

# National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN **Part I**

50TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Tuesday, 01 March 2005

## 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)

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. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Home Affairs; Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara (AOL)</i>
The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth 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>
The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)</i>
*The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P.	- <i>Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs</i>

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	- Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Absent)
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
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 Ali, 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 Heeralali Mohan, J.P., M.P.	-(Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	-(Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shuny, 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)
Mr Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.	
Mr Neendkumar, M.P.	-(Region No. 4 - Demerara/ Mahaica)
Mr Khenraj Ramjattan, M.P.	-(Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne) (Absent)

\* Non-Elected Minister

\*\* Elected Member from The United Force

**Members of the Opposition (30)**

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

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M.P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	- (Absent)
Mrs Clarissa S. Richl, M.P.	- Deputy Speaker of the N.A
Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- Chief Whip (AOL)
Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P.	- (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)
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.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dagleish Joseph, M.D., M.P.	
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice) (AOL)
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands West Demerara)
Dr Carl Max Hanoman, M.P.	
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M. P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini) (Absent)
Mrs. R. Bancroft, M.P.	- (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

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

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

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

**OFFICERS**

Ms Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Maurice B. Henry, Head Committees Division

**PRAYERS**

**The Clerk** reads the Prayer

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**MOTION**

**BUDGET FOR 2005**

Assembly resumed the debate on the Motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2005

**The Speaker:** We will start with Mr Vincent Alexander.

**Mr Vincent L Alexander:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of this National Assembly, I stand to make my contribution to this Debate on the Budget for 2005.

In so doing, Mr Speaker, I would like, first of all, to refer to some comments which were made yesterday by the Honourable Member, Mr Zulfikar Mustapha. Mr Speaker, it is unfortunate that a matter which we had debated in this house some months ago, which I thought had been ventilated and clarified, has once again become the subject of controversy as the Honourable Member yesterday sought to indicate to this House, and to the nation at large, that the People's National Congress/Reform are responsible for the delayed Local Government elections.

Mr Speaker, I observe that no mention whatsoever was made about those elections in the Budget Presentation and I wondered why. But I wish to say, Mr Speaker, that the People's National Congress/Reform, as is already in the records of this Honourable House, can in no way be held responsible for the delayed elections - then or now.

Mr Speaker, as I stand here today to make this contribution as the co-chairperson of the task force on Local Government reform, I am awaiting, for some months now, another response from my colleague on

the question of the electoral system. We have in the past shown the numerous occasions on which we had to await such responses, and how this has elongated the process and delayed the elections. It is not by intention at all, and I doubt whether it was the Honourable Member Minister Collymore's intention, to refer to this matter, but apparently there is someone who is more authoritative than he is on this matter and who thought that he would refer to it, and so it behoves me to correct the House. I am quite sure that the Honourable Member, Mr Collymore in his honesty, will in no way attempt to rebut what I am saying, that we are awaiting a response as I stand here. I am not blaming Minister Collymore, the Honourable Member, for that. We have to await on a response. The fact is that we are awaiting a response and we can in no way be held responsible for the continued delay in local government elections. The concerned Parties may, however, wish to indicate why it was found prudent not to include this item, like many others, in the Budget Presentation.

Mr Speaker, I also found it amusing yesterday, during the course of the debate, when the question of democracy was referred to by two speakers from the other side of this House. One of the speakers made it clear that development is associated with democracy, and no one challenged that - at least not on this side of the House. In fact, what we sought to do was to simply pose a question, given the number of developments which my colleague, the Honourable Member Dr Joseph, referred to. We pose the question, given the thesis of the Honourable Member Minister Sash Sawh, wouldn't you then say that there was some state of democracy during the period of the People's National Congress/Reform in Government, given his thesis is not our contention. It is not a matter we came here to discuss or debate, and one can hardly, in the context of this thesis, disagree. But, to our amazement, the Honourable Member, Dr Bheri Ramsaran, sought to contradict the thesis of his colleague by trying to prove that, although the People's National Congress/Reform may have been involved in the development of this country, it was not within the context of a democratic regime. Well, I am not going to argue the case. I am going to leave him to argue that case with his colleague. Suffice to say that there is a gross contradiction, and

I wonder whether this contradiction has its origin in the fact that people come to this House, not to make honest and profound statements, but sometimes to make different statements in the interest of cheap propaganda. Mr Speaker, I will let the matter rest. Hopefully, it will indeed rest.

Mr Speaker, provide me with the opportunity, please, to make some general comments on the Budget, and I want to go to the *Introduction*, paragraph 1.3 line 2, I noted that the Honourable Minister of Finance made the point that *it was evident that our drainage system ... [Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** What page is that?

**Mr Vincent L Alexander:** Page 1, paragraph 1.3 - page 1, that *it was evident that our drainage system was not designed to cope with such volumes of water, and that our disaster preparations is not capable of a timely response to a deluge of such magnitude*. Mr Speaker, I want to submit that there is need for two corrections in this regard. Indeed, we did have excessive rainfall but, as my colleague, Honourable Member Mr McAllister, in a factual way showed yesterday, the drainage system was designed to deal with two inches of water per day; and if the system was working to its full capacity notwithstanding the excessive rainfall, although we may have had floods, the water would not have stayed on the land for the extended period that it stayed on the land. So it is clouding the issue to suggest that the problem is that the drainage system is not designed for this amount of water, because the flood is not just a question of excessive rainfall and flooding. It was a question of how long the water stayed on the land, and that clearly resulted from the fact that the system was not fulfilling that capacity for which it was designed. Then someone must be held culpable for that.

And so, Mr Speaker, I go on to the second part of the statement which said *and that our disaster-preparedness was not capable of a timely response ...* Well, Mr Speaker, I would like to humbly submit that the issue here was not the capability of the disaster-preparedness.

The issue here was the lack of disaster preparedness - not the capability, the lack of, and in that regard I have a vivid recollection of listening to the mass media and hearing the contention that, in fact, the CDC, which is supposed to be responsible for disaster-preparedness was asleep, not-functioning, and could not be found at the time when they were required. A clear indication of the lack of preparedness, notwithstanding the fact that the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr Roger Luncheon whom, I am told, is supposed to be the one who chairs that body, so therefore, even if they were asleep, he should readily be able to bring them out of their slumber. Unfortunately that did not happen, and the President was left with the task of doing so on the 17 of January, some days after the People's National Congress/Reform had recognized and had already started to address the problem.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to turn to page 2 of the said report ... In fact, Mr Speaker, permit me to continue on page 1, paragraph 1.4, and to deal with the contention on that page that *within a short period hot meals, bulk dry rations and potable water were being delivered to the affected communities*. Mr Speaker, this statement is very, very accurate but its accuracy has been attributed to the wrong subjects of the act because, Mr Speaker, the short period, hot meals and the delivery of potable water can only be attributed to the act of the People's National Congress/Reform which, on the Sunday, some 24 hours before the Government made its first statement on this matter, was already in the business of delivering potable water and hot meals to the people.

Mr Speaker, on the other hand, one can only attribute slothfulness to the reaction of the Government, and so it brings contention to some of the statements made in the Budget Presentation. For example, on page 2, still under paragraph 1.4, there is a contention that *additional pumps were mobilized, as a round-the-clock battle began, to drain the water off the land as quickly as possible*. The question still arises how quick is *quickly as possible*? Mr Speaker, not to omit the outstanding question as to how many pumps were acquired, and can the Government, at this time, give account for all of the acquired pumps? The suggestion, a

significant number of the required pumps never went into operation and cannot be accounted for. That is separate and apart from the slothfulness in ensuring that the pumps, which were donated by the government of Trinidad and Tobago, were brought into action - very, very slothful. We have been already exposed to some controversy as to why that happened, but we know that those pumps arrived long after they were needed in the original flooded areas and, in fact, were eventually used, fortunately for the people of Mahaica, in that area. And so this attempt to speak about *quick and rapid*, and all of that, I must say, Mr Speaker, is in fact misleading.

And also misleading, Mr Speaker, is what appears in paragraph 1.5, *to meet the cost of the immediate interventions, the Government allocated \$220 million*, which is far from the truth. Mr Speaker, to meet the cost of the immediate interventions, the Government allocated \$20 million, which is public knowledge, and I do not see why my colleague, the Honourable Member, would want to stretch the truth this far to change \$20 million into \$220 million. Is this the mathematics which forms this Budget? Should we apply that kind of maths to all the figures in this Budget? I hope not. And so, Mr Speaker, I thought it would be useful for me to correct these inaccuracies, and to put on the record of this house the facts as they pertain to the flood.

