out of a “magic bag”. He had to assess the nature of our economy. He had to look at the past. He had to assess the future. He had to observe the conditions of the world. He had to get a fair idea of the resources that are available for the development of Guyana. Preparing a budget and its justification must be based on science, logic and deliveries. On the other side, we have the Hon. Member of Parliament, Mr. Carl Greenidge, an experienced crafter of past budgets and an experienced economist who should understand economic reality.

Mr. Greenidge does not need a pair of binoculars to compare the past budgets and economies with the present. Mr. Greenidge is an intelligent man and from my observation, he is not blind and he has feelings. He is clearly in a position to guide his brothers and sisters on the other side so that they can identify the obvious.

Let us go back to Dr. Singh, the People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) Budget is a long road, it represents the highway to prosperity and the construction of this highway began over 20 years ago and every year, specific things are done to ensure that at the end of the day, everything that we propose connects with the previous activities so that eventually, the result would be prosperity for all.

It is imperative, in particular, for our younger generation that we must spend a few moments to listen to the observation of two brothers who came from the United States of America (USA). This is about visitors who have not been home to Guyana in 20 years. It is a clear attempt to understand the changes in this society. This presentation is not to attack the Opposition, specifically the APNU coalition. The past is the past and we cannot run away from it.

This person who came to Guyana after 20 years is Mr. Joseph Narine, and he said:

“I am 68 years old; I am from Corentyne, Berbice. My mother is Afro-Guyanese and my father is Indo-Guyanese. I migrated from Guyana 22 years ago and I have not been home since. I have just arrived and I am pleasantly surprised as I descend the stairs of the Caribbean Airlines aircraft and enter Immigration, I immediately felt at home. I notice the well-dressed immigration officers, all handsome and beautiful young men and women situated in these lovely booths that I have never seen before. The young woman who received my passport smiled at me and said, ‘welcome home, Sir’.”

Mr. Speaker he continued:

“I was pleasantly surprised and immediately began to love my country again - the poverty stricken country that I ran from 22 years ago. On my way to collect my bags, I shuddered at the thought of the eight bags that I would have to lift, only to be surprised that the bags were on a rotating ramp and then there were uniformed porters waiting to take my bags via the use of a trolley. This was not before they were sent through a piece of equipment to ensure that there were no bombs in my bag. Now I exit immigration, only to see smartly dressed uniformed taxi drivers standing in an orderly manner. After 20 years I felt as if I was now entering a society that has positively evolved greatly and has now become disciplined.

I then boarded a taxi and off we went. As we turned the corner from the airport, the mannerly taxi driver said to me, ‘Did you know we are getting a new airport?’ The airport is going to look like La Guardia with a new large terminal and six gates so that you would no longer have to walk through the rain anymore. Plus, we will have big planes from China, India and Africa and they all will be able to land here because of the larger runway that will be put in place. I was again pleasantly surprised. He went on to

murmur that his neighbour who is a customs officer told him that there are more than 1000 cars being sold in Guyana per month. The taxi driver then said, 'We are now constructing a four-lane road so there will be no congestion.' I smiled and I said to the driver, 'Head to Georgetown immediately'.

As we headed to Georgetown, I looked at the scenes before me; I saw painted houses, new zinc sheets, fat goats, fat sheep and fat cows”.

[**Mr. Ramjattan:** You looked in the mirror and saw yourself.] One looked like Khemraj; a cow named Khemraj, not a goat.

“What amazed me was that immediately I knew something was missing; I saw no one carrying water in buckets on their heads. I did not see families bathing in the canals, unlike the past. I saw no trucks with drums of potable water. I asked the driver in amazement, 'Boy, are you sure this is Guyana?' He laughed and responded, 'You haven't seen anything yet.' He said, 'Every house has water pipes'. No bathing in the *blacka* anymore.”

I am sorry the Deputy Speaker is not here, because she would not have to bathe in the blacker anymore. [**Dr. Singh:** Mrs. Backer used to bathe in the *blacka*?] Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is trying to put me in trouble.

“We were now at a place where it was the fishing village, I saw trawlers, so I asked the driver again, 'What is happening here?' He said: 'We have mostly big boats now, some small boats, but we are into exporting more fish, shrimp and prawns.' I said: 'It's no wonder that I have been purchasing this fish in the United States and have been saying to my wife, 'This fish tastes like Guyanese fish'.

I then said to him, 'Hurry, keep driving, I need to see what Georgetown looks like now'. Suddenly, there is traffic congestion; I asked him, 'What is going on here?' He said, 'We are at Diamond, it is a housing scheme'. The driver said, 'I will take you and show you'. As he turned right into Diamond, the houses I viewed were totally different from the wooden buildings that I was accustomed to in the pass, plus, I remember this area as being cow pastures and cane-fields 22 years ago.”

The houses he saw, hundreds of houses; he emphasised that they were mostly huge, some one-storey, two-storey, even three-storey and some with one or even two cars parked in some of the yards.

“I noted that so many cars could only mean that Guyana was getting like the United States. The amount of cars I saw represented economic growth. I said to the taxi driver, ‘Ok, let us continue to Georgetown, I need to get some money out of my account so we have to go to the bank’. The driver responded and said, ‘Sir, look to the right at those two big buildings that we are approaching’. As I looked, I saw that they were actually two banks with ATM machines. He said, ‘That was long time you do not have to go to town to get money anymore’. I thought that was weird I never thought that they would have put banks in the country side. There is now greater distribution of wealth.

At that moment my head began to hurt and I said to the driver, ‘Hurry, I need to get to the Georgetown Public Hospital; my hypertension may be acting up’. He said, ‘No need to go all the way to Georgetown, we have a hospital just a few feet away from here - the Diamond Diagnostic Hospital’. I asked about cost to do the necessary testing and was flabbergasted to learn that it was also free, just as it was at the Georgetown Public Hospital. He even went on to inform me that there were doctors present who were trained in Cuba. I instantly thought about moving back home because of the free health care and other developments.

As I travelled along the road to Georgetown, I noticed once again, congestion. I asked what was being done about this and why were the materials at the side of the road and was told that the road is being expanded to a four-lane highway from Diamond to Georgetown, and that all the new home-owners in that area would have an easier time to get to and from work. All I could have said at that moment was: ‘Oh my God, Guyana is definitely moving and improving’.

The taxi driver seemed to be very knowledgeable in this area, he said, ‘We have approximately 4000 – 5000 house lots for a housing scheme to accommodate re-migrants like you’. I said, ‘I am going to get mine immediately’.

I was overwhelmed. I have seen so much progress I am now confused. I am here with my brothers, Walter and John. Walter had heard so much about the new developments in Guyana, but was convinced by the Alliance for Change (AFC) representatives in the US to write them a cheque to donate to their political party because they had heard so many bad things about Guyana. He was actually bringing a cheque for Member of Parliament, Mr. Ramjattan, but because he heard the story

At Providence, I saw the houses, the house lots and a new road being re-built towards Mocha Arcadia. I asked myself, ‘How is it people cannot see Guyana’s development? How can politicians be so vicious? Why they, especially, cannot and will not tell the truth when things are so evident?’

I last saw cricket at Georgetown Cricket Club (GCC), now I am passing a place called the “Stadium”. I asked the driver...”

This was what he asked the driver:

“Is this the Yankee Stadium they brought to Guyana?’ The driver said, ‘No this is our Stadium.’ He went on to explain the different sports and activities carried out there. He spoke about the various international artistes like Akon, Beres Hammond et cetera.”

[**Mr. Ali:** Akon?] Yes. We have entertained the Guyanese population at this very stadium.

“I then saw the large sign marked “Casino” and asked the driver about it, he said, ‘This is the Princess Hotel and Casino, it has a large pool, poolside restaurant and bar, ATM machines, casino, hundreds of rooms, a gym, a spa, et cetera.’ I started wondering and said, ‘I do not need to go to Las Vegas anymore’. I then decided that it would be best that I come to my own country and go to that casino.

