

# National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE FIRST SESSION (2001) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF  
GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA**

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21st Sitting

2.00 PM

Monday, 25th March, 2002

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## **MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)**

### **Speaker (1)**

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S. C., M. P. - *Speaker of the National Assembly*

### **Members of the Government - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)**

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| The Hon. Samuel A. A. Hinds, M.P.              | - <i>Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications</i>          |
| The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P. | - <i>Minister of Parliamentary Affairs</i>                                       |
| The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P.                | - <i>Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation</i>                |
| The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.              | - <i>Minister of Local Government and Regional Development</i>                   |
| The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.                   | - <i>Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport</i>                                    |
| The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P.            | - <i>Minister of Education</i>   |
| The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P.            | - <i>Minister of Finance</i>   |
| The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.                | - <i>Minister of Housing and Water</i>   |
| The Hon. Navindranauth O. Chandarpal, M.P.     | - <i>Minister of Agriculture (Region No. 4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>                 |
| The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P.                | - <i>Minister of Home Affairs (Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)</i> |
| The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramrauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P. | - <i>Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security</i>                  |
| The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.            | - <i>Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development</i>   |

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The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No.5-Mahaica/Berbice)
*The Hon.S.Rudolph Insanally, O.R, C.C.H, M.P.	-Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs
*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	-Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
The Hon.Dr.Jennifer R.A.Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	-Minister of Transport and Hydraulics
The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.	-Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No.3-Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Absent)
The Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- Minister of Health
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	-(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	-(Region No.7--Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	-(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, M.P.	-(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supernaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	-(Region No.6-East Berbice/Coventryne)
Mr Kumkaran Ramdas, M.P.	
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	-(Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Coventryne)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H, J.P, M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	-(Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

\* Non-Elected Minister

\*\* Elected Member from The United Force

**Members of the Opposition (30)**

**(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)**

Mr. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, S.C., M.P.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition</i>
Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M.P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly</i>
Mr E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	
Mr Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. Andy Goveia, M.P.	- <i>(Absent-on-Leave)</i>
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dalglish Joseph, M.D., M.P.	
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.5-Mahaica/Berbice)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)</i>
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara)</i>
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.1-Barima/Waini)</i>
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.8 - Potaro/Siparuni)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.6-East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)</i>

**(ii) Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance Party (2)**

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

**(iii) Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)**

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

**OFFICERS**

Mr Frank A. Narain, C.C.H., Clerk of the National Assembly  
Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

**PRAYERS**

**The Clerk** read the **Prayer**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**Leave**

Hon. Members, leave has been granted to the Hon. Member, Mr Andy Goveia.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.**

By the **Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security**

State Paper on the following Convention and Recommendation which were adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 88<sup>th</sup> Session held in June, 2000:

- (i) *Maternity Convention in 2000, No. 183*
- (ii) *Maternity Protection Recommendation 2000, No. 191.*

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**MOTIONS**

**1. MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2002 (2002 BUDGET)**

**The Speaker:** Hon Members, we will now proceed on the Debate for the year, 2002.

**Hours of Sitting**

For the Budget Debate and for the consideration of the Estimates by the Committee of Supply, we will, in respect of sitting time, follow our usual practice, that is...*[Interruption]*



14:06 H

*[At this stage the Members of the People's National Congress Reform and Mrs Sheila Holder of the Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance withdrew from the Chamber].*

..... we will have our break from 5.00p.m. to 5.30 p.m. and continue thereafter.

Assembly Resumed debate on the Motion for the Approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2002

**The Speaker:** The first Speaker today is *[Pause]* ...

Hon. Members, I can put the Motion now, if you so wish. *[Pause]*

The Prime Minister.

**Hon Samuel A. A. Hinds:** Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, I rise to support my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, on his Presentation of our Budget for 2002.

Soon after his Presentation, there was a criticism, that my colleague had presented our Budget in a managerial way, not at all like a politician. I was comfortable with that criticism, I was a little unsure of what was being implied about politicians. I am sure that all Members of this House, including the departed Members of the other side, and those who are still with us, would agree with me, that we who have taken up the call to serve our country in the political sphere, are moved by the most noble of intentions. Nevertheless, when it comes to money and our Budget, I find comfort in a managerial style, earnest, diligent, thoughtful, knowledgeable, disciplined, sensitive, balancing, venturing, but not being adventurous, conserving our gains, but not stifling initiatives.

Mr Speaker, there are some who have been saying that this is the same Budget as last year, and the year before last, that there is nothing new. Yes, it is much the same, but the economy has not changed much

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over the last years. Indeed, the reality is, that we have been to some extent marking time since the run-up to the elections in 1997. Regrettably, political and social tensions, unsettling disturbances, and the preoccupation with such things, have caused us over the last years to be taking one step backward and one step forward. So in terms of our economy, and our GDP, we are essentially where we were in 1997. Only we have grown older, and let us hope wiser.

Having achieved growth rate averaging 5 percent up to 1997, we have achieved, minus 1.8 percent in 1998, a year of disturbances and political tensions, plus 3 percent in 1999, when there was some easing of tensions, minus 1.4 percent in 2000, and now 1.9 percent in 2001.

The image that comes to my mind, Mr Speaker, is that of an economy that wants to gallop away, but is hobbled by painful self inflicted wounds, and yet still remarkably holding its place. That we achieved the growth of 1.9 percent last year, must be seen as remarkable, when we think of the destruction and preoccupation throughout most of that year.

We started the year with concerns about what might happen, what we may be visited with, if elections were not held by January 17, and those tensions continued day by day, until election day on March 19, and then, that day was followed by those troubling disturbances, destroying public and private property and spirit, maybe most of all spirit, until the middle of the year. Those were the internal wounds, but there were external ones, too. Our Minister of Finance reminded us about the horrific September 11, which shocked the world, and served a knockdown blow to a world economy that was already on the ropes.

To have achieved 1.9 percent growth against such a background, was indeed a remarkable achievement, and for me, a truly bitter/sweet achievement. For the same time, we must think how much better we could have done. The 1.9 percent growth in 2001, is a sure indicator of our potential to return to growth rates of 5 percent and more a year, from which we have been straying since 1997.

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This year's Budget is also like our Budgets of years before, because it falls within our PPP/C commitment, to maintain a favourable macro economic regime, which would stimulate growth, engendering sustainable economic development and reducing poverty, whilst emphasizing that growth and development, increases in production and productivity, are the ways toward the eradicating of poverty.

The Minister pointed to nearly \$2 billion which is to be expended directly in the fight against poverty. We took the position, or we took note, that we have to do both things, we have to provide our people with fish, and we also have to provide them with the hooks, and train them so they can get on fishing for themselves.

In addition to this, there are other programmes still heavily subsidised to ensure certain minimum standards, which will also alleviate poverty, such as programmes to improve housing, Potable water supply, education, health, and may I mention, too, the unserved area electrification project. Within our means, we are continuing to improve the nation's physical infrastructure, improve our people's health, education and living conditions of all our people.

Whilst we of the PPP/C wished we could be everything to everyone, the high inflation rates that we and our country experienced through the first twenty years of independence must continue to be a very clear lesson before us, about the high costs of granting the wishes of everyone with no regard to balancing revenue, that is, income and expenditure.

The reality is that the majority of our wishes could not be entertained within our current constraints, but yet, they serve us a good purpose if they will motivate us to keep on applying ourselves, knowing that it is only a matter of working more harmoniously together to get much more of what we need and surely are worthy of.

The Minister of Finance noted that Government has managed, and will continue to manage the economy with prudence and financial rectitude. Inflation has been kept low, 2.9 percent, and so, too, has been the foreign

exchange rate, largely maintaining the value of our income. For those who talk about more income, we must repeat again, that maintaining the value of money is maybe the first thing we want. What's the point of income increases ten, twenty percent, when inflation rates, as in the past, doubled those numbers?

Mr Speaker, I have recognised the expressed disappointment of some people that the Income Tax threshold has not been raised, but as I said just now, inflation has been kept low, and at the same time, workers and all of us in Guyana, are receiving benefits in Social Services that are being improved, and job opportunities are being created for those less fortunate who have not been in a job for some time.

Yes, some people speak about moves to greater cost recovery, reduce subsidies, but general subsidies are like rainfall, and all those above, and those below the poverty line, those who need subsidies, and those who do not, and more often than not, those who don't need the subsidies, are in a position to utilise the subsidised service or goods more, enjoy it more. It is better to reduce subsidies smoothly in a phased way, because it is those monies, that can be re-allocated and re-appear in programmes focused more directly at poverty reduction and alleviation, and to families in especially needy circumstances.

Mr Speaker, whilst acknowledging earlier that this Budget, respecting the macro cost constraints and falling into a framework of development agenda for a number of years, is much like our earlier Budgets, and no doubt, is like our Budgets to come, I need to assure this House, and the nation, that this Budget is no mechanical application of a formula, but comes out of factual, thoughtful and comprehensive review of our achievements in 2001, and a thoughtful look at the next steps to be taken this year, 2002. This is manifest, in the detailed review in Chapter 3 of the Domestic Economy, which presents detailed listing of the Roads, Schools, Health Centres, Drainage and Irrigation Canals, Housing areas, which were worked at and improved in 2001.

In Chapter 4 - *Key Tasks and Policies in 2002 and Beyond*.

There is, similarly, a detailed listing of what is to be done this year, and onwards.

Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, such detail puts us of the PPP/C on the line, and I think we have purposely done so, not hiding behind generalizations, but stating specifics that can be checked, deliberately challenging ourselves, and all levels of government, to work for our people and to do so satisfactorily, to do all that we could in our circumstances for the good of the people and our country.

Mr Speaker, there is another good reason, why such detailed listings are of value. They show the extent of what we are doing and at the same time, they show the limitations, because we would still have more to do. But also, we hope that it provides all citizens of our country the assurance, that we of the PPP/C administration are staying true to our pledge to govern for all, in the best interest of our country, without regard to race, political party support, religion or Region of Guyana.

In presenting such detail, we are challenging everyone to judge, whether we are not trying, whether we are not striving to strike a reasonable balance, among all our differences, political party support, race, religion, Region, and between various economic sectors and within sectors. Mr Speaker, we could hardly speak on our Budget at this time without recognising the difficulties of a number of companies, many being privately owned, but a few still with the State holding a major share. One could not but expect, that the last four years of our economy marking time, rather than expanding, at the previous rates of more than 5 percent per year, coupled with the generally adverse changes in prices in terms of trade in the international market for the commodities we produce, would have led to a tightening, a difficult situation for many enterprises.

Inefficiencies, ineffectiveness, excesses and extravagance, may go unrecognised, maybe absorbed painlessly in booming times, but not so in tight times. No doubt, we all must live hoping for the best, and hoping that things will turn out right, and on this account, while we also need to be prudent, I think that some words of consolation and encouragement

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are to be extended to those who are presently in difficulties. It is important that we take note, however, and learn some lessons. In such times of adversity, even the soundest of companies could run into real trouble, workers, managers, owners, suppliers, customers, all are dependent to some degree on the company. All can be happy in the times of success, and in times of difficulties none should be free from questioning himself or herself, how their own actions might have led to the difficulties.

The important thing, Mr Speaker, and Hon. Members, is to restart the recovery, to come to terms with the situation generally, the more quickly and the more deeply, the better. We have to keep trying, learning from, but not being hemmed in by, past experience.

We, Guyanese/Guyana, do need successful Guyanese companies, a pride in which we can all share. We need to achieve and share in the achievement of success, because inherent in achieving success, is learning what is required for financial and economic success. That would make us all better partners in the larger world, so that we can really welcome foreign investments and foreign investors, because we are better able to evaluate their proposals, and we are better able to evaluate what they really need to be attracted to come to Guyana.

Mr Speaker, it is important for us to recognise, that it is our own desires for the goods and services out there, that demand, that we trade with, partner with others and become part of the globalisation that is occurring.

My colleague, the Minister of Finance, has acknowledged the challenges, and the opportunities in our participation in these sweeping trends, which continue to engulf the world. On page 6 - Section 2.8, he advises:

We look forward to the early fruition of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, (FTAA) and CARICOM Single Market and Economy, (CSME). The expanded market access, should serve both to reduce the barrier of small size of the domestic market, and compensate us for

the impending loss of our preferential markets.

I recall the words of our President, at times, that these changes bring good over all, but they are disturbing, inherently they are disturbing. There will be losses and gains, and hopefully many more people gaining than those who lose. So we have a challenge, and I think it is time we put aside our squabbling and face up to these larger challenges.

There are momentous changes taking place in the world, and the quicker we can resolve and reconcile our internal issues, the better we will be able to obtain the advantages and avoid the dangers inherent in these globalizing trends.

Now, let me speak a little about the areas for which I bear direct responsibilities. The mining sector, gold and diamond, bauxite, petroleum and the institutions of the GGMC and the GGB. **Gold and Diamonds** - In the last two months gold price has settled and we hope it will stay there, or go up further, but it is now settled at about US \$290 an ounce and a bit more, a welcome rise above the US \$270 an ounce which was previously prevailing, but still falls short of the US\$360/400 an ounce, on which OMAI and other projects of that period were based.

Declared gold production in 2001, was the highest ever at 456,089 ounces. Diamond declaration too was large, doubled to 178,698 carats, a high point for over 75 years. The increased diamond declaration reflects increases in overall activities in small scale mining, some shifting from gold to diamond - it occurs when gold price goes down, and also increased declarations following the Bastus Affair.