But it does not end there, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the debate on the flood, notwithstanding the mention of the flood in this debate on the Budget, we are still awaiting, from the Government, a comprehensive and complete response to the aftermath of the flood. We are being told that studies will be done and will be ready in six months, but I am quite sure that, even without the completion of those studies, one can have a complete framework within which we are going to address this question of the aftermath; but no such framework has been brought to this House. We are told to wait; and we are told that there will be a supplementary budget some six months down the road. Mr Speaker, I have a sneaking suspicion that, when that supplementary budget comes to us, like is now the practice in this House, we will be told how much has been spent and what supplementary provisions we



are required to approve, and in so doing, Mr Speaker, once again the Parliament would have been excluded from being a part of the deliberations and the determinations of policies and programmes for the betterment of this country. Notwithstanding the contention in the Budget by the presenter that this is the place for us to have dialogue, and in fact the Honourable Member did welcome the present state of the Parliament on the basis that it provides for dialogue. Mr Speaker, here I am showing example where we are most likely going to be denied that dialogue, and we are going to be greeted with a *fait accompli*, which seeks to say so much has been spent. Could you bless it? Why can't we act in an anticipatory way rather than a retroactive way, with a *fait accompli* that makes, in some regards, nonsense of the work of the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I would now like to turn to paragraph 2.5 of the said Presentation, and to give recognition to the fact that Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr Kowlessar, has come to a pertinent conclusion. Speaking on the question of international relations, he concluded:

*These developments have certainly broadened the dimensions of our foreign policy and placed us in a position from which we will not only gain enhanced international prestige, but also derive increased opportunities for development.*

I refer to this because it has taken some 13 years for my colleagues on the other side of the House to come to the recognition of how important international relations are in the whole thrust in development of the country, and we vividly recall the way in which, at the inception of their term in office, they were critical of the role of the Foreign Service. They degouted the Foreign Service and our country would have suffered because of that. But I am glad to see today that there is some recognition of the role of diplomacy in the affairs of the country. I do hope that this recognition would be brought to bear, not only on diplomacy, but so many other things which have suffered from the lack of foresight and insight and have not benefited from the kind of attention which were

required. And so, Mr Speaker, I hope that in the future my colleagues on the other side would pay attention to the Minister in his quote, which said, *the prospects are well worth an investment of our financial and human resources.*

The prospects in diplomacy were always worth an investment of our financial and human resources, and there are so many other prospects that are worth our financial and human investments that are being ignored, so much so that I need to commend to you the comments of my colleague, Honourable Member Dr Dagleish Joseph, yesterday as he called for us to pay more attention to the development of our human capital.

Mr Speaker, having made those general remarks, I now wish to turn, specifically, to those parts of the Budget which falls within my remit - regional, municipal and local government and electoral matters.

Mr Speaker, for those who may have read the Budget, they may be asking how I could say that this falls within my remit in the context of the Budget because, if one goes to the Budget, there is no heading that makes any reference to regional, municipal and local government, and there is little or no reference, in the text, to regional municipal, and local government. In fact, all that the budget says about regional, municipal and local government is to mention a figure in relation to the Urban Development Project. It says absolutely nothing else about regional, municipal government and local government, and one wonders why. In a country where we say so much about democracy; in a country where we say so much about the people's involvement and participation, that a Budget would altogether ignore the question of the regional system, the municipal government, and the local democratic organs left something untold. Mr Speaker, I think there is some untold story behind this apparent omission. I may rather suspect that it is not accidental, but an intentional omission. Mr Speaker, that omission, I think, is found in the fact that, if one goes to the Estimates, one would see that, under the regional system, there are three areas in which the regions are provided for:

- health services;
- education; and
- public works.

Those are the three areas in which provisions are made in the Estimates for the regions.

But if one goes back to the Draft Education Act of 1998, one would see that that Draft Education Act proposed the establishment of education districts - separate and apart from the Regional Democratic Council, or any sub-body of that Council, and in fact, Mr Speaker, one may well argue that the process is now entrained at the level of the education system - to do away with the education sector within the context of the Regional Democratic Council and to establish education districts that are outside of the Regional Democratic Councils - both in terms of the geographical area, and in terms of their jurisdiction.

Mr Speaker, that is not the only instance of this tendency because if one goes to the Regional Health Authorities Bill, which has gone through a first reading in this Honourable House, one would see the tendency in that Bill as well. If one goes specifically to the Ministry of Health Development Plan 2003/2006, one would see that four health authorities are proposed in that Plan, and that those four health authorities will in no way correspond with the Regional Democratic Councils; will in no way fall under the jurisdiction of the Regional Democratic Councils. So therefore, what you see emerging, is a demolition of the regional democratic system and replacement with districts that are not at all related to people's involvement to the body which was elected to represent the people and to oversee the people's interests. So that is the tendency, and I daresay that tendency runs foul of our National Constitution.

So I would like to draw to your attention, and to the attention of the House, what our Constitution has to say. Our constitution is not an aged Constitution. It was recently unanimously approved by this House.

Article 71 reads as follows:

- (1) Local government is a vital aspect of democracy and shall be organised so as to involve as many people as possible in the task of managing and developing the communities in which they live.

It goes on to say:

- (2) For this purpose Parliament shall provide for the institution of a countrywide system of local government, through the establishment of organs of local democratic power, as an integral part of a physical organisation of the State.

Mr Speaker, to establish health authorities where the Minister appoints the members of those authorities, to establish education authorities where the Minister appoints the members of those authorities, and to have these authorities not operating within the physical regional jurisdiction, undermines the Constitution and the intentions of the Constitution, and seeks to recentralize power in the executive and, I daresay, in the hands of a few Ministers. Mr Speaker, the People's National Congress/Reform cannot stay idly by and see the Government of the day wither away a Constitution which they themselves, at home and abroad, boast of, almost on a daily basis, as being the most progressive Constitution in the Caribbean. Alas, Mr Speaker, it remains but a boast, because nothing is done for the realization of this Constitution and, worse than that, much is done to undermine the Constitution.

Mr Speaker, I will take you even further to show that Article 74 says:

- (1) *It shall be the primary duty of local democratic organs to ensure, in accordance with law, the efficient management and development of their areas and to provide leadership by example.*

Now tell me how they are going to manage their areas, how they

are going to provide leadership if they are degouted and their authority is transferred to some administrative form of decentralization, as we seek to demolish, to get rid of the political decentralization which ensures the people's involvement, the people's management, of their affairs. Something is amiss.

Mr Speaker, I draw your attention to Article 77 of the Constitution, which says the following;

*The development programme of each region shall be integrated into the national development plans, and the Government shall allocate funds to each region to enable it to implement its development programme.*

When one reads the Regional Health Authorities Bill, one sees that the allocation of funds for health will no longer fall under any region, but will instead fall under the proposed poor health authorities. And there is every likelihood that we are moving in the same direction for education, making a total mockery of the Constitution, which specifies that the development programme of the region is coming from the region, for the region should be integrated into the national plan, and that funds should be allocated to each region. So this makes it clear to me why it is there is this deafening silence in the Presentation of the Minister on the question of regional, municipal and local government.

There is an agenda that is untold, an agenda that is unmentioned, that is at work. Mr Speaker, a tendency has emerged in this House where bills are, to this, to make changes in the way we govern this country, but there is no white paper, blue paper, green paper or any paper carried to the bringing of those Bills which seek to articulate the Government's thinking, the Government's policies, and the underlying philosophies that are leading to the changes. That has become a matter of the past in this House. One can remember those days which ... I am sorry the Honourable Member, Mr Belgrave, is not there because he always talks about those days when the People's National Congress/Reform, whatever it sought to do, felt sufficiently confident to come to this House

and to bring a policy paper for debate, for discussion, and I daresay, for amendment, for inclusion, for exclusion; so what eventually would have been arrived at would have reflected the will, not only of the governing Party, but the will of the National Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, I rise to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen more minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

**The Speaker:** You may continue, Honourable Member.

**Mr Vincent L Alexander:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and my colleague who granted me the extension.

Mr Speaker, today in this National Assembly, we have thrown aside that tradition of engaging in meaningful policy debates that can help to inform the eventual emergence of legislation. We have recast the whole policy power relation process, and it is evident, not only in relation to the matters I have referred to, but it is equally evident, Mr Speaker, in the manner which we treat the question of the Public Service Commission, and the jurisdiction of that Commission, over the employees of the Public Service of this country. My colleagues yesterday referred to the manner in which contract workers have become more dominant, not only in their numbers, but in their remuneration, notwithstanding the talk about *mean and clean* and no super salaries that are now the order of the day but, more than that, Mr Speaker, what this contract worker thing has done is to undermine the security of tenure associated with the existence of a Public Service Commission. The creation of contract workers does not show what kind of meritocracies are used for employment, does not show what kind of determination is used for their salaries; but you are assured that, if you do not blow the tune of the piper, then they get the backlash, for he who pays the piper calls the tune. So it is a mechanism that allows them to whimsically get rid of public servants who do not fall within the dicta of their masters – yes, Mr Speaker, of their masters.