My brother Walter then shouted at me saying that he was heading across the river to the West Bank of Demerara because he wanted to see more to decide whether he was making the donation to the AFC or the PPP/C, but was afraid of the floating bridge. The driver then showed him a heading in the newspaper stating that Mr. Robeson Benn said that there would soon be a concrete bridge like those in the United States of America (USA) and England. Walter called me two hours later with excitement in his voice as he said,

‘Brother, I have been all over the West Demerara area. I have seen so many positive changes in the villages, but I have two specific places in my mind - Tuschen and Parfaite Harmony - both are completely developed. They have paved roads, potable water, painted houses, schools, health centres with nurses and drugs for distribution, lots of houses are now being constructed with ladders and carpenters on their premises.’ He turned to the driver and said, ‘Before I left Guyana, these villages were undeveloped; there was no water and no electricity’. I immediately thought about the fact that even the great United States does not have so many new housing schemes, recently. He then said that after his visit across the river, he would head to Corentyne, but not before he stopped at Freedom House with the donation for the PPP/C instead of the AFC. He said that he was now convinced that the PPP/C Government has brought Guyana from darkness to light and that the AFC wanted to join PNC/R/APNU to carry Guyana back to the days of Burnham.

As I journeyed to Georgetown, I smelled a stench. I noticed garbage high over my head and was rewarded by burning eyes. I thought I would die. I then turned to the driver and asked him why was Georgetown so filthy. He said that most of the out of town areas are under the PPP/C Government; the people who manage the city are members of the PNC/R/APNU, the garbage and cleaning is their responsibility, however the PPP/C helps them as a necessity.

I asked to go to the hospital to check on my eyes, he suggested the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC). I asked him, ‘Are you crazy? Why would I want to go where I know 22 years ago there were no doctors? That the same hospital which sent an ambulance to Buxton to pick up Lumumba’s grandfather two weeks after he died? Is it the same hospital where a rat bit a baby while she was in her bed?’ He said, ‘No, things have changed, we have Dr. Bheri Ramsaran who is the current Minister of Health, highly trained doctors from Cuba, we have Dr. Norton who will take care of the eyes and we also have a dispensary that is well stocked with drugs. When I arrived at that hospital I was appalled, I thought I was at the Bellevue Hospital in the U.S., the doctor’s shirt was lily white, his disposition welcoming and I was seen by the doctor ten minutes after my arrival and given some eye drops to help my burning eyes.

I then called Walter and told him that I was headed to New Thriving for lunch. The driver told me they had peking duck, chowmein, lowmein and even lobster. I said to Walter, Guyana has really changed, but for the better, as I see it. I decided that after lunch, I would go to the market and buy some fruits after my meal. Walter called and said that he was headed to the Corentyne now, but was afraid to travel the distance at night due to an experience with robbers 24 years ago. The taxi driver then said that it was safe to travel the distance since we now have good roads and highway lights. Then Walter asked, 'What about the ferry that used to take four hours?' The taxi driver said that it can now be substituted by another means of crossing the river. Walter then mentioned the new market being built at Mahaica, a big concrete structure, which he stated he was taking a few photos of to show off to the Guyanese-Americans, because APNU/AFC told them that there were no markets in Guyana and that people sell fruits on the roadside.

Walter boasted about the big beautifully, painted houses that he was seeing East, West, North and South as the car sped towards West Berbice. He spoke of the spanking new health centres, large newly built schools. One hour later, Walter told me that he was in the middle of the Berbice River. I instantly asked him if he was crazy and asked him what boat he was on and what time he would reach the Corentyne. He said, 'I will be there in a few minutes; I am on the bridge like the Manhattan Bridge'. Walter said, 'Brother, it takes 3 minutes to cross the Berbice River now as opposed to four hours, 22 years ago.' He suggested that this was cause for us to take a drink to former president Bharat Jagdeo and the PPP/C Government."

Mr. Speaker, Guyana has indeed changed, the roads are better, there is potable water, new schools, hospitals equipped with doctors, nurses and drugs.

"At this point, my journey became very tiresome and I decided to get a hotel and get some rest. I asked the driver to take me to the Pegasus Hotel, but before that, I would stop at the market for my fruits. The driver drove down Robb Street and I saw the dozens of cars along the street doing their shopping. The stalls and shelves were fully packed with fruits and greens. Before I migrated, it took a few minutes to walk through the market to encounter only dried up greens and rotten fruits. Now, it is an entirely different experience.

Upon my arrival at the Pegasus Hotel, the front desk staff advised that there were no rooms available; I was surprised because I had to had to ask the question, ‘How can a country with a bad economy have hotels that are fully booked?’ I asked the driver to take me to another hotel. The driver turned left and jokingly said, ‘Let us go to the Marriott.’ There I saw a huge building with dozens of workers doing their carpentry and asked the driver, ‘What is this?’ He said, ‘This is the Marriott International Hotel & Casino, it will be completed in August 2014. My immediate response was, ‘Book me a room for next year now.’”

Mr. Speaker what Walter and his brother have seen is a new Guyana, a democratic Guyana and a Guyana with hope. A Guyana, that guarantees that Member of Parliament, Mrs. Volda Lawrence, is much healthier now, than 22 years ago. A Guyana with an army that the Hon. Opposition Leader, Major General, Granger was part of; an army that now has guns with sufficient bullets for them, an army that is now professional; an army that does not allow their young officers to sell the *New Nation* newspaper in front of Guyana Stores; a Government that would not order a public servant to attend a political party’s general council meeting. It is a different Guyana that would not allow Major General Granger to be unceremoniously jumped by Mr. Joe Singh. Guyana now has democracy. With this Government, no public servant can be ordered by the Hon. Minister Westford to carry the *Mirror* newspaper and sell it anywhere. We now have a country that is blessed; a country that is for all of Guyana, regardless of race, colour and creed.

The growth that Walter and his brother witnessed can only continue if the proposed budget is accepted. This Government is open to discussions and debates, we have not closed the door and we have never closed the doors. The discussions, however, must be about economic growth, must be about truism about what is good for the country; it must be practical; it must be about the creation of employment, construction of more buildings on Sheriff Street, Robb Street and all the streets of Guyana. A 5% growth rate in this world today is a phenomena, controlling inflation is a phenomena. This Government has done well.

My brothers and sisters on the other side argue that Value Added Tax (VAT) should be lowered; VAT is too high. If VAT were to be lowered to 15%, old age pension could not have been increased. The money has to come from somewhere. Unlike the PNC/APNU, this Government does not believe in *Obeah*. Because VAT is 16%, the sugar industry was able to receive \$1

Billion; \$2.9 Billion was given to Linden in electricity. The money has to come from somewhere; unlike the PNC/APNU, this Government does not believe in *Obeah*. Guyana Power Light (GPL) was given \$5.8 Billion, if VAT was lowered, we would not have been able to cushion the 1% increase in NIS, it is because VAT is 16% that the income tax threshold is eased. The money has to come from somewhere; unlike the PNC/APNU, this Government does not believe in *Obeah*. If VAT was lowered, we could not have provided that \$20, 000 per annum for senior citizens in electricity. If VAT at 16% is lowered then the property tax that has been lowered could not have been dealt with and the young professionals, who now have tax relief through the interest of mortgages, would not have been able to receive that.

I have known Member of Parliament (MP) Greenidge for a number of years and I have known him not to be racial man; I have known him to be a good person. For MP Greenidge to say that giving \$1 billion to GuySuCo is a “black hole”, can make those that do not know him, believe that his position is ethnic based. Furthermore, is he saying that Linden deserves \$2.9 billion, but GuySuCo does not? He needs to pronounce and clarify the difference between the two. The Hon. Member, Mr. Carl Greenidge, must have a comprehensive position on this issue through more debates and discussions; he must not get away with this lightly. This country needs clarity. I am personally uncomfortable with Mr. Greenidge’s statement because anything that looks racist or smells racist can be interpreted as racist.