But, Mr Speaker, there is something to be cautious about here, because while OMAI achieved its highest production last year, its production from here on this time is projected to fall, as it has reserves remaining only for four to five years. In fact this year, it is projecting to get down to 280,000 ounces from about 350,000.

OMAI is pursuing, and we made some arrangements to assist, to give them an incentive, to pursue prospecting and in particular drilling, in

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the original property, two adjacent properties and we do hope that additional reserves could be found, so that this facility, this plant at Omai could continue into operation for many years into the future.

Mr Speaker, as population and activities increase in the hinterland areas, there is rising incidence of potential conflict; more people are coming up against each other, different sectors, different individuals. There is pressure to improve the practices of small and medium scale mining, particularly to reduce the negative, social and environmental affects, and we are addressing that with the GENCAD Programme (Guyana Environmental Capacity Development Programme), a CIDA Funded Programme. We are also encouraging other moves towards what may be called dry methods of mining instead of hydraulic mining, and there is one potential example, of a good medium scale operation in the Vanessa Ewang Maple Creek Development, above Mahdia, which should reach full production in a few weeks time.

Concerning incentives in the mining sector, particularly the smaller people, gold and diamonds, in addition to the fiscal concessions and equipment, we are maintaining the other incentives previously offered, one of them being two calendar years of operation for one years' payment and commitments, which essentially has halved the rental and licence fees for some years now. The sliding scale for royalty of gold is being maintained, the recovery of half of approved infrastructure expenditures against part of licences, rental fees and royalties within the first five years of operation.

Mr Speaker, there has been too, much talk about guests, workers, persons from Brazil, coming over into Guyana and working in the mining sector. This has always been so, and in fact the technology, much, if not all of the technology, that our local miners have been utilising has come that way via persons coming from Brazil, most recently the Lavadors, which have allowed many small groups, five/six persons to get going in mining with capitalisation of about G \$4 million. So we have always had Brazilians coming to Guyana and there have been some benefits.

Nevertheless, they need to be regularised, and we have been on a



programme of regularising all the eligible non-nationals working in the mining sector.

**Bauxite** - During last year, depressed conditions in the aluminum and steel sectors put downwards pressure on both price and volumes for both metallurgical bauxite and non-metallurgical bauxite, increasing the difficulties of our bauxite operations, which as all of us should know suffer from high overburden to ore ratios and the need for dredging, continuous dredging at the mouths of our rivers to accommodate shipments of 10,000 tonnes or more.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has noted that about G \$2 billion, US \$10 millions have been expended in 2001, in supporting LINMINE, and through LINMINE the town of Linden. This is not a figure that appears on Region 10 Budget, but is it certainly a support for a place within Region 10. I am sorry that some of my colleagues from bauxite and Region 10 on the other side of the House are not here to take note of that.

It has been estimated that the same amount would be required in 2002, to keep LINMINE going, and to rehabilitate and recapitalise it. There are proposals that run between US \$20 and 30 million.

As has been reported in the media, CAMBIOR carried out a preliminary study, partly because Omai the subsidiary of CAMBIOR, has done some contract work for LINMINE, and they have been encouraged, to carry out a study, to do an initial market survey, and they have put a proposal for them taking a majority position in the new operating company in Linden, into which a number of LINMINE assets would be vested. We are pleased about that and encouraged. You may know that out of the dialogue between His Excellency the President and the Leader of the Opposition, we have a process where a negotiating team of three persons, have been identified, two nominated by the President, and one by the Leader of the Opposition. Our hope is that they will get to it and speedily arrive at some arrangement for mutual benefits. Because, the money that we have basically to pay people to buy our bauxite, that

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money, if it were to be utilised in providing additional services it will go an extremely far way

BERMINE has less pressing demands on the Budget, but BERMINE too is in difficulties. I have seen various proposals for some US\$500,000 to U \$6 million to recapitalize BERMINE.

Mr Speaker, we know, too, of ABC, Aroaima Bauxite Company. At the end of last year, the GOG was the full owner of ABC, and we know that story. There have been a number questions put and I have answered them on a number of occasions. I find it difficult to understand how some persons are still persisting in this erroneous claim that in taking full possession of ABC, the Government of Guyana has taken over a debt of US \$68 million. I find it difficult because people who should know ... there are many things - ABC was capitalised by means of loans to it from Reynolds, and there was an unpaid balance of US\$68 million at the time of the transaction. But ABC is a Corporate Entity, now this is a debt of the Corporate Entity, the first lesson I think in business, and I do not see how people could say that the Government has not taken over that debt. That debt is with ABC and in any case, we have said also that there is an arrangement by which, at the end of the year, that debt was converted to preference share, and it would be made available to the Government for US\$1. So I really do not understand.

In fact, Mr Speaker, let me say truly, I am particularly grieved by lots of people who should know better, who peddle falsehoods to the people of Guyana [*Applause*] and the cost of those falsehoods is our economic performance over the last five years, departing from the steady increase that we need to double our economy every ten years, if we could, to take our people away from that path, and to poison their minds, so that they yield themselves to demonstrations and marchings and burnings, and so on. I am particularly grieved that many of these people who hold themselves to be intellectuals and who hold themselves to be the most thoughtful people in the country, and thoughtful about the nation, that these people involve themselves all the time in spreading falsehoods.

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Mr Speaker, back to ABC, it is true that the industrial sectors in the world have been experiencing greater difficulties still, I think in steel and aluminum, people are still looking for another year before things upturn. However, just to make it clear ABC will be able to see itself through this year to meet its cash needs without any recourse to the Budget.

**Clays and Laterite** - People in Guyana have been looking for development of clay for some time, and if we are lucky this year there should be an arrangement for medium size clay operation to begin in the Linden area.

**Construction Materials - Stone, Sand and Lome.** These are important things. They are not very fancy, but they are important and we have been able to keep pace with the increased need for stone, sand and lome in line with the strong growth of public and private construction, and export sales of some stone and sand have begun to the Caribbean, and we hope that export is sustained and increased.

**Petroleum** - Essentially all of our off-shore areas have been on lease, but we know of the CGX incident and that has put a hold on much of the prospecting, as the lease holders express concerns of our neighbours to the East and our neighbours to the West.

We look to the recent trip of our President to Suriname and President Chavez's trip later this year to Guyana, to lead to accords which will enable prospecting to go forward fearlessly.

Mr Speaker and Hon. Members may know about the projections coming from very knowledgeable areas, that there could be a significant pool of petroleum resources off the shore of Guyana and Suriname and it must be a sad thing that we could not come together and get going.

The institutions in the mining sector, the GGMC in particular, has been improving its performance, but one can still discern the need for institutional strengthening, both with regard to the improved systems within the GGMC, and increased knowledge and experience to assist the miners in improving their operation. I have spoken about the CIDA Funding/

GENCAD Project, which has been helping in this area.

Our Guyana Gold Board continues to offer a place to sell gold for prevailing international price, and while this is a good thing for the producers, small and large, it means that gold for refining and manufacturing jewellery in Guyana is not available at discount prices. I need to say this, because many times people come to me, saying they want to set up a refinery in Guyana, some even want to set up jewellery production in Guyana. They then come back and say that the gold is at the same price, as if they were to import it from anywhere. But if that is so, it is good for the producers, in that they are getting the best price that they could.

The lesson is that any refinery or any added value jewellery or any other establishment in Guyana has to be profitable on the value it would add, and the value it would add being more than the cost of doing so. People cannot base their plans in this area on cheap gold and diamonds in Guyana, because that is not so.

**Electricity and Energy** - I do not think and I feel a little bit like testing faith here. The last time or some years ago, about six/seven years ago, when I talked about electricity in this House, everything went down, so I feel like tempting faith here. Nevertheless, I would say that I do not expect that anyone would want to deny that electricity supply has continued to be improved. But we could not ignore the complaints that the improvements have been too slow and the price increases have been more than they should be. I would repeat my commitment that we would have good electricity at the lowest possible sustainable prices.

Comparison with prices in other places, with some similarities would provide us with guidelines as to what could be done, and we are having the benefit, too, of a number of formal studies, that address those issues.

During 2001, the major problems with electricity have been too many outages, too high fault rate in transmission and distribution systems, and reducing margins in generations, too many billing complaints, problem

with meter readers and meter reading, hasty disconnections, but tardiness in reconnections, electricity losses remaining high about 40 percent, contributing to higher than necessary prices, and widespread demands for extension of electrification.

During the second half of 2001, in response to those calls, there were proposals to increase the investment rate in electricity. Some of the things done and committed to, six caterpillar transportable sets, were acquired and installed in time for the last Christmas/New Year season. An order is to be placed, all arrangements are in place, for the installation of 30 megawatts of diesel generation equipment at Garden of Eden, in staged phases of 10 megawatts each. T & D Systems are to be upgraded, with the installation of new transmission lines, the introduction of four sub-stations, a new computerised Billing System is still to be installed, extensive re-metering of customers is to begin so as to remove or minimise issues about meter-readings; but the meter readers will still have to get there at the times they should, and read the meters accurately, too.

Recent complaints about prices have emphasized that the impact of proposed investments must be explicitly addressed. We have also on the table, the question as to whether the manager is accomplishing what was committed adequately, whether he is doing enough for his fees, or it should be reduced, or additional technical expertise should be provided.

Mr Speaker, we have spoken a number of times on the unserved area electrification project, to bring by 2005, electrification to all the areas across Guyana. I have been having to ask for patience because nearly everyone of those 220 communities reached my door and asked for electricity to be at the head of the list. Some criteria have been developed and we are applying those criteria with other Ministries, Ministry of Housing, in particular, to set a fair schedule for tackling the various unserved areas.

**Hydro Power** - We have three proposals here. We know of Amaila where there are plans to put in a 100 megawatts facility, and they have been looking for a Power Purchase Agreement with the Utility. Because

in our Laws the PPA prices, the cost of the Power Purchase Agreement, are transferred directly to customers. The Law also requires that the PPA be reviewed and cleared by the PUC. One trouble is that initially the prices that are required by the developers are above the avoided prices. But we, with the help of the UNDP, have retained a consultant to look at this matter in much greater detail and make a presentation on it and seek to resolve and close gaps. We have too, the development on the Mazaruni River, where Edmond Group has a preliminary licence to develop the Turtuba location, and they are hoping to sell power export to Brazil. We have also, a Japanese group who are looking at the Upper Mazaruni area, and hope that by 2007, they would be in a position to take a decision to go ahead with a large development of up to 200,100 megawatts.

In **Wind Power** too, we have an agreement with Delta Caribbean, to test the potential for Wind Power at Hope, on the East Coast of Demerara. So, Mr Speaker, we are busy at work, very diligent in looking to develop the full range of potential sources of power within our country.

In the area of **Telecommunications, Information and Communications Technology** we are pursuing our programme of transforming the sector into a Competitive Free Market one. We have begun discussions with ATN/GT&T, which has been a monopoly holder of some sorts in this sector, and the Honourable Attorney General, as we know, is leading our negotiations.

Mr Speaker, our position is that we want Guyana and Guyanese to benefit and be able to take advantage easily of all the new and emerging information and communications technology and to do this we hope that we, Guyanese can avoid being imprisoned in the contentions of the past with ATN/GT&T. Our position is, let us look to the future, and let us recognise that the future whatever has past and done, that is already dead. The future is there for us to seize, and take advantage of.

Mr Speaker, it is known too, that we are pursuing a loan from the

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IDB to make Guyanese Computer and Internet literate, and let me admit, I might have to be one of the first ones to sign up. We are looking for some US \$20 million, and hope to put some twenty thousand Internet access points all across Guyana.

Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, you may have noticed too, some recent advertisements for all Guyanese to apply for the opportunity to become trained in what I have learnt is termed **Medical Transcription**, a company decipher, we have been able to move very rapidly with them and they have already applied for persons to be trained.

In the area of **Televison Broadcasting**, we have been patient, and at this time all but one of the TV Broadcasting Stations have applied for and paid for, has been granted a licence to continue their business. You would recall, too, that this is being done in line with the agreement reached in the dialogue process between His Excellency the President and the Leader of the Opposition. We have one recalcitrant, I have been patient, and will continue to be patient for some time, but my patience is not without end.

The **GPOC** has continued to do well, quietly and without much fanfare, and it has been attaining high ratings on international rankings on mail deliveries, but yet, their revenues are still very small, and their rates of pay have left behind following the large increases that the Public Servants enjoyed over the last two/three years. So we do need to seek assistance of some consulting group with relevant experience and expertise, to review the operations comprehensively and propose a staged development plan. We have had one or two offers of assistance in this direction.

Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, in closing I am pretty sure that things can go well for Guyana and Guyanese, that 2002 Budget, like others before and other Budgets to come has set the stage for us, the people of Guyana, to make things go well. We are still in the early days of building this land, that belongs to us. We must steer the course, and we can find lots of satisfaction in building our country.

Mr Speaker, behind the facade of our very strident materialism, I think our people are listening to the call from us, the politicians... *[Applause]*, all of us in this House, including those who have taken themselves out, our people are listening for the call, the challenge to build our country. I found such an assurance in a young woman, a lawyer, who even in the presence of calls for more pay and all about low income, wanted me to take a message of us not living lives of being Guyanese by default, and that we should not be resident in Guyana by default. The challenge to build our country is ours and our Budget has set the right conditions for that. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you Hon. Prime Minister.

The Hon Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Mr Speaker, I rise to offer my support to the Motion moved by the Hon. Minister of Finance in the National Assembly to approve the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year, 2002.