Mr Speaker, it may be argued that, in modern public service reform, that many countries, and I heard New Zealand used as an example, are moving towards contract workers - and I will not refute that argument. Suffice to say that, in the countries where they have done that, they have articulated it publicly, and not only have they articulated it, but those are countries in which they have an efficient judicial system and, in the context of them having contracts, if by any chance their contractual rights are denied, if by any chance their contractual rights are infringed, then they can turn to the judicial system for redress. Unfortunately, we do not have that kind of efficiency, that kind of innovative, that kind of bold judicial system, so we therefore cannot be ready, at this time, for contract workers.

Mr Speaker, I wish to say that, in this context of policy power relations taking place in other places, and agendas being pursued without the nation being told, I put it to this House that the issue of contract workers has to do with two things - on one hand it has to do with the question of administrative power, the way in which the Government can rest administrative power - something which was quipped about when they got executive power. It is a way of ensuring, not only that they are in executive power, but that they deliver, from their own hands the goods and services in a manner no different from the way they delivered the flood relief.

So, Mr Speaker, this is obviously a pursuit for administrative power. Administrative power which, in normal circumstances, resides in a professional Public Service that delivers goods and services in the context of bureaucracy to ensure that there is fairness, and to ensure that all things are done within the context of the rule of law. On this point, I rather suspect that the prior contention was that there was ethnic imbalance in the Public Service. It is one of the issues that the Government has not found it man enough, or brave enough, to bring to this House to debate. It may be true. I am not questioning whether it is true or not, but I am saying that, if that is the case, it is a national issue, it is a national problem, so let us come and identify the problems in this House and propose solutions. Let us go not through the backdoor, under instru-

ments like contracts to seek to address these matters, in ignorance in the role of the National Assembly and, in this respect, for the nation at large, which need to know what the Government is doing, and why it is doing these things. We have this gigantic problem of, on one hand, the Assembly being identified as a place for dialogue and, on the other hand, the Assembly being undermined in the manner in which it is treated in the process of policy formulation. So, on this occasion, given the disbandment of the regional system, there is not much I will say on the figures in the Budget. Suffice to say, Mr Speaker, that, when one looks at the provision, and one looks at Region 3, Region 4, Region 6, what do we see?

- For employment cost in Region 3, we see \$1,035,000,000;
- For employment cost in Region 4, we see \$1,020,000,000;
- For employment cost in Region 6, we see \$1,151,000,000.

Mr Speaker, those figures tell a story. You may wish to compare those figures with the population of the various regions under question. The services they are required to deliver to the population and one can see the imbalance in the allocation. Mr Speaker if that was the only imbalance, then one may identify some good reason, but when one goes to the capital budget, what are the figures?

- Region 3 - \$148,000,000;
- Region 4 - \$93,000,000.

I have a sneaking suspicion that Mr Munroe would have to write another letter. I have that suspicion.

- Region 5, \$145,000,000,
- Region 6 \$198,000,000.

I do not have to give an interpretation. The figures speak for them-



selves, and so this is a transition; the transition from the regions doing things, to the Central Government doing everything through centralized authority. They call it decentralization. The Minister of Health, on his presentation of the Regional Health Plans, talked about decentralization. Guyana has always had decentralization. Yes, we have moved from de-concentration in 1936, under the system of the District Commissioners, to political decentralization in 1980, under the system of Local Democratic Organs. Mr Speaker, I daresay, like thieves in the night we are returning quietly to the kind of decentralization which we had in 1936. A system of de-concentration, central authority, central personnel - controlling what happens in the various regions.

And so, Mr Speaker, having given all that are happening makes a nonsense, I now move on to the question of elections. And you know this matter on elections is another matter on which the Budget is almost silent. One would believe that a matter, which is in the national media on a daily basis - a matter which requires meetings between the executives, the donor agencies, some Parties, excluding others, would be a matter that would come in for attention in the Budget in some comprehensive way. But what do we see in the Budget, under *Governance and People Participation*, paragraph 4.69, and it is ironical that the Honourable Minister says, *finally*, elections come under the rubric of *finally*. That is the end of the barrel, the last thing. *Finally* under governance and the people's participation, the election is *finally*. I quote the Minister of Finance.

*Finally, Mr Speaker, on this aspect of enhancing the Government's framework and promoting greater people participation, general and regional elections are constitutionally due in 2006.*

Of course the local one falls off the agenda. We do not know what year. *An initial sum of \$1 billion has been budgeted for a number of elections-related activities.* That is what the Budget has to say about national elections under the rubric of *Governance and People's Participation*.

Mr Speaker, you know, optimist I am, and the optimism which is always found to be a part of the mode of operation of the People's National Congress/Reform, finds a ray of hope in this Presentation. What ray of hope does it find, Mr Speaker? I always feel that words have meaning, and that they are not used whimsically, and I hope that this is the case in this instance. I find a ray of hope in the statement *an initial sum*. I hope the Minister means, Mr Speaker, that in fact there will be other sums. I hope the Minister recognises that in fact one billion is an insufficient sum and therefore, notwithstanding this provision, has placed himself in the position where he can, without bother in the future, come with the supplementary to the Parliament, because this is only an initial sum. Mr Speaker, it will require more than a billion dollars for us to run our elections. It will be far more than a billion dollars. Why, Mr Speaker? Because, in addition to the acquisition of new hardware, new software, and ensuring that the new hardware and the new software have the kind of security that ensures that they cannot be tampered with, and that they can not be invaded, there is also the need for the data - what the experts call the pertinent data. What, in this instance, is the national register of registrants from which the voters list is extracted? There is a need for that to be recompiled. It is unacceptable for us to seek to use that in a proposed system of continuous registration, which does not as yet exist. It is a new system being introduced. It is unacceptable for us to use the old pertinent data. In fact, if we want to go for best practices, and if we want to use universal standards, there is no single country in the world, none, where continuous registration has been introduced and the old pertinent data, the old register, the old voters list, has been used. If in every instance, in every single instance, a new registration has been done and, on that score alone, it gives credence to the proposal found in the concept paper of the Elections Commission. I hope the comrades are hearing me. It gives credence... [*Interruption: 'Which comrade?'*]... Oh, yesterday you were a comrade. Today you are not a comrade anymore - which comrade? Oh, why are we so flippant, man, yesterday was comrade, today is what? Oh, I see, thanks. Mr Speaker, I must thank the Honourable Members for putting me in the right frame. I am probably too generous in dealing with the Members on the other side.

GECOM had, in its context paper on continuous registration, recommended a house-to-house verification of each registrant, and the People's National Congress/Reform concurs with that for more than one reason. The first reason was already brought to your attention. But beyond that we recognise the fact that, since the last registration, thousands of people have migrated. We recognise the fact that, since the last registration, thousands of people have died, and we recognise the fact that all of those names are on the present list. All of those names are still on the list - the pertinent data on the National register of registrants, and so all we are calling for, Mr Speaker, is a system which ensures that those names are expunged so that there is no loophole that allows for the retaining of those names on the list.

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Yes, Mr Rohee?

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Mr Speaker ...

**The Speaker:** Just one second. *[Pause]*

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** ... Standing Order 35 (3), I recall that we had a rather lengthy debate on this matter some time ago at the Ocean View Hotel, when the Parliament, or the Assembly, was situated there, and my recollection was that we had drawn certain conclusions from that debate on a motion that was tabled at the time, so I am seeking your guidance on this matter, Mr Speaker. Thank you.

**Mr Robert HO Corbin:** It was never on any Order Paper in the Parliament, but maybe your memory is better than mine. I don't know.

**The Speaker:** I do remember that there was a motion. I do not know if that is what the Honourable Member is referring to. There was a motion in relation to geographical boundaries. Is that the matter you are referring to?

**Hon Clement J Rohee:** Yes, your honour.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, thank you for that diversion. I rise to ask that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation to finish, unless he has objected.

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Member got an extra five minutes, because I was not paying attention. I will give you the benefit. Are you proceeding with this matter, or will you conclude on this point Mr Alexander?

