

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN*

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113<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Wednesday, 17<sup>TH</sup> February, 2010

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*The Assembly convened at 2.06 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in Chair]*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, as you may be aware His Hon. the Speaker is still not well enough to preside. So I am here again today.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

## **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

## **MOTION**

## **BUDGET SPEECH 2010 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2010.**

“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 the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2010 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2010-02-08;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010, of a total sum of one hundred and twenty-five billion, five and sixty-eight million, five hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars (\$125,568,573,000), excluding seventeen billion, two hundred and seven million, and twenty-six thousand dollars (\$17,207,026,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.”[*Minister of Finance*]

*Assembly resumed budget debate.*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members we will now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2010. The first speaker today is Mr. Basil Williams, as I understand. Mr. Williams, you may proceed.

**Mr. B. Williams:** If it pleases you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, permit me at the outset to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for his efforts expended in producing this budget. I note that it is the Government's fourth budget for this current term, and I must confess that I have been unable to find any correlation between these budgets and the objectives outlined in its Party's *Manifesto*.

A big budget must not be an end of itself, but rather a tool to achieve transparency, accountability and greater efficiency in Government's financial activities. As it has been said before, emphasis should be on value for money and impacting the greatest number of beneficiaries. Should we be building more schools or training more teachers to maximise the use of existing buildings, most of which are empty after 3 p.m. Our budgets are not doing the little things. For example: improving the quality of life of the masses, creating new jobs and opportunities for our youths, promoting research and development, and science. These little

things our budgets seem to miss. But they impact and benefit greatly any further progress in our society. I am sorry to say, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, that all that exists from the Government's efforts is bricks and mortar. But this does not equal progress.

The biggest budget has financing implications. It must be financed somehow. It is not simply to say, no new taxes. Inflation is a tax. If there is no tax now, the budget must be financed by borrowing, which is deferred taxation. That is, taxing other generations, our children and our grandchildren. A bigger budget means no reduction in taxes; demands for reform of the tax system not is being met; the income tax threshold is not increased; VAT is not lowered. That is what a bigger budget means. In fact, Guyana is still maintains the highest tax to Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) ratio in the Western Hemisphere. So much for the bigger, biggest budgets.

Let me move on to my remit in labour, and let me begin with wages and salaries. I see the Hon. Minister of Labour is nodding at me, and as he did that I remembered what he said about the cooperatives, about Linden Utilities Services Co-op Society Limited (L.U.S.C.S.L.); how it was able to resolve L.U.S.C.S.L., after taking it over for several years. But it was not the Ministry of Labour or Co-ops that had resolved that matter. That matter was resolved before the Hon. Justice Rishi Persaud. That was done between the Hon. Attorney General at the time, Mr. Doodnauth Singh and yours truly, who represented L.U.S.C.S.L. I am not sure about his dubious claims in that regard.

But let us come to his responsibilities under the Ministry of Labour. The welfare of the Guyanese workers, without saying, is of low priority to this Government. Over the last ten years the Government has deliberately kept workers' wages low despite spiralling inflation. I have a chart, who wishes to see this chart can have a view of it. This chart says this:

<b><u>RATE OF INFLATION</u></b>		<b><u>WAGE INCREASE</u></b>
2002 – 2004 (ave.)	5.0%	5.2%
2005	8.3%	7.0%
2006	4.2%	5.0%
2007	14%	
2008	6.4%	10%

2009                                      3.6%                                      6 %

It must be noted that in every case, one: salaries' increases were either tied to the rate of inflation or below, and secondly, the rate of inflation when it was expressed to below, was in fact a guesstimate, because there was no household budget survey done in years. Therefore we all knew, with the high cost of living, the value for goods, etc., that that could have never been in the rate of inflation as put out in the various budgets.

If we continue, the wages and salaries' increase for the period 2007 to 2010 is as follows:

<b><u>REVISION OF WAGES AND SALARIES</u></b>	<b><u>PERCENT INCREASE</u></b>
2007 - \$2.3 B	
2008 - \$2.3 B	10%
2009 - \$2.3 B	6 %
2010 - \$2.0 B	5.5%

When we look at the figures, this \$2 billion which would be less by nearly \$300 million would be equal to around 5½% or thereabout. What this means is that there will be no increase in the real income of the Public Servants of this country for the year 2010. In fact, the percentage increase proposed for 2010 will be less than the standard increase that there was over the last ten years or decade.

What has been happening is that the workers and the Public Servants of this country have been made to mark time by this Government. They have never had any real wages given to them by this Government. They deserve to have a living wage. When you get this stagnant 5% or 6% every year, it does not factor in the rate of inflation; it does not factor in the 331/3% tax; it does not factor in the 16% VAT. So what we have here is every year, for the last ten years, the workers are being kept on the breadline.

The Guyana Public Service Union conducted a household budget survey, last year, in 2009. It concluded that the living minimum wage would be \$111,000. That would be required to start moving the Public Servants from the poverty line. In the result, therefore, the P.N.C.R.1-G. recommends that there be introduced in this country a wages policy. We will like to have a discernible wages policy. This policy should be attended by a number of factors:

- (i) The involvement of the Trade Union movement in its formulation.

(ii) The wages and salaries' increases should be fixed above the rate of inflation.

(iii) It must focus on the workers' real income and not the nominal one.

(iv) It must give all workers, except in the case of rare skills that are needed, the opportunity to obtain wages and salaries based on fixed scales rather than the ongoing use of contract employees to reward some and punish others.

Job Creation: Without a doubt it is the sole responsibility of the Government. President Obama cannot say "I inherited my joblessness problem from the last administration." It is disgusting to come into this Hon. House to hear, year after a year, instead of any genuine attempts being made to reduce this unemployment rate and figure in this country, one keeps hearing P.N.C.R.1-G. did this, and this happened in 1992 and all that. I think it is time that the Minister of Labour and the Members on the Government side wake up and smell the coffee. Let us look at it. The hallmark of this Administration has been high unemployment. It is common knowledge for many years now that University of Guyana graduates, high school graduates and even high school dropouts, and many other Guyanese cannot obtain a job. In case it is felt that I am talking from the top of my head only, there are international criteria for determining unemployment. These are as follows:

(i) Persons who wanted work.

(ii) Persons who looked for work.

(iii) Persons who are available for work.

Of course, the common denominator is that they could not have gotten work. This should be added "discouraged workers", that is, workers who have given up on job seeking. It is that serious. Two, "part-time workers", that is, workers who would prefer full-time occupations, and the unemployed.

The labour force data obtained in 2002 Census, conducted by the Bureau of Statistics, revealed that in 2002 the number of the unemployed was 31,072 or 11.7% in this small country of ours. Then, there was this household budget survey which was conducted by the same entity in 2006. What did this find? It found that the figure for the unemployed in 2006 was 28,242 or 10.7%. I do not know what anyone wants to stay, but in such a small country in terms of population as ours, and a small labour force as ours, the impact of 20,000 and

30,000 persons being without jobs must have a deleterious effect on family life and the quality of living in this country.

Since this household budget survey in 2006, there has been no recent survey, but it is self-evident that more jobs have been lost, and more persons added to the ranks of the unemployed. It is safe to say, therefore, that the figures for the jobless should be around 40 to 45,000 persons right now in this country of ours. What was the response of the Hon. Minister of Labour? This was his response, verbatim, “we cannot guarantee every person we train a job”. He said that either on the opening day or yesterday. That is what the Hon. Minister of Labour has said. But I must say to the Hon. Minister of Labour, no! It is your duty to find and create jobs for the Guyanese people, and you have failed to do so. Therefore the P.N.C.R.1-G. will come to your rescue, and we will give you a recommendation. We recommend that you recognise your responsibility and that you adopt as your number one priority - I laud President Obama, you are going to be in great company - measures to increase jobs and reduce this unacceptable high rate of unemployment in Guyana.

Now, the Board of Industrial Training (B.I.T.), mention was made about it in the Budget Speech this year by the Hon. Minister of Finance. He said that sixty-six persons graduation from its apprentice programme. When I did my checks I found that in 2008 \$60 million was allocated to B.I.T., but I did not see anything in the 2008 Budget Presentation. Perhaps that can be explained by the Hon. Minister. In 2009 the amount increased to \$85 million. So you have to sit up and pay attention. He said sixty-six came out, and now he says 1,050 are supposed to enrol. When I look at the budget, it is \$120 million for B.I.T. The Minister is on to something; he is straining, but he is only producing a mouse, with respect. Money is not impacting, that is what we are saying. We are not having value for money.

What we are saying is that we should not politicise the training of students under the B.I.T. programme. We understand that training is conducted at Kurukuru College with doctrinaire teachings. That could only mean selective admission. We do not want to go back to those Bolshevik days. Not every worker has to be a Communist or a Socialist, or be indoctrinated. So what we would like to say is that there are already existing institutions whose fiat is this type of training for the Guyanese people; the various branches of the Guyana Technical Institute, the Industrial Training Centre and the Critchlow Labour College. In fact, we recommend that instead of expending all that money under the so-called B.I.T. programme

that it in fact gives the money to these established training institutions in this country and to restore the subvention to the Critchlow Labour College.

Industrial Relations: The trade union movement woefully is still divided. The International Labour Organization (I.L.O.) Convention No. 154 on Collective Bargaining which was adopted in this National Assembly 1981 by resolution, and then reduced into our Municipal Law in the Labour Amendment Act of No. 9 of 1984, is still being breached with impunity by this Government. Foreign-owned companies which are operating in Guyana must respect our laws and our people. Therefore, they ought to be certain standard terms in contracts involving these foreign companies that wish to conduct business in Guyana. These should include:

(i) Payments of severance pay to workers of the business they take over.

The Minister of Labour has a duty to ensure that severance payment is paid. Once they have taken over, they are changing ownership. Therefore the people are entitled to exercise that option, to take the severance pay, and whether they want to stay on or not is a matter for them.

(ii) Secondly, include as a must for these foreign companies' contract the right of the workers to be represented by a union of their choice.

We must not have foreign companies come into this country and exclude representations by unions for the workers. On arrival, they destroy the representations of the unions and they cannot do anything about it.

(iii) Thirdly, foreign companies must respect unions certified to represent their workers and they must also respect the collective bargaining agreements entered into between them and the workers representatives - the unions.

Conflict resolution, therefore, is a paramount importance in resolving trade disputes, especially between the workers and their employers. The Minister of Labour, in this regard, has been given the responsibility under our laws to be the mediator/conciliator in resolving such disputes. In discharging this duty the Minister of Labour is required to be both fair and impartial. The question is: Has the Ministry of Labour been discharging this duty where industrial trade disputes seem to be the order of the day? The answer is a resounding no! The Ministry has failed in its duty in resolving conflicts and to bring harmony to the Trade Union

movement. For example, for the past decade, the Government, as the biggest employer in Guyana, has consistently failed to honour its collective labour agreement with the Guyana Public Service Union representing the public service workers. The Government has repeatedly breached the collective labour agreement by arbitrarily withdrawing from the collective bargaining process and imposing paltry wage increases on the Public Servants.

In response, what has the Ministry of Labour done? Nothing! It did not hold the Government to account, by insisting that it should follow the grievance procedure to completion which would eventuate in arbitration for final resolution. What it did was to start negotiations, and if it was in a 'good mood' it would move it to conciliation. Nowhere in the last decade did it allow any movements towards arbitration. No doubt, being influenced by the arbitration at the beginning or turn of the new millennium – Dr. Aubrey Armstrong's Arbitration Award. They are afraid of that like the plague. We really cannot be hamstrung by the affairs of persons who have been given the mandate, according to them, to govern. They have to discharge their responsibilities. The Ministry of Labour, you notice I am being charitable to my honourable friend, simply abandoned the Public Servants of Guyana.

Another case in point is the industrial dispute reaching a foreign company in Guyana and Guyana Bauxite and General Workers Union (G.B. & G.W.U.) I do not know if I would be permitted to call the name of this company, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am guided by you. Basically, it is common knowledge that this foreign company is RUSAL. It has been riding roughshod over the bauxite workers up in the Aroaima area. RUSAL is doing everything. It has had an industrial dispute with respect to Occupational Health and Safety Standards in the industry. In other words it wants the bauxite workers to work in trucks that were designed and constructed to be refrigerated trucks, but without the refrigeration. So I do not know if it is a sauna it wants the workers to get into that hot sun, in that sandy region. Could you imagine, that because the workers struck, in order to have a better working condition of work, do you know what RUSAL did? RUSAL purported to sue the officers of the union in breach of the law of this land. Why we are showing this case, we are building this case to show attitude. That is why we have to regulate foreign companies. We are not saying we do not want them. We welcome foreign investment, but you cannot have them coming *carte blanche* without any kind of regulation and controls.

The next thing it did was to terminate the collective labour agreement, arbitrarily and unilaterally, with the union. It should be noted that by virtue of section 28 A of the Labour



(Amendment) Act of 1984 a collective labour agreement is legally enforceable and binding on the parties to it. It did that. If that was not enough, the foreign company was involved in wages and salaries discussions following the grievous procedure. Do you know what? It dismissed fifty workers off the bat. It then arbitrarily derailed the negotiation process with the union and imposed a paltry increase in wages on the bauxite workers. Does that sound familiar, Members of this Hon. House? Does that behaviour sound familiar? Yes. RUSAL believes that it is the Government in that area, because it has seen the Government of this land doing the same thing - breaking off negotiations and then imposing arbitrarily salary increase. How would you expect your visitors to do better? That was not enough for it.

There was a meeting at the Ministry of Labour, or there was supposed to be a meeting, of which notice was given to the Newspapers to the union. That is the respect which the Ministry gives to the union. On arrival at the Ministry, the officers of the union were given a letter by the officials of the company. This letter purported to derecognise them as the bargaining agent for the industry. Could you imagine that? Under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, this foreign company instead of sitting down around the table and making attempts to resolve this dispute with the Government over its shoulder, hands over a purported letter of the de-recognition to a local union, representing the Guyanese people, in breach of the Trades Union Recognition Act of 1997 as amended by the Trades Union Recognition Act of 2006!

2.38 p.m.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Your time is up Hon. Member

**Mrs. Backer:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes to conclude.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Trades Union Recognition Act is a very important Act. It is an Act which is designed to determine which union should represent which employer and which business place. A poll is normally taken, especially if there are competitors, and the winner is given a certificate by the Trades Union Certification and Recognition Board. Now, once that union has that certificate, the union could walk like a champion, roll like a champion, and enter the office of the business place and tender it, *ipso facto*, it is thereupon recognised. That is our law. So, there is no way under the supervision

of the Ministry of Labour, should a letter in any way, manner or form, be given by a representative of a foreign company in the presence of the Minister and Chief Labour Officer, saying that the union is de-recognised. That is the quality of the representation that the Ministry of Labour has been giving us over the years.

It comes down to this: A couple Budgets ago, if not Budgets, some previous occasion in this Hon. House, the People's National Congress Reform (P.N.C.R.) proposed a solution to these problems – the establishment of an Industrial Court. That is what we had said. Even more so now, we are seeing how necessary it is; because right now the dispute between the G. B. & G.W.U. and RUSAL is festering and it is going nowhere.

The Minister of Labour is not exercising his duty to call in the parties, as he did in the case of Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) and Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (G.A.W.U.), to say: come around the table and let us talk about this thing. In fact, I think there is a gross dereliction of duty on the part of the Minister of Labour in this matter. It is his duty to bring the parties together and try and harmonise relations and he has not done so. We need the Industrial Court, because in the Industrial Court there will be trained persons and when the Government goes into that Court it will not be above the Court; it will not be above the law; it will be a party like the workers and the workers' representatives and I am sure that by now that matter would have been, in some manner or form, discussed in the Court and might have been long fast on its way to resolution.

In concluding, I know that my Hon. friend and brother, the Hon. Minister of Finance, showed little enthusiasm for this budget. I could understand that, because every year he says it is bigger and better, but we are not seeing the results. He is not doing the little things - quality of life, job creation. We need these things.

In that regard, I would like to thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to discharge my remit today on behalf of the People's National Congress Reform, and I urge the young Hon. Minister of Finance to try to do better on his last Budget Presentation, which will be coming up next year. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

*Members of the Opposition, People's National Congress Reform-1 Guyana, withdrew from the Chamber.*

**Minister of Health [Dr. Ramsammy]:** I genuinely believe, no – I actually know that whatever side we sit in this National Assembly, we are all driven by an ambition and a desire

for social justice and equity. I heard the last speaker said that budget after budget he cannot see the links between budgets. Our budgets have always been linked to our pursuit of social justice, and equity.

The P.P.P./C. Government, since 1992, has remained resolute in this pursuit and the 2010 National Budget provides a genuine reaffirmation of the commitment to the promise of social justice, well-being and Health for All. All of our budgets have done so. Budgets of every country must reflect the overarching principles and vision of a government or of the country. The commitment to social justice must be reinforced by an overt attempt to promote human development and this is best reflected through the national budgets.

The human development that we aspire to has as its principal components: health, education, a safe environment, the ability to grow economically, and the enjoyment of a set of basic guaranteed rights and freedoms that are enshrined in our democracy. In all these areas, the 2010 Budget makes clear, unequivocal statements. From the Ministry of Health, we argue that these various facets of human development are all intertwined and we separate them at our peril. A long time ago, Adam Smith argued wealth of a nation from the perspective of a flourishing capitalist state. We see the wealth of the nation as measured by the status of those aspects of social justice and of human development that I have just mentioned. And, therefore, we must make meaningful investment in all the areas. The 2010 Budget stayed firm and resolute in this regard.

The 2010 Budget was crafted with these principles in mind. Thus, we see the investment in health, education, housing and water, culture, youth and sports, human services and social security as critical. This was intentional and the crafters, led by the Minister of Finance, deserve commendation for ensuring that the 2010 Budget remains consistent with the overarching principle of human development and that it stays consistent with the well-being and social justice that the People's Progressive Party Civic (P.P.P./C.) Government has always embraced. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, all of us, if we go back to 1953 P.P.P. Government, if we go back to the 1957 P.P.P. Government, if we go back to a 1961 P.P.P. Government, and if we go back to all the P.P.P./C. Governments since 1992, we have not varied from this approach; we have stayed persistent in our pursuit for social justice.

The 2010 Budget continues the rich tradition of the P.P.P./C. Government of investing in the social welfare of our people as our expression of commitment to these overarching goals. More than \$50 billion, which is over 35%, has been allocated for the social sector in the 2010

Budget. Almost 11% of the national expenditure, amounting to more than \$13.3 billion, has been allocated to health alone. This is not a trivial undertaking by any means. But it is a true rejection of the days when we invested fewer than 10% to the entire social sector in Guyana, and some of the architects of that sad history in our country when a total of less than 10% of the national budget went to the social sector, are still sitting in the House. I wish they would stay and listen to what they did; it is that shame which drives them away. And, it is not only that it was less than 10% of the entire budget, remember the last budget that they presented in this House was a mere \$19 billion. So, take less than 10% that is what went to education and that is what went to health. They closed housing and social security was abandoned. This is their history that they always walk away from

Prior to our Independence, and since Independence we have all accepted the call of Health for All as part of this pursuit for social justice and well-being. But the truth is that by 1990, we had come to believe that Health for All as a goal was an impossible, elusive target. Life expectancy, by 1990, had begun to drop. Infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, among the best in the Caribbean in the 1960s, deteriorated to become the worst in CARICOM, just ahead of Haiti. Malnutrition was rampant; Malaria had reached more than 100,000 cases per year and medicines were rarely available. We did not have enough blood to provide the population. Ambulances had become extinct. Technology, even simple ones, was absent and the physical infrastructure was not only dilapidated, but was absolutely unequivocally unsafe. That is the history that we must learn, we must remember and we must never ever forget, and the people responsible for that must be able to face that truth.

Today, Health for All is a target we know that we can achieve. Today, even facing tremendous challenges, new and emerging diseases and conditions, including lifestyle diseases, we know our dream of Health for All is not an impossible holy grail. We know it is not some utopian concept; we know that our quest for health is but another aspect of the eternal struggle for human development; we know that Health for All is but another aspect in our overall pursuit of social justice.

CARICOM does not disagree, as it proclaimed Health is Wealth and the United Nations (U.N.) has sought to embrace this concept in the equation for the Human Development Index.

I hear the criticism that it is not the amount of money that matters, but how much we invest is critically important. As Rev. Kwame Gilbert said last night, it is difficult to compare ourselves to those countries that spent several times than what we had spent and expect the

same results. We pay the same price as Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica for medicines and we pay the same price for technology as the other countries do. We pay the same for utilities. Unlike all those countries, health care is free in Guyana, it is only what the Government puts...Yet, Guyana is trying to move from a time when we as a country refused, or could not afford, to invest in health. Have we forgotten? It was not so long ago. It was in 1991, when we invested a mere US\$6 per capita in health. The 2010 Budget has invested just over US\$87 per capita. We might say that that is not important, but Comrades, I think that we as a country must embrace this transformation. We must remember that our sister countries in CARICOM are spending way more than this for health. Barbados, for example, is spending close to US\$600 per capita for health, this is what the Government spends and then the people must pay for services too. Trinidad is spending, as a Government, US\$339 per capita and then the people pay in addition to that. We are investing US\$87 per capita in the 2010 Budget.

This has not deterred us in the Ministry of Health or it has not deterred the health workers of Guyana from using what we are given to achieve the same results. In the case of Guyana, I can assure you that this is made possible because of the unrelenting dedication and commitment, the unrelenting perseverance of our health care workers - our human capital. Indeed, an examination of what we have achieved and a comparison with others at the same level of investment would show that the Guyanese health care workers and the Guyanese health care system can be justly proud of our achievements.