Why is it ok for one set of people or one community to get \$2.9 billion and another cannot get \$1 billion? As a matter of fact, both sets of communities can only be sustained with these interventions. Furthermore, MP Moses Nagamootoo and MP Khemraj Ramjattan, who incidentally and this is not necessarily indigenous or have nothing to do with ethnicity, the fact that they are East Indians does not mean that they are not nice guys, I think they are great guys I think they are fair-minded and good men. They have been very silent when Member of Parliament, Greenidge attacked the sugar belt. They are very silent on the matter; they did not refute him on the matter or did not ask him to clarify the matter. It seems that the AFC and APNU are working together at any cost, even if it means dismantling the economic growth of the people of the sugar belt of Berbice. This confounded nonsense must stop.

In conclusion, I suggest that we, as political leaders continue to talk; we must continue to find ways of working together. This budget is not about the PPP/C, it is about Guyana. I close by

congratulating the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh and his staff on their outstanding job with the proposed budget and I encourage my brothers and sisters on the opposite side to support and accept the 2013 Budget as laid. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much Hon. Member. It was very entertaining. Before we move to the next presenter can I ask Cde. Prime Minister to move the motion to go beyond 10.00 p. m. I think we should move the motion first to go beyond 10.00, rather than interrupt our Minister.

Mr. Hinds: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I propose that we suspend Standing Order No.10, so that we could continue this evening's debates and complete the list of speakers.

Motion put, and carried

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Mr. Ganga Persaud, you may address us on the Budget. Thank you.

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. G. Persaud]: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Permit me to join Singh and his team of dedicated and committed staff members, for once again producing the Budgetary Estimates for the year 2013 and continue to make all of us as Guyanese proud.

It is my understanding that the 2013 Budgetary Estimates have emerged from a process of deliberate consultations with several key and critical stakeholders across this beautiful land of ours, including, those on both sides of this Honourable House. Maybe it is because of such consultations that Budget 2013 has received the magnitude of popular support and the excellent public ratings, some of which was acknowledged and shared by Members of the opposite side of the House; such as the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma, when he boldly stated that at a quick glance, Budget 2013, as presented by the Hon. Minister, is seen by the public as a very good budget.

Various sections of our society at the individual and group levels have also publicly expressed an extremely high degree of agreement and satisfaction with the \$208.8 billion Budget, as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance on behalf of the PPP/Civic Government.

I must commend all individuals and groups who have made public, their comments on Budget 2013, including the Private Sector Commission, Chambers of Commerce across Guyana,

entrepreneurs from all walks of life, Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and all representatives of Labour, as well as farmers, workers, students, senior citizens, differently able citizens, representatives of youth, as well as individual young people; members of the sporting fraternities, just to name a few. It is therefore obvious that Budget 2013 has something for everyone. Every strata of our society and hence we can therefore conclude that undoubtedly, it is a well crafted budget.

I wish to acknowledge and endorse statements made by my colleagues on this side of the House who would have spoken on Budget 2013. I also wish to acknowledge the Hon. Members of the opposite side of the House, who would have also spoken in support of key measures, as outlined in budget 2013.

I have noted concerns expressed by some Members on the opposite side of the House. I wish to reiterate that our National Budget is presented annually to this House and so it is for a specific period; the Fiscal Year.

9.45 p.m.

Hence, no one should expect that this Budget 2013 can sufficiently and adequately address all the developmental and socioeconomic issues affecting our country at this point in time. While I do not think that it is necessary to remind all of us that we are still a developing country and as such we are not fortunate to have all of the resources that we would like to have to fix all of the issues and problems affecting all of us as Guyanese immediately, nonetheless the PPP/Civic Government is committed to continue offering effective leadership, stewardship, strategies, initiatives and programmes which will continue to enhance and accelerate our growth and development as a people and as a nation.

The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development is responsible for 11 Budget Agencies, that is, our Central Ministry and ten Regional Administration, and as such I am happy to state that as a collective unit we have benefited from a significant increase in the \$208.8 billion Budget 2013. Overall, in 2012, the revised budget for the 11 agencies was \$21,278,267,000 in comparison to what is proposed in Budget 2013, \$23,425,690,000, an increase of 9.7%. I wish to commend the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, for assisting me in doing some of the math so that I had to just copy his figures.

It must be noted that during 2012 the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, along with its ten other Budget Agencies, six municipalities and 65 National Democratic Councils (NDCs), including the 200 plus Community Development Councils stayed very closely connected to our communities across this beautiful land of ours. This allowed us the opportunity to listen to suggestions, comments and proposals as to how the different tiers of Government, through budgetary support, can bring greater joy, happiness and comfort into their lives.

Myself and my Colleague Minister, the Hon. Norman Whittaker, also listened attentively to many of our colleagues on the opposite side of this House as they would have sought to focus our attention to issues affecting citizens and communities in the various regions, municipalities and NDCs. Some of these issues remained unsolved and so they are now placed in Budget 2013 hoping that we will receive the required support so that the solutions can be brought to bear very early in this year so that we can, as a collective, resolve issues affecting the communities across the regions.

I wish to commend all Members on both sides of this honourable House for their support in bringing community issues to our Ministry's attention and also for making suggestions and recommendations with regards to possible solutions. The working relationships with many on the opposite side of this House would have resulted in several major issues at the local level resolved; much to the satisfaction of the residents. I wish to reiterate that some additional solutions are contained in the indicative years of our budget and we are hoping that, should savings be accrued from Budget 2013 approved projects, we will be able to take some of those projects on board at a later stage in this year.

For us at the Ministry and the other tiers of regional and local governance, Budget 2013 is significantly charged with the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government's commitment as was stated in the 2011 Manifesto and also during Government's interactions with communities in 2012. This budget will result in many expectations being met, many promises being fulfilled, many issues being resolved; thereby enhancing the quality of life of our people.

For the 11 agencies in 2012, the revised expenditure under the current budget for administration and finance programme was \$1,044,812,000. Budget 2013 proposes \$1,224,030,000; an increase of 17.2%. This is extremely significant since this increase and the total allocation will allow for

the 642 staff members across the 11 agencies in the 10 regions to have more financial resources expended on their welfare and wellbeing.

Under the agriculture programme in 2012 the revised allocation was \$1,188,325,000 as against Budget 2013 making available \$1,284,495,000; an increase of \$96,170,000 or 8.1%. The number of staff members in the agriculture programmes across the ten regions would have increase too over the year 2012 and are catered for in Budget 2013; staff movement from 301 to 319. This is an indication that the fears expressed by the Hon. Member Mr. Bulkan and the Hon. Member Mr. Morian that we seem to be under-resourcing agriculture at the regional level does not hold much since we have increased allocation as well as the number of staff members on the extension programme.

The current budget for the public works programme: In 2012, we expended in excess of \$1 billion. In the year 2013, the allocation is \$1.2 billion. Here too we have had a staff increase, moving from 240 to 254. The allocations under this programme will see us maintaining a number of our structures and infrastructure, including our roads, bridges and other infrastructure across the 10 regions of Guyana.

For the education programme the revised budget for 2012 would have recognised an expenditure of \$11,104,000,000 under education in comparison to a budget of \$12,087,000,000 provided in Budget 2013. This, in itself, is an increase of 8.8%. It must be noted that the number of staff members under the education programme across the 10 regions would have increase from 7,908 to 8,280. Apart from the increase in numbers, the number of trained, skilled and additionally qualified persons during the year would have increased considerably too. This allocation will generally enhance the delivery of education services across the ten regions and will seek to compliment the support provided by the Central Ministry of Education in areas such as the School Feeding Programme, distribution of text and exercise books, provision of other teaching and learning materials. It is anticipated too that this allocation in 2013 will, in a very significant way, enhance our ability to effectively maintain our infrastructure – our school buildings and other infrastructure – which are part of the education assets in the 10 regions. Part of this allocation, as well, would be used to enhance our security services in the education sector; thereby offering greater protection to our facilities.