**Mr Vincent L Alexander:** I was about to conclude on the point, but I would like to thank the Honourable Member on the other side for giving me the chance of a water break. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, the issue of financing of the elections is not restricted merely to a verification of the list. It also involves the question of additional biometric features. In 2003, the Elections Commission introduced the idea of additional biometric features, and not only did they introduce the idea, they brought down experts and concluded that the way to go was to have additional biometric features. If one goes to the concept paper on continuous registration, we can see that it is in the paper proposed. The issue of biometrics is one that is critical to ensure that, as we introduce continuous registration, hereafter we have all that is required to have a completely clean list, and all the mechanisms to ensure that we have a clean electoral roll. All that is meant by this biometric feature, this big word, is that the registers must offer up an acceptable, a useable fingerprint, at least one, that can then be electronically cross-referenced to ensure that no person registers more than once. That is what it means, and I can hardly think of any right-thinking Guyanese, particularly those who argue that our elections are always a source of controversy, and that the people who like to create problems after elections, I can hardly think of any such right thinking person, not wanting a system that will drag the rugs from under the feet of people who like to create confusion. Here is a glorious opportunity for us to implement a system of continuous registration that will clean the list of biometrics that will ensure the list remains clean, and that will ensure that there is no duplicate voting, and that will ensure we have the kind of environment that we can all accept

the electoral results, whatever they may be, and get on with the business of running our country. So I submit that \$1 billion will not suffice for continuous registration, plus the introduction of biometrics - things that have been proposed by Elections Commission. I daresay that there are those who would want us to use the present smudges on the MRC, but we know that the Guyana Police Force and some of the experts, whom are often referred to by Members on the other side, have made it clear that those fingerprints are unusable and cannot suffice in a system of electronic cross-referencing, and it therefore becomes incumbent that we have an opportunity to have each registrant place a new fingerprint in the system for electronic cross-referencing.

Mr Speaker, in this context one can only conclude that there is need for, at minimum, a house-to-house verification, designed for fingerprinting and for the compilation of a new list, based on the records coming out of that registration, thus ensuring that the old list would have been condemned, after it would have provided some basis for the house-to-house registration that could not be, in any way, allowed to contaminate the new list. Mr Speaker, I have no doubt that this ray of hope, which is that that initial means more than a billion, will see us coming to that point where, in this country, we will have an acceptable voters list, an electoral environment, that will provide for all parties to go into the elections feeling confident in the system, and to come out of the elections and accept whatever the results may be. So, Mr Speaker, I await the response to this, which is an appeal to the House and the nation, to do what is right in order to ensure that our nation is put on an even keel.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude by simply saying that, notwithstanding this largest Budget, and I do not know how large a Budget really will be because, after the last Budget, a circular was immediately sent out, reducing the largeness, so I'm not sure how large this will eventually be but, given this largest Budget, I do look forward to an enlargement of, not only of the Budget, but to the hope, to the mentality, to the aspirations, to governance, and to all that will make it possible for us to have glory days in this House, where this House truly becomes involved in policy formulation, where this House becomes involved in the consul-

tation that we are told it should be involved in, and as adumbrated in this document.

Mr Speaker, finally, that House that, in the not too distant future, will be made up of Honourable men and women who would be elected under an electoral rule that would be impeccable, that would pass any test, and that will create the framework for us to move from the acrimony which now disassociated our elections to a position where we can discuss, without acrimony, the issues of inclusivity and the grand idea of having a shared government, of having shared governance, as we seek to mobilise all of the resources of all Guyanese to move our country forward so that we can realise that goal of one people, one nation with one destiny. I thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

**Hon Clinton C Collymore:** Mr Speaker, we have just been regaled by the Honourable Member, Mr Vincent Alexander.

First, he embarked on a regurgitation of all the old arguments which were ventilated in this Honourable House during the flood debate. I have come to the conclusion - I might be wrong, that my Honourable friends on the opposite side seem to relish and to enjoy the agonies suffered by the Guyanese people during the recent flood disaster. They have ventilated this thing *ad nauseam*. We have had almost three days of debate, and yuh still debating it, yuh still discussing it. Mr Speaker, it's a shame. It's a shame. Foolish remarks capitalising on the agony of the Guyanese people - it's a shame.

Then he went on to talk about certain wild allegations - missing pumps, that is what he is saying, if a pump is missing we will find it but, Mr Speaker, I remember several years ago, it was in the late 1970's, when a big bulldozer disappeared under the regime of my honourable friends on the opposite side. Most likely that bulldozer was being offered into out of space by a teleportation device because, up to now, it

has not been found. He is talking about pump, but a big heavy bulldozer disappeared under their watch.

Mr Speaker, people listening to members of the People's National Congress/Reform these days - if they don't know what has transpired before, if they have not done their homework, they will tend to believe them, but the PNC/R has one humungous impediment. They were in power for 28 years. That is their impediment, you cannot banish that ... [Interruption: 'Proud of it.'] Are you proud of it? [Interruption: 'Yes!'] That is why you are there, because the people of Guyana are not proud of it. [Laughter] So, that is their problem, they are trying to overcome this with propaganda, and they put a spin on everything. Now, imagine, my good friends on the opposite side, I had good relations with these guys over there as well as with the girls. [Laughter] [Interruption: 'Comrades.'] Now I can call you comrades - no problem but, where politics are concerned, there is a divide. Imagine, Mr Speaker, those Honourable gentlemen and ladies talking about what? Discrimination! PNC/R is talking about discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and corruption. Are you talking about corruption and electoral fraud? Mr Speaker, let me tell you, the only existing manual on electoral fraud was written by the People's National Congress [Laughter] the only one - and they wrote it. So, I listened to my good friend, Mr Alexander, a very able speaker. Nobody nods off when he is speaking because he spoke well, but I have a problem with some of the things he said ... [Interruption: 'Harry will bulldoze you.']. ... Debbie, behave yourself [Laughter].

Mr Speaker, much has been said about the Budget. I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance on a very ably-crafted Budget. My friends on the opposite side are saying that is the old things he is rehashing, he has just changed the numbers in the matrix, and doing things to demean what has been presented.

The Honourable Minister of Finance has been showing what the Government has been doing over the period of time we have been in office. If we deviate one way, they would be saying - *look you devi-*

ated, why have you deviated? You should catch 22 situations. We are damned if we do, we are double-damned if we don't. So Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, carry on smartly. You are doing a good job.

So there have been a continuation of policies since 1992, and what are these policies? I want to give you, Sir, seven pillars of these policies:

- good governance;
- delivery of goods and services
- transparency;
- accountability;
- thrift;
- development; and
- vision.

These seven conceptual pillars are aliens to what transpired under the previous administration. They collide with the policies and malpractices with the previous PNC regime over 28 ghastly years. *[Interruption: 'There are no shortages now.']* No.

Mr Speaker, there is a head-on collision between these concepts we support, and the concepts that my Honourable friends on the other opposite side implemented.

Instead of good governance, we had dictatorship;

Instead of goods and services, there were shortages and chaos;

Instead of transparency, there was huddled secrecy;

Instead of accountability, there was no audit for ten years;

Instead of thrift, there was wild squandermania;



Instead of development, there was systematic regression; and

Instead of vision, there was chronic augurate myopia. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, those who then constituted the administration of yesteryear misused and abused the Guyanese people, and they are still fulminating in the same vein and on the same road. Mr Speaker, the Honourable gentlemen and ladies on the opposite side, in my view, are patently impervious to logic. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I recall that, last year when I spoke in this Honourable House, I made reference to several features:

- urban development programme;
- waste disposal;
- upcoming legislation;
- secondary township;
- fiscal transfers; and
- local government elections.

These are some of the things I spoke about, and with your permission, Sir, I will give an account of my stewardship where these are concerned.

Where the *urban development programme* is concerned, Sir, Phase I is being concluded, but I must confess that we are behind schedule in Region 6, and this is due to the activity, or inactivity, of the contractor whom is supposed to be doing the works. We have had to speak to him on several occasions and, on the final occasion, he gave us the assurance that he is going to see that the works are proceeded with alacrity.

Mr Speaker, I want to quote to you from the Budget Speech, page 34, paragraph 4.35, pertaining to the same urban development pro-

gramme, and this is what the Honourable Minister of Finance had to say:

*Mr Speaker, \$784 million has been allocated to the urban development programme plan. Specifically complete Phase I projects, that is, the rehabilitation of Hadfield Street, John Street and Lombard Street in Georgetown; Smythfield and Vryheid Lust Road in New Amsterdam; and Jackman Street, Market Street and James Street in Corriverton; and Phase II projects, that is, the rehabilitation of market and Town Hall, Corriverton, New Amsterdam, Wismar, and Bush Lot; rehabilitation of roads and drains in Corriverton, Rose Hall, New Amsterdam Linden Anna Regina; and provision of technical assistance on unit for development on Property Tax Reform.*

So I want to apologise to the people in Region 6 for this inability of the Government to deliver on time. We are behind schedule and it is because of the contractor. I want to say we are really sorry. *[Interruption: 'You should apologise to the nation.']* . You have never done so, you should have been apologising from the time you entered this Parliament. *[Laughter]*. You are a walking apology.

Now, Mr Speaker, Phase II is about to kick in shortly. There are already designs in place, and we are on the verge of embarking on the tendering process of ... *[Interruption: Barking!]* Debbie, don't trouble meh ... the institutional strengthening, Sir. Under the urban development programme there is a component known as institutional strengthening, where certain facets are expected to be put in place, such as standard budget format, which is already in place, training programmes, technical aid. We getting technical aid from CIDA, from the Federation of the Canadian Municipalities, from the Municipal Governance Management Programme, from the World Bank. Also, we have put in place municipal business plans in all municipalities, and a municipal service division at the Ministry of Local Government. We are currently embarking on updating the evaluation of roads in all the municipalities, along with upgrading evaluating systems and restructuring the Evaluation Divi-

sion, which is currently housed at the Ministry of Finance.