In this debate so far, people have talked about some incidences and have focused on some areas of deficiency. I am not surprised nor am I upset. I believe we need to recognise that indeed there are deficiencies and we must acknowledge that at times we make mistakes. But we must tell the whole story and not merely come to the National Assembly with anecdotes, and stories that only tell a part of the truth. One Member of the Opposition spoke of things and she does not even know what they are. When she spoke of electrolytes and so on, she does not know what she is speaking about. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you, no country in the Caribbean can afford to put a CT scanner in every hospital. None! We have been able through a public/private partnership, to bring three CTs in Guyana and within the next twelve months, we are going to place a CT at the Georgetown Public Hospital for access by all those who come to the public sector.

For someone like the Hon. Member Dr. George Norton, who would like to be Minister of Health one day, it is important that he apprises himself of the context, the trends and the

larger patterns. No one should condemn his or her colleagues and fellow health workers based on only a part of the story or based on what he or she reads in a newspaper. And for a sector that sees people, close to 5 million times a year, a handful of adverse events that people complain about, must not be used to misrepresent what we accomplish in the health sector.

Let me tell this House something about the administration at the Georgetown Public Hospital that Dr. Norton talks so much about reading from the newspapers, not what he knows. He is a part of the management. When he criticises, he is criticising himself. As part of management, there is something called a Medical Advisory Committee made up of all the Consultants, who review all the cases at the Hospital, not only for positive things but also for the things that go wrong. He sits on that Committee; maybe he should go and tell them in that Committee, rather than being absent. He is abdicating his responsibility to the hospital and the people of this country. It is inconsistent with the general responsibility as a senior medical professional of treating people with dignity. You will realise, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, why the people of Guyana vote the way they do. Because, do you think, Comrades, that they want a Minister like Dr. George Norton? Yet nothing in what I have said could discount the fact that in spite of increasing investment, there are concerns, there are genuine concerns relating to whether we are getting reciprocal returns for our investment.

The health sector has made tremendous strides in the past two decades. This cannot be disputed and I will make the case. Yet the health sector has not eliminated all of its problems. I have stood up in this House and I have stood up in this country, and we have acknowledged that in spite of impressive improvement, our maternal and infant mortality rates are still too high. We acknowledge that in spite of improvement, waiting times could be significantly reduced. We acknowledge that accountability of our services needs further improvement. Our services could be even further improved through greater client friendliness. We acknowledge that even though we have ensured more reliable supplies of medicines and medical supplies, our health facilities sometimes do not always have the medicines in stock that they prescribe, and we acknowledge that our ambulance services can be further improved. We acknowledge we can do a better job at documentation in the sector. Most importantly, we acknowledge that our human resource capacity is not what we would like it to be.

But the story of our health sector is not only our deficiencies; the story of our health sector is not just in a total year the four or five deaths that are reported in the newspaper. I want to tell

you the real story of the health sector of Guyana. I want to tell, so that people can hear. I am not shy in telling the story of the health sector of Guyana, because I am proud of the work that this health sector and the health workers have done.

Let me tell you of the story of the real heroes, of the health workers who toil everyday to ensure that, at our level of investment, we can achieve what others are spending much more to do. I want to tell you the story, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, that, in spite of where we have come from, from a place of under-performance, from a place of mismanagement, and, in spite of some mistakes and misjudgements that are being made, we strive to be the best in CARICOM and we compete with the best in CARICOM today, and lead in some areas.

Let me tell you the story: life expectancy is a measure of the overall performance of the health sector. Let us listen Comrades, let the people of Guyana hear, that as we emerged in the 1990s, the combination of high child deaths, high maternal mortality and deaths due to AIDS, threatened to push Guyana's life expectancy to below 60 years at birth. Guyana already, by the 1990s, had the lowest life expectancy in CARICOM, just ahead of Haiti. Let me put this in perspective. In the 1960s, Guyana had the highest life expectancy of all the Caribbean countries and yet by 1990 we were last in the list. And so what happened from the early 1990s to now? At the end of 2008, Guyana's life expectancy was 70.4 years at birth. This has been climbing and is a turnaround from the early days of the 1990s. This is one way we have gained through our investment. Does it not matter how much money? It does matter! It matters because this is a success story of our increasing life expectancy that has come about because we have invested in the health sector. It is this robustness of the health sector that has led us to adjust our estimates and so our projection for 2012 is a life expectancy of 72 years and our projection for 2015 is a life expectancy of 75 years. We can set these targets because we know the performance and results of the health sector and we know that these are improving.

The story of falling infant and maternal mortality rates also tell of the valiant efforts of the health sector in ensuring social justice. The fact is that last year more than 16,000 women delivered babies safely in our hospitals, not the few cases of deaths which were read by Dr. George Norton. Almost 7,000 did so at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (G.P.H.C.) Last year our maternal mortality rate was 9.8 per 10,000 births. Have we forgotten that not so long ago, our maternal mortality rate was more than 34 per 10,000 births? The truth is that thirteen women died in 2009 during pregnancy, giving us that rate of 9.8. Like

similar deaths around the world, these were mostly preventable deaths. Last year around the world, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy.

Whilst deaths during pregnancy are mostly preventable deaths, we continue to wage a global struggle to end this scourge. We have made tremendous strides towards reducing maternal deaths to a minimum. We have reduced maternal mortality by more than two-thirds in less than two decades. Three or four of these deaths of pregnant women in Guyana have been reported in the newspapers. Every death of a pregnant woman that occurs in our country is important to us, because we believe we have the capacity to prevent most of them. No, we want to prevent them all. This is the reason why, since 2003, there is a permanent investigative team, the Maternal Mortality National Committee, to look into those deaths. It is not made up of just people from the public sector. It is made up of doctors, nurses and lay persons. Over the years, many changes have been made as we try to learn from the experiences of those cases. We will continue to address the issues so that we could achieve optimal outcomes and avoid preventable maternal deaths.

*3.08 p.m.*

For example, we have led the way in the Caribbean with the introduction of the ALARM programme, pioneered in Canada to improve emergency obstetric care. One hundred and ninety health care providers have been trained through the ALARM programme, and we have developed standards of care for the pregnant woman and a new perinatal reporting system is being enforced throughout the health sector. Clinical Audits to ensure that these standards of care are being utilised in our facilities are now being carried out routinely, with the help of our partners Pan America Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). I know that these are some complicated things, but they are just examples of what we do. For example, when a pregnant woman comes into our hospital her blood pressure should be taken at least once in every four hours. If a woman with high blood pressure comes in her blood pressure should be taken every 30 minutes. These are the standard guidelines. We are now auditing the system to make sure that simple interventions like those are happening. This is the story Comrades. The real story is of our health workers of Guyana. We are proud of the work we do, but we are also embarrassed by some of our lapses. We will continue to ensure that we provide our people with fewer and fewer cases where they see us in ‘a bad light.’



Last year, our infant mortality rate was about 15 - 14.8 per 1,000 births. Some will argue; some of us will argue; I have argued, that too many babies die in our country. But while we plead for even greater efforts from our health workers to eliminate all preventable deaths, we should also acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the health workers to reduce infant mortality from what represents a shameful part of our history when, for example, infant mortality was between 78 and 120 per 1,000 in the late 1980s. A mortality rate of about 15 per 1,000 is not good enough and must not provide us with a reason to celebrate. But must also acknowledge the valiant efforts that have seen Guyana move from over 100 deaths per every 1,000 infants to about 15. It is a success story that we must not under-state, even if we are not where we want to be as yet. The target was set: we want to be at 12 per 1000 by 2015. This is the real story, this is the on-going story of the health sector of Guyana.

Immunisation continues to be a major achievement of the health sector: Let me add to that story, the real story is looking at the fact that ninety-eight per cent of our children have been vaccinated against fourteen deadly diseases which have all been eliminated in Guyana. We have to do this year after year. Coverage for Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (B.C.G.) for tuberculosis vaccination in under one-year-old children has reached ninety-eight per cent in 2009. For the Oral Polio Vaccination (O.P.V.), vaccination against Measles, Mumps and Rubella, and Yellow Fever, coverage was ninety-seven per cent.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Time, Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Hon. Minister be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Ramsammy:** We have introduced the child pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (P.C.V.) 7, to reduce pneumonia-like illnesses in children, and we are presently prepared to introduce the H1N1 vaccine. There are many adults who did not benefit from immunisation against certain illnesses because they were not part of the children immunisation programme then. Remember at that time many of these vaccines were either not available or only at low coverage, so a lot of women of reproductive age today are not vaccinated, must be vaccinated as adults. An example is seen when we vaccinated adults against \*pertussis in Region 1, when a few cases of whooping cough were discovered in late 2008 and early 2009. Let me once again say that the public health nurses/workers deserve our eternal tribute. Once again

in 2009, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and the United Nations recognised Guyana by awarding a gold medal for its national immunisation programme. We have won that medal every year since 2002.

We wish we could promise that we will have no deaths. But we must not take the fact that deaths occur in our hospitals as evidence that we provide a poor service. The fact is that people die in hospitals all over the world. We need to look at the overall picture and not a single case or a few cases. We need to make comparison with similar size hospitals. We need to look at the resources we have. This is the kind of work that people like Dr. Norton, need to do if they are going to come here or if they are going to condemn their colleagues, their fellow administrators, or if they want to be a Minister of Health.

I really genuinely wish we could eliminate some of these problems that sometimes arise. I am not consoled when regrettably something wrong occurs, where in retrospect we know we could have done better. But these calamities, some of which might have been preventable, must never overshadow the tremendous work that is being done at the Georgetown Public Hospital, day in, day out, saving lives and restoring health and well-being. The fact is, the real story is, that the G.P.H.C. has made remarkable progress in meeting its mandate for tertiary care, training and research. The Hospital in 2009 admitted more than 30,000 patients, with outpatient visits amounting to more than 500,000 visits. There were almost 10,000 surgeries done at Georgetown Public Hospital last year. More than 7,000 babies are born at the G.P.H.C. each year. **[Mr. Nandlall:** Even Mr. Sharma is going there now.]. Yes, Mr. Sharma is in the Georgetown Hospital. Fifteen per cent of the deliveries at the Georgetown Public Hospital of babies are done through Caesarean section. No hospital in the Caribbean has to face such a heavy workload.

The G.P.H.C. has introduced modern techniques as part of expanding, modernising and improving quality of our services. For example, we have introduced surgical techniques that require no open cut. We have now made routine the application of Phaco-Emulsification surgery for cataracts, so much so that one can have cataract surgery in the morning, and one can go home after lunch. Laparoscopic surgery for gall bladder has been introduced, and endoluminal lithotripsy for renal stones, this is laser, has been introduced. Some people would say that, “I have surgery at Georgetown Hospital and I had an open cut.” That is because not all patients are candidates for these new types of surgery.

A centre for excellence in diabetic care has been established. It provides a modern foot care programme that will benefit this year from a Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA) Grant. The programme will introduce this year routine testing for HbA1c; this is a test for glycosylated haemoglobin. We have trained sixty-eight persons in inter-professional wound care, and because of this we have reduced amputation due to diabetes complications by 44% last year.

In terms of cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment, we have made significant advancement at the G.P.H.C. All forms of treatment, including surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy are available to our patients. More than 500 cancer survivors have benefited from one or all of these modalities of treatment in the last three years; most of whom would have died had these services not been available. We have introduced a national cervical cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment programme, for example. More than 5,000 women of reproductive age have been examined. We expect that every woman of reproductive age will be screened within five years.

In terms of training, the G.P.H.C. is unrivalled in the Caribbean, outside of the University Hospital at University of West Indies (U.W.I.), Kingston. Almost the entire University of Guyana (U.G.) medical degree is offered through the G.P.H.C. Indeed, all the allied health professions receive training at G.P.H.C. These include pharmacists, medical technologists and radiographers. Internships are provided to all graduates: graduates from medical schools in Cuba, from our own medical school and graduates from Universities in other countries, such as India, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the United States (U.S.). There are now three postgraduate programmes in place at the G.P.H.C., namely in Surgery, Orthopaedics and Anaesthesia.

Nine graduates from the surgical programme are now carrying out surgical duties at the Linden and New Amsterdam hospitals. They were trained right here in Guyana. The first batch of eight nurses will graduate from the nurse anaesthesia programme later this year. Our first batch of dentists, locally trained, will graduate early next year from the Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre. Our postgraduate surgical programme is now being discussed around the world as a model for developing countries.

We have not forgotten our research mandate either. Important publications in peer-reviewed journals have begun to appear featuring the work of young doctors and nurses in our country. Every intern is mandated to engage in research aimed at improving quality at the G.P.H.C.

and the health sector. The G.P.H.C. is the only hospital in this region which has an international standard medical conference on an annual basis, with several researchers from around the Caribbean and North America presenting research papers.

Under all circumstances, and by any standard, this is a busy hospital. If we look at emergency surgical cases at G.P.H.C, I have told you that about 10 000 cases are being done, we get a good picture. Yet in terms of elective surgery, G.P.H.C. recorded about 0.5% deaths in 2009. This is the hospital where the most serious cases come. Yet the per cent of deaths in the surgical department is not unlike those of many hospitals, and, indeed is lower than in many hospitals in the Caribbean. This is the true story of G.P.H.C. While it might serve narrow political expediency to tell of isolated cases, it diminishes the work of too many of our dedicated health workers, some of whom might also be supporters of other political parties. This is the story of our health sector.

The fact is that more than 90% of all chronic disease patients are diagnosed and treated in the public health sector. These Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases include diabetes, hypertension, heart diseases, cancers, asthma, arthritis and cirrhosis of the liver because of alcohol. Almost 60% of all deaths in Guyana are due to these illnesses. Just two illnesses, diabetes and hypertension, account for 13% of all deaths. There are 54 to 68,000 persons living with diabetes and hypertension in Guyana. Standard treatment guidelines for diabetes and hypertension have been introduced, and this year we will ensure that all health care facilities are complying with these guidelines. Training in the use of these guidelines is ongoing.

In 2010, we will extend the foot care programme to all regional Hospitals and we ensure a basic foot care programme is in place at all health centres. The ability to test for blood sugar has in the past been limited by the unreliability of testing capacity at our lower levels. This is being addressed more aggressively in 2010. Indeed, in 2010, all diabetic patients will benefit from the availability for the first time of HbA1c throughout the public health sector. This is an attempt to obtain better diabetic control and to reduce diabetes-related complications, such as kidney diseases and eye diseases.

A Chronic Disease Register has started too and this is to enable us to better monitor the health of our Guyanese sisters and brothers. A diabetes Self-management Curriculum has been developed and this year we will make Diabetes Self-management an important part of

the services we provide to our people. Our diabetes programme includes all of the services that a person living with diabetes requires.

Within these packages, there are 37 medicines that we have in our hospitals to provide to people. I thought I would talk about this for a moment, because if the programme is fully rolled out we will need just for diabetes and hypertension \$1.2 billion for medicine; with the medicine and supplies budget, even though it has increased very generously, (I see the Minister of Finance coming in and I want to thank him for the generous amount that we have) for those medicines, we will have spent almost half of our entire budget. Clearly this will remain a challenge.

In 2009, 13.2% of all medicines and supplies in terms of cost went for the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes and hypertension. I will give you another statistics Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Guyana is one of the few countries in the world where a statin, a cholesterol lowering drug, is included in our essential drug list. One of the very few countries; in Trinidad you have to pay; in Barbados you have to pay; in Jamaica you have to pay. It is not a drug available in an essential drug list, but in Guyana we have included it. Last year for 1,000 people we spent \$75 million. The truth is we have about 10, 000 people who need to be on statin, and if we provide it to everyone we will need about \$500 million for one medicine. That is the reality. But this is the story of the health sector, a sector that is responding to the needs of the people, we confront the challenges and we overcome the challenges.

The story of addressing Behaviour Change: Comrades...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Time Hon. Minister.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker I move that the Hon. Minister be granted another 10 minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Comrades more than eighty-five per cent of our illnesses come from our behaviour. We eat too much of the wrong food. For example, more than 60% of us do not eat enough fruits and vegetables. We eat foods with too much salt in them. We have developed great propensity towards fast foods. We eat food with unacceptable amount of trans-fat, and we eat food that is poor in micro-nutrients, such as iron, vitamin A, and iodine. We still are reluctant to breastfeed our babies in this country. Only about 43% of our babies are breastfed

in accordance with national guidelines. We will continue to increase the robustness of our education and communication programmes for nutrition. This year we will complete a new study on the micronutrients status of the population. The last one was done in 1998. We will introduce a salt standard and a trans-fat standard for food in Guyana, both imported, locally manufactured and also those that are produced in our restaurants.

We have become far more aggressive in our fight against tobacco, and Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I do not have time to talk about that, but I believe in Guyana we smoke too much, we drink too much. This year we are working with the manufacturers and suppliers of alcohol products to stop alcohol abuse. We also recognise the need for an extension of the substance abuse rehabilitation programme.

We will address the continued aversion of the population to physical activity. More than 60% of us are not adequately engaged in physical activity.

The real story of the health sector today is that everyone who needs blood and its products is guaranteed blood that is obtained from voluntary donors. The real story of the health sector in Guyana is that we today have more doctors, more nurses, more medexes, more community health workers, more dentists and dental professionals, more rehabilitation medicine personnel, more pharmacists, and more medical technologists. We average more than six health worker per 1,000 population.

I need to address briefly the questions that the Hon. Member, Mrs. Sheila Holder, asked. I promise that I will give you the answers. I think in this address I have talked about some of the policies. Yes, we have policies, and yes, we have indicators to measure and we are on pace in terms of our 2008/2000 plan.

The infrastructure is also a story and this year we will begin the reconstruction of both the West Demerara and Skeldon Hospitals.

We continue our pursuit of Health for All, our pursuit for long, healthy, productive lives and our pursuit for social justice. A healthy health budget is like adopting a healthy lifestyle. When you decide to do having a healthy lifestyle or engaging in unhealthy behaviour, either of those choices will shape our future. Our health budget is crafted to ensure better Health for All. Adopting this budget will help shape also our future as a people. It will help us to create a better country for us, for our children.

As political parties and as politicians we are in the business of competing with our ideas. The competition is not and should never be geared towards seeing who is cleverer. The battle in ideas must always be aimed at making our peoples' lives enriched and better. This was our dream, when we fought against slavery, when we fought against indentureship, when we fought against colonialism, and when we fought against dictatorship. This was our dream. We must strive to make our dream of a better Guyana, a Guyana proud become a reality. We have the wisdom to do so; the question is: do we have the will to do so? Thank you very much. [Applause]

**Mr. Elliot:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Before I go into my presentation let me offer my words of congratulations to the two newly elected Members of Parliament, and wish them God's richest blessing.

I rise to make my contribution to this debate on the 2010 Budget which was presented in this House on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> of February, by the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh, under the theme, *Consolidate, Transform and Sustain*. This budget lacks vision and does not face political reality of what is facing this nation. It also provides no hope, prosperity and plans for real growth to move this great country of ours forward. This budget will not contribute to the building of trust, confidence with the working class, the unemployed or the vulnerable in society.

This budget fails to address the harsh realities facing the ordinary person and fails to make life more comfortable. It is clearly an avenue for lucrative contracts for the big contractors and friends of the People's Progressive Party/Civic. This budget fails to serve the fundamental objectives of our economic system. That is the formulation of appropriate and relevant policies and plans arrive at improving the livelihoods, real wages and salaries for all citizens and the working class.

To achieve all of this, Government has to build trust, introduce good governance at all levels, stamp out corruption, and appoint the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. The need for freedom of the press, an independent judiciary and adhere to the many recommendations put forward by the acting Auditor General on the Public Accounts of Guyana and on the accounts of the Ministries, Department and the Regions. If these measures are put in place only then the theme of this Budget will be meaningful and contribute to the return of confidence to the people of this country.

As I sat and listened to the three-hour long presentation, which was very painful, I heard nothing of the holding of the much talked about local government elections - an important element for local democracy. My suspicion is that Government is prepared to further blindfold the electors by pushing back the holding of these overdue elections as part of its delaying tactics. If my suspicion is wrong then I bow. However, the People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana is conscious of the fact that this Government is prepared to rush through with the holding of these elections without putting in place legislation on all the agreed reforms on the new local government system. This will be a step backward since local government bodies will continue to be ineffective.

While there has been an agreement on the reforms to the Local Government Electoral system the People's Progressive Party Civic fails to hold discussions on the draft Bill for the establishment of the Local Government Commission. It should be noted discussions were advanced on the draft Bill for fiscal transfer to local authorities.

*3.38 p.m.*

The People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana and the other Opposition parties have called for all three Bills to be tabled in the National Assembly with the aim of having an agreement on the Bills through all the stages and be expedited in the National Assembly.

It is evident to the People National Congress Reform 1-Guyana that the failure of the Government and the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) to establish a comprehensive public education programme to ensure that the Guyanese electors are fully informed and understand the new local government electoral system. A well defined and structured programme is what is indeed, not what is taking place today in the media. It is a shame and blatant disregard of the electors the political Opposition parties of this country.

In my presentation during the 2009 Budget Debate I had made mention about the failure of Government to provide a comprehensive plan for regional development so as to allow the meaningful role in the formulation of respective budgets for funding by Central Government based on an establish criteria. Such an approach will serve to further enhance and to self-sustain real development in a more positive way. The creation of a regional development plan is meant for the shifting of power to the people with the aim of enhancing the regions so that in the long term they will become self sustainable and operate in the interest of their people. Surely this Government is not interested in shifting of power to the Regional



Councils. It is comfortable with political control and interference. There is need for measures that will result in effective coordination of the various units in the regional system, and coordination and cooperation between and among the Regional Democratic Councils, Municipalities, and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils.