Mr Speaker, some of the reasons why you support something include:

1. If it is good; and
2. If there is credibility in the record of the person proposing it.

I find in the Presentation and in the Minister of Finance both of these characteristics. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we have not only to congratulate and thank the Hon. Minister of Finance for his stewardship of the economy, but we must express a breadth of gratitude to him also. Because in the face of declining world economy, increasing pressures for concessions, political instability, mis-information as the Hon. Minister of Finance said, he has been able to steer the course and produce a 1.9 percent growth rate, that is, a remarkable achievement. *[Applause]*



Mr Speaker, one has to look at that achievement in the context of the International and Regional environment. The Minister of Finance quite aptly described the international environment within which we had to operate last year and in which he has to craft this year's Budget, another difficult task, but we must admire the fighting spirit in him, by what he says on page 6, Paragraph 2.9, and you know, Mr Speaker, this is the first time I have seen this amount of zest and enthusiasm coming in a Budget Speech. When you look at Paragraph 2.9 on page 6, he said, speaking in terms of the adversity of September 11:

We will work with the Private Sector, labour and other stakeholders to create wealth for the benefit of all Guyanese. Mr Speaker, in choosing the latter course of action, we have signalled our intention to shape our own destiny. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, when you go to Paragraph 7.1 on page 52 as he sums up, he said:

Mr Speaker, this Budget sets out clearly a package of policies, programmes and measures that would stimulate investment and growth, create employment and employment opportunities, and reduce poverty.

Mr Speaker, it is not insignificant that this year's Budget Theme of *Promoting Economic Growth: Accelerating Social Gains*, ties closely with those same two themes from last year because that is the programme. If you see the Manifesto's promises that were made, those were the programmes:

To stimulate economic growth; and

To reduce poverty so that we can increase and accelerate social gains in the society.

What we have seen in this Budget, is the resilience of the Minister of Finance to steer the course and in being resilient in steering the course, we have seen very impressive macro numbers emerging in the economic performance of Guyana last year.

It is not insignificant that a growth rate of 1.9 percent is matched by an inflation rate of just 2.6 percent - It is not insignificant. It clearly shows that we have at the helm of the management of the Financial Affairs of the nation someone who is capable, aptly capable, and will lead us on to greater things as we pursued the programme of the government over the next five years. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in reviewing the economy of Guyana, I want to mention quickly what has happened in Barbados. In Barbados after years of economic growth, and I will quote here from the Central Bank of Barbados Bulletin, *Reviewing the Economy of Barbados in 2001*. It says:

Following eight consecutive years of real economic growth, the Barbados economy contracted in 2001. Some sectors especially manufacturing and agriculture continued to struggle as they tried to adjust to trade liberalisation, while others suffer from the spill-over effects of a slowing world economy.

Real output in 2000, in Barbados is estimated to have declined by 2.8 percent in contrast to an expansion of 3 percent in 2000. The Barbados economy in 2001 suffered a 5.8 percent in total decline over the year 2001 and we had 1.9 percent positive growth. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, all of the literature that might you read about last year from the TIME Magazine, to the ECONOMIST, to the different websites of industrial countries spoke of the slowing world economy and it is remarkable that Guyana has been able to produce this positive growth rate.

Mr Speaker, we have heard some of the commentators out there once again trying to dispute the numbers and saying that it's his accounting gymnastics, acrobatics that have produced this. But there are some significant indicators in the performance of the revenue sectors last year that showed that we ought to be very upbeat about performance of the economy in 2002. But while the Minister of Finance said that current

revenue decreased after we took out the rice levy, there was a shortfall in the Customs and Trade Administration, but there were good results from the Inland Revenue Department.

Mr Speaker, in any vibrant free market economy, government current revenues will derive from PAYE and corporate taxes. The vast proportion of current revenue from Government in a vibrant free market economy, is going to derive from PAYE of the people and the taxes from corporations, not on import duties and such taxes. What we have seen, is that the Inland Revenue performance is doing much better. Only in a growing economy that is churning out real output growth that you will see the collection from PAYE increasing and if I take you to the ESTIMATES on page 8, TABLE 6 and we look at the results of the Inland Revenue Department, which really is the tax our people pay on the hard-earned money, from growing salaries and wages and from more people coming into the tax net, then that, in my view, is a clear indication that we are generating more wealth within Guyana from which our people are paying their fair share of taxes.

I go to TABLE 2, Inland Revenue, and of a budgeted amount of \$18,949,000,000, the Inland Revenue Department actually collected \$19,668,000,000. It was contributed mainly by personal income tax, which showed an almost 10 percent increase and this, as was promised, *no new taxes*. It has to come from the generation of more wealth in the economy.

Mr Speaker, the self-employed is a category many complained about. Self-employed PAYE grew from \$581 million to \$725 million. Again, that can only come if more self-employed people made more money and so they paid more taxes all because of real growth in the economy.

Mr Speaker, while PAYE and the self-employed taxes showed significant increases, we saw a marginal drop in company profit taxes and on the next page the marginal decline is noted. But I want to bring the National Assembly's attention to the pressures which the Minister of

Finance has in terms of our request for concessions.

Mr Speaker, in 2000, the Minister of Finance granted concessions to the tune of \$14.8 billion that were actually processed through the Customs and Trade Administration - some \$14.8 billion in concessions. In 2001, those concessions were \$16.3 billion - we have granted that amount of concessions and there was only a marginal decline in the performance of the Customs and Trade Administration. If we go back to that same Table on page 6, Customs and Trade Administration were projected last year to bring in \$19.1 billion, it brought in \$18.1 billion, yet we gave concessions to the tune of \$16.3 billion. There are two significant points to note about concessions.

First, 37 percent of the concession, \$6 billion of those concessions, went to Companies producing wealth, Companies who were lobbying the government for greater incentives and greater concessions. Last year in the Minister of Finance's Speech, he said:

*We will listen and we will support*

This is tangible proof that the Government has supported the Private Sector. *[Applause]* Noting, Mr Speaker, that \$6 billion can equate to about one-third of the price of equipment, vehicles and the investment, if you multiply that by three, you can get an estimate of how much the Private Sector spent in expansion and retooling last year, over \$18 billion.

Mr Speaker, in the Minister of Finance's Speech, he said, (I was talking about the fighting spirit he had) in the Budget and there is on page 10, the last paragraph of his Speech, when he speaks about the activist role of the Ministry of Finance and the Government. Many persons have said that Government isn't doing that and they are not tinkering with monetary and fiscal policy in order to stimulate growth, far from truth.

If we look at inflation, page 10, Paragraph 3.15, the Minister of Finance, again in this positive line says:

It is tangible testimony of the Government's monetary policies and

its activist role in maintaining relative stability of prices.

He is referring here, Sir, to the Government's intention three times last year to reduce consumption taxes on gasoline and diesel. *[Applause]* For many of us, three times mean nothing, but that intervention last year, saw the Minister of Finance giving up \$9 billion in revenue, that was the consumption tax and duty foregone on the importation of fuel alone last year \$9 billion.

Mr Speaker, \$9 billion helped to stabilise prices last year, that is, the Government had gone ahead and collected \$9 billion on duty and consumption taxes on the importation of fuel. Those costs would have been passed on to the consumers and we would have imported more inflation. Many persons say, last year we didn't see an increase in the threshold for workers and there was no increase in the threshold this year, but all of this are for the ordinary people. Foregoing \$9 billion in revenue, that is significant. So of the \$16.3 billion in concessions granted last year to companies, on fuel alone it was over \$15 billion.

Mr Speaker, it has to be the characteristics of a remarkable Administrator, who will be able to do this - to provide matching funds for all the funded programmes that we have, come out with a 1.9 percent growth rate, 2.6 percent inflation and turn back in 2002 and give a commitment to no new taxes. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I thought I should mention that because it gives one an appreciation of the challenges faced by the Minister of Finance and his staff in trying to match the wants with the revenues and the taxes we impose upon the people, because out of current revenues of \$45 billion, I think it is \$41 billion net of the rice levy, the Government also forewent \$16 billion.

Mr Speaker, last year, the Hon. Minister of Finance mentioned about being more aggressive in support of Private Sector Investment and when some of the Speakers spoke, last year, they asked and called for a more aggressive attitude towards investment.

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I was watching a TV Programme recently where a current Member of Parliament was giving his comments on the Budget and again, he harped on this issue of investment and he tried to say that the role of GO-INVEST is being stymied, frustrating and not delivering to the people (somebody just said that he is mad).

Mr Speaker, I quote here from Stabroek News, August 29, 2001, the speaker is Mr Deo Singh as he opened his \$2.8 billion project. The new Head of GO-INVEST, Mr Jeffrey Da Silva came in for a special praise from Mr Singh.

He said that GO-INVEST under Mr Da Silva had undergone a transformation which was encouraging to investors. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, that is one investor speaking about the role of GO-INVEST and the new attitude towards investment by GO-INVEST and the Government as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I now quote from the 2001 Annual Report from the Guyana Economic Opportunities Programme, US Aid/Government of Guyana Programme, page 16 and it says here, this is a survey done of the people who used the service of GO-INVEST - the investors to GO-INVEST:

Ninety-four percent of the respondents reported that the overall quality of GO-INVEST service was satisfactory or better. *[Applause]*

The results more than double the answers to the same questions of the same clients of 1999. There are several explanations for this, but we believe the key factor is a changed attitude and a new client orientation at GO-INVEST, as a result of the appointment of a new CEO in May, 2001. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, that is from a US Aid/Government of Guyana Project Report that is for international and local circulation.

Mr Speaker, I bring this, because the Government is aggressively

courting investment in Guyana and what is said to the investor is *just tell us what you want us to do*. Every student of economics in their first class learns of the four factors of production - the land, the labour, the capital and entrepreneurship. What we have said to the investor is that we cannot provide you with money, with capital, and you have to have the risk-taking ability within you, but Government can provide the land and Government can help develop the skills of the people; and so we are working with the manufacturers, we are working with the investors and a new regime for the industrial sector is being put in place.

**Development of Industrial Estates.** While last year, we can't boast of producing one square inch of new industrial land, what we can boast of, is the better utilisation of those that we have right now. *[Applause]* What the investors have said is that we need a more favourable lease, that the one you have says, twenty-five years which is too short a time and we are asking for fifty years. You know what this Government did, we have given them ninety-nine years, *[Applause]* and what we have said to them is *give us one Guyana dollar per square foot rent per year*. So a person with one acre of industrial land will pay only \$44,000 a year rent. In those estates they have paved roads, concrete drains, independent supply of water and we are going as far as providing transformers for their electricity. The Government is courting investment and is going after the investor to put his money in the ground in Guyana. We want to work with them to ensure that they can make a profit, a decent return on their investment, and so GO-INVEST is very proactive and is working to deliver the investor faster with less bureaucracy and we are seeing better results.

Mr Speaker, only on Friday I received a complimentary note from one investor and he said, previously when I applied for the concessions which I am entitled to in the investment package, it took nine months. I want to say this last set of concessions only took nine weeks. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, poverty reduction cannot be achieved on a sustainable basis by borrowing and handing out. It will be achieved sustainably, if we can get Guyana working, by getting people to invest here, making a

profit on their investment and paying their fair share of taxes. So I see a bright sign for the Manufacturing Sector, a bright light on the horizon for the Tourism Sector and for other value added investments that will come our way in the ensuing years.

Mr Speaker, I was mentioning what we were doing in terms of providing land for the investor and I had mentioned that Government can also play a role in helping to develop the skills of the workforce, training the labour, because what Guyana has in its favour, are land, language, labour and location, in order to attract investment. Perhaps, I am being told here by Minister Shadick, first and foremost, the love that we have within the country. So we have *the five Ls of successful investment - love, land, labour, location and language*.

Mr Speaker, the Government of Guyana has signed on to no less than half-dozen programmes to help train people to work with the Private Sector - no less than half-dozen. There is the Guyana Economic Programme, that is accessed mainly by the Commercial Sector and the Manufacturing Sector. That programme is to the tune of US \$6. The US did not come in here and say to the Association of Regional Chambers or the Georgetown Chambers or the GMA to work with you. They listen to the pleas of Government for help for the Private Sector and so we have a five-year programme to the tune of \$6 billion to assist the private sector.

Recently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP signed on to the EMPERTEC Programme to help small and micro enterprises in Guyana. That is a programme for three years, 2002 to 2004 to the tune of US \$730, 000.

Mr Speaker, recently, you would have seen advertisements for the Guyana Training Agency, a Private Sector/ Government of Guyana/ European Union Partnership Programme, that will see over the next three years 1.8 million Euros going towards training for Private Sector people.

Then there is the LEAP Programme in Linden that has a significant



amount of its \$12.5 million going towards training also.

For Tourism, the OAS has a US \$50,000 community based Tourism project and there is the SEPEC Programme that is assisting the Guyana Manufacturers' Association to increase their competitiveness and to bring their manufacturers up to scratch.