I noted the disclosure made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, in which he sought to compare and contrast the allocations given to Region No. 4 with that of Region No. 6 and at the same time sought to insinuate that there is some evidence of discrimination in the apportioning of resources. I am of the view that it was an honest error on the part of the Hon. Member and this was due to lack of knowledge with regard to the regional system, particularly Region No. 4 and with regard to how the budget allocations work in this region.

For the National Budget the entire landmass of Georgetown, including the population of the city, are excluded from the Regional Administration, Region No. 4, Budget so we cannot use the entire population of Region No. 4, including that of Georgetown, and then seek to compare and to say that one region would have benefited more or less.

As I said earlier, I am of the view that the Hon. Member made an honest mistake and so, to take the guidance provided by the Hon. Attorney General, let me use an example so that the error would not be made in the future. If we look at the education allocation for Region No. 4 all the schools and educational institutions that are within the boundaries of Georgetown, all the teachers and facilitators who operate within these institutions are catered for under the Ministry of Education's Budget, centrally, and not in that of the Regional Administration and so it is for all of the other programmes in the regional budget.

The health programme across the 10 regions: The 2013 Budget has made provision for \$3.6 billion to be expended. This is an increase of 7.6% over expenditure for 2012. In the health sector, the staff members at the regional level continues to increase not only in quantity but also at the level of quality based on deliberate exposure to a number of training programmes, seminars and workshops. The number of health workers across the regions is recorded now as 2,320 in comparison to 2,209 in 2012. This undoubtedly is a very good indicator of the effective delivery of healthcare across the 10 regions. I must remind us that the Central Ministry of Health, like the Ministry of Education, provides significant support to the health programme in the ten regions. Much of the drugs and medical supplies, as well as training for the various categories of health workers, providing of other basic healthcare materials are often undertaken by the Central Ministry of Health. As a nation we can boast of having healthcare facilities in more than 90% of the communities across the ten regions. This, no doubt, has contributed to a higher life expectancy rate of our people. It can be further argued that the quality and degree of healthcare

offered to our citizens at the local level often exceed expectations. It must be noted that the number of referrals from the hinterland to the coastland region are on a steady decline which is a very empirical indicator that the quality and quantity of healthcare is improving at the regional and at the community levels.

I wish to express profound thanks and gratitude on behalf of the PPP/Civic Government to the 11,815 employees at the Central Ministry and in the 10 Regional Administrations for their dedication and commitment displayed during the year 2012 in the implementation and completion of the various projects and activities and to encourage them to display greater commitment and dedication in the execution of a larger number of projects and activities as a consequence of higher degrees of budget allocations.

Many of my colleagues have agreed and accepted that while we have done much, while many services have improved, both at the quantity and quality levels, there are still difficulties and inconveniences experienced by our citizens from time to time. I wish to join my colleagues in such acceptance and to invite the Hon. Members on the opposite side of this House to join us in minimising and removing these irritants and hindrances from the various service systems wherever they exist.

The Hon. Member, Dr. Norton, state that there is no doctor at the Mahdia Hospital. Here again I want to believe that at the time when the Hon. Member received the information it was before 28th February, 2013, and because of the Hon. Member being busy with commitments he could not have double checked because information available - and I am certain the Hon. Member representing the AFC from that region would have guided the Hon. Member, Dr. Norton, had he enquired - would state that a doctor by the name of Dr. Samaroo took up this appointment at Mahdia Hospital on the 28th February, 2013, so to say that we do not have a doctor only a couple of days ago... Here again, I think, the Hon. Member, Dr. Northon, would have trusted the information that would have been passed to him; so unfortunate, but it happens at times.

Once again, I must respond to a statement made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan. That statement stated that RDC Councillors were not paid stipends for five months in 2012 up to today. I am in sympathy with the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan because it seems as if there are some persons who are bent on providing incorrect information to the Hon. Member, seeking to

cause embarrassment to this Hon. Member in public space. Payments of stipends for RDC Councillors were available in 2012 at the usual RAU counter to the extent that some councillors would have been a little bit tardy in uplifting their payments. Information received as of yesterday suggested that there are only two councils who have not uplifted one month's payment that is still at the RAU, waiting to be picked up. I think that there was some mischief in that information shared to the Hon. Member. The intention, apparently, was to discredit the Regional Administration but what has happened here, because this information is verifiable, is that it has only ended up in causing an embarrassment to a dedicated and Hon. Member of this House; very unfortunate.

Seeing that I am responding to statements that were made here, apparently Region No. 8 indeed has difficulties with persons accessing information in a timely manner – especially accurate information. The Hon. Member, Ms. Marcello, made several statements during her budget presentation. I will seek to just correct one such statement and that is one where teachers have not been paid Hard Line Allowances and Remote Area Incentive Allowance for 2012 and for 2013, thus far. Such allowances are part of the monthly payroll mechanism. Those payrolls are generated by the Ministry of Finance and a quick inspection would reveal that as of March, 2013, there are no outstanding payments for any of these allowances.

I am certain that the Hon. Member, here again, was provided with the information she shared.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, one second. I recognise Ms. Marcello; on a Point of Order, I suspect...

Ms. Marcello: On a Point of Verification, Mr. Speaker, I did not say “Remote Area Incentive”. I said “Station and Hard Line Allowances”.

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My apologies, I stick with the “Hard Line Allowance”.

Mr. Speaker: The Point of Order is upheld. Thank you.

Mr. G. Persaud: As I said, the Hon. Member can verify this on her return to the region. Just check any one of the pay sheets and that will give her the information she needs. If she has the

time, however, and wants very urgent response, I am certain that the Accountant General at the Ministry of Finance would be willing to facilitate a quick inspection.

As I was saying, I am certain that the Hon. Member was provided with the information which she shared and her intension was to share this information so that if indeed a problem existed it would have been corrected.

On the number of other inaccurate statements that were made I will seek to have a discourse with the Hon. Member and provide the responses so that we can move away these misconceptions and misinformation.

The revised capital budget for 2012 at the Ministry level would have revealed, as recorded an expenditure of \$751 million. I am extremely pleased that Budget 2013 proposes an expenditure of \$1.1 billion, an increase of 42.4%. We welcome such an increase.

In 2012, the regions expended \$2.3 billion and in 2013 it is expected that they will be spending \$2.6 billion; an increase of 15.2%. Overall the capital allocation proposed in Budget 2013, for the Ministry and the regions, is \$3.7 billion as against \$3.1 billion in 2012. This is a 22% increase across the eleven programmes and, once again, we are very pleased.

This year the capital budget for the Ministry will provide resources to acquire an additional vehicle which will be used in our M and E Department. Budget 2013 will also allow for the enhanced staff comfort by facilitating the procurement of air condition units, fax machines, cabinets, chairs, desks, water dispensers. Budget 2013 has also continued to provide subventions to the six municipalities and 65 NDCs.

Provisions have been made in Budget 2013 for completion of the market tarmac at Mabaruma and construction of sanitary facilities at a number of the tarmacs located in various parts of the country; namely Patentia, Buxton and Enmore. These sanitary facilities are intended to maximise the use of the tarmacs since these were requests coming from the vendors, themselves.

Budget 2013 has, once again, enhanced the Ministry's power generation programme. Solar lighting systems will be provided to several health centres across Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9. The Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill Programme...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you go to the landfill programme, may I have an extension for the Minister?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Proceed, Hon. Minister.