Having said all of that, let me now focus on Region 4 - Demerara/Mahaica, my Geographic Constituency. This Region is so important because there lies the seat of Government, the City of Georgetown, and a P.N.C.R.-1G led Regional Council which has many controversies due to the excessive political and Ministerial interferences with the day to day administration of both the R.D.C. and the Municipality. There is no secret about Government's plan to change the demographics of this Region. Since 1994 we have observed the shift of population to increase the political support for the P.P.P./C. at the local government elections and the 2011 national and regional elections. This is evident with the creation of many housing scheme across the Region. Plans are also afoot for the creation of some four hundred house lots at Hope Estate. What is worse, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the people of Region 4 are offered house lots at La Parfaite Harmonie in Region 3.

Let me make it clear, my Party is not against the distribution of house lots and the creation of housing schemes. We, however, are critical with the undemocratic and non consultation with the elected officials of the R.D.C., and more so the Neighbourhood Councils. This act by the Government is a lack of vision and will not promote trust with the stake holders.

After careful examination of the 2010 estimates for Region 4, it is evident once more that Government plans to further starve this region of funds needed to deliver services to many communities as budgeted for. This attitude is not in keeping with the true spirit of regional development.

Land and water transport for the Region: The request for land and water transport was denied by Central Government as a further attempt to handicap the work of this important Region.

Guyana Water Inc.: The distribution of pure water to citizens is the responsibility of the Minister of Housing and Water through its agent the Guyana Water Incorporation which has failed miserably to sustain an effective system in the region. This situation needs to be investigated on how millions of dollars have been spent every year for the upgrading, extension and maintenance of the system. On routine visits to a number of communities, particularly on the East Coast of Demerara south of the railway embankment, will find all of

communities, such as Bare Root, Dazzle Housing Scheme, Victoria and Anns Grove, Dochfour; they are without this precious commodity. To make matters worse for the residents of Anns Grove to Dochfour, recently G.W.I. hooked the Clonbrook system to Hope Estate, thus denying them the regular supply of water. This situation is unbearable and only is making life much more difficult for the residents who are in distress because of G.W.I.'s incompetence.

Education Delivery: Over the past few years the population has increased two-fold owing to Government's political demographic engineering. This political action has caused much concern to the people of Region 4 and Guyana as a whole. We have seen the overcrowding in many schools especially on the East Coast. There is a lack of furniture and a shortage of trained teachers for many disciplines. Certainly, this situation is unacceptable for the delivery of quality education to our children.

Surely, the Government did not take the request by the Region seriously, instead it has allocated the sum of \$33 million in the capital estimates for the expenditure of five schools in the Region for improved accommodation - Grove Nursery School and Prospect, East Bank Demerara, Hope Primary School and Strathspey, East Coast Demerara, Covent Garden Secondary School on the East Bank Demerara. This allocation is totally inadequate for the quality of work to be undertaken especially at the Covent Garden Secondary School.

The allocation of \$8million for furniture and equipment also is grossly inadequate to satisfy the needs of the Department of Education in Region 4. I wish to call upon the Minister of Education to examine the difficulties facing the delivery of education in the Region. This call is being made because while the Government boasts about the buildings it has constructed, the delivery of education leaves much to be desired.

Public Works Roads: It is good to see the rehabilitation of so many community roads which are being done hastily by the Ministry of Public Works. One wonders if these are in keeping with the tender documents. On examining some of these roads the taxpayers/stakeholders are not getting value for the millions of dollars which have been spent. It is shameful to see the sloppy work offered by some contractors who have no idea of road work. Roads which were done between August 2009 and January 2010 have started to deteriorate; you only have to travel on Plaisance's main road and you will see the condition of that road which was done recently, Minister of Works. I hope that Minister Benn is satisfied with the quality of road rehabilitation. All the Minister has to do, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, is to use his hammer and he

will see what I am talking about. A point to note, while Government is spending hundred of millions of dollars, the Region's allocation is a mere \$33million.

Agricultural Development: This was executed by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Regional Administration in the Region. The drainage and irrigation structures have reached a state due to the collaboration of both organs and the stakeholders. However, the Ministry should have ceased the opportunity during this dry season to assist the Region in rehabilitating other drains so as to cater for the expected rainy season. One major concern is Government's intention to expend billions of dollars for alternative outlet to drain the East Demerara Water Conservancy through Dochfour/Hope. The residents of these communities are still awaiting the meeting with the Minister and his technical team so as to clear the air on this project and how it will affect occupancy and livelihood. There is also the need for the upgrading of farm-to-market road on the East Coast of Demerara.

There is an unpleasant situation as it regards the unpaid accounts for Region 4 due to bad and mishandling of the Region's work programme and various line items. A number of contractors, officers in the Region, teachers and councillors have not received outstanding payments for services rendered between the latter part of 2006 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2009. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, no one in the Region or the Ministry of Local Government is in a position to say when payment will be effective. The concerned contractors are contemplating legal action against the Region. In light of this development, I will call on the Minister of Regional Development and Local Government to investigate this unpleasant situation with the urgency it deserves.

Other concerns of the Region:

- i. Excessive Central Government control, influences and directives to appoint officers of the Council. Senior Ministry of Health officials, example Director of Regional Health Services, are also culpable.
- ii. Ministry of Finance's emasculation of the institution of the Regional Democratic Council by instructing Accounting Officers to amend and rearrange decisions of the Council. Constant adjustment, demand for additional information, or imposition of new criteria for budgeted fund release are regularly made without notice.
- iii. Inadequate allocated funds to programme COA 6211, COA 6291.

iv. Intervention into the Region without consultation or notice to the Regional Democratic Council. Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Health are the chief offending agencies.

v. Arbitrary appointment of the Regional Tender Board by the Chairman of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board without the views of the Regional Democratic Council.

vi. Confiscation of the Region 4 loam pit by Cabinet without consulting the Regional Democratic Council.

vii. Inadequate vehicles for the work of the Regional Administration.

I will hope that the Ministers concern will look at the various deficiencies in the Regional Democratic Council of Region 4, as well as the deficiencies and the planning for regional development for the 10 Administrative Regions. I hope that the Ministry and its Officers will desist in having direct control on the day to day functions in the Regional Democratic Councils and in that of the municipalities of Georgetown. Stop the micro-management of these Councils and let us get ahead with true development for all the people of all the Regions and that of the municipalities of Georgetown. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker.  
[Applause]

**Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Ms. Sukhai]:** Good afternoon Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I wish to join my colleagues, Members of Parliament in commending Hon. Minister Ashni Singh and the team from the Ministry of Finance for presenting to this Hon. House another outstanding Budget for 2010- *Consolidate, Transform and Sustain*.

I will also take this opportunity to add and endorse the welcome extended to the two new parliamentarians, and I wish to state for the records that this signals in our country we are sustaining the body of representation of Hinterland communities or Hinterland Regions and Amerindians. I would also, like to boldly state that the People's Progressive Party Civic (P.P.P./C.) Government has not faltered in its representation of its citizens. This is reflected in its ability to maintain a stable macroeconomic environment, while, at the same time promote economic growth and advancement across the length and breadth of our territory. This, I wish to endorse, is correctly placed in this budget document which was presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance.

With respect to Amerindian affairs and development, the year 2009 saw positive outcomes. Within the context of last year's programmed objectives the Ministry and its team continued to implement the stated strategies with full engagement of the Amerindian Village Council and members of the villages. The successful delivery on all goods and services, including support that covered governance, transportation, communication, agricultural equipment and machineries, representation of welfare issues, provision of services to scholarship awardees and patients, the issuing of land titles and certificate for titles for land demarcated, among other services were achieved as planned.

Turning attention to Policy Advancement on Amerindian Development, I wish to endorse that the People's Progressive Party Civic Government continues to work on developing policies geared towards improving the standard of living for all Guyanese, and within this framework Amerindians derived attention, intervention and benefits. Therefore within our national policy framework, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs positioned its interventions and programmes to achieve the objectives of initiating with the Village Councils to promote the transformation of their village economy which we expect will stimulate a level of income generation and enterprise development, and further reduce the developmental gap that remains a challenge.

Last year the Ministry collaborative approach raised the bar on consultation and discussions at various levels by the engagement of other sector ministries and agencies to position the Amerindian positions on various important matters national and local, such as forestry, mining, water, environment and even the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which is our main development strategy for the future.

The National Toshao Council Conference convened in July of 2009, also presented another opportunity which allowed for higher level deliberations with leaders from Amerindian Villages. The leaders were able to outline their concerns and recommendation with His Excellency and the Ministers of the various sectors.

Highlight of many of the discussions included many recommendations for support which Government can provide to enhance the development of villages. The other side to the discussion was the boldness by the village leaders to commend the Government on its policies and the resulting interventions. They identified the impacts such interventions were having on the well-being of the members of the Amerindian villages. The expression by the leaders of their willingness to encourage continued participation of the members of the

villages in pursuing improvement in all the sectors within their communities was also overwhelming. Therefore while I was amused and yet annoyed yesterday to hear a Hon. Member of this House stereotyped Amerindian as living in a primitive life style, and that Amerindians remained the poorest of the poor. Hon. Mr. Whittaker outlined yesterday how many Amerindians held strategic positions within Regions 1.

My question is: How is all of this possible in Region 1? I can assure this House that the story of Amerindian climbing the ladder is true of all Hinterland Regions. The Hon. Member comment, I believe is prejudice by the aged-old view of Amerindians way of life and their culture in the past have been likened to poor backward people of the forest with little meaning. We need to remind ourselves as Guyanese, that we need to remember where all of us came from; the inhuman conditions all our forefathers experienced and were reduced to, during colonialism, and the unequal availability of opportunities to various ethnic groups over the post independence period up to early 1990. Such situations stymied the development and expectations of the people of our nation, the people of the Hinterland, and in particular the Amerindians, were similarly subjected and credit must be placed on the door step of the People's Progressive Party to begin to change that landscape.

The Hon. Member also failed to recognise the transformation of the social and productive landscape of the villages. There is one hundred per cent of access to primary school in Amerindian villages, one hundred per cent access to basic primary health care. Women participating in the mainstream of village life and development projects are increasing. Youths are becoming more engaged in various projects. Residents are developing the potential of eco-tourism and are marketing their unique brand of tourism internationally. The expansion in the access of safe water, including an increasing shift to improve the technology of water system to solar powered water pumps, and not to miss the development of the physical infrastructure. There are new village offices, health's hut, new schools, eco-tourist lodges, and multi-purpose buildings, school feeding kitchens, village shops, and bridges. These and other physical infrastructures were put into place within the last seventeen years, and the main partner who stood solidly behind the Amerindian villages and their leaders is no other than the People Progressive Party Civic Government.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I would wish to repeat that Amerindians are receptive to development support. They are careful to protect, to manage and to utilise the environment and resources contain within their villages in a sustainable way while advancing their own

community development. It is now internationally recognised in many developed countries that such a lifestyle is what is necessary or what was needed to work to maintain a safe global environment. Today those countries, including some of our own developing countries, are now talking about seeking solution to reduce the pace of our planet destruction. All of this in no way means that Amerindians are totally comfortable with the pace and quality of service which currently exist. This is also true of all Guyanese that when you improve and you solve one demand many more arise. Change is a dynamic thing.

Turning attention to other issues, the Ministry further improved its institutional capacity to better serve and deliver our mandate to the Amerindian population. The Ministry's Projects Department was expanded and now engages an additional six professionals with strong technical background in project management, institutional strengthening, environmental economics, sustainable natural resources management and rural development. It is envisaged that this team will enhance the current capacity to augment and expand the scope of the Ministry to primarily focus on policy development, strategic planning, advocacy, resource generation, project implementation and full community development. We expect that we will also be successful to meet the needs of our Amerindians. We will also be able to manage successful programme implementation, monitor and to evaluate the impact Government's investment in these various villages in the ten Administrative Regions. Since 2007, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has been expending a grant fund referred to as Presidential Grant. As a result the impact of the grant, and the difference it has made in Amerindian communities to help them to elevate their development, an additional \$10 million was granted last year taking the total sum to \$160 million annually that will be invested. Not invested by the Ministry, but invested by the people.

The implementation of the National Secure Livelihood Programme is testimony to the Government's commitment to repositioning and reengineering Amerindian communities from the state of some vulnerability to enterprise development with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs executing in coordination with the Village Councils and the people in the villages.

*4.08 p.m.*

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in partnership with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) received approval of this National Secure Livelihood Programme (NSLP) in June 2009. The programme is geared towards addressing the many challenges hampering economic

development in Amerindian Villages and Hinterland communities. Central to this aim are; the creation of employment opportunities, sustaining food security, improving income generation, and economic diversification so as to secure a sustained livelihood for Amerindians. We have engaged the services of six international experts to help us implement this programme.

Parallel to the international specialists, we have a component whereby we have a core of young Amerindians, twelve in number, attached to these specialists so that they too will have a hands on knowledge, be trained and they will, we expect, provide that solid foundation for sustainability of the projects when the experts leave the shores of Guyana.

This programme was done in consultation with fifteen villages in Region 1. Our Ministry did not hand down the programme. Consultation took place with the VSO in partnership with us and the fifteen communities. Currently, there are four combined agricultural projects and value added enterprises which includes; pineapple, passion fruit, ginger and cassava.

There is one value adding enterprise also to deal with the production of crabwood oil and other products; one aquaculture and one apiculture. These projects manage to attract from September to December the investment of G\$48 million.

Land Demarcation: Guyana with a population of approximately 9.4 % of Amerindians is a model example to those countries in our hemisphere with Indigenous populations; Amerindians fully securing fundamental rights to their lands. I am proud to say that our Government's policy has seen the introduction of issuing outstanding land grants to villages, and to further secure their ownership by funding annually the demarcation of village boundaries.

In 2009, the following villages were demarcated: Isseneru, Massara and Parikwarunau. Additionally, Toshaos presented eleven additional requests for land to be titled. This shows that the Amerindians are fully aware and are strongly participating in their welfare, social and economic upliftment.

Low Carbon Development Strategy: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, yesterday again there was some misconception about the Amerindian participation and access to information on this Strategy. This matter was debated here some time last year in this very Hon. House when this Motion was brought before us. The matter of consultation I feel, is a non-issue today. But just to add, the Amerindian communities, Hinterland communities and some forested communities



benefited from a wide ranging high level of consultation, awareness and information sharing on this matter.

As I speak here, the National Toshi Council Executives are meeting and they too are discussing an additional component of the awareness programme which they would wish to launch as soon as the funds are made available. They are also discussing the alternatives and the procedures for opting into the Low Carbon Development Strategy. This sends the signals that they who are officially elected by their own people to represent them on matters of national importance must be put on record.

I just wanted to point to the fact that within the Budget it was clearly stated that financial incentives which will be derived from the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Norway and Guyana; within that \$30 million which is expected as inflow to our economy, the land demarcation programme will be accelerated. Therefore we expect from our Ministry that in addition to the annual \$50 million allocated in the Budget to the Ministry to ensure the demarcation proceed, we will be able to accelerate that programme.

I do hope that others who have or want to have stakes in Amerindian business and affairs and who hope to represent Amerindians will make use of this process and help to guide them so that they can be able to complete this process. I know many of them would like to hear some additional support coming from our nation in relation to their land and the fundamental right which this, our Constitution, allows them to have.

**Electrification Programme:** Our Government continues to explore all avenues to provide electricity to Amerindian communities. In 2009, a total of ten communities were provided with solar panels. Households in Hinterland communities also benefited from the installation of one thousand 15-watt solar panels which were provided to each household. The installations of these panels have greatly helped to improve lives, as many children can now have extended study periods, women can also do some additional housework and productive work after the night comes.

**Communication and Transportation:** We are all aware of the challenges of our villages, the remoteness and access to various communities, and its relevance to address these issues. These services, we recognise, are key developmental pillars for the enhancement of community life and growth, production, markets and improvements in service delivery.

The Government has provided allocation to acquire water and land transportation. This year the villages of Arau, Karisparu, Yurong Paru and Parabara will benefit from land transportation. Meanwhile, numerous other villages will benefit from water transportation, both engines and boats. I think my colleague, Mr. Norman Whittaker, made mention of this yesterday.

I must also say that I am pleased with the competitiveness in the telecommunication sector which is being encouraged by our Government. This has greatly enhanced, in a very fundamental way, communications in a number of our Hinterland Regions. Our Government continues to provide radio communication sets to the Amerindian and Hinterland communities. This is an ongoing programme.

This year Kurutuku, Chinowieng, Kamaru, Kamana, Wakapoa and Tassarene will experience improved communication through radio sets. While I may not speak on behalf of the private sector, there is an initiative to also improve telecommunication in Aishalton, Santa Rosa, and two other communities which we know are going to benefit tremendously from this intervention.

Modern Students' dormitory: Last year an allocation was made for the commencement of our modern dormitory for the students who were awarded scholarships in institutions in Georgetown. The contract was awarded as planned and work is currently on the way on this important facility. **[Mr. Corbin: Where?]** It is a shame that even the Leader of the Opposition does not know where this modern dormitory is being constructed. **[Mr. Corbin: You have not told us!]** That tells a story of how they are interested in Amerindian affairs. If you were listening attentively to last year's presentation, you would have heard where it is located. It is also mentioned in this year's Budget. The Minister of Finance has allocated \$120 million to complete and furnish that institution.

Welfare issues: Our Ministry continues to see a reduction in the number of welfare cases affecting Amerindian population. As a matter of fact, we are strengthening that department too to respond effectively to the issues that confront daily. These are individual Amerindians who reside in the city, who come to the city seeking redress, and who also reside in their villages.

In addressing issues of labour, we refer these to the Ministry of Labour. These are not very many, but in difficult circumstances, we will refer them to the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

We have also been supporting the delivery of birth certificates prepared by the Ministry of Home Affairs. This will help to alleviate many people's concerns as it relates to those issues since the Government does not bury its head in the sand and say everything is fine and glorious. We have not been sleeping and that is why this Government maintains and will support the existence of a Ministry of Amerindian Affairs unlike those who would wish to see a Ministry like ours, go under.

I will finally like to say that in respect to village governance, our Ministry and the Government of Guyana recognise that village governance is a key ingredient in the advancement of Amerindian villages. In addressing and supporting village leaders, village members and community members of various communities that are not only titled, but entitled, we have enhanced our support to those leaders.

We have appointed an officer responsible for governance to drive the support programme which is geared to increase and build capacity at the Village Council level. While we will be supporting the village leaders in the management of their community affairs, in the management, development and utilisation of their resources within the communities that they own, we would also support them at the level of having effective governance and being effective leaders.

Therefore, with all that was said, we expect to ensure that this year's allocation as provided for in our 2010 Budget will be utilised and expended as the programme stated. And we hope that we will be able to provide, from our Government, that type of developmental support which is still badly needed in the Amerindian villages. Thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Hon. Minister has just brought us to the end of the first segment. I think we will now take a break.

*Assembly suspended accordingly at 4:24 p.m.*

*Assembly resumed accordingly at 5:35 p.m.*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have been informed that we have a birthday boy in our midst. I hear Mr. Anil Nandlall is twenty-one today. [Applause]

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let me do the general protocols now that you have informed the House that indeed it is the Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall's birthday. I would like to congratulate him. I rather suspect that he is not twenty-one though. I also want to congratulate the other two Members who have been recently named to be Parliamentarians, one from the People's Progressive Party (P.P.P./C.) and one from the People's National Congress (P.N.C.R.1-G.).

Every year we come here for purposes of a debate and a deliberation on this annual Budget. We come here thinking that indeed by the end of the year that which was put forward as a plan would have been executed to completion, and also that which was planned initially is going to be what was executed. This year because of the precedence set in earlier years, I have come to regard this Budget probably as a three-quarter Budget. I say so because of the fact that we know that come 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010, we would have had a number of supplementaries that might carry these budgetary allocations, whether capital or current expenses, to lots more than the amounts that are allocated here. What that signifies is that there is obviously in the Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance, a foreseeing that which could take them to a position of ensuring that what is planned at the beginning is executed by the end. So you have the scenario in February where we are told that approximately \$140 billion will be spent, but by the end of it all we are going to have supplementary No. 1, supplementary No. 2, supplementary No.3, and then right up to supplementary No.6.

So what then is this? I want to state additionally, that that is a preemptive dislocation of our spending immediately. You can foresee that indeed we are going to have difficulties during the course of the year whereby the Hon. Minister will come here and ask for these additional sums.

However, there is also another defect that I have noticed with Budgets. The precedence is there and one can see that quite clearly emanating from what the P.P.P. propaganda machinery does through their 'Budget At A Glance' almost every year. They will come here and tell you that this is what the 'Budget At A Glance' is, but little do they realise sometimes how they give themselves up by stating that that which was last year's allocations is now happening exactly also this year. What then happened to those last year allocations especially in the context when you have this situation when it would appear that the money has just dissipated?

Take for example 'Budget At A Glance 2009'. They said that a new facility will be built at No. 56 Village to facilitate easier access to improved stock for farmers and over \$40 million will be invested at Burma for that purpose. They come with the 'Budget At A Glance' this year and state – they just change the words - \$40 million will be allocated for the construction of a new seed paddy at No. 6 Village, Corentyne. Where did that money that was allocated in 2009, there being no seed factory, go? Additionally at that Burma Station, where did that \$16 million go? Money is fungible. Fund is fungible and that is why it is so difficult to pay due respect to the allocations made by the Administration year after year.