All these programmes didn't drop out of the sky for the Private Sector, they had to be negotiated by the Government of Guyana as part of the aid that we are getting, the grants and loans that we get. The Government of Guyana signed on to them for the Private Sector. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the result of all of that, is today, when you opened the newspapers and I think, I have a newspaper here (somewhere), I just pulled a newspaper out of the file and I said, let me look in the newspaper to see how many vacancies were advertised and almost every page you look at, there are vacancies being advertised - vacancy for Accountant, MARDS, page 2 Guyana Chronicle, Wednesday, March 13, and you just open the newspaper every page there are notices for vacancies. Guyana Revenue Authority, eleven vacancies advertised on page 8. Training course for mariners, training programmes for people, vacancies and training programmes for the Private Sector; Applications for the Carnegie School of Home Economics, and the Minister of Finance mentioned that we are working towards making that, training people for the hospitality sector also. As you open the newspaper, more training and more vacancies and why is that so? Because the conditions have been created for more investments and for more job creation. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I had to make a special note of what the Hon. Prime Minister said of the cost of peddling falsehood and it is damaging us more than we anticipate, because in the literature that goes out, and there is one international travel publication that ranks Guyana as vying with Bogota with crime for the crime capital status of South America. International publication and then there are the websites and some emanating from the Embassies, that are giving really negative impressions

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of Guyana, that the moment you step out of your hotel, you are going to be mugged, and face serious injury to limb and possible loss of life. The damage being done, I believe, Sir, is to destabilise so that they can slow down the economic growth and put hardship on the people of Guyana. But we are going to repair that damage and we are going to have an aggressive programme to search and destroy false information, Mr Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Finance for being generous to the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. *[Applause]* That while we may have the smallest quantum allocated in the Budget, we have been given encouraging incentives to foster Private Sector development. We see for the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, not the \$438 million in the Budget, but the measures to help the Private Sector as being significant. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, overall for our Ministry in the different programmes, it just averaged out about an 8 percent increase, but we can live with that. We understand the pressures on him, and if we can achieve the targets that we set for the Private Sector, it means that it will make life a little easier for him as he tends to the social services and the infrastructural programme we have to do for Guyana.

Mr Speaker, my Ministry has four important Sectors, namely:

Tourism

Industry

Consumer Affairs

Commerce; and

We also have the Guyana National Bureau of Standards within our portfolio.

Some of the things we have planned for 2002, including (and let me

start with) Tourism.

Mr Speaker, first, the long awaited Guyana Tourism...  
*[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member, I think this is an appropriate time for you to get an extension of time.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** I move that the Hon. Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue his speech.

**Motion put and agreed .**

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The long awaited Guyana Tourism Authority Bill was tabled at the last sitting of the National Assembly. This Bill has had a long gestation period. It was first referred to in this House in 1998, and we have been able to produce the Bill at the last sitting for its first reading.

Mr Speaker, it was not for the want of will that the Bill took so long, but if we are going to ask for consultation and dialogue and input from all stakeholders, the process of bringing bills to the National Assembly will be lengthy. That is a fact of life.

Mr Speaker, the Bill will put the development of Tourism in the hands of a Private/Public Sector Partnership and will lead towards significant development of that industry. But I will use this valuable fifteen minutes, not to speak more of that Bill, because I will get another crack of it later and go to some of the things that are happening in Tourism.

Mr Speaker, last year, I said, the two most important factors that affect tourism would be the political situation and the perception of increasing and very high crime.

Mr Speaker, when I look at the numbers in terms of the arrival of visitors to Guyana over the past five years, you can link significant drop in arrival directly to elections and post elections protests.

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Mr Speaker, in 1996, Guyana achieved one of its highest targets in terms of visitors coming to this country, almost 92,000 arrivals to Guyana.

In 1997, it fell to 75,737 and we all know that things in 1997 slowed down considerably as the investor had a wait-and-see attitude, in particular waiting to see what would be the PNC's response to the loss at the elections.

So in 1998, after the December 1997 elections and the six months of protest and in-action, visitors arrival fell to 65,800. If we look at the significant months, for example:

In January, 1998, 4,000 persons as against 5,700, in the previous January, came to Guyana.

In February, another protest month, 5,000 persons came as against 6,000 in 1996.

In March, at the height of the marching 4,200 as against 7,500 in 1996.

So they have marched the visitors out of Guyana with political action, and so if you look right down the line and every single month, in 1998 showed considerable decline. Things stabilised in 1999 and by 2000, visitor arrivals once again started to peak. So in 2000, we had almost 105,000 people coming to Guyana.

What happened in 2001? In January, 2001 as against 2000, there were 400 more visitors. In February, we had 2,300 more visitors (that is 2001 over 2000), but when you hit the month of elections, March and the following months, let's hear the numbers, March 7,000 in 2001; in 2000, 7,800. In April, *More Fire* 9,700 as against 11,000 the previous year - a drop of almost 2,000 visitors. And May, when we still had *More Fire* and *Slow Fire* (it was *Slow Fire* then), we had 6,000 persons coming as against 6,800 in year 2000.

But, Mr Speaker, there are encouraging signs, very encouraging

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signs for tourism in Guyana and so despite the fact that we had the marches, in April and May and GA 2000 collapsed in June, and that significantly hurt us because the airlift out of Toronto in particular was affected, that by December of 2001, we have 2.1 per cent more people coming into Guyana than in December, 2000. We had the highest number of visitors ever in a December, last year, coming to Guyana and we only had six months of stability. Imagine if we have six years. *[Applause]* With only six months of stability, tourism, in December, 2001, posted its highest ever aggregate in Guyana.

Mr Speaker, there are some other encouraging signs in the Tourism Sector, that in two of the most important markets the United States, we held our own in 2001 as against 2000, doing marginally better by bringing 1,000 more people out of the United States. For me, perhaps the shining light will be arrivals from Europe.

We are in the process of promoting Guyana mainly as a country that has nature-based tourism. Germany and the United Kingdom supply the largest amount of such visitors to any country, and from Europe last year, we posted an almost 10 per cent increase in arrivals so that we had 8,700 people coming out of Europe in 2001 as against 7,200 the previous year. Those are where the bright parts are.

Mr Speaker, our Private Sector is responding to the incentive packages that the Minister of Finance has allocated to us for the sector and they have responded because, despite the fact that some accused the Minister of Finance of not listening and not hearing and lobbying in vain, he has to carefully balance all considerations and there were positive vibes coming to the sector last year. From those vibes the investor is putting money. Right now Guyana has about 1,200 relatively good rooms to sell. This morning, I said brief words at the opening of our newest hotel, twenty-one rooms, Royal Regency, in Hadfield Street. By the end of the year an additional fourteen more rooms will be available there.

From the Sector, it appears that within the next eighteen months, we will have about 150 new rooms in Guyana, good rooms to

accommodate the increase of arrivals that we are speaking about.

Tomorrow, Sir, it is a very significant day for tourism in Guyana, a cruise ship with 118 passengers will be sailing up the Essequibo River to spend two nights to enjoy the water, the scenery and the beauty of Guyana in the Essequibo. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, those 118 persons will spend an average of about US \$300 for the two nights and three days they will be in Guyana and we are working hard with the tour operators to show that this cruise can be a regular feature on the tourism itinerary for the Region.

Mr Speaker, the Government is working very hard with the different sectors associated with that industry. By the end of last year, there were two new carriers, contributing additional seats to Guyana, Universal Airlines who, I understand, is doing very well and Caribbean Star for the Caribbean traveller.

In terms of our promotion for tourism, we all know that the Government has signed on to the US \$112,000 programme in collaboration with CTO and the Caribbean Hotel Association. That programme is set to start in April. The Ministry is promoting Guyana in collaboration with the Tourism and Hospitality Association.

Mr Speaker, we must commend the Private Sector in the Tourism Industry for working very closely with us and for taking the risk, for having the venturesomeness to put their money in this Sector. Tourism is the largest industry in the world with 600,000,000 people travelling spending over \$600 billion and we are going to take our fair share of that market.

The Minister of Finance in his Budget mentioned the preparation of our website. One-third of the tourist in the world get their information through the Internet and so we have to be present on the Internet with an internationally comparable website in order to attract the type of visitors that we want. We are seeing the evolution of packages that will see people coming to Guyana for three nights and four days all inclusive, that

is beginning to evolve. So, Mr Speaker, it is with great optimism that I speak on this particular sector - the Tourism Sector - which can significantly diversify the economic base of Guyana.

**Industry** - Mr Speaker, I mentioned briefly the incentives that we had for Industry. And our industry division in 2002 will work even closer with the manufacturing sector. We are working with them by listening to some of the problems that they have, in order to prepare the data and to present the nuts and bolts and the numbers to the Minister of Finance, to show where we can benefit from what concessions and I trust that as he said, he is going to be as generous to Industry as he has been to Tourism. But what is more important for us is the over \$500 million in terms of the development of industrial estates and for economic ventures that he has put in the industry. While I have said earlier that it is the entrepreneur's responsibility to raise his capital, what the Minister of Finance is doing by allocating almost half a billion dollars for industrial development is trying to ease and to cushion the burden of heavy initial outlay especially for the small and micro enterprise sector.

**Commerce** - Mr Speaker, last year we promised a Commerce Department and that Department has now been established. It has been staffed and we are now preparing to work directly with several sectors in domestic trade. In fact one of the first recipient of our collaboration has been the lobbying for the reduction of the entertainment tax for the Cinema Industry. Some have said, it is too little too late, that the cinemas are already closed, but while they are saying so, last year that sector paid over \$20 million in entertainment tax and with this reduction, this year, they only pay about \$5 million. That is an additional \$15 million going to the cinema owners, so that they can refurbish and I note in the release coming out of the cinema owners, that they said when we met with the President, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Tourism and Industry, that the cinemas were promised duty-free and consumption tax relief for refurbishing and that is so. The Minister of Finance don't have to stand up and say everything. The President of the country gave his word and he said to them it was effective immediately. Whatever you want to do to bring in to refurbish those cinemas - to redo them - we are

going to be here to support you. So not only are we foregoing the physical revenue that we were taking, but we are going to be meeting them in terms of the consumption tax and duties to refurbish their cinemas.

Mr Speaker, so the Commerce Sector is preparing to work quite closely with the small and micro enterprise sector. We are in close collaboration with the Guyana Small Business Association and we are looking to table this year, the Small Business Act. That is coming on stream.

But more significant, what I have said to them, while the process of bringing legislation to the National Assembly could be lengthy, as a matter of policy, we can already start to help you, and we have offered the Guyana Small Business Association, the craft producers, a place at the National Exhibition Complex in Sophia, where they can set up their office. They can start their institutional strengthening programme. We have offered them that and only last week Friday, I received from the Hon. Attorney General, his approval on a lease to the Guyana Manufacturers' Association for a building in Sophia that we have provided to the GMA for their Head Office. You know what is the rent, Mr Speaker, \$20,000 per month. This is all tangible proof that we are out there working hand in hand with the Private Sector to ease some of their problems, so they can create wealth, create employment and improve the lives of Guyanese.

**National Exhibition Complex** - Mr Speaker, as I mentioned Sophia, I need to touch basically on the vision for that complex. The National Exhibition Complex will be a permanent exhibition site and a place where the Private Sector will be entrenched, so that they can get the full use of those facilities to help them in the promotion of their products and services and so that complex, which was once used only for political purposes is now being used to help generate value added in the Guyanese economy. *[Interruption] [Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Time, Hon. Member.

**Mr Donald R. Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon.



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Member be given fifteen more minutes to conclude his speech.

**Motion put and carried.**

**Hon Manzoor Nadir:** So, Mr Speaker, right now at the National Exhibition Complex there is an Export Packaging Unit that sorts fruits and vegetables for export directly to Barbados. We have the Guyana National Bureau of Standards housed there, we have the Office of the Guyana Manufacturers' Association, we have the Administration Centre, we have the Sophia Special School. Tell me, isn't that complex being adequately used now for the benefit of Guyanese? *[Applause]* We want to encourage more of it. We want to see the public coming there. We have a nominal fee for the use of the premises and only this weekend we had a massive Youth Exposition there, but that sector is being mobilised and it is going to be used for productive purposes.

**National Bureau of Standards -** Mr Speaker, another area that falls under my Ministry is the Guyana National Bureau of Standards. If you look at the PPP/C's Manifesto plans that it presented to the people and on which it was elected, it speaks of working with the Private Sector to increase local, regional and global competitiveness and next to that was the strengthening of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards along with the assistance to manufacturing entities.

Mr Speaker, it is not insignificant that there is \$20 million allocated to the Guyana National Bureau of Standards to start the building of our national laboratory where the national standards, which will be comparable to regional and global standards, will be kept, and so our conformity assessment programme, which is now the buzz-word in international trade, that programme is going to begin this year. So Guyanese manufacturers will be certified as conforming to international standards in keeping with the Manifesto's promise of reaching regional and global competitiveness for Guyanese. It is very significant.

Mr Speaker, all of us know of the Phyto-Sanitary Certificate that every country accepts a Phyto-Sanitary Certificate, once it accompanies

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its produce overseas. In today's world, with a trade of so many manufactured goods, it is your certificate of conformity assessment that accompanies the goods and is acceptable throughout the world. We have begun that programme and we are looking to start certification by the end of 2002.

Mr Speaker, the Guyana National Bureau of Standards currently has over two hundred and thirty (230) Standards, that it has developed over the past five years and this year we are going to be doing sixty-five (65) new Standards including Standards for the Tourism Sector and we are going to be revising thirty-five (35) of those standards. The programme that the Guyana National Bureau of Standards has for 2002 is one which would see it working very closely with the manufacturing sector so that we can emulate what was achieved last year when Precision Wood Working copped the No. 1 prize in the Caribbean for best entrepreneur and best Caribbean Manufacturer. *[Applause]*

In fact, Mr Speaker, we have down-played Guyana's and the Government's role in working with our manufacturers, but last year in that competition that was held across the Caribbean, Guyanese manufacturers occupied the top three finalist positions - all three. *[Applause]* We had Prettipaul Singh for Fisheries, Denmore for Garments and Precision for furniture and we also had two other entrepreneurs, we had Mae's for Education and we had Roraima Airways for tourism. So five of the finalists in last year's Entrepreneur of the year Award Competition were Guyanese. That is significant *[Applause]* and what is more significant is that there are new names in the production of value added in the Guyanese economy. All the work that has been done over the past few years is bearing fruit and even if you are blind and deaf, you ought to still have 'touch' to see that things are getting better. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I am sure that we will touch them with this presentation as they see it on TV later this evening. Mr Speaker, and so it is with much pride that I support the Motion of the Minister of Finance. In fact in concluding his speech, he said and I quote from page 52:

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*we can turn Guyana from a land of potential to a land of plenty*

Mr Speaker, I want to conclude by saying and I am paraphrasing him, that we will turn Guyana from a land of potential to a land of plenty. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. If no other Member wishes to speak, I can put the Motion now for the Budget. *[Pause]*

The Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

**Hon Bibi S. Shadick:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, this afternoon, I rise to add my voice to support the Motion moved by the Hon. Minister of Finance for the approval of the Estimates and Budget for the year 2002.