Question put and carried

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill Programme, which was started several years ago, will continue to receive budgetary support this year to the tune of \$732 million. The project was able to complete, thus far, full closure of the La Repentir Landfill Site, install gas vents, construct an access road from Cemetery Road to Mandela Avenue. Budget 2013's total estimate for the solid waste programme is \$732 million; \$662 million from the specific and \$70 million for local contribution. The programme will be carrying out a vigorous public awareness programme to sensitise the public on the ramifications of littering, both the environmental impact and legal consequences, under the proposed Solid Waste Act.

10.15 p.m.

The programme will see, during the year 2013, the procurement of 841 collection bins to be placed at public institutions and places with the 15 NDCs in Region 4. These bins will be serviced by the 4 compactor collection trucks which will be procured during this year. The programme will also be purchasing several larger containers to be used in Georgetown commercial district. These containers will be serviced by a specialised truck used for those types of containers.

The Government of Guyana is currently finalising a Regional Solid Waste Management Programme, which was under consideration by our Cabinet from the year 2011, and which will be rolled out in all the regions, except Region 4. This system is as a result of lengthy, transparent and dedicated engagements with the private sector, regional and community based organisations, citizens and waste management entrepreneurs over a 19-month period. This will join the list of the other private- public partnership (PPP) initiatives taken by the PPP/C Government in recent

times. The intention is to ensure that dump sites across our country no longer exist and that the management of solid waste will be done through the establishment of landfill sites across the regions.

It must be noted, too, that the PPP/C Government is at the final stage of discussion with several companies and organisations which have expressed interest in establishing waste recycle plants in our country. To this end, Cabinet has established a committee, which includes the following Ministries; Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development to bring closure to these discourses.

Across the capital programmes of the 10 regions, Region 1 the Hon. Minister Whittaker would have given insights with regards to what are some of the activities, programmes and project we will be undertaking in that region. Let me say a significant sum of money allocated in Budget 2013 would be used to procure a number of items that would seek to enhance the working conditions of our staff members and also enhance accommodation at staff quarters across the 10 regions.

We will continue to focus on our agricultural activities and programmes. We will continue to focus on enhancing our delivery of education by the construction of new schools, extensions of additional school facilities, construction of sanitary blocks, upgrading of our physical infrastructure, including our play grounds and our play parks.

We will also seek to focus on the number of roads and streets across the various regions. We will seek to look at our Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) structures. We will also, through our public works programme, seek to do major maintenance, construction and rehabilitation of our buildings under that programme.

Under our health programme what we will seek to do is to upgrade or health huts. Most of them, because of their size, cannot, at this point in time, allow for patients layover. We are hoping to focus on some of those health centres during this year to see how we can provide more space in those centres. We will also work on enhancing our outreach programmes in the health sector by providing vehicles, outboards engines and boats. The sore question of ambulance, we are

ensuring that our budget, once approved, will provide additional vehicles in the ambulance service area.

I am confident that the Hon. Members in this House will have no hesitation in supporting and approving the expenditures proposed under the Ministry and the 10 regions and by extension the entire Budget 2013.

The expenditures catered for in Budget 2013 are expenditures which, as I said earlier, many of us, here in this House and the communities out there, would have identified as projects needed to be undertaken, as solutions needed, so that we can enhance the comfort of the citizens.

There are some projects and activities which were brought to our attention but were not included in Budget 2013. We accept that there are some persons who are employed in the public and civil services who are not functioning with the expected dedication and commitment, thus causing undue hardships for some of our citizens. There are some officers whose actions are less than transparent. There are some, who are publicly employed, who are non supportive and non cooperative to members of the public. Yes, there is room for improvement in the enforcing of the by-laws and dealing with the issues of solid waste, but we will continue to address these issues and with all of us working together we can correct these deficiencies. I urge that we seek to forge closer working relationships between and among ourselves.

It is no secret that, as a country, we have made significant progress in our fight against poverty and our quest to secure a better life for all of our peoples. These achievements are as a result of many of us working together and putting our peoples and our country first.

Here, again, Budget 2013 presents another opportunity for us as statesmen and women to unconditionally demonstrate and send that positive signal to all Guyanese that their elected leaders, from all walks of the political divide, are serious about their continued growth and development as well as that of our beautiful country.

As we move closer to the point of granting our approval to Budget 2013, I urge all of us to please do so, and do so with hope and expectations that our actions will result in our peoples having a better life and so come to the end of the year 2013 we will all say that we have exercised our

responsibilities in a manner that would have won the admiration of the people who have elected us, to serve their interest.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Ms. Shadick: I have had to get use to speaking at late hours of the evening these days. As I rise, Sir, this evening to make my contribution I ask your permission to read instead of just speak because it is late.

As I rise this evening to make my contribution to the debate on the budget for the year 2013 which was presented to this honourable House on Monday, 25th March, by the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, under the theme *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*, I must congratulate all the staff of the Ministry of Finance who was involved with their Minister in formulating a budget which seeks to address the needs of all Guyanese, as we move to modernise our country while continuing to build, restore and improve its infrastructure.

As promised by successive manifestos, there is a definite path which this Government is travelling upon, a path which is designed to place Guyana firmly in the 21st century, while ensuring that every citizen benefits from improved infrastructure, social services and all those other amenities which are considered absolutely necessary for a happy and productive life.

Before I address budget issues proper I feel that it is incumbent upon me to address an issue which I do not consider a budget issue but for which there has been much reference to in and out of this House, some references more emotive than others. I am referring here to the allocation of radio frequencies by the former President and Minister of Information, thus ending the monopoly on radio in Guyana.

There have been many accusations of the former President having given away a limited commodity to his friends, to family and to PPP/C cronies. Those accusations have been made vociferously and very clearly, both in and out of this House. Never, however, have I heard it mentioned, in here or outside, that there is one broadcasting entity, not a company, but an individual, which was issued, not one, but two, licences to broadcast by way of television in Guyana. Those licences were granted long before the year 1992. The PPP/C is not accusing the

people who were in Government prior to the year 1992 of cronyism or giving frequencies to people. In fact, that is one of the entities which is yet to comply with the new Broadcasting Act and submit the proper documentation to be licensed now.

The board of the Guyana Broadcasting National Authority understands that the new law, and the new regulations, and the new requirements are new to all. We are prepared to work with everybody. As long as there is compliance, licences will be issued to that entity for both stations, because once a licence is issued it cannot be revoked, except for cause. To this date, we have not found any cause.

With regard to radio licences, issued in the year 2011, the Broadcasting Act is very clear as to the functions of the board and the authority, that prior to the Act all approved broadcasting companies and agencies, all broadcasting licensees, had to apply for permission to continue under the Act within 28 days of the Act being brought into force. That order was made on the 28th August, 2012. All of the entities applied and were given permission to continue. All of the entities were written to giving permission to broadcast and without exception every entity was asked to apply to be licensed under the Broadcast Act of 2011 - every single entity. There have been no exceptions and no exceptions will remain. Among those continuing broadcasters would have been those entities that were granted licences to broadcast by radio in 2011. There were 10 new ones and added to NCN there are now 11. I think that effectively breaks the monopoly on radio. I say very clearly that the board of the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority has never discussed revocation of any licences. It is not authorised to revoke any licence by law except for cause and no such cause has been brought to us. Regardless of rumours, regardless of heads of media agencies that arrange people to picket their own media houses in an attempt to bully... I listened to the Hon. Member Mr. Harmon who said that the Chairman of the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority must do this and that. Well, I have never succumbed to *bullyism* and I do not expect to succumb to *bullyism*. I will not head a board which will buckle to those things.

It was not only arranging picketing of their own media houses. One honourable gentleman, who is attached to another media house, walked, I understand, from a report in the newspapers, 17 miles and protested, according to the newspapers, article 282 of the Constitution of Republic of Guyana. I am familiar with the Constitution, but I do not know that it has an article 282. While I retain that dubious honour of being the Chairman of the Guyana National Broadcasting

Authority, I wish to assure the Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo, and anybody else who thinks that he or she can say to me to revoke the licences and make them null and void, that the law does not allow me to that.