They indicated here also under the 'Budget at A Glance 2010' that there will be training and capacity building for over 2000 farmers this year. A whole lot of money was allocated also to 'Budget At A Glance 2009' - 1500 farmers will receive benefits. You have a whole argument now being made that it is going to be rolled over. It is not rolled over. You allocate the money, it dissipates and then you come and reallocate. That is exactly what happened at Leguan. They were going to build an aerodrome in Leguan and Wakenaam; \$40 million dollars you will notice in the Budget 2009 was allocated for Leguan and Wakenaam. And then you come back to 'Budget At A Glance' in 2010, and it is all there again.

We have to be perceptive and scrutinising enough to ask the question: "Where do these moneys go?"

We have already indicated that those people internationally and even those locally that give the information to them, Transparency International, have been stating for very many years, that this country is probably the most corrupt among the Americas. I made a speech some time ago in 2008 indicating that moneys by this Administration seem to, like quicksilver, fall through their fingers and probably are caught by others underneath. It is very difficult, no matter what scrutiny you do at the Public Accounts Committee that you have this difficulty finding out where the money goes.

And it is in that context that I want to say to this National Assembly that that is why in the Country Report of Guyana 2010, the Economist Intelligence Unit states that Guyana is indeed in a very bad shape. The only country that it betters is the one that was recently hit by the Earthquake, Haiti.

At their page 8, in the Comparative Economic Indicators, under the Gross Domestic Product heading, Guyana is third from last. It is only Haiti and Nicaragua that are bettering. Out of all

these countries, Brazil being the biggest, Mexico then Argentina coming down... and Guyana is the last! I have recounted how many items we have been last or second to last in relation to a previous budget debate.

My good friend, Hon. Mr. Robeson Benn, indicated that those statistics are on stilts. They are not true when I showed him the 'Business At A Glance'. Mr. Donald Ramotar also said those were fanciful, farcical statistics conjured up by these people overseas who know nothing about Guyana. Well the glorification that we have just had from very many of those speakers from that side of the House is a deception that is extremely grand.

Let me go on to state why indeed this is all happening. It is because the analysis is forthcoming from Members who are well trained economists and accountants who do these reports. This is what they had to say at page 16 of the report: "High levels of unemployment and crime..."

I just want to counter the glorification and the details that beautify beyond the true landscape of this country that had been given by Members over there. Indeed that does not sink in very well with what the outside people are talking about. They have big difficulties when the ordinary sugar workers at Tain erupt. Ministers then go there, but what is the categorisation of these sugar workers that they make? They are drunks. You go to some other places and you hear that they are saboteurs, putting boulders and sugar and putting it inside of the factory along with railway pieces of iron. **[Mr. Neendkumar: Where did you get that from?]**

It is all here. The Minister is condemning these people as drunks and saboteurs. September last year, in Kaieteur News it is stated that the Minister indicated as much.

So it is not a true picture that is being painted at all: "High levels of unemployment and crime bring down Guyana's overall score."

This is the quality of life index they are talking about:

"Poor economic management has led to weak G.D.P. growth, ensuring that unemployment has remained in the double digits since 1980s despite one of the highest rates of outward migration to the outside world."

And then they go on to talk about the trans-shipment of illegal narcotics which they are stating here, is heading to the United States and Europe. Drug cartel activities in Guyana and other activities threaten the quality of life:

“Although remaining below the global average, Guyana’s score on corruption has deteriorated since 1995 as cases of nepotism, bribes and opaque public financing deals have remained common place despite repeated Government commitments to crack down on these.”

Let me just repeat that:

“Guyana’s score for corruption has deteriorated since 1995 as cases of nepotism...”

All those Queens Atlantic deals and all those fanciful deals that they had to come here to regularise quickly by statutory amendments:

“...bribes and opaque public financing have remained common place despite repeated Government commitments to crack down on these.”

And then they indicated from 1989 how we have been doing and we have not shifted one bit in relation to corruption.

*5.50 p.m.*

The spending that we see is not what one will regard as sincere and to the direct target where it is intended.

We, in the Alliance For Change, have constantly reminded the Minister of Finance and last year, almost the entirety of it, have seen in the Kaieteur News and to a lesser extent the Stabroek News, bringing out some things. There are times when you would have a building that is worth about \$6 million while having \$40 million being spent behind it, and when you would have a pumping station that is worth about \$25 million and the contractor was being paid \$100 million. That is what we have been having. So when you have a Budget that comes here and knowing that you will have Supplementary Provisions – six or probably eight this year – knowing that there were allocations made last year which have not seen any construction on the ground although they said that they would have construction on the ground, you have to wonder: Is this genuine? Is it sincere what they have brought here? Is it going to be that which will Consolidate, Transform and Sustain? It will not, definitively not!

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, there is one area I want to talk about before I go onto the major portion of my critique of this Budget and that has to do with what we were told by the Minister in his presentation of the Budget last week. This is very close to my heart - the Justice Sector Reform. Indeed, as I know for a fact and as has been given as the analysis and thesis by main stream economist like Dr. Kenneth Dam in his book *Law Growth Nexus*, a classic, that indeed we have to have our legal system in order before we can proceed with the growth and development that we want.

For too many years now we have been talking about developing this sector, the justice sector, but we have not been seeing the necessary outcomes as a result of that sector having so much being spent in it. Why is that so? It is because there is absolutely no political will to ensure that the legislative arrangements that have passed, are being effectuated. They are not being implemented.

Take for example our Criminal Law System. We indicated last year that we were going to pass a Bill and it was passed about having paper committals. We were going to quicken the process. Today there is a wave of applications in court seeking constitutional remedies for trials that are not happening after an unduly long time. Paper committals are not being implemented. Why is that so?

We passed here a Bill in which we indicated that we are going to processes certain witnesses through videos. They can remain in the prison and their testimonies will be given. What has happened? So that which we see as allocated for budgetary allocations for these systems seem not to be put in place and so our justice systems seems just to be floundering. That is at the Criminal Law side.

We also have on the Civil Law side so many things that are wrong. Last year they indicated that we are going to spend moneys to ensure that we are going to have new drafting rules. They are going to spend so much money to digitise the Deeds Registry. You have been there, I have been there, and do you notice any new rules? Do you notice any digitisation? Moneys are being allocated, but where is it going? Although in very glowing terms we have the Justice Sector Reform stating a certain set of things that will be done, I am wholly supportive of those. I want to see the Magistrates Court built in those regions in which they are so dilapidated magistrates feel ashamed to go inside. I want to see the Family Court which has been spoken about since Mdm. Indranie Chandarpal was a Minister. [Ms.

**Manickchand:** It is being built. Are you not seeing it every day?] Since five to ten years



ago we have been talking about it. Yes it is going up now, but let us see if we are going to have the arrangements to effectuate it. \$322 million is budgeted for that reform measure.

We are going to talk about mediation too. But it is all floundering. Mediation was here since ten years ago. I was President of the Bar at the time they started talking about bringing it on board, but what is the effect of it? You and I very well know that what we have to start doing is to execute these projects in a timely process so that we can have the benefits of these strategies, programmes and projects. We have to wait and then probably some other time they are going to say, as I am anticipating: "Oh these things are all rollovers."

Well I hope it is rollover and not 'tappleover'. *[Interjection: Inaudible]* You did not want us to go to the merits of the case. Again that is a classic example. It took three and a half years to determine a preliminary point and you would have lots more happening like that.

So my analysis of this Budget is one which is incomplete; that which is not going to be a true depiction of what our plans are for this year and to that extent, it is a grand deception.

I want to comment on a matter that is very close to me. What we are doing with a very big industry in this country that could see the development and growth if we only apply our minds to doing the correct policy proposals in relation to it, will see some progress in this land- that is the sugar industry. I come from the Corentyne, Berbice. I have lots of relatives involved in this industry and lots of supporters there too who are in deep trouble. That is why every time that we go up to Berbice now, you see Donald following us saying:

"Don't botha wit wah dem A.F.C. tell yuh, Don't botha wit dah"

...going to tell the television station that and putting the pressure on them:-

"Why yall giving dem time there to bad-talk sugar?"

Well I want to let you in on this if it has not been let in yet. Only recently we had an Economic Services Committee Meeting which was public. We know now, to a question that I had asked, that the sugar factory at Skeldon has over one hundred defects, ten of which Mr. Errol Hanoman very frankly and candidly informed us are critical defects. He indicated that indeed it may very well be that we are going to remedy them in a short period of time. But there it is, spending in the vicinity of US\$200 million on a factory and we are having these kinds of defects - hundred and more known - there is a register of defects that they keep, ten of which are critical.

As I indicated, we are not also obliging those who know the international scenario about sugar being accommodating to them. We can be the raw material producers of sugar. It goes to the European Union. The European Union last year indicated that it will help the industry to the tune of \$1.6 billion, if indeed you came up with a plan within the framework that we are talking about. Do you know what happened? We lost the \$1.6 billion as a result of the non-timely submission of a certain business plan. Moreover, we had a correction being made to that at the Economic Services Committee Meeting where my good friend, Mr. Robert Persaud, indicated:

“You know it was not late submission. It was because the plan that we gave to the European Union had not been within the parameters that the European Union wanted us to be in.”

[**Mr. Neendkumar:** Watch, he said all of that last year.] I could not have said that last year because this only arose as a result of last year. [**Mr. Lumumba:** “Arose” he knows English!] Well I know a couple of big words, but you know big animals like dolphins!

We also have been talking that there must be a professionalisation of that sugar industry. We were so happy when we learnt that indeed, because of the new strategic plan there is going to be professionalism whereby the hard decisions will have to be made. This must be done so that the industry can prosper. However, I must say once again that the ‘controlfreakism’ of the Administration – that is another big word – has resulted in political appointees at GuySuCo to the extent whereby you are stacking it up with accountants and the one agronomist, Davis Jr., who was fired.

When G.A.W.U. would say to the entire country that what is causing this decline in production has to deal with husbandry, you go on to and make a deputy - a person who is an accountant and the agronomist, you go on to fire.

Do they have the sugar workers at heart anymore? They do not. It could not be said that they have the sugar workers at heart.

We feel that when you talk about a Budget and you want to realise in the Budget that which is going to cause progress and advancement in an industry which, if progress and advancement occurs, will have what is called a nuclear effect. This is where everything in the country, as what has happened with the miners because of the gold prices and the greater production of the miners resulted in many people’s livelihoods being progressive.

Additionally, we have a lot of promises to the extent that we are going to help the Cane Farmers Association. I had to speak to Mr. Errol Hanoman on that same Economic Service Committee to ask him what financial help will be given to the cane farmers because I was representing one called the Landless Cane Farmers Co-op. Very many of them came to realise that we are going to have a session in the Economic Services Committee and they said to ask some of these questions because they are the ones on the ground. I understand that when some of these GuySuCo officials go that they run out from those villages because they do not have answers. However, the question was asked:

“What it is that you have for us since that is what is going to ensure that there is more land cultivation in the Skeldon area to supply that huge Skeldon factory”.

They said:

“We are going to do what is called a tri-partite arrangement so that we are going to go to the banks and we are going to ensure that we...”

They cannot guarantee, but they will go to the banks and try to persuade them. Persuasion is not going to help ordinary cane farmers in areas like the Landless Co-op Society. Just like this Government would do in relation to certain favourites that they have. They seem not to want to do anything for people in those troubled areas. So they could put their best foot forward, go on cultivating and when they do that, the Skeldon factory will be all the better run, managed and become profitable.

We have gotten complaints also from the Bellview Cane Farmers Co-op about the same thing. They are not doing that which the farmers were begging them to do and they always have what is called a pretext: “We really cannot give you moneys.” It is so important that we appreciate...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Your time is up Hon. Member.

**Mrs. Holder:** I move Mdm. Deputy Speaker that my colleague be given 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put and carried*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I think the agreement was 5 minutes.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Was the agreement 5 minutes Madam?

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** By all of the M.P.s across the board.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I just want to make another point and that has to do with what this Government feels is going to take us places, borrowing aid money. I want to let the Hon. Minister in on a very important article by Jagdish Bhagwati, a renowned economist, who indicated these words: “If the history is to guide us...” And this is Foreign Affairs page 125:

“...the chief weapon on the war of poverty should be not aid, but liberal policy reforms. Aid may assist poor nations if it is effectively tied to the adoption of sound development policies and carefully channeled to those areas where it will be enlightened policies which aim to check the country’s worst political abuses.”

He then goes on to state that:

“They must come from solid policy makers and academics with hard earned experience and scholarship, and also from citizens who are, to a certain extent, the chief policy makers.”

It is at the last paragraph of that article that he was doing a critique. What we have, however, is that the President will go all over the place begging for aid and not getting any or very little and banking that that is what is going to take us places. He is more out of the country than in. People are saying: “He comes in. He bath, change an’ gone out back!” This is not what will help the economy.

I want to also say that we are going to see this ultra-insincere spending that has happened in relation to I.T. (Information Technology).

One of the more liberal policy proposals that have seen countries take off has been what you call Government not being a competitor with the private sector. What this Government has done when it has said that it is going to deal with the I.T.T., when it is going to bring in from Brazil, a cable, although they are talking about E-Governance, that is not true. The E-Governance pretext is being used to set up the infrastructure for a certain set of friends of the Government who have already applied for cellular telephones and digitised television.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker I will conclude in a couple of minutes I just have a set of notes here, but in relation to spending like that... **[Mr. Lumumba: Time!]**

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** You have two minutes.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I have two minutes. I will finish my two minutes. If I do not finish you will cut me off, but it seems as if it is irking some of them on that side. I want to ask, who is paying for this cable? Who will get the contract for this cable? Who will manage the operations for this cable? Where will the power for this thing come from? Is it going to come from Brazil? And a very important question that all economists should ask themselves first when going to spend \$37 million knowing that GT&T will spend \$50 million. Was a feasibility study done as to the marketability of this project? There was none. This is what you call jobs being created for the boys. Why then the secrecy of all of this? I suppose, 'Bs' sting. I will stop there.

I cannot in these circumstances commend this Budget, it is unwise spending and a total amount on aid which never, in accordance with Mr. Jagdish Bhagwati, is going to move any country forward. It is the liberal policy proposal that will do such. [Applause]

**Hon. Minister of Housing and Water (Hon. Mr. Irfaan Ali):** Madam Speaker, I rise to support Budget 2010 which definitely reaches out to the ordinary people, opens new opportunities, consolidates our hope, advances transparency and consolidate accountability.

I am very disappointed that the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, on behalf of the Alliance For Change, made it very clear to this National Assembly and to the rest of Guyana that they are not in support of a Budget that would bring to our people thousands of house lots, that would bring to our people improved healthcare and that would bring expansion in the agricultural sector. So when the West Demerara Regional Hospital is rehabilitated and when the new...

*[Interruption]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, keep it down please.

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support Budget 2010 which definitely reaches out to the ordinary people, opens new opportunities, consolidates our hope, advances transparency and consolidate accountability.

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sector. So when the West Demerara Regional Hospital is rehabilitated and when the new...

*[Interruption]*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, keep it down please.

**Mr. Ali:** ...drying facilities for the rice sector are completed and when the processing plants are completed, I hope that the A.F.C. would be willing to stand up and say we were not a part of that because your rejection of this Budget today is your rejection of policies and plans for the benefit of the ordinary people of this country.

You must equally go to Leguan and tell the rice farmers: “I stood up in Parliament today and I rejected for you, the rice drying facility.”

You must go to your Amerindian brothers and sisters and say to them: “The A.F.C. has rejected the building of 200 core homes in the interior.”

You must say to them that you have rejected, as the A.F.C., the building of health facilities and solar water systems for the interior. That is what the A.F.C. has done today.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, has said that this is a three quarter Budget and the Government would come sometime during this year and request supplementary and as a result of that, he concluded that the Government has a problem forecasting. The Hon. Member obviously does not have a clue of what a Budget is and what goes in towards planning a Budget. Even if you know to interpret language and see the word “estimates” being used, you would also see the word “projections”. If the economy outperforms projections, as last year, and the Government decides to use that additional inflow for the benefit of the ordinary people in expansion of housing by \$4 billion, in expansion of health facilities, what is wrong with such supplementary provision?

Is he against utilising additional revenue for the benefit of our people? It is obvious that the A.F.C. especially, has a particular disinterest in social development. I do not know whether it is grounded in some ideological position that they have facilitated to carry forward or whether their pettiness as a political party in stillbirth is affecting their ability to see and to promote the advancement of development in this country.

The Hon. Member gave one statistic, G.D.P., and went on to make all sorts of conclusions. I do not know whether he is a lawyer, an economist or what else, but I know that he is a Hon. Member of this House. I do not even know if he is a car dealer because I heard that he is in

the car business too. In accordance with the World Bank M.C.C. Report, let me read our score card:-

“Political rights - 92%, civil liberties - 87%, control of corruption - 76%, Government effectiveness - 95%, voice and accountability - 89% and inflation - 81%.”

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Minister, is that from the same document that...?

*6.20. p.m.*

**Mr. Ali:** I just said Mdm. Deputy Speaker, that I am quoting from the World Bank 2010 M.C.C Report. Of course, it is not in the interest of the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, to go through the details of Guyana’s performance because obviously they are not concerned about the image of Guyana.

I wish to make this clear that the A.F.C. especially has been on a continuous assault and attack on the image of this country. We have to question the loyalty of the A.F.C. to Guyana. When internationally acclaimed organisations are giving us excellent ratings, the A.F.C. puts a spin on it to bring a negative image to this country. How can we say that the A.F.C. is genuinely interested in development in this country? This evening I officially question the genuineness of the A.F.C. in their concern for Guyana’s development. I want the A.F.C. to come to this House, and explain to us how they are genuinely concerned about the development of this country.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams, obviously absented himself from the presentation of the Hon. Minister, Mr. Manzoor Nadir, or he just turned a deaf ear to the truth. He spoke about the training and apprenticeship programmes. In GuySuCo, BOSAI and G.P.L. alone, we had 66 persons being trained in the Masters’ programme. The National Training Programme for Youth Empowerment in 2008 graduated 600 persons and in 2009, graduated 1200 persons. In 2009, the single parent programme was introduced which graduated 372 persons, giving a total of graduates in training to 3000 persons.

I can understand that the Hon. Member is not aware of what transpires outside of Georgetown because as we know, he is a Georgetown bourgeoisie criminal lawyer. I am very delighted that the Ministry of Finance saw it fit to increase the budgetary allocation for training so that the Ministry of Labour can continue this exceptional work.

Whenever I rise to speak, I enjoy the excitement that I generate from the Opposition.

We obviously are not paying attention to the big picture. We obviously cannot debate 2010 Budget if we are ignoring the big picture. All the Members so far, save and except the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Murray, failed to acknowledge the transformatory effect that the Low Carbon Development Strategy would have on the economy of this country. All the Members, every single one of the Members in the Opposition, with the exception of the Hon. Mr. Winston Murray, failed. Even if they did not agree with the strategy, they did not even put up one single argument to voice their opinions. This is the type of opposition that we are dealing with. We are dealing here with a development strategy that will transform the entire economy of this country.

I am sad because the Hon. Member from the A.F.C., Mrs. Latchmin Punalall, made it sound as if the Government went to Norway with a begging basket, as if Norway is giving us a gift. I take offense to that because it points to a bigger issue. Our opposition parliamentarians are not interested in analysing and understanding various development strategies. The forest to us on this side of the house is not a gift. The forest is an important natural resource in the local and global context. It is an asset. As a country, we must be able to mobilise our assets for the benefit of the economy. That is what this strategy seeks to do; to advance our efforts in mobilising our skills and competencies so that we can utilise this great asset of the forest for the benefit of the people of Guyana.

We heard nothing of one of the most important initiatives that we have been speaking about for years, nationally. Nothing from the Opposition, not even for once, save and except again the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Murray, did we hear from any Member of the Opposition, the mention of hydropower. The realisation of hydro power in this country has a tremendous potential of expanding our industrial and manufacturing capacity as a country. And yet such an important project did not even stimulate a response from the Opposition.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we heard about the fibre-optic cable. Let me be very clear on this: no country in the Globe today can speak about modernisation without even entertaining the thought of E-Governance. E-Governance is critical for the delivery of service, the expansion of service, and the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of any Government. I am positive that this fibre optic cable will present our country with an opportunity to create hundreds upon hundreds of jobs, especially in the I.T. sector with call centers. When we realise that, I want the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, and the A.F.C. to remember that they did not support this initiative.



I wish now to move to my sector. I was very disappointed in the Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon. Let me bring the facts about Region 10 to this House. I have a problem when our parliamentarians try to divide and create an impression of inequitable treatment by the Government. I just want to set the record straight since we are the elected representatives to all the people of Linden on this side. I am speaking about our people in Linden, because the people in all of Guyana are the responsibility of this Government. Be it political affiliation, be it religious affiliation, they are our responsibility. So as long as this P.P.P./Civic Government is in office, we would ensure that each one of them benefit equally in the development pie.

Between 2006 and 2009, approximately \$544 million was spent in Region 10 in housing, covering 26 km of roads, 46 km of pipelines, 40 km of drains, and delivering 5,325 house lots, benefitting more than 21,000 Lindeners. This is the fact.

In 2009 alone, approximately 600 house lots were allocated in Region 10. There are more than 4,200 house lots allocated in total in Amelia's Ward Phase II A and BI; more than 730 allocated in Block 22, Wisrock, and there are hundreds in West Watooka, South Amelia's Ward, Canvas City, Buck Hill and Green Valley. Nothing has been said of this.

I wish to assure the Hon. Member that our love for the people in Region 10 would continue because in 2010, we will continue the expansion in the housing sector by spending more than \$378 million. We would create more than 1,000 lots; we will build a more than 20 km of road, drains, and pipelines. In addition to this, we are going to ensure that the One-Stop Shop delivers 1,000 more house lots by the end of this year to the people in Linden. We are committed to this. I want the Hon. Minister of Finance to please take note that we are going to work so hard that if and when you have excesses revenue, we want supplementary for Linden. I am putting in an early notice. We want supplementary for Linden, because it is our people in Linden. I must represent my people, my constituency, in Linden.