However, Mr Speaker, before I begin my presentation proper, I would like to record my disappointment at the fact that, a little over forty percent of Guyanese in this country who voted at the last general elections for their representatives to sit in this Honourable House and to speak on their behalf, today, have no voice, have nothing to say, to this most important subject of our nation's survival and our nation's benefit.

Mr Speaker, I wonder whether my Hon. Friends who would normally occupy the other side of the House think that Opposition means that they have to oppose and I am wondering whether their absence here is not saying that since we cannot oppose, because we agree on what is in the Budget, whether that is why they are absent? *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, it has been said that this Budget is a repeat of last year's Budget and I want to say, if we can maintain a standard, then we are going forward and in fact there is at least one thing to repeat of last year, last year we recorded negative growth, this year we recorded 1.9 percent positive growth. So that at least is different. *[Applause]*

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Mr Speaker, I am no economist and I was put in a Ministry that provides what are called safety nets to the Guyanese Public, many of whom belong to that forty-two percent, whose representatives are not here to speak on their behalf. I would like to say that I speak on behalf of one hundred percent of Guyanese, who have need of the safety nets that the Ministry I have been appointed to provides.

Mr Speaker, our Theme of the Budget is *PROMOTING GROWTH; ACCELERATING SOCIAL GAINS*. My colleague Minister, the Hon. Manzoor Nadir, focused on *promoting growth, accumulation of wealth*.

I would like to look at the other part of the equation which talks about the reduction of poverty, which is something that we on this side of the House are very concerned about. It has been said (and people say all kind of things) that the majority of our people live in poverty. It is for those reasons that we on this side of the House want to concentrate on reducing poverty and if one goes through with an unbiased mind, the Speech of the Hon. Minister of Finance, they will find so many instances where there is pre-occupation with bettering the lives of the poor, with improving standards of living, with making things better for poor people.

One of the most important things is that, again, (Is it the fourth time?) there are no new taxes, there are no new fines, nobody has to pay more for licences for cars, minibuses, so nobody should have to pay more for transportation.

We are looking at the people who are looked upon as poor, the people who maintain the statusquo in this country, the people who work and produce. But since I have been in that Ministry, my portfolio includes matters to do with women, with children, with the elderly, those people in society who cannot speak for themselves and who need someone to speak on their behalf. When I say that, I remember, last week, the opening of this new laboratory that can now cater for DNA testing, and I am smiling because there is a phrase that comes to me almost every day-single parent - and I am thinking, well we will soon know who the

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other half of the equation is, because we can now find those fathers and prove to them that, yes, you are the father. So, we wouldn't have any more single parent.

Over the years, some of the nets that we provided, and will continue to provide, and will continue to improve upon, have to do with those same people called *single parents* and those unfortunate women who for one reason or another have been left to look after ten/eleven, all numbers of children on their own, because either one or more fathers have abdicated their responsibilities.

Sometimes, I wonder if my friends who are not here and some of our detractors don't get tired of negative comments about little things that they can pick out that have not yet been done, but like in the case of the poor Prison Officer who is lying in the hospital, where there is this resounding silence from those people who march and talk about extra-judicial killings, whether those people... is the same kind of silence that we have when they omit to mention the significant gains that we have achieved especially in the social sector. Mr Speaker, the silence is resounding.

Mr Speaker, as I said again, there are some who think that *opposition* means that you have to oppose. I would like to say to them that sometimes, you should also congratulate, you will be the bigger person for it.

We have been, in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, trying to provide some form of independence for those members of our society who find themselves in particularly difficult circumstances, especially those women who find themselves as Heads of households, having to provide for, sometimes, husbands who are substance abusers as well as children of such unions.

Last year, we tried to make efficient our unit that deals with difficult circumstances and we encouraged applicants who came for assistance there to begin small income generating activities so that they don't have

to become beggars and go to people everyday to ask for food. We did that mainly in Georgetown and its environs because those were the people who could reach us. This year, I am very pleased to say that we are going to be expanding that kind of assistance into the Regions. In fact, I've just come back from Region 8, where I set up certain systems that will help us to assist those persons in Region 8 to access the kind of assistance that we give. So we are not only going to Sophia and we are not only listening to people who said that I used to be a vendor and somebody stole all my belongings. We are trying to listen to the people all over the country including that forty or that little over forty-odd per cent of the people who voted for my colleagues who are notably absent this afternoon.

Mr Speaker, at this time in our history and what is happening in the world today, there are so many distractions and so many things that are happening which involve young people, children, juveniles. Whenever a child is involved, *child* being defined as anyone under the age of eighteen, in any kind of problem, be it in the home or Second Street, Albervtown or in Section 'K' Campbellville, the Officers of my Department of Probation and Family Welfare from the Ministry of Human Services are there to give assistance. Those Officers are very hard working people and, we are not only looking after the children there, we are looking after them in the Courts and we look after them afterwards, we give counselling and assistance. These are safety nets that are sorely needed in our society and these are safety nets that are provided and will continue to be provided by the Ministry where I have been placed. We take our responsibility seriously. We get a report of a child being abused and we are there. A newspaper reporter calls us and says, Minister, we have heard such and such a thing. I'd say, give me ten minutes. I call the Probation Department and they say, Yes, Minister, we visited, and we will give you a report. Such is the efficiency that we are striving for and we have almost attained in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

People talk about corruption and people talk about finding the people who are corrupt and knock them off or lock them up. My humble

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submission is that were we to do that, then they might not have the forty-two percent of the people, we might not have those people over there sometimes, but my view is, what we need to do is to change systems, to put new systems into place that will lesson, that will cut out the corruption. Revenge is not something that we believe in. Had we believed in revenge, then many of our colleagues who are noticeably absent today would not have been here, they might have been somewhere else. We believe in people making right choices and we believe in putting systems into place that will encourage honesty and integrity and efficiency. Those are the qualities that, when I agreed to become Minister, I took to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security and, I can tell you, it is worth it.

**Problems of the Elderly** - Mr Speaker, we have to deal with matters involving the elderly of this country and part of the reason why I went to Region 8, was to look and see the problems that our pensioners and our recipients of public assistance have to face. Those problems are going to be addressed and matters are going to be made much simpler, and life should be a little easier for those people.

I know our detractors claim how much is the old-age pension and I say, it is as much as we can afford at this time, but given the positive indicators that are happening in our economy, very soon.. and with some of the savings, we might be able to generate because of efficient systems that are being put in place. We might very soon be able to announce that we are going to increase those, but let us try to keep the path. We want to maintain gains that we have and to build on them. We don't want to lose any of those by trying to grapple with too much too fast.

**Coops** - Mr Speaker, this country of ours used to be called the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and Co-operatives were identified as the vehicle by which people could overcome their difficulties, people could get together and overcome difficulties.

Co-operative Societies somehow had gone to sleep. Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to report to this Honourable House and to my friends



who have left us that I am sure they will listen to what is going on here today and I can assure them that the co-operative movement has awakened and it will soon begin to run again. We are finding out those co-operatives that were formed for political reason and are still being run by politicians and those who wish personal gains under the guise of a co-operative society. Mr Speaker, those are the kinds of corrupt practices that this new administration in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security has embarked upon.

We would like to see fair play, we would like to see all people advance together. We would not like to see some people gaining at the expense of the large majority. When I talk about co-operatives, I remember a financial institution that resembled a co-operative that had a few at the top benefitting at the expense of the great majority of the people who put their money into that venture.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security has since, at the end of last year embarked on, what I would like to call a clean-up campaign of the old-age pension registers and the public assistance lists. Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that that campaign is going very well. It has just begun and while some people would like to say that so many hundred million dollars disappeared, as if it was in a bucket, and somebody stole it, what I would like to say is, we are hoping that we can save so many hundred millions dollars by being a little more efficient and that our Ministry will enter the technological age and have computerised data bases of all the recipients of old-age pension and public assistance before the end of this year.

**Street Children** - Mr Speaker, there are so many things that people talk about in this society. There are children on the streets. The Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security has just formally opened a new residential drop-in centre for street children and I must say that some of those Private Sector Companies and my colleague Minister have discovered their social conscience, something that I have been urging them to do. I keep calling some of these businesses and saying, it's all right to make profits, but you must remember that there is a social



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conscience that you need to have and I must say that quite a few of them have discovered that social conscience and so we have partners who are in helping us to run our drop-in centre for street children.

**Palms** - Mr Speaker, one thing that continues to haunt us is the inadequate buildings that house the Palms and I know our detractors would talk about it, but I want to tell them that we are well aware of the conditions at the Palms Institution. This year, we have planned a massive rehabilitation programme of as many buildings as we can, given the finances that we have and we have started to educate the inmates of the Palms so that they can take an interest in the Institution, seeing it as their home, so that they also can help in this rehabilitation process - those who are able-bodied can probably help to paint, things like that.

So, Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security continues to give human service and social security to the less fortunate of our society.

Mr Speaker, while I speak about the social services, my colleague Minister, Dr Bisnauth will speak on the Labour issues.

**Regional Responsibility** - Mr Speaker, I also have to speak to the Region for which I was elected Regional Constituency Representative in this Honourable House and it is here where I miss my colleague on the other side of the House, Mr McAllister, who would have reminded me of some of the things that he has seen that he would like done, but he would not have reminded me of the things that have been done and are working well.

Mr Speaker, there is one anomaly about *Islands*, I always thought that an island is a piece of land surrounded by water and if that was so then that piece of land should have been higher than water. The Islands of Leguan and Wakenaam are below sea level and hence our sea defences are very important or else those islands will no longer exist. I must say, had the trend continued that had been going on prior to 1992, Leguan would have been no more, I would have lost my birthplace. I

am very pleased to say that Leguan and Wakenaam have been listed as critical areas for sea defence rehabilitation and they are well on the agenda for sea defences this year.

I am well aware of all the media publicity that surrounded the floods that they had recently, when due to global warming and the rise in the water level on the Island of Leguan the villages of Phoenix and Henrietta were flooded and what amazed me was that, in the media, it looked as if other villages of Phoenix and Henrietta were flooded. I would like to say there were many more villages in Leguan that were flooded by over-topping, not by breaches in the sea defences. We are trying to maintain what we have, but we will have to do some more work so that we can increase the efficiency of the sea defences. There were other villages and I wonder if it is because those villages have mainly in their population that part of the forty percent of our population that voted for my friends who are noticeably absent here today, because we only talk about the ones who will make the greatest noise. I must say that one of the reasons why the water stayed so long there was because, as the Opposition thinks they must do, they even oppose people who went there to try to assist and take them out of the villages. The other villages that were flooded, like Maryville and Waterloo where I come from, they allowed the people to drain the water out very quickly, so nobody could have reported a flood.

Mr Speaker, in Region 3, where I come from, there are mainly farmers, rice farmers, ground provision farmers. In areas where nobody ever went before, we have started but we are now planning to build roads this year on Hog Island, farm to market roads to link villages. Hog Island people had to go by boat from northern Hog Island to Eastern Hog Island. They had to go by boat, but they will soon go by road. We can link the schools, children can choose where they need to go.

Mr Speaker, we on this side of the House have people as our main concern. We are looking for places where people live, so that we can provide them with health facilities. At Moreschi which was just a name to some people, and I wonder whether all of my colleagues who have

disappeared know about that name, but we are going to build a health centre at Moreschi because the population there has grown quite a bit.

Agricultural communities need drainage and irrigation. For Region 3 a hefty sum of money has been set aside. As I said, I am no economist, the figures are like lots of money that I am not used to calling, but I am going to say a hefty sum of money has been set aside for use by the Region and by Central Government to provide and to improve and to maintain drainage and irrigation facilities all over Region 3, and even as I speak, I know that in Leguan, they have at least three Hymacs backhoes that have been digging the trenches to prepare for the rice crop that is coming up.

Mr Speaker, while we talk about rice, I would like to mention what I would like to call the rescue plan that was engineered and worked out by the Government in conjunction with the banks who are the lenders to small rice farmers to provide a package to assist those small rice framers who were indebted to the banks, so that they can re-plant their fields, and the loans they have taken which would have robbed them of their very houses were restructured so as to make it easily repayable. I am sure, small farmers of Region 3 are truly grateful. I know, for I have visited and the eagerness with which the farmers have been going back to the fields for this crop is to be noted and even though our Budget says rice production increased, I would want to feel that we would have a higher percentage of increase for this year because of the measures that the Government has taken to assist the small rice farmers.

Mr Speaker, we believe that when we build we should maintain, we should try to keep what we have and it is to that end that the road from the Demerara Harbour Bridge to Parika, which is one of the main arteries - to the interior of our country, that that road will be rehabilitated and will be done during this year. Everybody who has to go to Essequibo, to Bartica for Regatta, to any one of the Islands in the Essequibo, anywhere to the west of Guyana, has to pass through that road.