I must, however, while I am on this topic, say that the board has been very active. It has been ambitious. It had set itself a date by which it would have finished processing licences. It had set the end of March, but all kinds of things happened, but I have to assure this House that 36 continuing broadcasters submitted documentation and applications to be licensed under the Act. Of that 36, 14 have complied with all of the requirements and so those are well on their way to being granted licences. The others have pieces here and there, a list of this and that. The board is working with them because it understands that it is a new process.

I also need to say here that with respect to Region 10 and its application for a licence, I have said this publicly and I am saying this again in this House, the board is only authorised to grant broadcasting licences to a company or a trust, not a country or a region. I have asked those who have any influence with the administration of Region 10 to tell it to please register a company or form a trust and get a trust deed and make its application. The board has made a commitment that as soon as the relevant documentation is sent to it, it will hold a special meeting to scrutinise the application, to make sure that the residents of Linden get television broadcast through a station that is properly licensed under the Act, even though, that will be a new station.

I will leave the broadcast issues; it seems to be a very emotive issue. I have heard all kinds of things but I have not heard any legal reason or any legal argument which says that these are not right. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is late in the evening and we need to complete... Allow the Hon. Member to be heard and to make her presentation.

Ms. Shadick: I now move on to budget issues. I must say that on the first day of this budget as I listened to the Hon. Member Carl Greenidge, I was appalled as he was denigrating the provision of \$1 billion to support GuySuCo's financial requirements for its transformation plan. As he reacted, while on his feet, to an intervention from the Government benches, he very clearly suggested by his retort that GuySuCo and the sugar workers were the Government's problem, not the Opposition's.

I should not have been surprised really, having lived through a period when the actions of the then Government, of which the Hon. Member was a part, showed their total lack of concern for another large group of hard-working persons in another agricultural industry. I refer here to the thousands of rice farmers who learned the hard way, that they were not the then Government's problem either. The Guyana Rice Marketing Board was shut down and the Rice Producers' Association was deemed to have outlived its usefulness. In the year 1990, when only just about 93,000 tons of rice was produced, Guyana had to resort to importing rice from Italy in order to meet local consumption demand. That was a shame. In order to survive, thousands of small farmers were forced to turn their rice cultivation lands into pasture lands.

When the PPP/C took over the Government in the year 1992, it rescued the rice industry. *[Interruption by Mr. Greenidge.]* I would appreciate if Mr. Greenidge would stop grumbling and mumbling and trying to disturb me. It found then, and continues to find now, viable markets for rice and paddy and so restored the livelihood of thousands of rice farmers. By using appropriations in successive budgets over the past 20 years, it helped the rice industry to grow from strength to strength so that in the year 2012 rice production was 422,000 tons with a projected production of 440,000 tons in the year 2013. I just heard the Minister of Agriculture said that it will reach 450,000 tons in the year 2013. Rice farmers now, once again, live with dignity.

I want to inform the Hon. Member, and more importantly I want to assure the sugar workers of this country, that just as how this Government did not abandon the rice farmers and the rice industry, in their time of need, so too it will never abandon the sugar workers and the sugar industry no matter how often or loudly the Opposition shouts "bail out" or "black hole".

I am, however, curious about the Hon. Member's off the cuff remark that the sugar workers are the Government's problem, not the Opposition's. Is the Hon. Member saying that no sugar worker voted for the APNU at the last elections? Is there no Opposition constituency among the sugar workers of this country? Is this why GuySuCo and the sugar industry are not the Opposition's problem? The sugar workers deserve an answer.

Before I leave the sugar Industry I would like to answer a question posed by Dr. Rupert Roopnarine a bit earlier during his presentation when he asked the question whether it could be

true that Dr. Raj Singh is going to take up some position and be paid US\$25,000 per month and have two houses, among other things. The short answer to that, through you, Sir, to Dr. Roopnarine, is no. There have been no concluding negotiations between Dr. Singh and this Government or GuySuCo. There is certainly no agreement to pay him US\$25,000 or to have him live in two houses. Though, that is a bit difficult for me to understand how it could happen.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to address the issue of another “black hole” so branded by the same Hon. Member Carl Greenidge, GPL. This year GPL is to benefit from a sum of \$5.8 billion as support to meet cash flow requirements. This is provided in order to prevent an increase in electricity tariffs which will be inevitable if the company has to meet increased costs for fuel and other consumables, the prices for which, due to external influences, increase year after year. This intervention is about people, and the Government’s concern for all Guyanese, because, as I wish to point out, those 166,000 consumers, who receive electricity bills, are only about a quarter of all the beneficiaries of electricity services, many of whom are children.

A further sum of \$5.4 billion is provided in the budget for upgrading and improving the transmission network of GPL and the loss reduction programme. This, I am sure all of us can agree, is very necessary at this juncture.

In comparison and in contrast, a sum of \$2.9 billion is provided in this budget to subsidise the electricity cost of just 10,363 electricity customers in Linden and Kwakwani in Region 10. It is interesting to note that this sum is exactly a half of the sum provided for 166,000 other GPL customers and no one has called Linden Electricity a “black hole”.

I was reminded, as I listened to the presentation made by the Hon. Member Mr. Neendkumar, a few days ago, when he listed all of the interventions that this Government made, Linden Economic Advancement Project (LEAP) and Linden Economic Advancement Fund (LEAF), all the things, which were happening in Linden, then I am left to wonder whether Linden should not have been called a “black hole” instead of GuySuCo and GPL because the Government keeps putting things in and not getting anything out of it.

I have listened to, and read in sections of the local media, suggestions that the sums provided for GPL and GuySuCo, but not Linden Electricity, should be used instead to provide salary increases for public servants and to give increases to old age pensions. Sir, I have a weakness for

Mathematics and at the risk of being called immodest I can claim to have been, at one time, one of the best Mathematics teachers in this country. I will try to apply some simple arithmetic here. I am going to give the benefit of the doubt to those who made this suggestion, and I will include teachers, policemen and soldiers for this salary increase. From the information I have been able to gather from the various agencies, there seems to be about 12,200 public servants, 10,000 teachers and 7,000 military personnel making a total of 29,200 persons. According to what is being advocated, those 29,200 persons will get an increase in salary and 166,000 GPL customers including the 29,200 persons, some of whom, by the way, live in Region 10, will have to pay increased electricity charges. Is this the arithmetic the Hon. Member is giving us? Is this the arithmetic that the Opposition wants us to have, that everybody must pay increases and these people will get the percentage increase on their salaries, but they do not have to pay the increases too? Then we are going to hear calls that the increase was given but it had to be paid for the increase in electricity because the bill has gone up, and all kinds of things.

The \$1 billion set aside for GuySuCo, if saved from the “black hole”, will negatively affect 18,000 sugar workers and their families, a total of about 160,000 individuals, while 40,000 old age pensioners will get an increase in their pensions. Is this how the Opposition represents the interests of their constituents? How do we measure the interest of 40,000 as against 160,000?

I know that the PPP/C got less than 50% of the votes at the last elections. Is the Member saying to us that the GPL customers, the GuySuCo workers, and so on, did not vote for the APNU and that it has no constituency there? Is it that APNU’s constituencies are the old age pensioners and the public servants and the teachers? Is it that what is being said, because it does have to represent the interest of its constituents? That is what is important.

But then in the infamous words of the Hon. Member Khemraj Ramjattan, last year, when it was pointed out to him that the budget cuts would leave cleaners, drivers and other such workers without jobs, those who suffered from the recklessness of the Opposition were referred to as collateral damage, probably copying the former President of the United States of America, George Bush’s description of all the thousands of innocent women and children who died without even being part of a senseless war. I know the Opposition likes the policies of the United States of America. That is why I made that comparison.