The Hon. Member spoke about teachers and nurses getting house lots in Region 10. Let me give you the statistics. In 2009, 69 teachers and 19 nurses benefitted from house lots in Region 10 bringing the accumulated total to 145 teachers and 83 nurses. I was happy when the Hon. Member, Mr. Murray, asked for quantitative and qualitative data. That is what we are delivering here.

In the water sector in Region 10, we spent more than \$163 million. A new well is now completed at Amelia's Ward that will benefit 12,000 people at the cost of \$86 million.

We completed the installation of a transmission main linking Amelia's Ward and the McKenzie water supply system. We completed a service connection upgrade in Wismar Hill and Blue Berry Hill. We completed the upgrading of the distribution line in Karakara and most importantly, the transmission interlink between Amelia's Ward and McKenzie was completed in 2009.

In 2010, the expansion will continue as we seek to rehabilitate various sections of the distribution network in Richmond Hill, One Mile, Half Mile and Canvas City bringing benefit to 11,000 persons.

Very critically though, one of the major challenges in Linden in the water sector is the high operating cost as a result of energy consumption. While this is so, Linden has the potential of having a good gravity feed system. Therefore, we are going to have a master plan completed for Linden. A Linden master plan that would look holistically at the water sector in reducing the operating costs and improving efficiency and effectiveness.

A survey was completed on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2010, conducted in West Watooka, Half Mile, Silver Town, Wismar Hill Housing Scheme, Dunton Hill, Phase Rust, Richmond Hill and Amelia's Ward. Let me give you the results of this survey.

The first question was: "How do you rate your water service?"

More than 83% of the people were satisfied with the service they received. Out of the 17% that were not satisfied with the service, 15% were dissatisfied because of the quality of the water in terms of the colour.

The other question was: "How many hours of service do you receive per day?"

36% received 5 to 10 hours; 24% 10 to 15 hours; 29% 15 to 20 hours; and 11% 20 to 24 hours. 100% of Lindeners receive water for at least 5 hours a day. We heard nothing about this.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let us look at the general facts surrounding the water sector. I wish to quote from the Base Line Summary conducted by the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.) and the GOG/UNDP Enhance Public Trust Security and Inclusion Project Report. In that

report they looked at the basic services and calculated the penetration of the service. Overall water had the second highest penetration of 89%, second only to electricity at 96%. This is a University of the West Indies Base Line Study.

The availability of water by Region – Region 3 - 81%; Region 4 – 87%; Region 5 – 95%; Region 6 – 98%; and Region 10 – 88%. These are the facts.

This Government stands committed to improvement in the water sector. Our per capita investment in 2010 - I am giving you the analysis - in the water sector in Region 10, is \$4,000. Government subsidy in operating cost to water is \$2 billion excluding pensioner subsidy of more than \$200 million which benefits more than 17,000 pensioners and more than \$4 billion capital investment in 2010. The subsidy inclusive of capital investment and operation cost, less direct subsidy to pensioner, works out to approximately \$8,000 per capita. **[Interjection: So what is the point?]** The point is that per capita, the Government is subsidising the delivery of water by \$8,000 in 2010. This is a Government that believes in equity.

The issue of water treatment was raised and I appreciate this issue. The issue of water treatment is a genuine issue. It is an issue we must take very seriously. We have to evaluate at what stage of development the water sector is at. We have to determine our capacity both in terms of financial and human resources, and how we can achieve the target of 100% treated water.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Your time is up, Hon Minister.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I like to request that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue.

*Question put and carried*

**Mr. Ali:** Let me give you an analysis of what it will cost. Water treatment per capita on the coastal area would cost about \$70,000 and in the hinterland areas, \$120,000. This means that to accomplish 100% treatment in the coastal area alone would cost almost \$28 billion. That is the reality of the situation. Of course, we have to work on a comprehensive plan in achieving this target notwithstanding the huge investment cost. That is part of our projections this year.

I wish to say that we do not have a problem in production. The fact of the matter is that the company is producing 100 million cubic metres of water per year. In accordance with the

licence, we are mandated to provide 65 million cubic metres per year. So we are producing almost twice the amount that the licence requires. This points of course to a much broader issue and that is the issue of conservation which requires an effort from all of us as leaders and parliamentarians. We need every one to come on board in sending the message of conservation very forcibly. It also points to the fact that we have to work aggressively on issues of leak repairs and improving the network. That is why these capital investments are critical if we are to upgrade the water distribution system so as to further reduce line losses.

Another issue we have to deal with in the future is that of our wells. One can rightfully ask the question that if we are producing more than we need, why is it that we need new wells? The fact is that most of our wells are approaching or have passed the design life cycle of thirty years. So we need to commence an aggressive programme of replacing those wells. However, very importantly too, in replacing these wells we have to do it strategically based on the shift in population and the projected growth as housing development continues to expand. So these are some issues I wanted to highlight in the water sector.

Let us move to the housing sector. A lot was said about the housing sector, but I just wish for us to read the editorial from the Guyana Chronicle 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009, *Housing Development a Success Story*; Guyana Chronicle 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, *Aggressively Facilitating Housing Development*.

In the Stabroek News Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 this is what the editorial entitled: *The Housing Programme*, had to say:

"There is no gainsaying in the wisdom of the housing programme instituted by the 1992 Government of Dr. Cheddi Jagan. It is one of the inestimable successes of his administration and the succeeding ones. It was at the time a visionary decision."

And it continued to say:

"It in its simplicity exposed the moribund nature of the last years of the P.N.C. rule. There were few plans to improve the day-to-day existence of people. In fact by 1992 there was no longer a Ministry of Housing and Water and the slogan of 'Feed, Clothe, and House the Nation' had long gone and died away."

Quoting again from Stabroek News Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009, the caption: *Bankers Group Welcomes Height in Low Mortgage Ceiling*, had to say:

"The Association lauded the Government of Guyana for this initiative which it acknowledged as enforcing the administration's commitment to affordable housing, and to the contribution that housing development makes to a national development."

6.50 p.m.

Guyana Chronicle, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, '*Citizens Bank Commends Government for Raising Ceiling for Low Income Mortgages.*'

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Marco Nicola at the launching of the LIS II for infrastructure project said, and I quote:

"Moreover, this programme is also being used as a pilot for the country system in the areas of financial management auditing, for the use of the IFMAS audit office of Guyana and the state treasury. The Central Housing and Planning Authorities (C.H.P.A.) has so far demonstrated the successful use of these project systems. Because of this success, the Bank is moving towards the use of a country's system in more of its loans. The project was further sighted in International Development Bank (I.D.B.) global magazine as a model project among its best performers globally."

Not even this would the Opposition acknowledge and give credit to the young hard working staff of this sector.

I turn to Mr. Keith Scott, the Hon. Member. He asked whether the One-Stop Shop has stopped. Well, I have news for you Hon. Member Mr. Scott. Not only would we continue, but we are going to expand in 2010. We are going to hit Region 1 and Region 8 as we seek to develop 200 core homes in Hinterland pilot communities.

The One-Stop Shop benefited more than 10,500 persons in 2009. This exercise allows for public scrutiny, openness and transparency. It built a team approach and it allowed us to work with our people. We talk about transparency and efficiency.

After the 2001 fire, we have completed all our accounts inclusive up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001. This is 2009. This is transparency and accountability, Mr. Scott.

Let us look at the issue of value for money. The in-house investment that we have made in our human capacity has suppressed the need for consultancy as almost all our projects in the water sector is designed and supervised in-house. In 2009, these young staff saved the

Government of Guyana \$120 million that would have otherwise been paid to consultancy. Go after the Minister, but please have the courtesy of acknowledging the hard work of these people.

In the housing sector we have grown to the extent that even the foreign funded projects are designed and supervised in-house. This in 2010 would bring savings of \$221 million to the Government of Guyana which would have otherwise gone to consultancy.

Mr. Ramjattan this is the Ministry that you wanted to close down. It upsets me because I know the quality of people that we have in this sector and I know the work that they go through day in and day out for the benefit of our Guyanese people. To have insensitive Members of the Opposition question them and question the work they do, and try to discredit the work they do, affects me personally.

Mr. Scott asked about the development plan for housing schemes. He further stated that housing schemes lack access to health, banks, pharmacies, water and recreational centres. Mr. Scott, wake up, shake yourself from your slumber and take a walk to Diamond, and if you still cannot see, then make an immediate appointment with Hon. Dr. Bherri Ramsarran.

You will not only see a new well, a modern school, state-of-the-art diagnostic centre, supermarkets and pharmacies, but also three new banks, a modern warehouse, a state-of-the-art gas station and still to come in 2010, a mall, fast food outlet. Similar development is earmarked for Tuschen and Parfait Harmony.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Scott basically exposed his presentation for what it really was: propaganda, deviation from the facts embedded in his still distorted memory of the twenty-eight years of the P.N.C. and his association.

In 2009, we exceeded our target by more than 157%. In the allocation of house lots, we located more than 4,300 house lots. Mr. Scott we did this because of the hard and dedicated work of the staff at the Ministry. I want to advise Mr Scott that his time might be better served helping in the process of change rather than resigning himself to the dreadful decision he made in joining the P.N.C.R.1-G.

I wish to assure the Minister of Finance that the staff of C.H.P.A. would continue to work tirelessly in ensuring your projections of 5,500 house lots are met. With the expectation of

the economy exceeding projections, we may even approach you for the supplementary provision.

I wish now to turn my attention to another deviation from the truth. Mr. Scott made a bold statement that the people of Bare Root receive no water. I have here a letter dated 10-1-12 from the Buxton/Foulis neighbourhood Democratic Council, signed by the Chairman, Mr R. Blair. This is what it says:

“We are satisfied that many households in this community are all receiving water in the yards since the implementation of this project.

Water is now flowing further before the commencement of the project and once the pressure is maintained or improved, then more households will benefit.

Looking forward to continue working with you to improve and deliver this quality product within our community...”

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member your time is up.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker I will like to ask that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude.

*Question put and carried*

**Mr. Ali:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let me now turn to Kwakwani. The Hon. Member, Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, spoke about Kwakwani which is not receiving water. I have a letter signed by W. Rozario, General Manager of Kwakwani Utilities Incorporated.

This is what it said:

“I wish to inform you that residents of Jonestown started to receive pure water from the water treatment plant, effective from 2009-09-04. Through the kind courtesy of Minister Ali, Kwakwani Utilities Incorporated (K.U.I.) received 50 lengths of PVC pipes that were used in Jonestown. Five standpipes were placed at locations requested by residents.”

I am not here to mislead this Hon. House. I am just here to set the truth apart from the deviation to the truth.

One more point in conclusion. The Hon. Member, Mr. Murray in his speech asked for us to measure and evaluate the impact of the Budget. I sought to present the impact of the housing and water sector.

The 2.7 billion investments in housing would create direct demand for 986,000 metric tonnes of sand valued at approximately \$987 million. 99,000 metric tonnes of the loam valued at \$297 million, 88,000 tonnes of crusher run valued at \$517 million, and stone valued at \$45 million, 1,320 km. of pipelines would be created to the value of more than \$236 million, and 9,020 bags of cement valued \$14 million. All these investments will create direct employment for more than 2,600 workers of varied skills in the housing sector.

In terms of the investment in the water sector, the investment of \$2.8 billion in 2010 would bring direct benefits through the creation of more than 1,100 jobs with demand for 200 km. of pipelines, 7,200 tonnes of sand, 3,600 bags of cement, 50,000 service connections and 70,000 water meters. This Budget programme for 2010 will benefit more than 400,000 residents across the country, and would seek to improve water flow, quality, sanitation, productive capacity, transmission and the distribution network. In addition to this, I wish to advise the Hon. Minister of Finance that in keeping with your policy decision of rebasing and to have housing set aside as the sector, we have proactively set up a new monitoring and evaluation unit in the Ministry of Housing which would look at the various indicators to do an analysis, gather information and to assist in the generation of data for the rebasing.

In addition to all the investment that I spoke of which Government will be spearheading, the private sector will be expending more than \$3 billion in private housing development. We have the Madewini Villas and this is a private entrepreneur who is marketing in New York and Toronto. The point of this is to have Guyanese return home and build retirement homes. We know that this has created an exceptional market in Barbados and Jamaica. With the size of our population overseas and the risk they were exposed to in the 2009 financial crisis, we have seen a huge demand for retirement homes and housing in Guyana.

This investor is in the process of building a facility to house 400 retirement homes that will have located in the complex, an on-site hospital and an on-site recreational centre. These are initiatives that the Government wishes to compliment.

We say to members of the private sector who are working in the housing sector that we are here with you hand-in-hand. We are here with the ordinary people hand in hand. We are not



going to deviate from our primary objective which is to bring better service to the people of this country. I stop here. [Applause]

**Mr. Danny:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Before I get into my presentation I would like to congratulate the two new Members for being appointed to this National Assembly. I wish them well.

As I sat and I listened intently to the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, I looked at the facial expression of the P.P.P./C. M.P.s. Sad to say, I only saw hopelessness in the bewildered eyes with sporadic unconnected knocking on the desks by some Members. Not even the Members on the Government side were impressed, enthusiastic or even hopeful by the Budget. In fact, only despair was what I saw in their facial expressions. After listening to the presentation I asked myself: Where is the vision? Where is the hope?

The Guyana Budget 2010, the missing link in consumer affairs and protection. The 2010 Budget here has been the largest ever in the history of our dear country with the claim of ‘Consolidate Transform and Sustain.’ It is quite clear to me that this theme has to be mistaken, knowing full well that the Government mismanages the taxpayers’ money and the resources of the nation.

We have a problem if they seek to consolidate and sustain those bad practices and urge them to transform that culture into one based on good governance as they put it, and of course sustain. There are many areas which are critical to the improvement of the lives of our people which in spite of the largesse displayed in this document presented by the Minister of Finance, have been profoundly ignored. This Budget, does not speak to the issue of consumer protection nor does it address enhanced management of consumer affairs. It is quite well to propose:

“That small business development is well established as a most effective means of fighting poverty and improving lives”

...page 22 of the Budget document.

It is also indisputable that the development and enforcement of standards which protect the consumer who patronise these businesses, both large and small, are critical to the development of enterprise as a whole.

This Hon. House would remember that in 2004 the Consumer Protection Act was enacted. This act is described as an act to provide for the promotion and protection of consumer interests in relation to the supply of goods and provisions of services in order to ensure the protection of life, health and safety of consumers and others, the establishment of a Consumer Affairs Commission and for connected purposes. Today this Act sits highly collecting dust on the shelves in this Parliament building and elsewhere.

Since there has not been the establishment of the Commission nor the other provisions of the Act, there is no Consumer Affairs Commission nor is there any Consumer Affairs Trade Tribunal as required by the Act. This means that for all the talk about growing business, the competitiveness strategy and development of small businesses and the emphasis on private sector, when all is said and done, more is said than done.

The Government has not allocated any money for the development and management of consumer issues in this budget and has shown by its inattention to these matters, that it is not serious on the development of business, and creating the condition to ensure a decent standard of living for the citizens of Guyana.

Hon. Members are aware of the growing numbers of merchants and merchandise which have made significant inflows in our country, particularly Chinese merchants and merchandise. The Bureau of Standards is doing what it can with limited resources, but cannot keep up with the standardisation of the goods being imported. As a result, there is an influx of substandard quality goods which carry no warranties or guarantees, and for which the consumer has no redress.

It is not enough for the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Commerce to issue advisories now and then and to talk about a consumer hotline. Both of these serve little purpose. The consumer, according to the law, is entitled to redress under the 2004 Consumer Act. However the Government has not instituted the mechanism provided for under the law to make this a reality.

This House is aware of the large numbers of second-hand vehicles which are imported every year. It is also aware of the scams and shady deals often associated with the purchase of a second-hand vehicle. Many consumers have been struck with heavy defective vehicles because there is no requirement for the certification of vehicles to a specific standard and no effective means of redress.

A consumer who obtained a loan for \$2 million for a car which is ten years old and which purports to have 58,000 km of use, can easily end up with continuous repairs and bills in addition to his loan repayment. This happens regularly. A working consumer's commission and tribunal will give the consumer a viable effective means of redress and ensure that suppliers or dealers are more in compliant with the standards set by the beleaguered Bureau of Standards. There is no point in boasting of the value of trade when the quality of goods and services provided, is poor. The consuming citizens are made all the poorer and the merchants are made richer since there is no quality assurance.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the issue of private deals for motor vehicles is not a new one. While a person intends to enter into a binding contract, so long as it is not legal, the Government has refused to address the issue of auto dealers who provide these private loan schemes for vehicles in contravention of the Financial Institution Act, Chapter 53 Section 2 which states that:

“No financial business shall be transacted in Guyana except by a company which is in possession of a valid licence granted to it by the Central Bank authorising it to conduct a financial business in Guyana.”

The very act defines financial business to mean being engaged in the business of receiving deposits from the public other than demand deposits, or receiving funds from the public through the obtaining of loans, advances, or extensions of credit through the issuance of debt obligations, shares or securities or through similar means. It also encapsulates the relending or investment of these deposits or funds in loans, advances, receivables, debt obligation, shares or security, or the making of leases to finance the acquisition of the use of movable or immovable property.

Government has deliberately turned a blind eye to these unlawful acts since it benefits significantly in the tax collected, from the sale of second hand vehicles while telling the citizens and consumers that they are required to look out for themselves. While claiming to be concerned with the state and standard of our citizen's lives, Government cannot seriously believe the international investors would be interested in doing business in a country where consumer standards are a free for all, where the Financial Institution Act is observed only in certain points and where the Consumer Tribunal Trade is still sitting on paper. The Consumer Commission is also still a dream. Surely some of the billions of dollars can be put into implementing the law and making a real change in the lives of the ordinary citizen.

Hon. Members are aware that the National Bureau of Standards is hard pressed in terms of human resource and other materials to carry out its mandate of examining and qualifying goods for consumption by citizens. It is quite clear that the number of goods and services being provided is increasing in variety and quality.

The ability of the Bureau to effectively monitor and advise consumers is limited by financial constraints, effective electrical items, poor quality imported furniture, dubious quality foodstuff and other essentials escape inspection very frequently. A visit to any of the markets will reveal this fact. There is no mention in this illustrious Budget of any money to employ and train personnel and upgrade the operation of the Bureau of Standards. There is no money for the acquisition of tools and vehicles used in the operation of the Bureau.

The Guyanese consumer will derive no significant benefit from this Budget. Businesses will continue to provide dubious quality of services and goods. According to the Minister's projections, they would do so more efficiently and on a larger scale, wholesalers and importers will continue to dump substandard goods on the market where the ordinary citizens will continue to suffer losses without redress.

From this Budget, the Government will continue to ignore the illegalities of the auto dealers who blatantly contravene the Financial Institutions Act with impunity. The Consumer Act will continue to gather dust and the relevant provision will remain at just that. I urge the Government to snap out of its lethargy and provide the infrastructure for the good of the consumer. The Government must set the example for obedience of the law.

Let me put before my fellow Guyanese working class, the roadmap towards destiny. You go to school for about twenty years. Then you work for maybe thirty-five years on an average while struggling to pay some of the bills. Then you retire at about fifty-five years. You do not have to live on 1/3 of your retirement salary. If you live to be sixty years, you receive N.I.S., but you must have the 750 contributions and pray that your contribution can be found at the N.I.S. office. If it is found, then you will have a bright and happy retirement. You will receive about \$6,000 – \$150,000 depending on your salary scale. If you are at the maximum salary scale, you will receive somewhere around \$40,000 – \$45,000. At sixty-five years, old age pension is about \$6,000 with a massive increase last year of \$300. This is another life saving increase this year which will give you a fortune of \$6,600. So you now have about \$20,000 that is 1/3 of your retirement salary. Your N.I.S. is at an average of \$10,000 and your \$6,600

will add up to about \$36,600 to pay for your medical and living expense. It is at this age that you have diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol just to name a few.

In Budget 2008 at page 23, paragraph 4.10, 'New and Emerging Sector', tourism was placed on high priority as one of the future growth pulls.

*7.20 p.m.*

"Budget 2008, Page 24 - 4.13, we were told that Carifesta X will provide an excellent opportunity for Guyana to 'Solidify' its image as a tourist destination in the region. Targeting: Nature based tourism, Yachting, Birding (Neo-tropical birding), Eco-Tourism. All are expected to promote growth in the sector, that is, new and emerging sectors.

Can the Minister tell this Hon. House what is the contribution made by this Ministry and where is the growth in terms of employment and finances?

Page 2, paragraph 1.5 of the Budget 2009, we were told that Guyana has an unmatched reputation for hospitality and we have now put the rest of the world on notice that we have all the right ingredients of a tourist destination of preferred choice. We have established a lasting impression.

It is about time we convert these idle, childish boast into real, economic contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.). There is need for measures to create an environment for the development of tourism in Guyana. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, are we really happy? After listening to the 2010 Budget – no jobs, no increase in salary, the same slave threshold of \$35,000, a sick medical service and incompetent no vision education system to name a few – is this what we are happy about?

Coming back to Carifesta X because all the idle boast to Carifesta X, can the Minister of Finance look back and tell this Hon. House that Carifesta X was the most profitable investment for scarce dollars and how has Carifesta benefited Guyana as it relates to tourism or in any other way.