Our Stellings and our Transport and Harbours Department facilities

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are constantly being repaired renovated, refurbished and maintained. Parika Stelling just had (well, if not a face lift), a floor refurbished so that it is much easier to drive unto the boat right now.

Mr Speaker, things are happening all over this country, things are happening in Region 3 and things will continue to happen. At the West Demerara Hospital, there will be a new Physio- therapy Department and they are going to put in a new toilet block. That has to do with health.

Schools all over Region 3, those that have been built, we maintain, those that have not yet been repaired will be repaired this year. We are concentrating on all those kinds of things.

Mr Speaker, this year, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security will be tasked with a few other duties or responsibilities for which we will need to strengthen the Budget, those who listen to it will hear that the Ministry will be strengthening or carrying out its mandate in a more efficient manner. This year those who have read the Budget would have heard or those who listened would have heard that the Government intends to provide cash and other support to displaced workers while they seek other opportunities, because of things like the Bauxite Industry and so on that are going to have to lay off workers and people are going to be displaced, they will have to find other jobs, and so they will have to have some kind of rescue package in the mean time.

Support will be provided to pregnant and lactating mothers to ensure better health of the newborns and the children who are going to be born. There will be starting subsidies for the poor, all through the poverty alleviation and our Ministry of Human Services and there will be vouchers for textbooks and examination fees for those who are considered deserving or needing those subsidies.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, there will also be a distribution of school uniforms for those children whose parents cannot afford to provide school uniforms so that they can go to school. If a

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child does not have an education, we believe that it is not necessarily because he/she could not afford a school uniform.

There will be School Feeding Programmes of which you will hear more later from somebody else, I hope; and we are looking at employing people whom we are aware of, all those dropouts and people who don't have qualifications to apply for certain jobs, and so there is this programme - Temporary Employment and Maintenance Programme - that will target those youths during this year.

All in all, we are trying to take measures to alleviate poverty, we are trying to take measures not to have a nation of rich people, but a nation of independent people who are socially secured. This is the kind of people we want because if there is social security, then there will be the will to work and to build so that this country of ours can be a better place to live in.

Mr Speaker, with all of these positive things that are happening, with all of these nets that we are providing, we have a new breed of people that we have to provide safety nets for. They are called *deportees*, and every day we provide assistance at the Ministry for those people who (as one lady said to me today) had the unfortunate experience of having been born here, but have grown up in Canada, the United States and all of that, and it is just because the place of their birth is Guyana, that they were brought here, and it is left to us to take these people to help them to find jobs and places to live and means by which to survive.

So, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security is a kind of one-stop shop for anybody who needs any kind of assistance including legal assistance and legal advice. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Time, Hon. Member.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude her speech.

**Motion put and carried.**

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**Hon Bibi Shadick:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I was saying, Mr Speaker, there are these deportees who come to us and who have to be assisted. We don't want them to go and make life miserable for other people. We will continue to give assistance to them. There was this young man, who said to me, all I want is my passport so I could go back where I came from. Well, I wished him luck. I don't know whether he can go back where he came from, but I told him that for the time being, as long as he is here, he should stick within the law.

Mr Speaker, there are so many positives and so many things that are going on in this country that unless someone were to sit down and write it all down, it would be difficult for everybody to see. Visitors to this country have only praise. Visitors to this country can see that there is life, that there are houses which haven't been painted for twenty years, and which can now have two coats of paint, all since 1992. *[Applause]* There are people who can see that one bedroom houses have been extended to have three bedrooms. There are people who can see signs of life and signs of hope. That is what we at the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security would like to give to our people, hope, so that they can live full lives in happiness and in prosperity. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs.

**Hon Doodnauth Singh:** May it please you, Mr Speaker, Members of the National Assembly, I wish to support the Hon. Minister of Finance and his technical team for the preparation and presentation of the National Budget.

Even though I have had some nodding acquaintance with economics, I regret to say, I cannot analyse the Budget as Minister Nadir has done and therefore it is resolved that I will restrict myself to the Constitutional mandate given to the Attorney General.

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Mr Speaker, on the assumption of Office as Attorney General, the Chambers was manned by a professional staff of six persons. Since then, we have been fortunate in being able to recruit former Justice Deonarine Bissessar, Dr Michael Tang and twelve graduates of the University. *[Applause]* The result has been a considerable improvement in the advice which has been tendered to my colleague Ministers at a very early stage and the representation of the Government in the Legal Department.

Regrettably, I have to advise the National Assembly that at the takeover of Bookers, there were notes which should have been executed by the then President. Those notes, at the present time totalled the sum of 12 million pounds (sterling). As a result of our non-payment of that debt, there are arbitration proceedings which are going to take place very shortly at Ixit. We are required to be represented at those arbitration proceedings, because it is likely that the proceedings will conflict with the PARIS CLUB Agreement. The Minister of Finance and my Chambers have been working very closely to insist and to ensure that the Government of Guyanais well represented.

In addition, there are the arbitration proceedings which emanate out of the contract with N.H. International for the building of the Timehri/Georgetown Road. Those arbitration proceedings will commence very shortly as well and the Government of Guyana has to be represented. Furthermore during the existence of Guyana Airways, there was an arrangement or a requirement that Guyana Airways was required to collect US \$5 per passenger on behalf of the Customs and Security. It was envisaged that that sum which had been collected on behalf of the United States, Customs Department should have been paid over to the Customs Department. That has not been done and the present sum which is outstanding is in the vicinity of US \$125,000. The legal advisers of the Company for the re-assurance of the bond has been insisting that the Guyana Government should pay that sum. We have resisted that attempt and in fact proceedings have been instituted in a Court in Miami. We will take steps to ensure that the Government of Guyana is well represented at those proceedings.



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Mr Speaker, with respect to the Deeds Registry, I wish to advise that I think, my colleague, Mr Shaik Baksh would attest to the fact that there has been considerable improvement in the granting of titles and conveyancing to the various Government Departments. *[Applause]*

There is, of course, a project which has been discussed at Cabinet and in which a contract is likely to be signed with respect of the improvement of the material and technical facilities at the Deeds Registry.

Mr Speaker, with respect to the Administration of Justice, we have had several visits from the United Kingdom of former judges, Lord Brennan was the last, recently. There have been suggestions for the improvement.

With respect to Judges who are on vacation, coming to our Courts and assisting during their vacation period, I, however, have a very personal position on that matter, which I will not wish to discuss at this stage, but we need to take steps to ensure that the Magistracy and the Judiciary are fully complemented.

In relation to the Magistracy, there is a shortage of a minimum of six Magistrates. In the Judiciary, there are appointments which have to be made to the Court at the first instance and, of course, the Appellate Court, where quite recently the learned Chancellor had to make a comment about the inability of the Court to sit because of the fact that there has not been appointment to the Appellate Court.

With respect to the vein, I am speaking of the vein of the Administration of Justice, I recalled being at the Ministry of Finance and speaking to the Minister and Dr Ashni Singh. They have given me no money whatsoever to improve my facilities except a minimal amount. I would have wished that I would have been given money to have computers and those sort of things to enhance our service, but we are satisfied with what we have got because of the circumstances in which the Budget had to be presented in Guyana.



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My learned friend, Mr Nadir, has spoken of the protests and strikes, those matters which have influenced the tax-gathering capacity of our nation.

I want to inform this House that in so far as the Administration of Justice is concerned, there is a requirement for legislative programme to be put in place. We have had the considerable shortage of drafting personnel and as a result approaches have been made to the Indian Government, to the CDB and the UNDP to provide us with the drafting personnel. Those matters are in train and it is likely that within a very short time, we would be fortunate enough to have at least four or five drafting personnel of expertise. I have assigned to the drafting personnel six State lawyers and now that drafting department has been enhanced considerably, but of course they will not have had the experience.

I am in the process of discussing with the NDI and other institutions the training of these drafting personnel.

In addition, with respect to the printing of the Laws of Guyana, you will recall, that on the last occasion, this Assembly had sat and discussed the Budget, questions had been raised about the contract for the printing of the laws. I wish to advise that the Attorney General's Chambers is in possession of a diskette, which has updated the laws up to July, 1997. The Chambers are in the process of negotiating with the NDI for the upgrading of that diskette from July, 1997 to December, 2001. That is likely to take place within another three to four months, so that instead of us having those green volumes which many persons hardly ever looked at, those who wish can put a diskette into their computer and deal with the particular law which they wish to have and have it printed at the same time. So that in a sense, it is fortunate, that the contract that had been entered into with Global will not be proceeded with.

In furtherance of the Administration of Justice and as a requirement for the CSME, Guyana has given a commitment to the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice. I wish to advise that we will be one of the first signatories to that Court including, among others, Belize, Trinidad

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and Tobago, Barbados, and that we have been assured of a building which already has been provided by the Trinidad and Tobago Government, the Windshore Building, which has been fully refurbished and which is available for use whenever the Court comes into existence.

To bring the Court into existence, there is the requirement for funding. The original amount thought necessary was US \$20 million and that sum was to be raised and administered by the Caribbean Development Bank and the income from that fund would have financed the payment of the judicial personnel. Unfortunately that estimate seems to be inaccurate and there is now the requirement to find a funding to the tune of US \$100. That sum is being negotiated.

In addition to that, there is the legislation which has to be put in place for the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, the recruiting of Officers and Personnel; and the original estimate of the implementation of the Court has been thought to be October, 2002. Regrettably that cannot be the situation at the present time.

For the time being our Court of Appeal will be the final Court for the citizens of Guyana.

Mr Speaker, the Administration of Justice must be improved and steps are being taken to ensure that that occurs within the limitations, the financial constraints that are put upon us.

In addition, there is the requirement of amending our laws up-to-date and the Chancellor has appointed a Committee which is being headed by Senior Counsel Rex Mc Kay and at which Committee, the Attorney General Chambers is being represented.

The Committee will look into refining the laws, to ensuring that the laws are brought up-to-date because you will recall that quite recently the Chancellor made the statement that the over-population of the prisons was due to two matters:

1. That persons who had committed minor offences ought not to have

Mr Speaker, on the assumption of Office as Attorney General, the Chambers was manned by a professional staff of six persons. Since then, we have been fortunate in being able to recruit former Justice Deonarine Bissessar, Dr Michael Tang and twelve graduates of the University. *[Applause]* The result has been a considerable improvement in the advice which has been tendered to my colleague Ministers at a very early stage and the representation of the Government in the Legal Department.

Regrettably, I have to advise the National Assembly that at the takeover of Bookers, there were notes which should have been executed by the then President. Those notes, at the present time totalled the sum of 12 million pounds (sterling). As a result of our non-payment of that debt, there are arbitration proceedings which are going to take place very shortly at Ixit. We are required to be represented at those arbitration proceedings, because it is likely that the proceedings will conflict with the PARIS CLUB Agreement. The Minister of Finance and my Chambers have been working very closely to insist and to ensure that the Government of Guyanais well represented.

In addition, there are the arbitration proceedings which emanate out of the contract with N.H. International for the building of the Timehri/Georgetown Road. Those arbitration proceedings will commence very shortly as well and the Government of Guyana has to be represented. Furthermore during the existence of Guyana Airways, there was an arrangement or a requirement that Guyana Airways was required to collect US \$5 per passenger on behalf of the Customs and Security. It was envisaged that that sum which had been collected on behalf of the United States, Customs Department should have been paid over to the Customs Department. That has not been done and the present sum which is outstanding is in the vicinity of US \$125,000. The legal advisers of the Company for the re-assurance of the bond has been insisting that the Guyana Government should pay that sum. We have resisted that attempt and in fact proceedings have been instituted in a Court in Miami. We will take steps to ensure that the Government of Guyana is well represented at those proceedings.

the suspension for half an hour.

**Suspension of Assembly taken at 16: 50H**

**Resumption of Assembly at 17:30H**

**The Speaker:** The Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport.

**Hon Gail Teixeira:** Mr Speaker and Hon. Members of this House, I rise to support Budget 2002, presented by the Hon Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, these are uncertain times, the world economy started to go into a slippage as predicted, which commenced prior to 2001. The projection said that by the end of the year 2002, the world would be coming out of the recession. However, the latest projections are not extremely encouraging, and this is especially for those of us in the developing countries. The world recession coupled with the impact of September 11, had an impact on the developing countries in terms of trade, as well as the availability of finance and funding for development. Therefore, we have also seen a demise in the loans and grants available for developing countries.

We have also seen a great world recession, and this has taken place in other times of history, that war industries and the full croissant preparation for war allows countries that are having economic problems to pump up their faltering economies and to provide jobs, and create exports. Not only war, but the threat of war. And so, at the world economic level, there is also the major concerns of the world political level.

In the last debate, I spoke about the issues of Agricultural Trade, and the issues of WTO and Protectionism, and that, in the United States, despite the call for the developing countries to not protect their exports - agricultural exports - that, in fact, the Agricultural Sector in the United States is one of the most protected in the world.. In fact, a more recent

example has come to bear, in that President Bush's recent decision to put tariffs as high as thirty per cent on the steel industry, on steel imports, in order to protect the faltering steel industry in United States is a disgraceful one, in which it has tremendous impact on the developing countries to export ten per cent of the world steel to United States.