10. 45 p.m.

This is the same Member, who since February of this year, or probably before that, vociferously, gleefully and publicly declared his intention to cut the budget, a budget which he had not yet seen. This is yet another instance of the irrational wielding of the power of a one-seat majority.

We are well aware that the PPP/Civic got less than 50% of the votes cast at the last elections in year 2011, but unlike the Opposition, which is obviously high on the power of its one-seat majority... In this budget, as in the past 20 budgets presented by this Government, provisions have been made, and have always been made, for 100% of Guyanese, regardless of how they cast their votes, and from that course we will never ever waver.

Unless I forget, I must point out to the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence, who by the way made a presentation which was somewhat more constructive than many others from the Opposition, that this electricity assistance of \$20,000 annually, applies only to pensioners who get electricity bills; it does not apply to all old age pensioners. I must remind her, because of what the Hon. Member said that some pensioners were being asked to contribute towards the electricity in the homes in which they lived. I need to remind her that if among her constituents there are adult children who are so heartless as to demand that their old, aged parents contribute to electricity bills from their pensions, those parents need to be educated that they have the right and recourse, under the existing maintenance law, to legally demand financial support from their children. That law exists. I will keep saying it until people understand that they can educate their constituents that this relief exists. While I am addressing that I must address something that the Hon. Member Ms. Amna Ally suggested, tonight, and I think her remarks were that we should stop building new schools and we should repair the ones that need repairs. Well, as you know, since in the year 1992 we have been doing both, we have been building and we have been repairing and we will continue to do that.

As I listened to the vitriolic contribution of the Hon. Member Ronald Bulkan, as he lamented that Region 6 got more money than Regions 7 and 8, which are controlled by the Opposition, and that this amounted to discrimination in favour of Government's supporters, I must confess I was stumped. It is the same Member who sits on the Special Select Committee discussing the Local Government Bills, and who is adamant in that committee that fiscal transfers to local government

bodies must reflect the geography, population and functions of those bodies. Now, the committee is still to agree on a formula by the way, but yet here is the same Member lamenting that Opposition controlled regions do not get moneys equal to those regions controlled by Government.

I wish to, at the risk of sounding as a teacher, which I am and will always be, point out to the Hon. Member that allocations are made in the budget according to the specific requests and needs of each region, having regard to geography, population and function. Simple arithmetical division, which the Member seems to want, he wants the total to be divided by 10 because, according to his presentation, that is what we understood. Simple division cannot work. What will result is that we will have equal distribution, but what we strive for is equitable access. If he can appreciate the difference, then I would have been successful.

I do agree with the Hon. Member Jennifer Wade, that all is not well. All can never be well. There will always be problems. I am one of two Government geographic constituency Members of Parliament for Region 3, and I can assure the Member that in Region 3 all is not well either. There is a lot to do in Region 3. Earlier, the residents of Wakenaam protested the inadequate transportation arrangements between Parika and Wakenaam, resulting in hardships to the people and that is true. I wish to assure the Hon. Member, and the residents of Leguan and Wakenaam, that the situation is being addressed and the arrangements being put in place by the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) should alleviate the hardships. Very often, as Members of Parliament, we have to make representation on behalf of our constituents, we all do. I have to make and you have to make representations whenever these situations arise, but this is our duty as Members of Parliament. I have seen Members of Parliament from the Opposition benches sitting with Ministers and making representation for their constituencies. They do it on the quiet and they do it on the sly and then they get up, stand up here, and, as you know, *cuss up* and say that these things are wrong.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, before you proceed there is a need for an application for a motion for an extension.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put, and agreed to.

Ms. Shadick: Too many times Members of the Opposition wait for budget debates to score political points when they could have made representation all during the year to improve life in their constituencies.

All Members of Parliament are elected to this National Assembly by citizens who expect representation, and we all, whether part of the Government or Opposition, have a right and a duty, to approach the relevant Government Minister or agency and request interventions according to our constituents' needs.

Budget debates should be an opportunity for constructive dialogue and criticism, not for political posturing.

I listened to the Hon. Member Mrs. Garrido-Lowe, a few nights ago night. I wish to say that the incident she described should have never happened, but once it did, then it was her duty to take whatever action, which was necessary, to get justice for the victims. That is the responsibility of every member of society, and more importantly, we, as Members of the House, have a fiduciary duty to the vulnerable in our society.

Among the ranks of the Opposition, Members such as the Hon. Dawn Hastings is in the minority. The Hon. Member stood up there and made suggestions as to how the money in the budget could be allocated to better the lot of people in Region 7. It is up to the Government, having listened to that to see how those needs could be accommodated and how that could be done. Everybody else got up and said, according to Dr. Roopnarine, "the glass is empty; this budget has nothing". At least the Hon. Member identified the provisions and gave some suggestions. What we need here is rational alternatives based on people's needs. No one benefits from all this posturing for the cameras. At the end of the day Guyana will suffer if we cannot find common ground.

Mr. Speaker, I am the Member of Parliament for Region 3 and I am very excited about all the plans for Region 3. With the realisation of plans for a second bridge across the Demerara River, mining for bauxite in Bonasika, the soon to be completed world-class synthetic track at Leonora and a new access road for the residents of La Parfaite Harmonie, one of two of the largest

housing schemes in the country, Region 3 can become the place where people want to live, away from the hustle and bustle of Georgetown.

We plan to establish a legal aid clinic on the West Demerara shortly, so that Region 3 residents who qualify and need it can have easier access to legal services.

In Region 3, much was achieved using the allocation for the year 2012 in that budget and much more will be done using the allocation for the year 2013, even though it must be said that there is yet a lot more to be done.

This budget has much for many. Every sector, as well as aged and socio-economic group, is catered for and all Guyanese, except the 33 people who normally sit on the opposite side, every other Guyanese recognises that this is a good budget. This is a sad situation, but it is true.

As I understand it, annual budgets are about continuing development, and development is about people, and people expect to live in security and comfort, in the knowledge that the representatives they elected, when they cast their votes, will act in their best interests. This is why it was so disappointing to witness the shenanigans of the Opposition Members, when in retaliation for not having had the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs resign or removed from office, despite their best efforts, opted to vote against a necessary piece of legislation meant to control and criminalise the clandestine and illegal movement of firearms. This was at the time when CARICOM was making representation before the United Nations for an Arms Trade Treaty. Recognising their folly, they then, announced that it was a good and necessary piece of legislation so they will bring it to the House as an Opposition Bill.

Well, that course of action may not be possible under the existing law, so even in hindsight, the Hon. Members of this House need to be honest with themselves, and to the people who voted for them, and to recognise that it is only by working together with and reaching common ground, and I am referring to Dr. Roopnarine's, remarks almost at the end of his presentation, that people need to come to compromise to work together in the interest of all the people of Guyana. That is all we are asking for. As a show of that, I am going to issue an invitation to the Members of the Opposition that on the first day of the consideration of the Estimates let us all, 65 Members of this House, line up out there and be led by the one person of the 33 Opposition Members - let them choose and they must choose that person tonight; I do not want them to quarrel as to who

must lead - and we will walk in twos, one Member of the Government, one Member of the Opposition. Let us walk down here and show the people that we can walk together and we will work together in their interest.

Sir, I commend this budget to this House. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: I hope you will not just say that you will do it, but you will attempt to do so.

Mr. Adams: Before I present my presentation, I would like to say that I am one of the Members of Parliament who do not hide to consult with the Ministers. I consult openly with Ministers Ali, Benn, Rodrigues, Persaud and Westford. I am happy for those consultations.

I rise to continue to debate on the Budget 2013 that was presented to this honourable House by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, Minister of Finance, under the theme *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*. The very theme of this budget speaks of the challenges and the call on this entire House to work together in order to overcome them. I am positive that these challenges are not insurmountable and as the theme suggests that we work together, we can achieve the goal the theme has set before us and accelerate gains for all the people of Guyana.