Where waste disposal plans are concerned, I must tell you about this waste disposal plan. There is a major waste disposal site at Hague Brusche on the East Bank of Demerara. We are proceeding to suitably develop that area. We have scheduled the closure of the Mandela site for sometime this year. We are awaiting, at this moment, a permit from the EPA to proceed, and the IDB has allocated the sum of \$120 million, partly for the closure of Mandela, and \$40 million for the commencement of the new site at Hague Brusche. Altogether, the financing of the Hague Brusche operation would be US \$10 million. Mr Speaker, at the moment we are dealing with identifying temporary disposal sites, or temporary holding sites for garbage, so that the garbage could be moved out of the villages, the proximity of domiciles and taken to the site which has been identified for the final disposal. Right now teams are on the East Coast seeking to identify these areas. We want at least one acre in each NDC at the back.

We are also developing a long-term plan for waste or garbage disposal, and we are putting the finishing touches to this plan. Legislation has also been dealt with, and this is in the process of being drafted.

I wish to also say a few words about the situation on the East Coast of Demerara, where the flood waters revealed what was taking place for quite some time. We have employed two quite competent waste disposal operators. They have vehicles, and they are assisting us in bringing out the garbage and transporting some to Mandela. These two are Cevon's Waste Management and Puran Brothers' Waste Disposal. They are doing a very good job and, up to this particular time, the cost of these operations is \$23 million and rising, because the NDCs have been asked to assist, and they have been told to employ at least five labourers to assist in the collection of this garbage and taking it to central points from where either Cevon's or Puran's will remove them to Mandela. So the Government has undertaken to meet the expenses of these five labourers and whatever other expenses have been accumulated for this operation. The Government sees a major role for private operators in

waste disposal projects, and the Government undertakes to publicly assist the NDCs.

On upcoming legislation, Mr Speaker - I thought that my good friend, the Honourable Member, Mr Vincent Alexander, would have raised the matter of legislation, but he did not, so I just want to inform this Honourable House that he has received two draft bills. They are in the process of being finalised for transmission to this National Assembly. We have the Municipal and District Council Amendment Bill 2005, and the Evaluation for Rating Purposes (Amendment) Bill 2005. I mention these two because they are more or less mature for transmission to National Assembly after they have gone through the necessary process, but there are two other bills which I have received quite recently, and the Minister is studying them before putting them on the time-table. Those are the Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2005, and the Local Government Commission Bill 2005. These are some of the bills which engaged the attention of the task force, where myself and Mr Alexander are co-chairman. Drafts are being prepared for a Physical Transfer Bill and a Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Bill 2005, or whenever. So, Mr Speaker, we are moving on these matters which I raised last year.

Last year I spoke about *Secondary Townships*, which the Government is considering, and we have decided to move ahead on four of these secondary townships:

- Charity in Region 2;
- Supanaam in Region 2;
- Parika in Region 3; and
- Bartica in Region 7.

Work has begun last year and altogether the funding is of US \$10 million, as provided by the Caribbean Development Bank.

Each area for the township is to be allocated US\$2 million for infrastructural purposes, and altogether the four areas will be allocated \$2 million for institutional strengthening. The sum spent last year in doing these preliminary works was \$49 million and, for this year, the sum is going to be \$174.3 million. The projects which are envisaged, Sir, are agro-industrial development, legislative reform, policy changes and institutional strengthening.

We will be dealing with roads, stelling, markets, drainage, sanitation and solid waste management. We also plan to develop the Vreed-Hoop area. Proposals, Sir, have been received so far and are being processed.

Mr Speaker, where the fiscal transfers are concerned, this is a thorny question, as the Honourable Member Mr Alexander would know, and also Mr Basil Williams, because he is also a member of the task force. I want to say, Sir, that these gentlemen performed well at the task force. We operate like comrades at task force level. Only when we come here do you hear all this nonsense from the opposite side so, we are battling to find an agreement on a formula for fiscal transfers, and both the People's Progressive Party/Civic and the People's National Congress/Reform are to have a scheduled meeting with some of the experts dealing with this matter from the Ministry of Finance, I want to say that we will soon be arriving at a formula acceptable to both sides.

Where the local government elections are concerned, consensus has been reached on the format of the elections, that is, that there will be two elements, as I said last year - the constituency element, and the element of proportional representation. Whereas there was a wide gap in the position of both sides at task force level, that gap, Sir, has considerably narrowed, and I want to say that an agreement by consensus will soon be achieved.

Mr Speaker, I want to conclude by once again commending the Minister of Finance for an ably-crafted Budget statement. It projects where we came from, and where we are going, and I want to assure the

Honourable Members on the opposite side that we are not going to deviate too much about this. The Budget is good. I commend it, and I want to ask all the Honourable Members, on every side, to lend their support to this Budget of 2005. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member

The Honourable Member, Mr Stanley Ming.

**Mr C Stanley Ming:** Mr Speaker, I rise on this side of the House to offer my comments to this Budget Debate and I would like to open my comments by quoting from an article that was written to the Editor of the Stabroek News some time ago. This is September 20, 1998:

*Guyanese have to stop living in the past, so must Guyana's leadership. Regardless of what has happened since independence, the past is the past; the past is not the future and vice versa. Guyana's political economy has always been based on race and it is precisely because of this race-based commodity economy that Guyana has not developed beyond its current state. Political parties also need to stop living in the past. Development, and especially sustainable development, is about leadership, courage to make tough decisions, and vision. Development is not about political parties and individuals with egos who believe that they are Guyana, or that they can do everything on their own. Government also needs to understand that sustainable development is about private sector-driven growth. Government must play many critical roles, including creating the enabling environment for public/private sector partnerships.*

Mr Speaker, having listened to presentations today and yesterday coming from various speakers, it is clear that, on many occasions we seem to not recognise those things that were positive that were done by either side. As pointed out by my colleagues earlier, it seems that we

disregard making honest statements and tend to make flippant statements, purely for propaganda purposes.

Now, I listened very carefully yesterday to Minister Xavier talking about what he has done during the last year, and what he proposes doing with the budgetary allocations for this year. No one will dispute the fact that, as indicated by Minister Xavier, we had some developments.

He pointed out the maintenance and the upgrading of the Demerara Harbour Bridge. We know that.

He talked about the resurfacing of the road between Mahaica and Rosignol. That is happening.

He talked about the many bridges along the East Bank of Demerara and the East Coast that were being built, at very high standards, by Dywidag, an International Consultant and Engineering Firm.

He talked about the upgrading of airstrips and upgrading of facilities at Cheddi Jagan International Airport.

But then he went on to say, unfortunately, that this damage was as a result of the 28 years neglect of the PNC. We must not forget the facts, and I quote the facts and acknowledge them, that the construction of the Demerara Harbour Bridge was done under the PNC; the Soesdyke/Linden Highway; the Corentyne Highway; West Bank Demerara Highway, and the East Bank Essequibo Highway to Parika were done under the PNC; the Canje Bridge was done under the PNC; the construction of the international airport was done under the PNC; the MMA Scheme and other schemes for irrigation project to promote the agricultural development of the country were also done under the PNC.

These, Mr Speaker, are the facts. I do not think that any Guyanese, irrespective of political persuasion, will dispute any of those facts.

Mr Speaker, it is also a fact that, in the area of housing, the Ministry

of Housing has established several areas around the country for development of Housing Schemes and have demarcated thousands of house lots. That is a fact. However, it would not be unfair to say that, in many of those schemes, there has been a shortage or lack of adequate infrastructure on many occasions. There is also evidence that some areas benefit, and continue to benefit, from a lot more facilities - such as roads, drainage, water and electricity, and I speak specifically of the areas such as Diamond, Mon Repos, villages on the Corentyne and Tuschen, which are all very good development.

But then it is a fact that there are other areas such a Sophia; areas in Linden, Amelia's Ward, areas in Bartica and New Amsterdam, which have not had the benefit of similar development. *[Interruption: 'When last have you been to Sophia?']* I have been to Sophia just last week, and Sophia, as we know, has been subjected to tremendous flooding long before the major floods that we had. Whenever the rain falls, and I am talking about normal rainfalls, if you go to Sophia - B Field, C Field, D Field and at the back E Field and Cummings Lodge, flood without any excessive rainfall. That is a matter of fact. It is also a fact that when the residents of Sophia were offered the opportunity to have some pure water pipes into their homes that, unlike residents of other areas where it was installed by government, they were asked to dig the trenches along the roadways and that the Government would provide the pipes, which they would install themselves. The unfortunate thing that developed out of that is that they did not have the human nerve, equipment, resources, and the job was consequently done very poorly. As we stand today, the pure water supply in Sophia is in a very ad hoc and disorganised fashion.