In fact, in addition to that, direct foreign investment of the United States is only one per cent of the world's investment in developing countries. Therefore, we are in for some uncertain and difficult times as part of the developing world. In fact, UNESCO which is not seen as an organisation that makes comments on poverty, in its recent magazine, the last quarter of last year, pointed out that the impact of globalisation, had led to an increase in poverty and also problems in terms of access to education and health care. In fact it was quite a scathing article, criticising globalisation, and calling for what and supporting what Commonwealth Head McKinnon talked about as globalisation with a human face. So that we are now seeing, many years later, what Dr Cheddi Jagan called for, a new global human order in which the world trade relations would be more equitable and allow for developing countries to have more scope to develop and also to improve their economic growth, so as to undermine the levels of poverty in their countries.

What we see up ahead, at least in the next year, are greater difficulties for developing countries, including ours at the economic level, and therefore, Guyana's performance in year 2000, is extremely special, and the Speakers before me, and Minister Kowlessar himself, have pointed out that despite the post election issues, and the unrest that we saw, as well as the disadvantage we face in terms of world trade, and the exports, too, internationally, that the Guyanese economy vis-a-vis other countries in the Caribbean, and elsewhere, did extremely well. *[Applause]* Therefore, I think that we have to commend the Government and all those who manage our budget, and kept us on the rafters as Ministers and sectors to make sure that we kept within the tight range, of what were allowed and possible.

Mr Speaker, we also have to look at what is happening in Guyana.

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We cannot just come in to these debates seeing as if this is just today, all of this is happening. We have had a difficult last five years of this Government. From December 1997 to elections of (let's say) December 2000, on the eve of the elections, we have had very little time of peace and calm in order to move our programmes forward. So in 1998, we were given six months after all the unrest, after the 1997 elections, to be able to implement many of our programmes.

In 1999, it was less than six months, if we include the fifty-four days Public Service strike, and the year 2000, was the only full year that we had as a Government in a period of relative calm, in comparison to the two previous years. So if we add that up we will see that we had one and one half years in a three-year Government whereas, in fact, we were cheated of anyway to execute our programmes.

In year 2001, we were given seven months, after the passing of the budget, to be able to implement a twelve-month programme, and the year 2002, has just begun. But I think we have to look at this history of a government trying to implement programmes in terms of poverty reduction, and economic growth, in a situation where the Opposition has deliberately orchestrated in many cases, irresponsible behaviour. The PNC/R, in its recent statements talks about their concerns about nation building, and the concerns about the Constitution and the economy. But their behaviour here in Parliament, and their behaviour in terms of responsibility as an Opposition, in terms of allowing the country to get on with its business, flies in the face, and in fact one could accuse the PNC/R of crocodile tears.

We have today, in this Parliament, an absent Opposition, except for the GAP and ROAR, but clearly, we have to look at the responsibility of the Opposition in terms of the importance and the dignity of this House. I wish to remind this House, for the record, that the PPP in opposition, even when Dr Jagan was censored by the then Speaker, Mr Sase Naraine, that he continued to use this forum to represent his constituency and the people of this country, and that he never gave up this forum as a highest decision making forum of the country.

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We are thirty-five years as an independent nation, and democracy in this country, if we take from October 1992, then we are only nine years old in business of trying to reconstruct this country, economically, politically, socially, legally, and, therefore, democracy is still being built; and I wish to again remind this House, that the United States, from the time of the American independence, has taken three hundred years to build, what is considered one of the more democratic nations of the world. But, in fact, there are still issues in the United States that are under heavy fire, in terms of human rights and equality.

The United Kingdom, itself has been in the process of building a nation, and building democracy over three hundred to four hundred years. So that this is not to excuse ourselves, but to say that we are only thirty-five years as an independent state, and only nine years in terms of seriously moving in the direction of building democracy and in building a nation.

If we look at the record of this government in terms of governance, one of the important issues to which this Government has contributed consistently and constantly over the last nine years, has been a process of consultation and involvement. The most recent examples of these, obviously, are President Jagdeo and the Leader of the Opposition having meetings in the height of what were problems after the elections in 2001. This level of generosity and magnanimity by the President, is an important factor in trying to find peaceful solutions to what are irritants and problems amongst our people. The fact that bipartisan dialogue committees were set up, and one of the most contentious committees in terms of policy, the Broadcasting Committee was one that was able to draft the guidelines, of what was an acceptable Broadcasting Policy for Guyana, and the basis for a Broadcasting Act for this country. The whole process of Constitutional Reform and Consultation, the interaction with the Trade Union Movement, and the Private Sector, with NGOs and the Civil Society, with Community Development Groups. If we take this into consideration, no other country in the CARICOM has this history of consultation and involvement with the people of its country. *[Applause]*

A National Development Strategy was created and then another



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document was done by Civil Society, and this is the document that the Government is addressing, the one which came out of a process of consultation right across this country, headed by the Civil Society, by Dr Kenneth King, who at that time was a leading consultant and an eminent politician, and thinker of this country. In other words, the whole area of governance is important in terms of the way in which we try to relate. That does not mean that this government is a wimp nor is it a push-over, because governments and leaders are elected by the people to make decisions, and sometimes decisions are not always popular.

But let us look at some simple decisions, which are going to be coming to this Parliament, to do with the Safety Belts. For example; an important legislation that the Women in Black and other NGOs and decent minded citizens of this country have been calling for concerns Traffic Legislation and Seat Belt Laws. However, it was timely by the activities of those in the minibus and taxi services, and others, who wanted, for some reason, to stop it. The Minister of Home Affairs will be bringing a law here, for debate and discussion. But it is not that this Bill did not, as an example, go through long periods of consultation and disagreements, amendments and re-amendments. But we have to recognise that one of the important pillars of this country, and an important pillar of this Government is this issue of governance. That does not mean that we can consult with every single person in every single place, that is an impossibility. What we do is that we work with the NGOs, the Local Authorities, various Agencies that represent people and interest at various levels. Therefore, we try to get a picture of what are the major concerns. There is no government in this world that pretends to be one, that can solve all the problems all the time. What we can do is set a processing place and put mechanisms in place for us to be able to hear and listen and address many of those issues, and try to find answers wherever they are possible.

The other pillar of this government is the issue of Financial Management, and the heightening of Management Reforms. The recent examples in the newspapers of companies not paying workers Income Tax and NIS deductions is a serious act that is illegal and requires



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responsibility on the part of the companies and business sector of this country. However, fiscal management has improved and the systems of accounting and auditing have improved very much also. The fact is, for many years, I believe it is ten years, the Auditor General had tabled no reports in this Parliament to do with what was happening with the taxpayers' money - for ten years. The fact that the Public Accounts Committee is functioning, it is busy, it is meeting frequently as far as I know, by the number of times my staff had to be sent to the PAC to answer questions, I feel these are positive signs.

If we look at the recent developments in the United States, with ENRON, and what has been required now, where there are major demands on President Bush for new regulations relating to the accounting systems, so as to prevent a disaster and a fiasco such as ENRON, in which thousands of workers lost everything that they had, which they invested in the company. We have not faced such abominations. However, maybe a small example of that, I am reminded, is Globe Trust where people have lost money.

When we refer to the Financial Management, we can see that the reins are tight in terms of how the Budget Office and the Ministry of Finance manage the Budget, and also all the issues which we still have to deal with. But the reforms are ongoing, and they are not quick-fixes. If we want to make changes in the accounting and auditing systems in the tendering and procurement issues, they require multiplicity of changes in legislation, multiplicity of changes at the regulation level, as well as in terms of whole structures in various Ministries and State sectors. These require major interventions which take time and are not, as I said, quick-fixes. We are still based very much on the British System of Accounting.

If we refer to the Civil Society Document, year 2001 to 2010 - A Policy Framework - entitled Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana. On Page 343, Section XXIX 620.2, it talks about the Fundamental Argument for the Eradication of Poverty. It entails the active and direct involvement of all sections of the society. It includes the mobilisation of civil society, it involves proper administration, an improvement in

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monitoring and dissemination of information.

However, one of the most important things it talks about, is the issue of Inclusive Approach to Democratic Governance. It also points out that any issue to do with National Development Strategy demands economic growth, and, as Minister Nadir pointed out, that when we look at economic growth, it demands a situation of stable economy, stable political environment, so as to allow the investors, the manufacturers and the private sector to be able to expand in some level of security.

When we look at the third pillar of this government, in terms of the quality of life, this Government over the last nine years going on to ten now, has made major investments, as no government in the history of this country has, in terms of improvement and the percentage of the Budget into Water, Housing, Roads, Sea Defence, Drainage and Irrigation, Education, and Health. *[Applause]* The billions of dollars that are going in to trying to repair what the PNC undid, and took twenty-eight years to undo, shows also that the economy that they inherited in 1964, was quite a strong one, and it took them a long time to dismantle it. What is happening now, is the reconstruction, and as we see in other countries, if we look at the rest of the world, and see what is happening in countries that have gone through difficult political struggles, in some cases Civil War, that it is not a five-year plan, that re-constructs those countries. They are looking at in many cases, ten, twenty, thirty years to reconstruct those countries.

Guyana as an emerging democratic state, is making major interventions and changes, and we have to be able to take this into consideration. We are not saying that there should not be criticism, we are not saying that there should not be constructive criticism, but we also believe that criticisms have to take reality into account, that we cannot go around with wishes as horses, but we have to deal with realities. If one looks at Page 35 of the Budget Speech presented by Hon Minister Kowlessar it talks about the number of interventions. Two billion dollars from SIMAP, Basic Needs Trust Fund, LEAP, the Poverty Fund and the Poor Rural Communities Projects which are going to have an impact

particularly on the poor and disadvantaged. Also the number of interventions in relation to women, subsidies for the poor and the elderly, and this mainly comes from the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

If we look further down the page, we see the number of interventions, as I have listed already, as well as US \$103 million will be invested in sixty-seven projects in the new growth area, resulting in 3,449 new direct jobs being created. Recognising that many of these issues cannot take place rapidly enough for those who are poor, and do not have many choices, there is also going to be the implementation of a temporary employment and maintenance programme to utilise unskilled persons to remove derelict vehicles, clear drains and clear the parapets and so on. These persons will therefore assist to enhance the general aesthetics of our country which is also needed..

### **Youth**

When we take into account all these issues, I want to particularly refer to what is the investment in youth. Youth refers to those under twenty-five in terms of statistics, they generally talk as persons who are in the youthful population, which is a large percentage of the Guyanese population.

The investment in youth, which some people look at erroneously, as if it is only the budget of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, but one of the major areas of Poverty Reduction, which is also highlighted in this document, on Eradicating Poverty and Unifying Guyana, are the areas that are in the Budget relating to Education, Health, Housing *et cetera*, and let me just give you an idea, because one of the major investments of this country in young people, is an education, because education is a ticket to the future, and that, we can see from the figures, which I am sure Minister Jeffrey will relate in this Parliament, did increase in the number of persons attending school, especially at the secondary level. They have been increasing the number of persons attending secondary schools, and there is a marked change between what was in

1992 and now in 2002. So the education budget about \$70 billion is really one of the major areas of contribution, in youth and the future of our country.

Health, especially to do with the Immunization, Maternal and Child Health, and all the primary health care issues, are major issues in investing in the young people and mothers who give birth to the next generation and so we have approximately another \$2.17 billion in that area.

Investment in Housing and Water - The people are able to access clean water, they are able to live in their own houses, rather than in rented houses, where ten or twenty people are living together. This improves the quality of life and the opportunities for young people, in particular.

The Social Services Ministry - In terms of another \$1.9 Billion, SIMAP brings in another \$861 million, and the Ministry Culture, Youth and Sport, another half billion. So, if we look at that, there is approximately \$12 billion in the Budget that is invested in youth directly through the Ministries. We also have the Regions, which have their Health and Education budgets, which bring in another \$5.8 billion, in terms of indirect and direct investment in the young and the youths of our country. So that, in total, there is approximately \$18.4 billion in the Budget that is being invested for the young people of this country, and this represents approximately thirty per cent in the Budget.

So that we can see there is a major impetus by the Budget in making certain areas accessible to young people, because in these modern times without education, without good health, we are not going to be able to produce a productive working class, productive people, who will be able to work, produce, at the demands of the information technological age that we are in, and to face the competition that faces us at the world level and even in the Caribbean.

For the Ministry itself, we have seen an increase in our Budget, between year 2000, when we first started this Ministry in 1998, to now

that our budget has increased by a hundred per cent. Obviously, we all want more money, but whether we are capable and have the absorptive capacity is a different issue. But if we look at (let us take the experience of) Mashramani, which is under Culture, and the amount of soundings that were made in the newspapers about that it was better and bigger under the PNC. I am not here to talk about bigger and better. Mashramani belongs to the people of this country, it is a Guyanese festival, it is a people's festival, and therefore it belongs under no one's ownership. *[Applause]* But the difference is, and this is not being told to the Guyanese public, that, for Mash in the past, under the PNC, deductions were made from people's salaries in the Public Service and particularly the Joint Services, so that there would be money for their costumes when they came out in the thousands, in the pre-1985 period. During 1985 and 1989, because of the perilous state of the economy and the level of IMF, trying to reach the IMF creditworthiness and the privatisation rush, monies started to disappear from Mash. Therefore, what we are seeing now, is the real reconstruction of what was a National Festival, which began like that in 1973, in Linden among a number of people, who wanted to create something that all of us can identify with, and at that time it was aligned to no government.