Budget 2013 is before us and although it does not meet the needs of all the people of Guyana, and more particularly the needs of the ordinary man, we on both sides of this honourable House can work over the next few days and put away our personal preferences and place Guyana and the people first. We must work as a team and make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of all of Guyana. We can make it if we try.

The time has long been passed for us to come to grips with the configuration of this Tenth Parliament. More than ever, we are hearing of the term “one-seat majority”. We must forget “one-seat” and remember that on this side of the House stands the majority. We must stop confronting and start consulting. The Hon. Minister of Finance himself alluded to the configuration of this Tenth Parliament and in so doing he urged this House to “make sound decisions that can withstand the scrutiny of time.” He also asked for rational and meritocratic configurations and for there to be the identification of sensible and practical solutions. We have

come to identify those sensible and practical solutions that will help us to overcome the many challenges to accelerate gains for Guyana.

There can be no denying that the PPP/C Government has made strives for the further development of Guyana. We on both sides of the House would have seen this, but can we safely say that all is well? Budget 2013, though it has in its various developmental components, has failed to address the needs of the ordinary man.

We heard of the country's growth rate over the reporting period, but one question remains in the minds of most Guyanese: What is there for me? The residents of Region 3 welcome the news of the news of the proposed rehabilitation of the West Demerara highway, the Canal Polder Numbers 1 and 2 roads. We welcome the 10 measures as were outlined by the Minister of Finance in his budget presentation. They are all commendable, but how much does this mean to the ordinary man, the ordinary public servants?

We heard of the various proposals for infrastructural development but we need to hear about the proposal for the human development. The ordinary man is not too much concerned about the highways, nor the Cheddi Jagan International Airport extension. He is concerned about bread and butter issues. He wants to hear about the salary increases and VAT reduction. This will help him to put foods on his family's table. It is quite true that we did not hear of rising food and fuel prices and other essential items in the budget presentation, but the small man knows whenever he goes to the shop, though it is not announced, he will be asked to pay more. We must not behave like the proverbial ostrich and buried our heads in the sand and pretend that all is well. All is not well. There is always room for improvement and in this instance there is room for improvement.

The ordinary man and woman of Region 3 are interested in wages and salary increases. We are not that much interested in a minimum wage but the public servants are interested in a living wage. A budget that had a 10% increase in wages and salaries would have enable the ordinary man and woman to live more comfortably. Region 3 allocation for the year 2013 is indeed a substantial one and it caters for the various programmes namely education, health and agriculture.

The regional health sector has indeed come a far way. The Best Hospital is still struggling to become the best hospital. This institution is short of doctors and nurses and other critical staff.

Although we heard of the number of doctors and nurses that are being trained, this institution is still short of staff. We are grateful for the few nurses and doctors who worked additional hours to ensure that their patients are given the best of care and they must be commended. Some, though, are acting in various positions and are receiving their acting allowances.

I would wish at this time to compliment Dr. Bridgemohan who is doing all he can, in his powers, to make this hospital the best hospital. I wish to appeal to the Ministers of Health and the Public Service for them to send additional doctors and nurses and specialist to the West Demerara Regional Hospital, the Wakenaam Cottage Hospital and the Leguan Hospital.

Education: This sector is still without a building it can call its own. It is appalling to see how the offices are cramped in little make shift cubicles to perform their daily tasks. When the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) vacated the office we were of the view that the remaining space would have been occupied by the Department of Education, Region 3. This was not so. That space is now the regional stores.

We hear of all the glorious intervention for the education sector, these are commendable. Our Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) results are often on par or even surpass those of our sister CARICOM states. This is an indeed positive indicator that our teachers are performing their duties and their commendations are in order. Many of these students, however, are at home waiting to find a place of employment. I wish to place on record though that as a result of my contributions to the Budget 2012 debate some relief measures were brought to the students and teachers of the Vreed-en-Hoop Secondary School.

This world is now a global village and information technology is here to stay with us. We heard of the large sums of money spent on information technology. Many of those laboratories are not functioning, dozens of computers harbour dust in the school. I will give the names of two such schools in Region 3 where about 60 computers laid idled, Patentia Secondary School and L'Heureuse Adventure Secondary School. Much has done to cater for the leads of the learners. Billions of dollars are being spent on the construction and rehabilitation and extension of schools. I will ask this question: When would that 10% of moneys, which is spent on buildings, be spent on teachers' salaries?

The multi-year agreement that was signed by the Government of Guyana and the Guyana Teachers Union is in breach. Teachers are supposed to receive one month tax free of their salary in the month in which they proceed on Whitley Council Leave. The teachers of Region 3 would have received that money on the first half or the second half of the year.

Head teachers would have become eligible for duty-free concessions but the last set of concessions were granted in the year 2009 and many head teachers, who were eligible, are no longer eligible for that concession.

In my Budget 2012 presentation, I made reference to the conditions under which our trainee teachers study at the Vreed-en-Hoop in-service training centre. Nothing has changed. I can recall saying that instead of extending the Windsor Forest Primary School senior building the junior building be renovated. This has not been done. The building is still vacant. If that was done it would have allowed the teachers to have a building that they can call their own and be in an environment that is more conducive to learning. In the year 2013, I am extending an invitation to the Hon. Minister of Education to visit the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) Vreed-en-Hoop centre.

I will wish to ask the Minister of Education if any study was done as to the risk being posed to the students of Leonora Secondary School where it is now being proposed that it will erect an e-Governance tower. My colleague, the Hon. Ms. Amna Ally alluded in her presentation to the value for money. As we speak, the students of the St. John Secondary School had to vacate their building this morning because of defects on that building. Millions were spent in the year 2001. Mr. Speaker, are we getting value for our money?

The youths of Region 3 eagerly await the completion of that synthetic track. For they believe that this facility will aid in them becoming sportsman and sportswomen. It was our hope that the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development and the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport would seek to complete rehabilitation of the Den Amstel Youth Camp. We trust that the many sports ground would be upgraded in the year 2013 and our young men and women would find a proper place to occupy their time.

This region is known for its agricultural capabilities and while we can boast that our rice farmers would have done fairly well in the year 2013, despite their challenges at the moment, some

farmers cannot find buyers for the paddy. Some cash crop farmers are still awaiting assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) to do excavation works, and more particularly in the Nismes sideline dam area.

Much has been touted about the large housing schemes in Region 3, La Parfaite Harmonie and Tuschen. I am recommending to the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water that there should be police outposts in those housing schemes for we know that crime is on the increase in both schemes.

We trust that legislation be enacted to deal with the violence in school. I remember, at this moment, my colleague in Linden who had suffered a fractured skull as a result of violence in school. We hope that the Ministry of Education can place social workers in every school.

We trust that the Fellowship Practical Instruction Centre, industrial arts, be renovated. The Fellowship Practical Instructing Centre, agriculture, this institution has been closed for more than four years and the head teacher is attached to the Stewartville Secondary School.

The time has come for us to arrive at a sensible and practical solutions that will help all Guyanese to overcome the many challenges together and accelerating gains for all Guyana.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, thank you. I think it is quite a fitting speech to end the evening on. I believe that we have come to the end of our debate proceedings for the day. Our business is at an end. I now invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment motion.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move the motion that the House be adjourned to tomorrow at two o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members. The funeral service for Dr. Dale Bisnauth commences at 10.00 a.m. but there will be a viewing from 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. The funeral service will be from 10.00 a.m., I believe, until 12 noon. There will be a cremation at 1.00 p.m. I have arranged with the Clerk to have a wreath be given on behalf of the entire National Assembly. I believe that Members of this House have been invited as well to pay tribute.

Thank you very much. Have a good night everyone.

Assembly adjourned accordingly at 11.14 p.m.