Because of these irregularities, and the way in which we seem to be conducting the business of government, it leads to a lot of discontent. It also leads to the feelings, by many people, of discrimination because of various reasons, which I would not go into any detail here.

Having said that, one would get the impression that the only time housing was developed in Guyana was under the present Government, but that again would be an unfair statement because, even though I was



not involved in the political landscape for the time most of you have been, I happen to be aware, through travelling around Guyana, that there are many developments in and around Georgetown, such as South Ruimveldt Gardens, Festival City, North Ruimveldt, Tucville, Guyhoc Park, Guyhoc Gardens, Sea View in Leonora, Amelia's Ward in Linden, Atlantic Gardens, Atlantic Ville, Vryheid's Lust, Melanie, Martin Luther Scheme in New Amsterdam, just to mention a few. So, it would be fair to say that, under the previous government there was housing development, and under the present government, there are efforts to develop housing areas but, as I said, unfortunately, there seems to be an unstructured way, for the simple reason that Sophia as we speak, has been languishing for the longest while, an area that has approximately 6,000 house lots, whereas in other areas that are totally new such as Diamond and Tuschen have had the benefit of significant inputs of resources and infrastructure, where these areas were completely new as against areas that were, as I said, languishing for a very long time. Mr Speaker, as other Members of the House have said, every Budget ... It is good to say that it is the largest budget ever, but the facts, as indicated in the Auditor General's Report are that, for all the years that I have been in this Honourable House, says that, every year, there is a shortfall of capital expenditure. On page 11 of the most recent Auditor General's Report, it says that *the capital expenditure, compared with the revised estimates for 2003, there has been a shortfall of \$9.6 billion, or 31.9 percent. The initial estimate was \$22.8 billion. A similar shortfall of \$5.9 billion, or 26.4 percent, was noted in 2002.* So even though these numbers are very encouraging when they are presented in a Budget, the reality is that, at the end of the day, or the end of the year we, for whatever reason - lack of absorptive capacity, lack of proper awarding of contracts, lack of proper supervision, we do not seem to be able to utilise the resources that are being made available to alleviate the suffering, and to improve the wellbeing of the masses of our people.

Mr Speaker, this is compounded by the fact that, in the Auditor General's Report, under the heading:

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(10) *Inadequacy of Staffing and the absence of Internal Audits,*

the Auditor General's Report said:

*The inadequacy of staffing at the various ministries, departments and regions, in lack of suitably qualified and trained personnel, and the absence of internal audit departments in large ministries, continue to militate against an effective system of internal control and have contributed significantly over the years to the deterioration of financial management at both the ministerial and central levels.*

Mr Speaker, my colleagues talked about the recent trend to have contracted employees and the negative effect this has had on the morale and performance of our traditional Public Sector employees. I do not need to expand any further on that matter.

Yesterday, some of my colleagues talked about the lack of vision and the lack of the bigger picture. They mentioned that, sometime ago, the People's National Congress/Reform had endorsed a proposal, which most people know as Guyana 21, which was a conceptual plan to deal with infrastructure development in Guyana, to propel Guyana into large-scale development as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Unfortunately, the Honourable Minister Satyadeow Sawh said that this plan was rejected by the Guyanese at large, but I just want to place on record, because I do not think it has ever been done, exactly what was the concept, and exactly what were the intentions of Guyana 21.

Guyana 21 was not a creation of Stanley Ming or any of his colleagues that entered into this exercise. It was the fact that, over the last fifty years, that numerous studies have been done about every aspect of Guyana - whether it is energy, whether it is forestry, roads, you name it.

What we did is that we went back through all of those reports and we extricated what we felt was relevant, even at the present time, and we put that together in a draft document, in which I wrote an open letter to the President, Friday, December 12, 1997, and published in the Stabroek News of that date. I wish to quote a statement in that letter as follows:

the plans were discussed in August, 1994, with the then Prime Minister, Sam Hinds, who felt there was a lot of merit in pursuing such development in Guyana's infrastructure. He subsequently made an announcement on Thursday August 4, 1994, which was reported in the media, that a new highway was considered linking Georgetown to Timehri on a new alignment, as was proposed in the Plan. Prime Minister Sam Hinds also requested that Mr Burt Carter, an engineer who met with the Prime Minister, shared the concept with Minister Harripersaud Nokta, Dr Henry Jeffery, Mr Michael Shree Chand, and Mr Asgar Ally, and the Prime Minister's Office arranged those appointments. The various presentations were made between Wednesday, August 10 and the 17 of 1994 and were well received. Subsequently, I had the opportunity to present the plans to His Excellency, President Cheddi Jagan, together with Prime Minister Sam Hinds and Dr Ivor Mitchell, in May of 1996 in my office. We discussed it in great detail and President Jagan was very enthused by the potential for Guyana's development if such a plan was implemented. After further discussions President Jagan requested that I make a presentation to the members of his Cabinet, to which I readily agreed, but was unable to do so before his untimely death.

Ladies and gentlemen, those are facts, and there are many persons around whom, I am sure, will have no hesitation in acknowledging that that was exactly what happened. *[Interruption: 'Remember, they did not get Ramjattan.']* That is irrelevant.

In several articles, unlike the one which might have been perceived, and these are only a few, and I can tell you that I have dozens of these. Several Guyanese around the world wrote articles to the editor, wrote to me on same occasions, and I just want to share with you, for the records, some of what was said.

This is Stabroek News. Dr Charles Ramnarine of Miami, September 21, 1998, and it says at the headline:

### GUYANA 21 IS WORTHY OF SUPPORT

*It is encouraging to see that many are reacting to the Guyana 21 plan because, without building broad equity in the Guyana development process, implementation is difficult. In fact, the presence of the Guyana 21 throws the National Development Strategy into a better light, because it stimulates debate, which always produces better public sector decisions. My fifteen years in the international economical development profession has taught me that a strong private sector interest in national or community economic development is an event not to be taken lightly. In fact, for most of us, it is a positive measure of success. The more interesting evidence, the better job we have done.*

Mr Speaker, at that time the leader of the Working People's Alliance, Dr Rupert Roopnaraine, penned an article, which was also published in the press. In fact, (I am sorry) he did an interview, and in the Stabroek News, Saturday, August 29, it said:

*I am impressed with the Guyana 21 Plan ...*

and Dr Roopnaraine went on to say,

*... the Government should have at least had an engagement with the Guyana 21 plan to assess the possibilities before throwing it out.*

Dr Rupert Roopnaraine, Co-leader of the Working People's Alliance said yesterday, and Mr Manzoor Nadir, leader of The United Force [Laughter] is encouraging the government to seriously foster ideas, which will create economic opportunities in Guyana. Specifically for the Guyana 21 plans, Mr Nadir said, *it has ideas which need to be further*

*investigated. He continued to say that nevertheless the concept that private financing is available for the economic development of this country has to be supported, unless we do that we will continue to limp badly behind those countries which have seriously adopted the private sector as their engines of growth.*

Mr Speaker, we all know that, subsequently, some very negative comments were made, emanating from the senior functionaries of the Government, trying to dismiss the validity of what was being proposed, and we also know, as stated by the Private Sector Commission, by the leaders of many of those organisations, they had sought ... I do not know if they succeeded, in meeting with the Government to find out exactly why they were not prepared to pursue the ideas that were then presented in the Guyana 21 Plan. It was said in the headlines at that time that the business group backed the Guyana 21 Plan, and they went on to talk about all the various reasons why.

Having come under heavy criticism by the Guyanese public, President Jagdeo, on Saturday, August 29, 1998 alluded to the fact that the Government is working on a number of massive infrastructure projects, also contained in the Guyana 21 Plan, and will seek the private sector's involvement. *Minister of Finance Bharrat Jagdeo said yesterday, a tight feasibility study for deep water harbour has already been completed, and the Terms of Reference for such a study for a road to Brazil, has just concluded. He went on to say, additionally the government is moving to construct roads along the rivers to open up new roads, lands for agriculture and manufacturing, and to construct three major drainage and irrigation schemes. [Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** I believe, in your absence yesterday, Honourable Member, a certain point was taken, in relation to the President's name being used in the Parliament for the promotion, or influencing, of the debate by your colleague, the Honourable Member, Mr Deryck Bernard. I do not see him here. We cannot have it one way for one side, and the other way for the other side. As far as I am concerned, this is a very old Standing Order, designed for another era, when there was a titular Presi-

dent, and it should be changed, but I am bound by it.