In the 2009 Budget, New and Emerging Sector – Tourism – Page 31 – 4.9, the Minister of Finance told us that efforts would be made to build on the excellent international media coverage that Guyana had received in recent months. I guess he was talking about Carifesta X; the plan was to make Guyana a preferred destination. How well has this plan materialised?

Are we on preferred list of destinations? Which website or magazine? Is it CNN or the Caribbean Weather Channel?

The Minister of Finance said:

“Government will continue to work closely with airline operators to ensure maintenance and expansion where possible of the routes and seats volume that are offered to connect Guyana with the rest of the world and to promote optimal competition in this sector. This effort manifested itself last year in the commencement of a direct service between Georgetown and New York by Delta Airlines.”

What has happened since then? No new flights or airlines, high prices, unavailability of seats. The Government needs to do more to ensure that the travelling public gets better service.

The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce in his presentation last year said there were consultations with the business community on the budget – (page 147 of the Hansard) – but I am not aware that there was any for this Budget. I know I will be told that there is ongoing consultation. In fact, last year he said that consultation for the 2010 Budget, which is the current one, will begin immediately after 2009 which was last year. The Hon. Minister should know that a handful of business executive is not the business community and I must draw his attention to his own recognition of the importance of the Small and Medium Enterprises (S.M.E.s.). There is need for meaningful consultation. In the Budget Debate, 16 February 2008, page 165 of the Hansard,

“In Guyana, Small Business represents about three-quarters of the total business activities and makes a substantial contribution to the generation of employment and income. There is no doubt that SMEs are critical for the success of Guyana. This sector is seen as having the potential for creating economic linkages to reduce foreign currency expenditure through utilising raw material, inputs and enhanced economic and social conditions generally.”

On behalf of the S.M.E.s I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for his honest recognition for their contributions made. However, can the Minister say if there was any consultation with the S.M.E.s in the preparation of this 2010 Budget?

We were told by the Hon. Minister Manniram Prashad: “We are currently speaking to the American Airline.”

Can the Minister say what happened to the talks with the American Airlines? It would seem that Guyana is not short of adequate promotion and publicity. The Hon. Minister reported in last year's Budget speech, page 156:

"...over 40 companies" and this year he said 60-plus "are now selling Guyana Documentaries – the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Three-part series. In 2008, Guyana participated in four of the largest trade and travel fairs in the world and was favourably received.

1. The ITB in Berlin, Germany
2. The British Bird Watching Fair, England
3. The American Birding Expo, Utah, U.S.A.
4. The World Trade Marketing at EXEL, London

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, with these kinds of publicity, you will agree with me that there should be financial returns on these investments to the National Treasury. If not, participation at these Fairs and Expos can only be described as expensive excursions. Can the Hon. Minister say if there is any way to measure the gains for the expo and fairs and how much the Ministry of Tourism has contributed?

Budget 2006 under the heading "Diversification of the Economy", page 30, 4.10:

"Guyana's tourism product continues to grow and attract significant interest from investors and visitors alike. This all goes well for the future as its potential has long been recognised and its contribution will help to mitigate the impact of loss of income arising from sugar price cuts."

The reality on the ground is that tourism under this Government is going nowhere. It is in this context that I enquire of the performance of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. The Hon. Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce continues with his empty boast of what others around the world are saying about Guyana:

In the 2009 Budget:

"Guide to Latin America 2008 – Guyana Top Ten Wild Adventures in Latin America, The Independent in the United Kingdom, February 2008 – Guyana among the top five wildlife retreat in the world, Bird Watching Magazine in the United Kingdom –

Guyana the next big neo-tropical birding destination, BBC World Magazine, April 2008 – Guyana is South America’s biggest little secret.”

I would like to stop here a little. Why is Guyana being recognised as this big secret? It clearly shows that enough money is not being put into this sector to make it known, so you could have gold and diamond but yet, no one knows about it.

“Hilary Brant - Guyana is the Cinderella of South America.”

Here we are again, referred to as a Cinderella.

After reviewing the 2009 presentation by the Hon. Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce and listening to the Minister of Finance’s 2010 Budget presentation, I decided to check this birding business and what I found was interesting. Firstly, the Birding business is for real and secondly, this hype about Guyana is a figment of the Minister’s imagination. The fact: Guyana is not among the top 20 Birding destinations and I hope that since birding is so significant, the Minister will tell this Hon. House how much money Birding contributes to the Guyana economy.

I now turn to page 169 of the Budget 2009 of the Minister of Tourism’s presentation:

“This year I once more bring facts to the debate with specifics concerning accomplishments in birding. Guyana is touted as the new international birding destination and is rating along Peru and Ecuador. Peru is touted as one of the best birding destination in the world and our name is being mentioned in the same breath with Peru.”

The fact: Like Guyana, Peru did not make the top 20 Birding destinations but Ecuador is number 17 on the top 20 list.

In closing, it is clear that this budget raises more questions than answers; questions such as: What is in the Budget for the poor other than the repressive VAT. What has happened to cause the domestic debt to meet US\$87 billion? What has happened to cause this country that has obtained so much debt relief, to have a US\$933 million debt at the end of 2009, as compared to US\$718 million at the end of 2007? What is it that has caused the cost of living to become a killer of our people?



It should be clear that this Budget will impact negatively on the people of Guyana and the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has made it worst with his Birding excursion.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, for the benefit of people who would like to travel and would like to know where the top destinations of the world are, I have a document here that gives the top 20 tourist sites but I would only give you the top ten. The countries are: France, United States, Spain, China, Italy, United Kingdom, Ukraine, Charity, Germany and Mexico and the cities are Paris, London, Bangkok, Singapore, New York City, Hong Kong, Dubai, Shanghai, Istanbul and Rome.

I will conclude by saying, that I have no choice rather than to say, that I cannot support this budget and I found it repressive. [Applause]

**Dr. Mahadeo:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to firstly congratulate the two new Members who were sworn in on Monday. Members, I wish you all the best. I remember Comrade Lloyd Pereira from Wakapau where we met for the first time, when I was doing medical outreaches to that community. I can remember him being very passionate about his work and I am sure that his contributions to this Hon. House will be very valuable.

I would also like to congratulate my colleague, the Hon. Member, Mr. Anil Nandlall, on his birthday and wish him many more birthdays in the future and lots of success.

I also stand proudly here, to be a graduate of the People's Friendship University (P.F.U.R.), like my colleagues Dr. Frank Anthony and Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, Hon. Members of this House. I also would like to congratulate our president on his Doctorate award. There are leaders across the globe who are part of the more than 90,000 graduates over the 50years of the P.F.U.R.

Presently, there are over 30,000 students enrolled at the P.F.U.R. with over 33% coming from the third world. Congratulations to the People's Friendship University on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Next, I would also like to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance on a wonderful budget presentation. He was well-spoken, clear, and the language was simple and the budget has substance. I would also like to congratulate and thank the staff of the Ministry of Finance on a well prepared Budget. I know it entailed a lot of hard work.

I would like to quote the Hon. Minister when he said:

“At the same time, visible progress was made in expanding and upgrading our country’s physical infrastructure and our Government’s longstanding pacts to invest heavily in social programmes continue to be honoured.”

We have not cured all the ills, we did not rebuild all the structures, we did not clear all the drains and we did not staff all the institutions at 100% in 2009.

We do not have all the funds we need to do all the developmental works that we want to do. This we know, we accept it as a cold, hard fact of life and more than that, it is something we have to live with. However, Madam, we can maximise the use of the funds that are available to us, this takes planning and community and stakeholder participation, and this is what we did.

The regional administration of Region Six carried out the necessary consultations with subject Ministries, the Regional Democratic Council (R.D.C.), Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (N.D.C.s), Amerindian Village Councils and other residents of Region Six, regarding policies and development plans.

The regional administration performed well under the leadership of its management team. There was much greater interaction with the communities in 2009 than in the previous year. Excluding the 50-odd meetings held across the region when there was the regular Cabinet Outreach to Region 6, there was over 231 community and stakeholder meetings that were held by the regional administration in communities across the region from Mara, on the East Bank Berbice to Siparuta up the Corentyne River. This does not include the meetings conducted by health and education in the communities. At these meetings with the regional administration, organisations, committees and community members were updated with the plans of the Region and the progress that was made. Complaints and suggestions were taken into account and the necessary actions taken.

With the objective of developing adequate drainage and irrigating of all lands for the social and economic benefit of residents of the region, a number of structures, access dams and sluices were rehabilitated. I have the complete list here, for those who may be interested in reading all the details about it.

These works were supervised by the regional administration and the works committee visited on a regular basis and reported to the management of the R.D.C. The works committee that does the inspection of works does that inspection before payments are made. This Works

Committee comprises councillors of the People's National Congress Reform (P.N.C.R.), the Alliance for Change (A.F.C.) and the People's Progressive Party Civic (P.P.P./C) along with technical officers. So, the claims that substandard works are accepted by the regional administration - all three parties have representatives and they would have accepted it or if they were absent, they would have abdicated their duties.

I must add that for these contracts, the communities were integrally involved with most of the contracts being signed publicly in the community in which the work was being done, in the presence of the members of the community. The residents of these communities were made aware of the works to be done and assisted in monitoring same. By the latter part of 2009, the communities were consulted and their decision was taken to either pay or not to pay the final payment.

There has been development in the Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) system, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Several retired sluices were reactivated. These were supported by drainage pumps on the coastal area of the region. Presently, five sluices are being constructed at Alness and Moleson Creek, five more are expected to be done this year.

I want to inform the Hon. Member who spoke on Region 6 and flooding in Rose Hall Town, that the Regional Chairman advised that a pump is dedicated to this town and it is located at the back of J.C. Chandisingh school, wherever rain falls this Member could visit and see the pump in action.

Canals were cleaned, sluices rehabilitated, access dams, bridges and revetments were rehabilitated utilising monies totalling approximately \$194 million dollars.

Government excavators have completed approximately 5 million cubic yards of excavation and 300,000 rods of cleaning of canals. Moneys were spent on the community enhancement programmes, that is, maintenance in the municipalities and N.D.C.s in Drainage and sanitation areas. Important to note here, is that it created employment opportunities for ordinary people of Region 6.

In response to the speaker who spoke on Region 6 about works not happening in areas like Kildonan, from December last year, there is a machine working in that area doing clearing of drains.

In 2009, under the urban roads and general roads programme, 37 additional roads and streets were completed including in some of the areas that the Hon. Member mentioned. I recommend that the Hon. Member visit these areas and he would notice that Alexander Street, Penitentiary Road and Lot 45 Stanley town, in New Amsterdam were all done. Mora and Eric Lewis streets in Rose Hall town was done, Circle and Main Streets in Line Path and Circle Street in Skeldon, Corriverton, Timmers Dam in Angoys Avenue, Streets in Crab Wood Creek, Numbers 47, 53 Villages and the list goes on and on.

A number of bridges were constructed in Region 6 in 2009. These include bridges on the East Bank Berbice, Johanna, Mibicuri and Yakusari, Tain, Fryish, Manchester, Crabwood Creek and Albion.

Permit me, to note that these works went through the tender board procedure and were awarded to different contractors including Memorex, Ramcharitar, Naimatialli, Dundass, Associated Construction, among others.

In the Public Works area, there has been an increase in funds that will be made available to the region this year. It will increase from \$91 million to \$106 million.

Under the Second Low Income Settlement Programme, \$1.5 billion will be spent in 2010 to begin construction works in 6 new sites, which will include Ordinance/Fortlands and No. 76 Village in Region 6.

In 2010, it is also expected that phase two of the Corriverton Water Treatment Plant will be completed at a total cost of \$1.6 billion benefiting over 12,000 residents from No. 74 Village to Moleson Creek.

In Region 6, we saw the completion of the Skeldon sugar factory and its commissioning. We heard that it has defects and this has been recognised. Important to note is, the fact, that thousands of acres of previously uncultivated lands are being cultivated between the Number 66 village area and Moleson Creek area.

It is necessary to point out that with the modern factory and large amounts of lands being developed and cultivated; sugar production is going to be increased significantly. When the factory is fully functional and operating at maximum capacity, it will reduce the cost of production, making it more profitable. And, electricity from the Skeldon sugar factory is already being added to the national grid.

In the rice industry where, according to the Hon. Minister of Finance, we achieved our second highest annual production of all time, in Region Six, for the last crop, 48,000 acres were planted. Increase in production and productivity is because of the Government's massive investment in the Agriculture sector.

Although we are experiencing a severe El Nino situation, due to effective management of our water resources, to date in Region 6, 44,000 acres of rice lands are under cultivation. Land preparation is ongoing in areas like Crabwood Creek and it is expected that the total acreage for this crop could even reach 50,000 acres.

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2010 in the rice sector, the Farmer Field Schools that my colleague and friend, Hon. Member Seeraj spoke so proudly about, will be sustained and expanded. Further, Region Six will benefit from additional drying facilities that will be constructed at Lesbeholden. This, of course, will aid in reducing spoilage.

Generally where water is concerned, there have been improvements in the quality of the water system in Region 6, unlike what my colleague alluded to. Many areas are now receiving this essential commodity for the first time, but Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge that we have not achieve all that we wanted to do. This is why the Hon. Minister, Mr. Irfaan Ali has said that he will demand more money.

In Region 6, more than 4000 leaks were repaired over the last year. It would have been expected that the present prolonged dry weather due to El Nino, would have caused very serious problems in the supply of potable water. This was definitely not the case; actually at No. 56 Village, Rose Hall and New Amsterdam where the water treatment plants and wells have reached their peak performance, performance has improved.

In the area of education, data from the Regional Education Officer reveals that at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination, which was taken by 8,122 students at sixteen schools, provided better results in 2009 for Region 6 than previously. Actually, the region jumped the National Average in 2009.

Work-study attachment was done by 50 students who were attached to government and private entities and this was very successful. In fact, it is important to note, that by the completion of the attachment, several students were employed by the agencies where they did their work study.

Students of Region 6 participated in several chess competitions, and we know that the Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony is passionate about chess. Actually, we hosted one National competition at the Port Maurant Secondary School and, of course the Nationals was also successfully hosted by Region 6.

The Regional Education Strategic Plan was reviewed. Workshop for nursery school teachers was done to train them on the implementation of the new curriculum reform programme on literacy. A Two-day sensitisation workshop on Escuela Nueva Model of Education was conducted in Region 6 to sensitise and sustain the Model of Education with a focus on “child-friendly schools” and its relationship to the concept of “effective schools.”

We have started Holiday Outreach remedial workshops which were held at seven locations for students who were awarded Primary Tops. Puppetry and drama were successfully used in Phonics and Mathematics.

Face the Community Meetings were done by the Education Department. There were eight Face the Community Meetings and these were attended by the Hon. Shaik Baksh. Issues were discussed with all those who attended. Parent Teachers’ and Friends Association meeting were also addressed in the areas on the improvement of the delivery of education

Truancy was recognised as a problem and major concern in 2008. This came up even during the Cabinet Outreach in 2008. I remember the Hon. Dr. Anthony and the Hon. Dr. Westford in 2008 being very upset at the reports that they received. I was with their team. A special effort was made to deal with this issue; P.T.A.s were involved in tracking and attracting pupils back to school through ‘Community Mapping’ where homes were visited by parents and school-aged drop-outs were recorded. In the New Amsterdam area, 348 children were picked up; 75% of these returned willingly to school and 25% felt inhibited. Incentives are planned and prosecution if necessary. Follow-up tracking of truants is done by School Liaison Officers.

To close the section on education, I want to say: 55 schools had renovation works done and additional works are planned this year. Furniture remains a problem but the region made serious efforts that will continue with the 2010 budget, to address this problem. The allocated sum for Education in our regional Budget for this year will see the good works continue.

Again we know that that we cannot cure all the illnesses and we cannot save everybody from dying since we are not God. But we utilised the funds we had available, to get maximum benefit.

The Hon. Minister within the Ministry of Health, Dr. Ramsaran spoke eloquently about the National Ophthalmology Hospital which was opened and is functioning. There is no need for me to talk about that National Institution.

However, I must first refer to a point raised by a speaker on the first day of the debate concerning the need to work towards set targets in Health – Hon. Member, there are targets set in the Health sector. Targets that are set could be found in the Health Plan or the National Health Strategy 2008-2012 and that, could be found on online.

I would like to start speaking about health in Region 6 by mentioning the Regional Health Authority. This Hon. House passed legislation, a couple of years ago, to form Regional Health Authorities. The first was set up in Region 6 and let me say: setting up of the R.H.A. was a visionary move and I congratulate this House. Region 6 has proven that R.H.A.s is the way to go.

The R.H.A. has functioned well, being guided by its board of directors under an astute and hardworking Chairman. Regular board meetings are held.

*7.50 p.m.*

In the case of the R.H.A., Mdm. Deputy Speaker, targets are put in the services agreement as dictated by the legislation. This binds the R.H.A. to delivering services to the public and reporting on progress of work in a systematic manner. I will just like to emphasis this point and mention some of the targets that were set and how we in Region 6 fared.

In the Labour Ward for example, and the Hon. Minister mentioned this in his speech earlier, targets for Foetal Heartbeat- monitoring hourly at least, Vaginal Examination- at least four hourly in normal delivery, hourly Blood Pressure monitoring, Birth weight recording, assessment of babies and the recording of same, were all set at approximately 98%, we achieved a 100% success rate.

We all know that in the not too distant past, and again I refer to the Hon. Dr. Ramsammy's Speech. In the 80's and early 90's, maternal mortality in Region 6 in particular was the highest in the country and we heard the Minister saying that Guyana had the highest maternal

mortality in the CARICOM and Latin America. In 2009 a target of 10 per 10, 000 births was set for the R.H.A., I am proud to say that we had no maternal deaths in Region 6. Our neonatal mortality also used to be the highest in the country, the highest in the Region in the 70's, 80's and 90's. A target of 20 per 10, 000 was set for the R.H.A. for 2009; we achieved 8.3 – much better than the target that was set. Still Births was also set a target for, we had a target at 22 per 1000, and we achieved 18.9 again better than the target that was set.

Other targets Mdm. Deputy Speaker, included number of surgeries, bed occupancy, number of patients seen at clinics, etc.

I advise all those that are interested in the works being done by the Berbice Regional Health Authorities (B.R.H.A.), the facilities managed by the B.R.H.A. and its staff to check the R.H.A. website at [www.rha6.gov.gy](http://www.rha6.gov.gy). In one week's time, the report of the R.H.A. that we presented as against the targets set in the Services agreement signed with the MoH that was presented last week to the Hon. Minister and to the Public, will be found on the R.H.A.'s website for all to see. This way, we are not only accountable to the MoH but to an informed Public.

The services agreement signed with the Ministry of Health was adhered to. The R.H.A. reported against the services agreement three times; first quarter, half year and at the end of the year. At all these presentations, the press was invited and they asked several questions. I am happy to say that we met all the criteria and surpassed most of the targets set in the services agreement.

From our budget for Region 6, about \$67 million was spent to rehabilitate health facilities across the region. We managed to do rehab works in the hospitals, health centres and health posts in the Regions, including Orealla, Crab Wood Creek, Bush Lot, Brothers, Nurses' Hostel, Port Mourant pharmacy, Doctors' quarters among others.

\$10.8 million was spent on the maintenance of health infrastructure, including access roads, repairs of fences and bridges, etc.

\$18 million was spent on the purchase of equipment and furniture. This excludes equipment that was sent from the central Ministry.



This huge investment in buildings, infrastructure and equipment was supplemented by an increase in medical personnel to Region 6. Of approximately 60 graduates from Cuba in the 2009 batch, Region 6 received the services of 16. The residents of Region 6 are grateful.

Human Resources were ably dealt with by the Hon. Minister and my friend Dr. Ramsaran that I do not need to deal with that. But we are also doing our bit in Region 6. Presently, we are training 10 Pharmacy Assistants in Berbice. Further, to deal with the special needs of the National Psychiatric Hospital, which has lots of needs I must admit we are soon to start a special Psychiatric Patient Care Assistant Programme, a special programme tailored to meet the needs of that institution. Of course we also have the New Amsterdam School of Nursing ably managed by the Ministry of Health.

Permit me to mention our medical outreaches. We have the general medical outreaches and specialist outreaches. There were 15 general medical outreaches to the hinterland locations including Orealla, Siparuta and Baracara. There were additional outreaches to the East Bank of Berbice, Yakusari, Topoo and other locations on the coast. I want to mention that when these outreaches are done, shut-in patients are visited at their homes.

Specialist outreaches were held at Skeldon Hospital where the orthopaedic surgeon, Obstetrician Gynaecologist, General Surgeon, Medical Internist and Psychiatrist held weekly clinics. Monthly clinics were done to the New Amsterdam Prisons also. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, this alleviated the sufferings of the patients since there was no need for them to come to the Regional Hospital in New Amsterdam to see the specialist, instead the specialist went to their location.

In addition, patients with hip fractures were visited at home by the orthopaedic team at home in between hospital visits.

All 25 health centres and health posts in Region 6 functioned well. Most of the staff under the management of the Senior Health Visitor went beyond the call of duty to achieve immunisation coverage of over 98% in Region 6. This continued the good work that was being done previously. Region 6 was awarded the best performing MCH programme in the country for 2009. I want to publicly congratulate the MCH staff of the R.H.A.