When we look at the areas of **National Trust and Heritage**, it is important to recognise that for example people are fetching water, and the majority of people and women in this country over the twenty-eight years of the PNC spent an awful lot of time, fetching water. We still fetch water in many areas, but there has certainly been a decline. We therefore have more time to consider other things in life, and therefore leisure is now something that we can talk about, we can think about, and this is evidenced by the number of people who go looking for social activities, especially at the family level, to the various Creeks and Splashmin's and so on, on the weekends. Because we are spending less time with the drudgeries, particularly of fetching water, in many areas, so we can pay attention to areas of heritage, of wanting to go to Fort Island, to know more about our history and who we are. Therefore the whole area of cultural identity and national pride is one of the cornerstones of

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our Ministry. It is a cornerstone of all of us as Guyanese, and a cornerstone of this Government. But in a world of globalisation, where in fact, the culture of globalisation is one of Americanism, that we and all of us in the developing world, are now talking more seriously about, cultural diversity, and how to maintain the diversity of our peoples, so that we will not be lost, and all begin to be one American model. That is not putting down the American model, it is just to say, we have a different heritage, different history, different backgrounds, different environments from which we come, and of which we are proud. The whole area of trust and national heritage, archives and museums, have had major investments in terms of trying to turn around these institutions, to make them more accessible to people, to try to make them more modern, and to catch up with Information Technology. One of the obstacles, in how fast we can move in this area, is a lack of skilled people, and in fact in Guyana, some of the skills we need are non-existent, and therefore we need to encourage our young people who are in school and at university to look at careers in the area of heritage, conservation, archives, museumology, and so on, in territorial skills which we need in order to protect what we have, and to be able to search and rescue those, that are our patrimony which is not in Guyana. Some of which were removed during the Colonial period, others were removed under suspicious arrangements in the past. So one of the important things for us to look at, is the preservation and revitalization of our community art forms, and I will give you an example of this, in terms of the area of a project we have, where we have called together for the first time, community groups from a variety of areas who were never consulted before in areas of the Que-que, the Ring-dancers, Masquerade, Macushi, Wapishiana culture, the chutney Nankarran, Madrassie culture, Nagara and Maticore. These are areas of our community art forms that were either ignored by the cultural practitioners at the time, because, coming out of colonialism, much of our culture was middle-class and what was acceptable in the middle-class.

We are returning to the villages, which are the cultural reservoirs of our society, to capture, and I mean capture in a positive way, what is still left there, so they will be able to preserve and revitalize them, and therefore

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be able to teach our children to have pride in what we are, where we came from, and how we have been able to survive and protect the diversity of our peoples.

We believe firmly in the Ministry of Culture, that the whole area of our cultural diversity is in fact an area for unification, that the diversity is not an instrument for division, but a weapon, in the fight for unity, and we have felt this in the work we have done by bringing in the various competitions at the community levels, and in the research and documentation we are doing in a number of areas.

Certainly, these are not complete, and I cannot pretend that we have begun to scratch the surface in any real way, because for too long, we have ignored these areas. Many people, especially in the urban areas in the city, have looked down on these art forms as being 'village' and not sophisticated enough. But we have begun a process, and I hope that this will bring more and more stake holders to be involved. The fact that people from Sandvoort, Ithaca, Triumph, could say to us that they have never been called together before to share their views and to share their knowledge... and they have left very much... the grass-roots researchers and facilitators of this whole process of restoring our cultural identity and pride.

One of the important areas of culture, obviously is because it is defined as the way our society lives. It involves inter-agencies meetings and consultations, and for example, in the areas of archeology and anthropology, particularly to do with our pre-history, that we have to have a range of meetings to look at what is happening in the research area, who is coming into research, who is taking out many of our artifacts, are they taking them out, how they are taking them out, and how are we able to design protocols for this? *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Time, Hon. Member.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the Hon. Minister be given an extra fifteen minutes to conclude her speech.



**Motion put and agreed.**

**Hon Gail Teixeira:** Thank you. In the area of youth, we introduced a **Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training Programme**, which includes the Kuru Training Centre, the Sophia Training Centre, the New Opportunity Corp and the PURGE. This is an important intervention by us and it came about through the absorption of the National Service and the removal of all the military paraphernalia, and revitalizing these programmes and making them youth friendly. We can probably say after two years in this, that we are training students at Kuru, in fact there are 687 applications for 150 places last year, and that we are now moving to work insitu in the Regions, in three pilot Regions this year, in order to respond to the needs of our people.

The **President's Youth Award**, Republic of Guyana, which is under the International Youth Award Association, Duke of Edinburgh is considered one of the best programmes of this kind in the Caribbean, and therefore, we feel proud of the interventions we have made with the young people, and that they have been able to discover themselves and discover Guyana.

While there has been much publicity about a group of foreigners who climbed Kaieteur, I wish to put on record in this Parliament that the PURGE young people, Guyanese, for the first time discovered Kaieteur, and climbed it. These were urban and coastal children who had never seen that part of the Interior, and this was prior to that. *[Applause]*

Anything that can make our young people proud of what they have inherited, what they will inherit, is part of our programme, and so the **Technical Vocational Skills Programme** that relates mainly to those who are disadvantaged young people, who have not been able to complete high school or have low CXC grades, who were unable, because they were Interior students, to find accommodation in town, and I thought, for the interest from the representation of GAP/WPA, to inform her that forty-five per cent of all the residents of Kuru Kuru are from Interior Regions. This is the first time that this has been reported *[Applause]* and that fifty per cent of all the females in the programme are from the



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Interior. It costs a lot of money to do this, and therefore, we know that we are trying very hard to improve access to opportunities. We cannot say that every child is able to access it, but we have improved the level of accessibility.

We have been able to have the camps which are now in their fifth year, and we have risen to 4,000 young people in the ten Regions last year, and this year we hope to go past 4,000, in our camp programmes in every region across the country. This is a process in which again, we try to produce skills, introduce them to new skills, heritage, HIV/AIDS, governance, they learn to elect their representatives to the higher levels.

The **National Youth Commission** has been re-established with a difference and that is, we have changed the whole focus, and it is headed by young people themselves, including for the first time ten Regional representatives, who come here, also young people from the Regions and youth organisations. We hope that the young people on this National Youth Commission will show-up the adults and older persons, who were on the former commissions and who were not able to have a great impact.

The NOC is a special area, and I wish to refer to it, because it is special in the Caribbean and in the CARICOM Countries. There are no prison walls, no cells, no bars, but, in fact, the number of young people going to this between the ages ten and seventeen, who are sent by the Courts is increasing, and that puts tremendous pressure on us, to be able to deal with the children who come there for rehabilitation. It is clear from the number of children we deal with that there are concerns about parenting skills, and major societal problems in terms of how we treat the young in our society, including the levels of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

In the area of **Sport**, it is important to note, thanks to the Ministry of Finance, that we were able to give waivers on the airport and travel tax for national teams going abroad, as well as grant waivers to visiting teams from other countries who came here to compete. I wish to inform this House that this is not done in the Caribbean, none of the CARICOM

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Countries, only in Guyana. We also offered waivers for special equipment imported and, in fact, Mr Stanley Ming, the Hon. Member of Parliament, heads the Guyana Motor Racing Association, which benefitted from equipment coming in for the Motor Races including foreign racers. And in fact, when I met them, the foreign racers, they advised me that it is only in Guyana that they had been given such support by any government, in terms of bringing in their stuff. *[Applause]* So obviously we can talk about the major issues we have to confront for the future, stadium and so on, but many people are talking about stadium, and are not dealing with the fact that the majority of our facilities are unused, under-used, right across this country. There are major issues coming up, in which their territorial battles and club battles and club politics as to who gets to use the grounds for what, and these are issues we have to confront and resolve.

The issue of sport will continue to focus this year, on training and dealing with Administration, strengthening of the National Sports Associations and the National Sports Commission and the Department of Sport in the Ministry, as well as training of staff and persons in the Sports Associations, where there are great weaknesses in the area of coaches, and sports administrators in the community. These are some of the factors that affect our performance in the international level. However, we wish to note that our athletes are doing better in a number of areas, and we have gained notoriety through two young people, Six Head Lewis and Marian Burnett at the international level, and we wait with bated breath for the next fight of Six Head, on March 30. Our best wishes and love go to him, to keep the Golden Arrowhead flying.

We also took over **Colgrain Pool**, which was under the Guyana Stores arrangement, and I wish to point out that this pool was under-utilised. It is now used from 5.30 in the morning to 9.00 o'clock every night, Monday to Sunday, and it is now open, for the first time, after a long time, to youth groups, to persons with disabilities, to the elderly, to the young, to the national teams. So we have shown that we have the capacity to improve what we are doing.

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There are many issues obviously to talk about, and there are time limitations, but we must point out the bilateral support we have been negotiating for with the Cubans. We have two young people in Cuba, now going into the third year with a Degree in Physical Education. Three new people will be going by this weekend, for three new sports scholarships, and we wish to recognise the support of Cuba for offering Guyana scholarships in medicine and all the other areas. *[Applause]*

We look to our relations with India, for technical support in experts, the VSOs, as well as Mexico, and we have developed a powerful and good relationship with Australia in the area of Sports Development and the Commonwealth Canadian Sports Development Programme.

What we are really looking at, my dear friends and Members in the House, in what we have been doing is developing what is confidence building, whether it is done as Minister Nadir eloquently pointed out, in terms of the performance of the economy, whether it is in terms of the changes we are making, slowly but surely in every part of Guyana. We are open-minded... Remember what some parts of this country was like ten years ago?... We cannot help, but admit that things are changing. As the Guyanese creole says, *one, one dutti, buil dam* and certainly that has been happening consistently and constantly, over the last nine years.

One of the interesting areas of the confidence in Guyana, is in terms of the fact that next week, there will be the **U.K. Caribbean Forum** here and that the year Guyana will host the CARICOM Heads of the Government Meeting here. If things were as dread as being purported by many people, I am sure they would not want to be in this country.

The fact that we have the CARIPAN, we are now hosting the *Caribbean Junior Steel-pan Festival*, the *West Indian Women's Cricket Tournament* - this is the first time that Guyana is doing that. We have also had *bilateral with the Germans to do with football*, we have *Rugby International Meeting* and the *Under-15 English*. So that even in the area of sport, we are seeing more confidence in Guyana being able to host games and as part of Minister Nadir's point that we

have more visitors here.

During **Mash**, we know that we have over 2000 people, who came to visit Guyana during Mashramani. In this year, we are starting from June to prepare all the marketing and the promotion that we are doing for Mash, in order to increase the number of visitors to Guyana and we are piloting and specifically focusing on the Guyanese and the diaspora, who miss Guyana, who are nostalgic, and who want to get away from the cold by February.

We also wish to recognise the initiative by the Minister of Finance, to do with the taxation being wavered and concessions in relation to the cinema sector. We feel that this is a good initiative, however, it does not obviate the need of the cinema sector to improve its facilities. But I think it is a step in the right direction.

When we look again at the NDS document, at page 342, two of the recommendations that are made in the document, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, is already implementing in terms of programmes to prepare youths for employment through Technical Vocational Skills, particularly for those who are poor, and Career Guidance and guiding young people where the opportunities are available. Certainly the Ministry has seen an overall budgetary increase of \$30.4 million, which represent 5.8 per cent increase. The majority of this increase is going into employment cost, and we must recognise that the employment costs ten years ago, despite the fact that there are complaints about the salaries, were less than a third of the budget, in some cases twenty and twenty-five per cent of the budget. We are now reaching in various sectors, that sometimes employment cost are going up to thirty-five and forty per cent of the programmes.

Mr Speaker, we intend to continue on a path of strategic planning, and forward planning. To add careful, frugal and prudent management and to be able to cope with the figures and the amount of allocations we have received. We also recognise that we have problems of absorptive capacity, and in some cases specialised technical skills, are not available

in this country. But we feel that we have been trying our best, to manage the best we can.

In the period of world recession, the high-flying corporations of the world are returning to the old management tools of *be honest, be frugal, be prepared*. Being frugal does not mean only in hard times, but that we learn to use our resources sparingly at all times, that we learn to develop new ways to cut costs, that we do not find unacceptable waste and excess, and that we are able to adjust to the rigors of the time.

We are in the process of restructuring the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, and major areas in terms of expansion, capacity development and institutional memory are being created.

The main pillar on which we are built is decentralisation and inclusion of communities and people at all levels, whether it is Culture, Youth or Sport. This takes a tremendous amount of time, effort, cost in terms of reaching communities. Without the inter-sectoral collaboration that we have been developing, with the NDCs, the RDCs and the Municipalities, it would have been even more difficult to reach where we have already. It is clear that the newest programme that we have included, the YAST is one of the most major investments in creative and flexible programmes that have been experimented with in relation to youth and disadvantaged youth, and we are proud of it, and we are open to scrutiny and to examination on this.

We hope that our contributions, because we have been able, as the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, reach out during Mash to some 100,000 people, and in the culture programmes, we anticipate that we will fete or influence and reach in a variety of ways at the competitions, and a variety of activities, 150,000 people. In the youth programmes, minimally, we reach 10,000 young people, and in sport minimally, again, about 10,000 youths.

We believe that as a Ministry, we are involved in the future of our country, that this Ministry has had the fortune and the support of President

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Jagdeo, and Minister Kowlessar to be part of the process of shaping our destiny as a people, and to be able to produce young leaders, who are fine examples of the future of our country, and in whatever way we can contribute that we will do it to the best of our ability.

I therefore wish to support this Budget, and call on this House to do likewise.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Speaker:** Hon. Members, this brings our business for today to an end.

Hon Minister.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the National Assembly stands adjourned to Tuesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, at 14:00 H, for the continuation of the Budget Debate.

**The Speaker:** The National Assembly stands adjourned.

**Adjourned accordingly at 18:17H**