**Mr C Stanley Ming:** Mr Speaker, I understand fully your comment, but I do not know if it is relevant to this matter, for the simple reason that, on Saturday, August 29 1998, when Mr Jagdeo was interviewed, and from which I am quoting, he was then Minister of Finance. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable Member.

**Mr C Stanley Ming:** As quoted by the then Minister of Finance, Mr Jagdeo said, *it is also to mull the need for a new international airport, the bridging of the Berbice river and will take measures to put down a number of industrial estates across the country.*

Mr Speaker, those were the comments and extracts from various articles that were written to the media.

Now, for the records, the Guyana 21 document, which was presented ... I just want to read, and I recall recently in the Chronicle, after the visit of his Excellency, the President of Brazil, that the CARICOM community has identified and has given Guyana the green light to proceed with pursuing the possibility of Guyana becoming the gateway for South America, and to connect the Caribbean countries and beyond with South America. I just want to read from this document - the Guyana 21, the first paragraph, and it says:

*...being the only English-speaking country in South America, and its very strategic geographical location, Guyana warrants investment in the development of the necessary infrastructure in order to become a prime gateway for transporting goods and services into and out of the northern landlocked regions of Brazil and the eastern areas of Venezuela. The proposed highway linkages through Guyana would also provide north, south and east, west corridors to the city of Georgetown, and create the opportunity for accessing some of the major mineral agricultural forestry and ecotourism areas in Guyana.*

*Tuesday, 1 March 2005*

The document highlights 16 projects and I just want to mention a few of them, in no specific order.

The first item was a high-span bridge across the Berbice River and development of a suitable commercial area. This is 1994 we are talking about here.

A new four-lane highway connecting Georgetown to the Soesdyke/Linden highway;

A highway from Parika to Monkey Jump on the East Bank of the Essequibo River; and this has nothing to do with the PNC or the members who put this together.

The highway along the East Bank of the Essequibo was envisaged since around 1950 by then Dr Cheddi Jagan. It was known as the Del Conte road, but we know what happened to that.

We also identified the need for a new international airport;

the need for a deep-water harbour and an export processing zone;

the need for a highway from Linden to Lethem, a modern highway, and we talked about a highway from Charity in the Pomeroon to the Venezuelan border.

We heard, yesterday, Minister Xavier telling us that is being pursued to link us up with Trinidad/ Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I do not need to belabour the point as I said, when we discussed the flood, that Guyana at the present time, if we want to be honest with ourselves, Guyana is under going a lot of trauma in many areas. Crime, lack of employment, low standards of living, and many others are not unique to Guyana, because there are many other countries that are even worse off than we are, but there are also countries, and I do not need to make too many examples, but I remember stating here, sometime ago that, just in 1963, I think it was just about a year

before Guyana got independence, Singapore had a per capita income of US\$1,000 and that was in 1963 or 1964 when Guyana, I do not know what the figure was then, but today Singapore has a per capita income in excess of US\$23,000 and Guyana is still below \$1,000. Now the reason why our friends would tell us from the other side is everything that we cannot achieve, but I beg to differ. If Guyana, and we have the wherewithal with the people that we have on that side of the House and this side of the House, and within the wide diaspora; we have Guyanese who are competent, Guyanese who have led major multinational corporations with success; Guyanese who have planned for the development of other countries that are willing and capable to be a part of any development that enhances the livelihood and well-being of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, as I stand here today, what is very sad is that we seem to be continuously looking back and not making a serious effort of really moving this country forward. As a result we continue to see significant levels of migration, significant levels of disenchantment, and the loss of hope in the eyes and faces of many of our people.

Last Sunday, I saw a programme on television by Mr Frances Quamina Farrier, where he visited the birth place of President Jagdeo and the community and met with a young man, whom I remember clearly, was riding a little bicycle and he said to him, *which school do you attend?* And he said to him, *I attend the school that the President formerly attended.* Then he said *what do you think of attending that?* And then he said, *Sir, I am very proud that I am attending the same school* and then he was asked, *what message would you like to give to the President, and to the government?* And he said, *Sir, I would like my country to be developed, I would like my parents to have a better standard of living, I would my school to be not flooded in the future and my community, because I would like to have a productive life, and I would like to become a cricketer, like Mr Ramnaresh Sarwan.*

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the dream and thinking of all of our young people, and what I am concerned about, and all of us in this



House are concerned about is: at the end of the day, be it Thursday when this Budget Debate is finished, would we continue business as usual, or would there be a concerted effort to rally the forces that are available to us to make this country a better place? That's my question.

Mr Speaker, as far as I am aware, based on the discussions I have had with my fellow colleagues on this side of the House - the People's National Congress./Reform and its members stand ready to sit down and to work with, to devise plans, to discuss, and to find consensus in every possible area of differences of opinion so that, in the not too distant future, our country can move forward and the betterment of not only our generation, but of generations to come can be given the opportunity to realise their full potential. Mr Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

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

The Honourable Minister of Housing and Water.

**Hon Shaik KZ Baksh:** I rise to make my contribution to this Debate on this 2005 Budget. At one point in time I thought that my contribution would have taken a small amount of time but, having regard to the points made by the Honourable Member, Mr Ming, I have to be a bit more elaborate in my presentation, and to disseminate information through this medium, if only to educate my colleagues on the other side, as to what we are doing in the housing and water sectors. But before I do so, I want to agree with Mr Ming that, on both sides of the House, we do have the nation's interest at heart. I have no doubt that both the PNC/R, as well as the PPP/C, would like to see and to contribute to the development of Guyana. The only difference is that, in these 12 years that the PPP/C has been in office, we have developed focused plans and programmes, and it is indeed making an impact on the development of this country. I will outline some of those as we go along.

Mr Ming was trying to make a very balanced presentation by saying that positive things were done by both sides, and I think we agree with that. Of course, the PNC did contribute to the housing develop-

ment, but you can count the number of housing areas, or housing schemes, by your fingers. I have a listing of all of those housing areas in 28 years and they do not exceed twelve, but the PPP/C government, in 12 years, have opened up over 100,000 housing estates, *[Applause]* and that is a fact. You know, when I reflect on the past, I do not like to do this, but it grieves me as a citizen of this country, and I am quite sure that it grieves all of you over there that, in 1990, you had to close down the Ministry of Housing. I just cannot understand that. I do not think there will ever be a repetition of that, because you paid dearly for that at the 1992 elections. You did not provide shelter and settlement for the population of this country, and we have a proud record *[Applause]* Before I go into the housing sector, Mr Ming made a point here, that Government was not able to utilise the resources made available, but this is not so. If you look at the 2003, 2004, as well as the 2005 Budget - page 13 of the Budget, we must have the figures, because it tells you a budget is about figures primarily to support your programme. Now the 2005 Budget tells you that the implementation rate of the PSIP was 94 percent. In the 2004 budget the implementation rate was 95 percent out of a PSIP budget of \$16.8 billion, but in 2004/2005, we had \$23.9 billion, and out of that we had an implementation rate of 94 percent. By any measure, by any standard that is good performance. Now, Mr Speaker, I am not talking about land here, my friend.

When we look holistically at the Public Sector Investment Programme, and the Poverty Reduction Programme overall, they make good reading. Any citizen of this country, reading this Budget, pages 13 to 18 will see, and they will be pleased with what the Government has been doing overall, in all the areas - in physical infrastructure, in education, in health, housing, water, urban development. In the area of poverty reduction, the rural community support services, the LEAP's Programme, the Basic Needs Programme, and the SIMAP Programme, all of these have been making tremendous contributions to meet the needs of the population. *[Applause]* Imagine, in 2004, \$1.2 billion was provided for the poverty relief effort. In 2005, this is nearly double to \$3 billion. By any measure the programmes are there to be seen of what the Govern-

ment is doing. We are advancing the human welfare and the human development of the population. We are improving the quality of life of the people of this country as we go on, year after year.

Mr Speaker, I was glad to hear Mr Ming stating that there has been positive development in the housing sector. I am not saying that there is not more to be done because, surely, when you have such a massive programme - over one hundred housing areas, some very large, as in Amelia's Ward - 2,000 houselots in Phase I alone; Phase II another 2,000 houselots; when you look at Tuschen Housing development - 3,000 houselots; when you look at Diamond and Grove 5,000 houselots; when you look at Parfait Harmony, another 5,000 houselots. There must be a lot more of work to be done. It cannot all be done in one or two years, but we already have the plans and programmes in place. It is there, and we have the resources in place also.

Let me enlighten you about what we have been doing. During the years 2003/ 2004, look at what we have done and, once and for all, I want my colleagues on the other side to stop talking about this discrimination and marginalization. I hope I can present to you the evidence against that. In the phase one of the low income settlements programmes, these are the following areas which have been completed:

- Charity, Pomona and Anna Regina in Region two;
- Tuschen, Best in Region Three,
- Diamond, Golden Grove, Non Pariel, Foulis, Good Hope, Hope Waterloo experiment and Amelia's Ward in Region 4.