Our R.H.A. also built cordial relations with NGO's and Business entities. Our award ceremony which has been held annually for the last seven years was sponsored by GT&T this year. Prizes have every year increased in volume. This year GT&T sponsored two trips for

two couples to Kaieteur as the two top prizes, overnight trips for eight couples to Mainstay Resort was funded by Meditron. So you see, even the private entities recognise the good works that we have been doing at the R.H.A. in Region 6.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the R.H.A. also had several community feedback meetings. Here the year report was presented and the community that we serve came and asked questions and aired their views, grievances and concerns. These include Face the Community meetings at Skeldon Hospital, Crab Wood Creek Health Centre, Orealla Health Centre, Siparuta Health Post, No. 47 Health Centre, No. 64 Health Centre, Bush Lot Health Centre, Williams burgh, Mibicuri Hospital and Health Centre and Yakusari Health Post, Bohemia Health Centre, Cumberland Health Centre, New Amsterdam Family Health Clinic among others. These meetings were well attended. Sometimes we had crowds of over 200 community residents. The Hon. Dr. Ramsammy and Dr. Ramsaran were alternately at these meetings to hear the reports that are presented by the staff of the Health Facility and listen to the community feedback. Management committees are set up at these facilities with a larger one being set up at Skeldon. They all give feedback to the administration and to the Board of Directors.

In addition we have a complaints department that deals with and investigates all complaints. In 2009 the number of complaints dealt with was 530. Of which 529 were resolved and one was referred for further investigation. Again, the target set by the Ministry of Health is that all complaints must be investigated and reported to the Board.

Our special projects were also successful. The Basic Nutrition Programme saw the reduction of severe malnutrition in our Region. All mothers and eligible children received sprinkles as a supplement and in a timely manner.

The HIV project was a huge success. We managed to test over 11,000 persons during the National week of testing in 2009. We have sensitised Berbicians and they now quite responsibly take the test. We also held very successful health fairs. The Hon. Member Dr. John Austin visited our health fairs and commended us.

The services agreement for 2010 is already in force. The budgetary allocation for 2010 of \$810 million will be used in a planned programme. This programme was prepared after consultations with all stakeholders and the Ministry of Health.

Our work and business plans for the R.H.A. is in accordance with our National Health Strategy for 2008-2012. The priorities of the sector in 2010 continues to be expanding and

upgrading of infrastructure to increase coverage and access, enhancing the human resources capability of the sector as a whole, and improving quality in the delivery of publicly guaranteed health services, with an emphasis in such areas as family health, chronic, communicable, and non-communicable diseases.

Considerable progress has been made in the mental health programme in 2009. I had expected the Hon. Minister Dr. Ramsammy to touch on the approximately \$50 million spent to upgrade the National Psychiatric Hospital Complex, making it a place where, like we promised, patients can receive quality Health Care in conditions that are acceptable. I guess he ran out of time, too many things to talk about.

The Mental Health Programme advanced with training aimed at strengthening and building capacity. The mental health programme also expanded with the establishment of substance abuse programmes in the New Amsterdam prisons, the New Amsterdam Hospital, Skeldon and Mibicuri Hospitals.

The Hon. Minister of Health mentioned the major works that will be done at the Skeldon hospital to the tune of \$23 million. This will improve the delivery of Health Care to the residents of that area.

I must mention the fact that the residents and road users of Region 6, from New Amsterdam to Moleson Creek now have 87 kilometres of good re-asphalted roadways, which was completed with \$2.1 billion expended in 2009. The residents are grateful. The approach of access road to the Berbice River Bridge was also completed. The Berbice River Bridge has earned national acclaim... [Mr. Persaud: International acclaim]. ...correction, the Berbice River Bridge has earned international acclaim and stands as a visible evidence that the P.P.P./C. Government fulfils its promises to this Nation. The Skeldon sugar factory is another of its promises fulfilled.

In 2010, progress will continue in Guyana and in Region 6. To quote the Hon. Minister of Finance, "The sum of \$1 billion has been budgeted for the construction of approximately 35 kilometres of all weather roads in the Black Bush Polder area, which houses some 425 farmers and 17,000 acres of land under cultivation. Further, in order to improve access to over 1,500 acres of agricultural land, major improvement will commence on the East and West Canje roads from this allocation.

The Hon. Minister said, “this Budget 2010 presented under the theme: “*Consolidate Transform Sustain*”.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Time Hon. Member.

**Mr. Hinds:** I propose that the Hon. Member be granted another 5 minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. Mahadeo:** Thank you, I am near the end. I want to close my presentation by extending an invitation, not on the Hon. Member Dr. Ramsaran’s bus that will stop on the bridge. But I extend an invitation to all those who are interested in development and what is happening in Region 6, to cross the bridge. It does not take much time; and to come and see what progress is happening in Region 6. I want to close my presentation by saying: I guess that this budget debate will follow the line of Government M.P.s seeing the good things presented in the budget and the Opposition M.P.s seeing nothing good at all; nothing good done, not even in 2009.

I often wonder why, some believe that if they shut their eyes and close their ears then others will not see or hear. It is only those who shut their eyes that will not see and those who close their ears will not hear. Progress is there for everyone to see and tell others. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members I think this is a convenient time to take the break, we will break for half an hour.

*Assembly suspended accordingly at 8.06p.m.*

*Assembly resumed accordingly at 8.41p.m.*

**Mrs David-Blair:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. It is an honour to be able to contribute in this Debate of the 2010 Budget. Once again we hear of the largest Budget ever. Is it the largest in moneys allocated? Or is it the largest promises made?

Tonight is very significant for me, because today is the 17<sup>th</sup> day of February and the residents of Region 7 more so Bartica commemorates the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Bartica Massacre. As I look in the newspapers here, today is a day when everyone reflects on the time of what happened on that dreadful Sunday night and what are the improved changes that have occur

in our Region. As I look at today's Stabroek News the heading says, "Struggling Bartica Massacre survivors still endure pain and loss." Our lone survivor of this massacre, Mr. Raymond White is still waiting to complete his surgery so that he can once again be able to provide for his family. He wishes that the royal run around by the authorities of the Guyana Public Hospital Corporation will soon come to an end and his expenses will be minimised.

As I look at the newspapers, the Stabroek News of today and I quote from page 18:

"Edwin Gilkes' widow Debra also never got the promised assistance from Office of the President". Last year when *Stabroek News* spoke with Debra her salary could barely cover her house loan and she was forced to use her lunch hour to sell clothes.

Debra's situation is still the same... Last year end, Debra said, she had received some assistance... from Red Cross."

She goes on to say;

"My salary is \$32,000 and my house loan is \$31,000, she said, and if I fail to pay my loan then my children and I will be homeless... you know how, I just trying my best."

The woman said that President Bharrat Jagdeo had called her to a meeting at his office less than a month after her husband was murdered. She had requested help in repaying the loan. She also approached the bank but because of her age they have refused to reduce the amount she must pay every month.

It is her belief that those who suffered from the Bartica massacre have been neglected over the 2 years."

She even went on to say that,

"...all the focus was on the families of the Lusignan victims." And that is how they still feel after two years.

One of the relatives of Mr. Irving Ferreira said;

"All the Government did was bury the dead...We do not talk about what happened much because it is just too painful but there will be a service at the Bartica Stelling we are going to attend it."

Mr. Raymond White said, "...he spends his days on the road waiting for his friends who are miners. They would sometimes give him a bit of money. He saves this money to pay the loan he took to build his house."

He said and I quote;

"I still have to do a next surgery on my arm and they keep putting me off. I know a lot of friends from the interior and they would give me a "lil ting" when they come out because I cannot work. These men have been more kind to me than anyone else."

And this includes the Government.

He even said that as a boat captain he does not even pass by the Stelling where the boats are moored that he once captained to the interior because it really hurts him. He said that he has to do the surgery and every time he goes to clinic in Georgetown he is being pushed around by the Orthopaedic Department.

You know, when we come to this Assembly especially from the interior districts we always tend to speak the truth of what is happening. Old people say, "When hoorie come from trench bottom and tell yuh patwa got fever, you got to believe him". What I am saying about the Bartica massacre is nothing else than the gospel truth.

I now turn to the Budget. As I listened to my colleague from the Government benches, the Hon. Dr. Westford, she has confirmed my belief that nothing new is provided for Region 7. The Hon. Member clearly stated that Region 7 will be rehabilitated, refurbished and upgraded. All moneys allocated in this Budget are to do just that, the normal routine. Nothing new, no new projects, no creation of jobs and our youths remain jobless as they come out of the Secondary Schools with their qualifications.

I will now speak on youth and sports. All the playfields in and around Bartica are at its most deplorable state. To contribute to the degrading of our main grounds in Bartica, one of the P.P.P./C. R.D.C. Councillors damaged the ground by ploughing it up because of personal grievances with the cricket board. The attitude of the Government and the Youth and Sport Department at Region 7 is one of politics. Where is the National Sports Commission? Why is Region 7 being neglected? There is always a fight between the football and the Cricket Association for the uses of the playground.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, a few chest boards are not enough for promoting sports in Schools. It is time the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture start focusing on the Schools in the outlying regions, especially the interior districts.

I now turn my attention to Housing and Water. It is said that Bartica has the best water system in Guyana. Well if this is the best I do not want to see the worst. Because the residents of Bartica based on which area they reside have to wait their turn to have water through the taps. The system is, today for 1-5 mile area and Mongreppo, and tomorrow for Bartica Central. And you have to call the authorities to find out what time of day water will flow through the taps. Sometimes we hear the booster broke down, then, the operator did not turn on the valve, that there was a blow out in the swamp and the list of excuses are coming based on the person that makes the call. Then there are the types of water quality, sometimes it is clear, most times it is brown another time it is milky. Then there are different taste of which they are hard to describe.

We want to acknowledge and say that we would be grateful for that 5 miles housing scheme, but too long is the process, too much of money for the lots allocated and too long a waiting for the infrastructure work to be done. Then after that how many of the houses are being repossessed by the banks because of not being able to pay the loans. This is a survey that the Hon. Minister should set up a committee, and to really do an analysis to find out and to see, not stand and boast in the Parliament that we are putting up thousands of houses; thousands of homes, millions are getting house lots. But go and find out how much pressure an allottee has to go under to own a home and then to pay for it. No wonder so many people have not yet built their homes in these various housing schemes.

I now turn to education. Region 7 is in a very unfortunate position with respect to education. Our children are only afforded a limited level. Majority of our parents cannot afford to send our children to Georgetown to further their studies. Only a few are fortunate to be given a scholarship and even the conditions within the scholarship programme, are very challenging. Because parents have to financially and materially assist their children in Cuba, so that they can have quality food to eat. The small *per diem* given to them is just a drop in the ocean in respect of their expenses to up keep them.

There is need for a trade school in Bartica to take care of our young people in Bartica and in the riverine communities. We have the Transport and Harbours Department on First Street that is being used as a garage or a storeroom that can be utilised in a way that will be

beneficial to our young children. They can acquire skills that will allow them to apply themselves to the kinds of jobs available in and around Bartica and in the interior district. And I think that the Ministry of Education along with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture should really make this a programme coming out of the LCDS funds for our young children in Region 7. And I say this because we were told that miners will not be able to acquire anything directly from the funding and we were told by the President some of this money is going into education. I am saying tonight that the best way we can use this money in Region 7 is to open this trade school well equipped with qualified tutors and skilled men so that our children really can have a future. Because we are taking care of Region 10, we are taking care of Region 3 and we are taking care of Region 7, Rivers View; the administration of Region 7 and 3.

The Hon. Dr. Norton ably dealt with the health situation in Guyana and I respect everything that he said. I would like to support him. I spent almost three quarters of 2009 in Georgetown because of the health of my husband. It was an experience at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. Tears had to be shed, hard words had to be spoken, the intervention of Dr. Bheri Ramsaran had to be sought and the announcement of my position as a Member of Parliament had to be made before health care could have started on my husband. I kept it quiet, I did not say anything to anyone. I discussed with Dr. Bheri Ramsaran certain things but I kept it back for this Budget Presentation to emphasise and to say that I had the personal experience, who feels it knows it.

*8.55 p.m.*

The Doctor and Patient communication is lacking. The moody unconcerned attitude of some of the nurses leaves much to be desired. Sometimes the tone of voice is questionable, the lack of privacy at the Accident and Emergency department is normal for a patient who is confined to a bed, stretcher or a wheel chair. I say this, because once you are confined to these things and you have to use a bed pawn you have to use it in the presence of all and sundry. My family would like to extend our gratitude to Dr. Bheri Ramsaran and wishes that all Guyanese be given the health care they need. We are asking for the service of the malaria department at the Bartica Hospital to be a 24/7 service. Most times when patients come from the interior with Malaria in the evenings they have to wait until the next morning, if they come out on Friday they have to wait until Monday. Of recent we had a death at the Bartica Hospital because of malaria and typhoid. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I attended the funeral on Sunday and



was told by the family members that the death certificate has Typhoid but the Hospital does not do Typhoid test. We are wondering what is happening. I know it sounds very strange but this is what I have been told at the funeral, we need to do more. We know that Malaria, Typhoid and Dengue Fever are sicknesses that never pass Bartica and the interior and you can only say that you are promoting good health care if you have that department fully staffed, well equipped and ready to attend to patients at anytime they get to the hospital.

We need an operable Electrocardiography (ECG) Machine. We have to go all the way to Georgetown to do a heart test. The theatre is not yet working and this is years Mdm. Deputy Speaker. We have a hospital there that should be regarded as the central hospital for Region 7 and still not being equipped and it is not fully run. We have the communication barrier that is a problem between doctors and patients. We need interpreters, this is my third budget speech and I am pleading with the Ministry of Health to give us interpreters at the hospital to assess the patient and doctor commutation. Patients are being given overdose and wrong treatment, all because of the communication barrier. Please Mr. Minister; it is an urgent matter that should be dealt with immediately.

I now turn to the big point of mining. Mining was in the media from the 1<sup>st</sup> of February and even before that because of remarks made by His Excellency the President of this country. The miners were even threatened that no small protest cannot make the Government do anything, if we do not want to go with them, they will go alone and these were words that was said by the President of this country to the people. We attended meetings, we talked about landlordism and every topic we spoke about at those meetings we were appalled to hear the President say; “Sam I do not know about this tell me, Woolford I do not know about this tell me”. That was when we realised that we have a President in this Country that do not know what is happening with us at the grassroots level, we were clearly told...

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Yes.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** The President is not here to represent himself and so I do not think that the Hon. Member should be allowed to continue in this way. [Interruption]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mrs. David-Blair, please take your seat. Yes, you have raised a point of order that the President is not here. I thought you would have been raising a point of order under the President is being criticised, because that is the point, but the Prime Minister

speaks for the President in the National Assembly, but I take the point that Mrs. David-Blair; the criticism thing is what is operable here, not the fact that the President is absent. [Interruption] But obviously the Prime Minister was there too as you said.

**Mrs. David-Blair:** Yes Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Benn and Mr. Manniram. We were told at the meeting about the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) and I want to say to you upon leaving that meeting our small miners came up with a description for the LCDS and the only description they came up with is “Leading Citizens into Deeper Suffering”. We were clearly told that collecting the money from Norway is a priority; it is being looked at with more interest rather than the small miners who are working very hard in the interior to provide for their families and to maintain their children at school. We were told that we could be paid off as small miners with the LCDS money and money will still be left over. [Interjection: Who said that?] The President said it. [Interjection: Where?] At Liliendaal. [Interruption] Yes we were told that the money... if you all want to hear the truth I could bring the tape.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I think the Hon. Member is totally misrepresenting...

**Mrs. David-Blair:** No! I am not!

**Mr. Rohee:** ...what the President said.

**Mrs. David-Blair:** I am not! I was there.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I was there too...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, would you please be quiet, a point of order is being raised.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I was also at that gathering and I think as far as I could recollect, this is a total misrepresentation. I would ask the speaker to withdraw that. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, with due respect, she has nothing on record to validate... [Interjection: Who is she?] ...the Hon. Member has nothing on record to validate what she is saying. She should withdraw her statements forthwith.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member would you please sit.

**Mr. Rohee:** All of us could say what the President said.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Mrs. David-Blair please sit. I wish to draw to your attention Rule 41 (8) “Contents of Speeches”. This Rule states the following: “The conduct of the President or any other person performing the functions of President, Members of the Assembly and Judges of the Supreme Court of Judicature or other persons performing judicial functions shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for the purpose”. If you want to criticise their conduct you have to bring a special motion to the National Assembly. You may go ahead and try to avoid criticising directly the conduct of the President.

**Mrs. David-Blair:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker my recollection of what transpired at that meeting was that, there was a clear indication that the moneys being collected from Norway is the priority to the Government rather than the sustenance of small miners in the interior.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I was there too and I am involved and I think the representation that we are hearing here is an unfortunate one, I think it misrepresents what the President intended. I think the President said... [Interruption] ...I think it is good for us to have the exact wording if there is some exact wording. My understanding of what the President said, was that there was enough money coming from the Norwegian fund that he could take care of the miners and any difficulties that they have. **[Interjection:** That is what she is saying.] That is not the same as what the Hon. Member was saying. The miners were of concern to him and he had enough money to meet with them and make whatever arrangements required.

**Mr. Murray:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, with great respect to the Hon. Prime Minister, I do not think this House can question what a Member’s recollection is of a certain situation. When someone rises to speak after the Member they may give their interpretation of what took place according to them. But she must be allowed to express her view. She is not speaking about the President; she is merely saying what her recollection was of the discussion. That must be perfectly allowed in this National Assembly. [Noisy interruption]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members please quite down or I will be forced to adjourn this Assembly. I will adjourn the Assembly until this fracas has come to an end. The Assembly is now adjourned.

*Assembly adjourned accordingly at 9.10 p.m.*

*Assembly resumed accordingly at 9.25 p.m.*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members we will now resume the sitting. When I read the rules I think it is 41(8) of the Standing Order, I perhaps stop short to ask Mrs. David-Blair to withdraw the remarks she made about the President, using the President's name which is not tenable in this Assembly unless by a motion. You cannot use the President's name with rule seven, to influence neither could you use it to criticise him nor anyone holding that office. I would ask Mrs. David-Blair before she continues with her presentation to formally withdraw those remarks she made using His Excellency name, the name of the President.

The second item that gave rise to the sort of rabble behaviour all though short lived in this Assembly. We cannot find any rule that was breached and no representation in my opinion. You cannot misrepresent something, if there is a document or something official that has the visual position and somebody stands and says something different, you can then find the person misrepresenting what is there or officially it was something that was said, and placed on record and someone misrepresents. But if different persons were at a forum and they came away with different impressions, I do not see - and we cannot find anything in the ambit of the Standing Order that shows that that is incorrect usage. What we do here in the National Assembly each side may say something that the other side may not find favour with, or may think it is inaccurate and the following Speaker would come, or at some stage if not even today and give the other side.

I really feel that the latter part of the behaviour was uncalled for. I should ask Mrs. David-Blair to express her points of view in perhaps a slightly different manner. If you came away with one impression, the Prime Minister is saying that was not the impression intended and he was there and that sort of thing. So it is just two different points of view of what happened there. As I said it cannot be any breach of any Standing Order. I would ask the Members generally to please behave yourselves. I was standing for a good half of a minute and there was still fighting carrying on, verbal fighting going on in between both side. If that happens again I will suspend the sitting for the night. So, shall we proceed Mrs. David-Blair, you have seven minutes to conclude.

**Mrs. David-Blair:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I now withdraw the references made in the name of the President. The miners are concerned, one way or the other about the mining industry, because of the different situations around miners working in the interior. For instance, the roads for the interior, miners are complaining about the taxes and the royalty they are paying to Guyana Gold Board when they sell their gold, none of the moneys are being used back in

the interior in respect of maintaining roads so that they can meet their working destinations in a very safe manner.

The miners would like to know how the Government intends to deal with the foreign companies like OMAI in respect of the LCDS and preserving the forest. These were questions that were meant to ask but were never allowed to be asked. The small miners are saying that a dredge owner with a six inch dredge alone should not be placed in the medium scale rate as a miner with excavators and wash pans because we are all left to feel and to pay the same penalties which are unfair.

If we are to be left in that category of medium scale we should be given the same privileges as the medium scale miners in respect of duty-free concessions that some receive; as much as six per year to purchase machinery. The miners are concerned about the GRIF and issuing of contracts when it comes to spending the moneys. Even though we were told that we can mine without being disturbed by the six months period we still feel that we are being limited to working. The gold declaration is intended to grow by 4% in 2010. The declarations grew by 14.7% in 2009 and that is the highest level of gold declared in one year without OMAI. We think miners should be commended for this declaration and this production.

We have contributed significantly to the economy of this country even combining rice and sugar. We think that more emphasis and more interest should be placed on the mining industry and the small miners so that we too, can be comfortable as the rice farmers. They are comfortable because you can hear of the benefits they are receiving. Guyana pays the highest royalty and the highest taxes for gold in any country. We were told, that during our mining process we have to ensure that we refill the land and that we have to ensure that we do not cut the wrong trees and we are asking, through this budget with the injection of the moneys to be collected from Norway that the Government should have a plan in store in assisting small miners so that we can mine in the legal and proper way. We are asking that some of this money be used to educate our miners through conferences, seminars and workshops because there is a lot to be learned in terms of our work.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how many persons visited OMAI, to see what is happening where OMAI once operated. There is a part of that mining area where no trees can grow back. We are very scared because we were told by persons from the Guyana Gold Search that they will be coming once again - another company in Region 7 - but this time it is in the Cayuni. We have not been compensated from OMAI for the spill of 1995, we are

scared that another one will happen with this other company and this time it will really affect the Amerindian Reservations, their livelihood and their culture at the same time. We heard in this Assembly during this Budget Speech about Members of Parliament not travelling to their Constituencies and not knowing what is happening...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member time.

**Mrs. Backer:** Mdm. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes and any time that may have been detracted from her during the adjournment.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mrs. David–Blair:** Yes Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we have been hearing in this Assembly, during this Budget Debate, of Members of Parliament not going to the different parts of their Constituencies to bring back a true and accurate report. I want to suggest that, in this Budget we have not heard anything, and there is need for systems to be in place. Members from both sides of the House should be furnished with a budget so that he/she can travel and see the interest and problems of their Constituencies. That is the only way we can solve what is happening in this country. We are hearing that whenever we attend Parliament that the Opposition do not bring the proper or good proposals. Here I am proposing that reforms be put in place, that Members of Parliament, like every other country be given a budget so that we can work. I do hope, in closing, that the way the miners feel in respect of the LCDS in terms of *leading Citizens into Deeper suffering* that it does not become a reality. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

**Mr. Atkinson:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I join with my colleagues in congratulating the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh and his budget staff, for bringing the current and capital expenditure to this Hon. House within the stipulated timeframe for the fourth consecutive year. For Region 8, each of these budgets has consistently shown a continuity of growth for the four main sectors of the regional investment programme namely: administration, education, health and public Works. Before I go into depth with my presentation, I would just like to bring to the fore to this Hon. House and set the record straight with respect to some statements made by the Hon. Member Blair. She made some statements, that this P.P.P./C. Government had at no time at all remembered the victims' relation...

**Mr. Carberry:** Point of order.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Yes Mr. Carberry.

**Mr. Carberry:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Mrs. Blair was at the meeting, The Prime Minister was also at the meeting. Mr. Atkinson was not at the meeting, he can only report what he has been told by a third party.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Carberry, as far as I am concerned this is not a court of law. I mean, it is a Court in one sense, but we do not have the “hear say”, for us to stand up in this forum and say what all kinds of people tell us. If Mr. Atkinson is attempting to respond he did not even get one quarter way in the response when you stood up. He said he was going to set the records straight. [**Mr. Carberry:** But he was not there.] Mr. Carberry, I do not want to hear who was there and who was not there, if a person wants to give the view for this side well he is free to do so as far as I am concerned. Mr. Atkinson please proceed.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid that the Hon. Member Mr. Carberry was not in tune exactly with what was taking place. If my observation was correct, I noticed that the Hon. Member, when she made the presentation regarding the massacre at Bartica... [**Interjection:** Who is she?] The Hon. Member, I said the Hon. Member. This is for the purpose of the Hansard, she distorted everything by claiming that nothing was done for the relations of the victims of the massacre. I have here with me, that Government is, and has always supported and stood by the victims of the Bartica massacre and that is a fact.

The incident occurred at Bartica and the Government recognised that the entire community of Bartica had suffered and was tarnished, also traumatised. However, only three of the persons killed were directly from Bartica. The rest of the persons who were massacred lived in other parts of the country and if my observation tells me that I am correct I notice that all her information was coming from the Stabroek News.

*9.38 p.m.*

I was beginning to wonder if the Hon. Member had actually gone in to all parts of the country where the relatives have resided to meet with these people to find out if any assistance has been granted to them. Just for the Hansard purpose, so that nothing is distorted or left there that will not allow the public to know the truth, some of the beneficiaries came from Wakenaam, Essequibo Coast, East Coast, two from Tushen on the Essequibo Coast, Mon Repos, Soesdyke on the East Bank Highway, Herstelling on the East Bank, and Tucville in Georgetown. Many of these persons received training in small business operations, for

example, Chanderdai Singh of Wakenaam. She was given four cows, poultry, mesh to commence her poultry farm; Juliette Balkarran: she was given sewing machines, sewing training, poultry production, computers, elementary, intermediate and advanced training in IT (Information Technology), a book allowance for her children and exam subsidy. I think this is enough for setting the records straight.

I will now go into my budgetary presentation. In meeting its mandate to the people of Region 8, Potaro-Siparuni, the Regional budget team was able to reach out to our residents for their ideas and opinions, to consult with our Toshaos and their Councillors for their views on how to proceed and to consolidate our development.

And as a result from the various proposals we were able to compile and project realistic targets for our Region for the year 2010. Quite often in the execution of our work plan we have had cause to appeal for more resources to be allocated. 2009 was very challenging in this respect and justly so since there was no stability in prices for transportation and labour which automatically altered the projected estimates for the Region, especially for fuel and lubricants and critical equipment for the health sector.

This year our capital projections include the rehabilitation of the Guest House at Mahdia and Orinduik to a tune of \$5 million. This investment will mean better accommodation for our government functionaries, but more so greater savings in order to service the more difficult areas in the Region when outreaches have to be conducted by our staff from the various departments. As a result of having to do more outreaches to continually consult with our people, \$5 million has been allocated for the purchase of vehicles. Our Regional fleet has increased over the years. We have four tractors to transport precious and costly fuel from Mahdia through Karasabai to the Pakaraimas, to bring in school and medical supplies, office equipment and material which would otherwise have to be flown in by expensive aircraft transport. In addition to this, assistance is provided to residents to transport building materials to build their homes.

At the level of the Central Government, this year will see us procuring 17 small 35 horse power tractors with ploughing accessories to deploy to all the villages. This will enhance agriculture development. In addition to this, our truck based in the Mahdia sub-Region would generally bring in bulk supplies into Mahdia for transshipment to the North Pakaraimas. For this reason we continue to concentrate on our road improvement plan and to build more bridges and to construct roadways where they did not exist. To this end a sum of \$16 million



has been allocated for bridges and \$23 million for roads which will see us pursuing the construction of critical bridges at Tuzeneng and Kanapang. The bridge at Tuzeneng is going to be 40 feet long and the bridge at Kanapang is going to be 40 feet also. The rehabilitation of roads from Itabac to Kanapang is going to be approximately 15 miles, Kamana to Kopinang approximately 20 miles, Mahdia to Princeville approximately 15 miles, and Kopinang to Maikwak approximately 15 miles. Last year we completed the linkage to Region 9 by linking the Echilebar which will enable ready mobility to and from Georgetown, Mahdia or Lethem even during the rainy season. There are many more intermediate bridges to be constructed but one will immediately recognise that the vision of our development plan was to initially access the sub-Region and to ensure that the linkage was maintained. We have now extended these roadways to Kaibarupai in the upper reaches of the Ireng River. All work was done by the residents of Waipa and Kaibarupai and 120 persons were employed to a tune of approximately \$4 million.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, for the first time in the history of Region 8, 14 Amerindian communities have access to vehicles, be it a tractor, a Toyota, an ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) or Canter from Micobie to Campbelltown, from Monkey Mountain to Kaibarupai. In 2005 His Excellency made a commitment that within a three-four years span, every community in the Pakaraimas would be furnished with an ATV. This promise was fulfilled at the end of 2009 with only two villages remaining outstanding namely Chenapau and Karisparu.

A population of 800 persons will benefit from the Princeville to Mahdia roadway rehabilitation project - not to mention the intransient mining population - to access the hospital, some mines, the shopping centres and the central administration. On the other hand, the Itabac to Kanapang roadway will bring relief to approximately 400 persons. This roadway will enhance transportation to and from neighbouring Brazil and the actual building of the road will create employment for approximately 120 persons. The community of Kanapang is in proximity to Irimatao in neighbouring Brazil and in the long term will become a major trading point for the Pakaraimas, benefitting approximately 6,000 residents. Based on the foregoing, it is only evident that despite our Regional administration capacity being below 50% of the prescribed entitlement that our key focus has been one of executing our programmes to lay the foundation and make it favourable for our people to develop.

It is a peoples oriented Budget; a Budget placing our residents in the forefront. We have not neglected the fact that we have to continue clearing our walking trails since the majority of

our residents will still have to resort to Shankmares. To this end, from Chenapau to John Smith creek is going to be cleared. This trail is critical for access to Paramakatoi for the secondary school and is approximately eight hours walking time. This clearing will benefit about 500 persons. Other trails to be cleared include Taruka to Monkey Mountain, Paramakatoi to Maikwak and as the review is being conducted others will be included.

Central Government's intervention to gradually transform Mahdia into a township saw the improvement of the gravity fed water system at over \$100 million from Salbora to the village and into parts of Campbelltown. This service benefits in excess of 2000 persons and no charges are made. It is projected to have electricity by mid 2010. The immediate road in and around Mahdia has been asphalted and ultimately will be extended to the air field.

The peculiar nature of the locations of some of our settlements warrants methodical planning, especially so when we have population shifts as in the case of Arasawa Settlement of Kurukubaru. This budding community of approximately 200 is already benefiting from a school and teachers' quarters. This year we are building a health centre to the tune of \$9 million. Staff has already been trained and identified to service these institutions. Our total capital investment for 2010 amounts to \$115,300,000. The largest sum of \$42 million is going to education followed by \$39 million for public works, \$22 million to the health services and \$11 million for administration. Our current budget is \$530, 560,000, our total budget being \$650,860,000.

As I indicated in my 2009 Budget presentation, our budgeting trend for the Region continues to concentrate and focus on our physical infrastructural development: buildings for conducive working conditions; for our children, teachers, health care providers and administrators; continuous expansion of our roads to access our farms - although our agriculture base remains at a relative subsistence level - our mines and our communities; providing radio and telephone communication; and upgrading equipment for both the education and health departments. To this end, \$21 million will be expended.

Some of the interventions from Central Government for the year 2010 will see the commissioning of an air field at Chenapau in collaboration with the World Wild Life Fund. This community, almost 40 miles up the Potaro River is serviced by the Kaieteur air field and is only accessible by foot and boat. This will bring relief to a population of about 700 persons primarily for medical evacuations but also to bring in much needed supplies. The Kaieteur National Parks Commission has set a target of September 2010 to complete the development

plan for the park. This project commenced in 2009 to a tune of \$39 million and will include complete mapping of the park for resource usage and consultation with all stakeholders, to create a database for potential park workers for training and employment. The villagers of Kopinang, Chenapau, Karisparu, Paramakatoi and Kurukubaru stand to benefit.

The Mahdia runway has been completely asphalted, fenced and upgraded and a private company has commenced immense investment to provide a hanger and a storage bond to facilitate servicing to the interior as a whole, Mahdia being a central spin off point – being strategically located.

Over 100 households at Kurukubaru in the Pakaraimas now benefit from the Government rural electrification programme. They are provided with a solar panel, a regulator, a deep cycle battery, two outlet points and two energy saving bulbs. We all know the degree of relief this has brought to our children, their parents and, on the whole, the total community.

Residents pay the sum of \$500 a month as a user's fee and for maintenance to their local steering committee. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, on the whole, water supply to some communities in the North Pakaraima remains a sore issue because of the heavy bedrock to penetrate and the settlements being on the mountain plateaus. This is coupled with the El Niño effect. Mainly Paramakatoi, Kato and Kurukubaru are affected. However, Kopinang and Monkey Mountain enjoy tap water through gravity fed systems. The Hon. Minister of Housing and Water has given his assurance to address the water issue and has already deployed his technical team to the Region.

Upgrading and training our young people continues to be on our front burner. Our focus is mainly in education, health public works and sports. Nine teachers are going to be graduating in 2010 and we intend to send 25 more to college for both primary and secondary levels. We intend to train at least one x-ray technician and two persons to manage the mortuary at Mahdia. Since this mortuary became operational in 2009, ten persons have passed through the facility and it is in perfect working order. To expand on our dental services, two persons are to be trained in dental therapy. We were able to send two youths for training in heavy duty machinery operation through the Board of Industrial Training and we hope to send two more this year.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, GT&T has commenced feasibility study for the installation of a cellular phone service at Paramakatoi. I am told that conditions are favourable for them to

bring in equipment through the road but they are experiencing some difficulty with the satellite signals. Our senior citizens and public assistant recipients continue to enjoy prompt quarterly payments and the newly constituted board is of a wider spread so that members of the Board have greater access to the outlying areas.

I wish to conclude with the assurance that our Government continues to be very accommodating and inclusive in the R.D.C.s (Regional Democratic Councils) and the Tender Board. We are receptive once it is in the interest of the people's development. I am confident that 2010's allocations will have a positive impact to continue to transform the lives, somewhat, of the residents of this part of the Interior of our country. I thank you. [Applause]

**Mr. Khan:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. I am very grateful for this opportunity to make my presentation in support of this 2010 Budget. But first of all, let me congratulate the two new M.P.s who were sworn in here on Monday, Mrs. Hastings and Mr. Lloyd Pereira my good friend from Wakapau. I hope their presence here will be very useful to this Assembly and be of benefit to the people they represent. I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance for a budget well crafted in the favour of the ordinary people and the working class. I wish to also thank the staff of the Ministry of Finance for their assistance.

I will like to point out the many achievements we have made in Region 2. My Colleague Parmanand Persaud has touched on a few points and today I want to continue with some other areas that were left out. Last year, in Region 2, we have spent \$545,574,381. This was spent as follows: capital programmes - \$188,928,975; maintenance programme - \$79,145,406. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for giving us additional sums through the Ministry of Public Works and I also thank Hon. Member, Robeson Benn, for \$277,500,000. These sums of money, I can tell you were well spent in the Region. Every area you go in the Region, every village in Upper and Lower Pomeroun, and every Amerindian community, you can see progress. I was a bit surprised yesterday when the Hon. Member, Mrs. Punalall who is not here, mentioned that the Amerindians in this country live primitively.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member we need to get some more time officially.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, on the basis of Standing Order 10 (1), I would like to propose that we suspend the ending of the regular sitting at 10 o'clock and extend it so that the Hon. Member who is speaking could complete his presentation.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Khan:** Yes Mdm. Speaker. I was saying that I was a bit surprised when the Hon. Member, Mrs. Punalall, mentioned that the Amerindians in this country live primitively. I think that is an insult to our Amerindian brothers and sisters. I just want to point out for Region 2. In every Amerindian community we have health posts with trained health workers. We have schools with teachers. We also have, in some Amerindian communities, solar systems where they can receive electricity for their homes. And I want her to know that Amerindians in this country do not live under trees; they live in houses with roofs. They wear clothes like anyone of us here; they do not cover their bodies with leaves or animal skins. I am sorry she is not here. She should apologise for making such a statement. It is an insult to our Amerindian brothers and sisters in this country.

As I have said before the money allocated to the Region was well spent and I will like to touch a little on D&I (Drainage and Irrigation). In Region 2 we have approximately 32,500 acres of land under rice cultivation and another 30,000 acres of other crops and cattle. For Capital works last year in the D&I system we have spent \$106,875,000 for the construction of concrete boxes, culverts, tail wall, timber bridges, timber revetment, irrigation checks, etcetera, in areas such as Riverton, Bush Lot, Westbury, Better Success. Also \$82 million was spent to maintain the D&I system, to clear canals, repair dams and repair sluice gates, etcetera. The amount of money spent, I can safely say that we have been rewarded for it in increased production. For last year we had the highest production of rice, in Region 2, for the past ten years – about 1.9 million bags of paddy.

We are now seeing the benefit of the Dawa pump station which was neglected under the P.N.C. An amount of \$406 million was spent to complete the Dawa pump station. Installation of four brand new pumps. Today I can safely say that this spring crop, 2010 we will be able to say save at least 70 to 75% of the rice crop because of this investment.

Farmers' field schools have been very beneficial. Farmers show great interest in attending these schools. The Guyana Rice Development Board (G.R.D.B.) in collaboration with the G.R.P.A. (Guyana Rice Producers Association) takes farmers to the field, under some tree or in the sun and demonstrates...And because of the knowledge they have acquired they become very successful. They are increasing their production, I can tell you Region 2 farmers are producing the best quality of paddy because of the farmers' field school.

During spring crop last year three farmers' field school were held at Hibernia, Queenstown and Evergreen. In the autumn crop of last year three farmers' field school were also held at Evergreen, Anna Regina and Hibernia. Exchange visits were also planned and executed. Farmers from Region 2 visited Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6 to see how the farmers in those Regions do their cultivation, to exchange views and ideas, and to learn from each other. That was done in the understanding that they will teach each other and it will be of benefit to all farmers in all the Regions.

I will like also to tell you that production in farm produce has increased especially in the Pomeroun. If you drive through the Pomeroun you can see the farms are flourishing again. This is because of direct help from this Government; direct help in the form of excavators and a pontoon to transport this excavator from farm to farm. We have increased production in coconut, citrus and ground provision. I am happy to report that from the Pomeroun itself, bottles of coconut water are exported to Trinidad. Dry coconut - copra, and ground provisions are all exported from the Pomeroun. Very soon Pomeroun will regain its rightful place as the breadbasket of the Caribbean.

There were a number of visits by the agriculture extension officers in all these areas, in all the Amerindian communities, areas in the Pomeroun offering advice and training farmers. Three livestock seminars were held at Airy Hall, Affiance and Anna Regina and the topics were Small Ruminant Management, Broiler Production and Swine Management. Also four crop seminars were held at Dartmouth, Lake Mainstay, Charity and Anna Regina. These seminars and these field visits help to educate the farmers to make them more efficient, effective, and help them to increase their production and productivity.

In aquaculture more and more farmers are showing interest to diversify and to be involved. We have over 35 active farmers in Region 2 and two commercial farmers. Anna Regina has a fish culture station which is equipped with laboratory facilities and is geared for research and development, and for information transfer to students and stakeholders.

I will also like to touch a little on sea defence. Sea defence work is now ongoing at Good Hope and Zorg: Good Hope and at Zorg at a tune of over \$18 million. Work will continue on the Essequibo Coast.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I want to move on a little to health since health is very important to us. A healthy nation is a wealthy nation and I will like to inform this House that we are

offering, in Region 2, quality health care to the people. Primary health care has been extended to every corner, every area, of Region 2 at our 18 health posts, 11 health centres, one district hospital and one regional hospital. In 2009, under the capital programme, we have spent \$21,459,016 to construct a health centre at Suddie, the waiting area at Suddie hospital, rehab the health centre at Capoey, and also rehab the nurses' hostel at Charity. We also purchased medical equipment such as cervical biopsy forceps, blood carrier, refrigerators, ect.

Let me be honest. While we have been spending money in this sector we are not getting full value for the money spent. Some of our medical personnel are not delivering. They are not performing and I want to tell Members of this Hon. House that when we take action against them I hope they will not run to the Opposition for rescue. We will not be accused of witch-hunting. Training of medical personnel is an ongoing thing.

*10.08 p.m.*

The Hon. Member Dr. Ramsaran has mentioned much about that, but I can tell you that we are now offering specialised medical treatment at the Suddie Diagnostic Centre in areas of surgery, gynaecology, orthopaedics, paediatrics, general medicine, dentistry. We also have a functional laboratory; x-ray, ultrasound and endoscopy. We have introduced last year a low vision clinic where 2,229 patients were seen, 1,141 were recommended for spectacles and 125 referred to the ophthalmology clinic. Patients seen in 2008 were 48,983, 2009 it went up to 54,041, an increase of 7,058 patients. We are catering, in Region 2, for patients from Region 3, Wakenaam, and part of Region 1 who access medical services at our institution. Fewer patients are now seeking medical service at the Georgetown Public Hospital Cooperation and at private hospitals and clinics.

I can tell you, let me be honest, it used to bother me and other Members of this House when they go to these health institutions and see patients waiting for hours to have medical treatment but I can safely say go to Charity on Monday, where the patient used to wait from Morning to 3 o'clock, by midday it is clear, with two doctors, a Cuban and one of the Guyanese who was recently trained in Cuba. The eleven doctors who were trained in Cuba have been a big boost to our health system in Region 2. In fact, one is now in training at the Georgetown Hospital and has opted to go to Mabaruma Hospital... **[Interjection:**

Patriotic] ...very patriotic. At Suddie Hospital when the old and the sick and those who suffer from diabetes and hypertension had to sit and wait the whole day to have medical treatment; now they go at 8 o'clock and by 9 to 10 o'clock they are out of the facility. I feel

so happy and I invite Members of the other side who want to dispute these facts to come and let us go around and have a visit in Region 2 to see what we are doing.

I would like to touch a little on Housing. In Region 2 this Government has established 12 housing schemes and regularised 3 squatter settlements. Let it be noted that these people squatted under the P.N.C. but we have regularised them and have given them house lots. Of these housing schemes that we have established 10 of these schemes have water, electricity and paved streets. Many of these schemes have been handed over to the N.D.C. and Town Council. This year we hope to regularise the last scheme and hope to do some extension work at Onderneeming; put in streets and lay pipelines for the people. More and more people are accessing low-income housing loans and I can tell you, if you go into these housing schemes you would not believe it is a low-income settlement scheme because of the type of houses, big and comfortable, which are testimony to the fact that the people's living standards are rising. The people are having a better quality of life and we are developing. [Mr. Elliot: What about the house you built for the Vice Chairman.] You are making an allegation that you cannot prove. You better be careful.

For last year, in Region 2, we had received 937 applications for house lots. The One-Stop-Shop has interviewed 677 people and 507 lots had been allocated. For last year, 217 titles were issued and 391 transports also were issued.

Region 2 is on the move. Region 2 is not the region that it was in 1992. We have developed by leaps and bounds, thanks to the P.P.P./Civic Government and the yearly increase of budgetary allocation. I cannot understand the Opposition. Every speaker did not see anything good in this Budget as in previous Budgets. Something is wrong with their eyes. Maybe they want a free bus ride and a snack.

Again I invite you on the other side and my friend Keith Scott, the Hon. Member who said that he represents Region 2. You cannot represent Region 2 and stay in Georgetown all of the time. Come let me take you around. Bring your colleagues and see for yourself.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I wish to commend this Budget and appeal to my brothers and sisters on the other side to support this 2010 Budget for the benefit of the people who you also claim to represent. Thank you. [Applause]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members I do not know if it is the lateness of the night or what has made you all so irritable. Hon. Members this concludes our business for today.



## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I propose that the House be adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 2.00 p.m.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** The Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow the 18<sup>th</sup>.

*Adjourned accordingly at 10.18 p.m.*