In the phase two project:

- Bartica, Four Miles. Roads are being built at Bartica right now.
- Parfait Harmony - 3,000 houselots, contracts will be

awarded shortly:

- Tuschen North, Zeelugt North, Caneville - 1,000 houselots;
- Block 22 Wismar - 420 lots; and
- Sophia, the big blocks A, B and C, works have already commenced to the tune of \$636.6 million. *[Applause]*

So, we are moving. As we get the resources, we are building more and more infrastructure, and I want to tell you that the goal is that, by the end of next year, we should have completed all the basic surfaces in all of the housing areas in this country - be it housing schemes, or the 165 squatters settlements. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, apart from the LIS Programme, we have the EU Programme, the Government of Guyana Housing Programme. This is coming onstream and this year construction will start. Six areas have been identified:

- Belle West and Parfait Harmony - another section of Parfait Harmony in Region 3.
- Section D, Sophia. Remember we are only doing A, B and C under the LIS Programme and Cummings Park, that will be done and designs will commence shortly.
- Area Y, Cummings Lodge to the north will also be done, and when I say, *will be done*, I mean complete works - all the internal roads, drainage systems, water supply.

I want to announce also that, in terms of Sophia, contracts have just been approved for \$96 million, apart from what I have quoted there to upgrade the water supply. This is not because of the self-help methods. This was employed in many, many other areas, but because there is need for a main transmission line to connect the Sophia area to the Georgetown area, and works will commence shortly on that.

- In Region 6, the Glasgow Housing Scheme will also come under the EUProgramme.

Apart from that we have covered many, many areas under the infrastructural programme, and I will name just a few of them as we go along.

- In Region Four, Vigilance north and south, works have commenced already. These projects should be completed in another 2 or 3 months – both Vigilance north and south.
- Works have just been completed at Belfield. When you pass you can see a beautiful house development going up there at Belfield;
- Enmore, Haslington and Hope lowlands - roads are being built in those areas.
- Mon Repos, and you could go on and on.

We have a total plan to complete the infrastructure for all of these areas.

Mr Speaker, it is quite evident that the Government has a vision for the housing sector in this country. A vision, and where this Government has distributed over 20,000 titles in 12 years, the PNC distributed hundreds of titles. 20,000 titles - where this Government is now regularising 165 squatters settlements, all that can be regularised across the country, the PNC made a mess of the housing sector. That is a fact, because of a large-scale squatting that took place, it was a mammoth and gigantic task for this Government, and you had to take time to develop infrastructure. I heard the leader of the Opposition saying that there is a total absence of infrastructure in some areas. These are a miniscule number. Very few would not have infrastructure at this point and time - very few. I challenge him to name more than five or six of them. In all of them some basic works have already commenced.

So we are moving apace, but this housing development is not about

infrastructure alone, no. It is about improving the quality of lives of the residents of the housing areas and, apart from roads and water, we are now moving towards providing electricity. Electrification - and this year. As a matter of fact, within a next month or two, we will start a massive electrification programme in the Sophia zone. *[Applause]* Do not get jealous about this, because this is about human development. This is not an elections gimmick. This is about what a caring Government is doing for its people, so concurrently you will have the electrification programme across the various regions. You will have the electrification programme in Region 2 and Region 3, in places like Tuschen and Zeelugt North. You will have the electrification programme in Region 5, Hope Experiment, Waterloo in Region 6, and so on. We have the funds available so we will be lighting up the country, light it up more and more.

Mr Speaker, we are creating sound housing for the people of this country. That is a big challenge for the Ministry. Houses are now going up by the hundreds. Take a drive into Diamond/Grove and you will see nearly a thousand houses there and, by the end of this year, I am hoping that you will have another thousand houses at the Meadowbrook housing development. Already at Parfait Harmony we have started to run the poles. The poles for the wires are going in at Parfait Harmony because we want to encourage those thousands of people who have been waiting to take up their houselots at Parfait Harmony. Only today Cabinet approved hundreds of millions of dollars in projects outside of the LIS Programme, outside of the EU Programme, but further, we have about 40 or 50 projects now already approved to jump start, to put in the basic infrastructure in the housing schemes in this country.

Mr Speaker, squatter regularization, and when Mr Ming mentioned there have been delays in putting in infrastructure in some of the squatter settlements, I admit that, as against the now housing areas, why? Because the regularization exercise takes time, because there are so many problems to be resolved, because of the fact that people occupied the lands before the necessary surveys could have been done. So this was inevitable, but we are now on the move and, as I said, and as I stand here today and say again, by the end of 2006 we shall complete basic

infrastructural works in all of our housing estates in this country.

Additionally, Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked the question. We are shortly embarking on paving the roads of 20 housing estates. We will be going out to tender for 20 of the housing estates in this country. We will be paving all the roads in those areas.

Mr Speaker, I now come to the water sector, and I know that the member from Region 8 has raised some questions, so therefore I want to go straight to address those concerns for the Honourable Member of Region 8.

We have already gone to tender for several water supply systems in Region 8. We will be installing a solar system at Kato. We will be doing water supply works at Kuru Kubaru, at Bamboo Creek and at Monkey Mountain. Already at Monkey Mountain, we have procured all the necessary pipelines. These are areas where we have to bring the water from the springs in the mountains, and plans are already far advanced to get that done. At Mahdia, yes, I do not know if the Honourable Member knows what is a bore hole? I have to clarify that before, but we have had many bore holes at Mahdia under the El Nino programme, but they were not successful. It is because of the geological formation. There is no water bearing aquifers, and she is right, we have had to spend money to try to see if we can get water for the people, but the production of the water is very, very poor. So what are we doing? Already we have a design. Over \$50 million will be spent on a design to bring the water from the Salbora creek into Mahdia. We have already completed the designs and the bill of quantities and, under the Basic Needs Programme, the proposal has already been sent to the Caribbean Development Bank for approval. I am hoping that, very shortly, we can obtain the approval and commence the work at Mahdia.

Now, I am going to Region 1. We will be at Mabaruma, a new water supply system utilising the Onaina Spring will be installed at Mabaruma. The designs have already been completed and we are awaiting the final approval for that from the CDB.

In Region 9, already in 44 villages contractors are moving through and, as I speak, to maintain, to repair the wells and the windmill systems in Region 9. So already we are moving in Region 9, but moreso, we will be installing several solar systems in Region 9. These will be at Sand Creek and at Ishalton. So we are utilising the modern technology - windmill systems and solar systems to supply the population in the hinterland areas.

In Region 7, Bartica has already benefited from a major water supply system and, on a recent trip visit to Bartica, the people are so elated that they are receiving water at the fourth floor level. *[Applause]* They are receiving treated water.

I was surprised that the member from Region 10 did not ask about the water supply development. So much has been spent - \$200 million for Phases I and II of the water supply improvement project, and I am happy to report that it was targeted for Block 22 and Blueberry Hill areas. Those residents are receiving a good supply of water. *[Applause]* Recent photographs were taken out to show you all of these waters flowing at Amelia's Ward.

Mr Speaker, that is not the end of it. We are now procuring resources to do a Phase III because we recognise that the network, especially the pipe network in Linden, needs rehabilitation, so we are trying to procure resources to commence Phase III, but already in the Budget some provisions have been made to start the programme.

At Kwakwani there will be a major overhaul of the water supply system. Again, tenders have already been advertised for the new water supply at Kwakwani, including the new housing scheme. The Government has not only been opening up housing areas in the coastland, but also in the hinterland areas - at Kwakwani, at Bartica at ... *[Interruption: 'What about Ituni?']* I am coming to Ituni, at Culvert City in Lethem, at Mabaruma, at Mahdia. At Mahdia, we have already moved the site, which we found to be very hilly, and we have moved it to flat terrain, and already all the roads have been built. The area has been



cleared and I will be proceeding there in March to ensure that the people get their allocations to start building their houses *[Applause]*. At Ituni, we have already completed the surveys. We have regularised Ituni and by the end of the month of March, we will be moving to give those people their letters of allocations and proceed to give them titles to the land, which they so richly deserve this year - nearly 300 residents of Ituni, so it is not only a coastal concern, but concerns to ensure that there is housing development in the hinterland areas as well, so that ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, I wonder if you can push your microphone a little bit forward so you would not be speaking too close to it. We are getting difficulty with the recordings.

**Hon Shaik KZ Baksh:** Yes, thank you very much. I want to be recorded properly, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, we do have a very massive water sector programme for Georgetown. I know the Honourable Member, Dr Joseph, talked about quality issues. In Georgetown, we have a programme to spend \$6 billion, and there is no discrimination in this, there is no marginalization. We have already spent \$15 billion, and \$6 billion will be spent over the next five years, and what we intend to do - the three zones in Georgetown, and I would like you to note - the zones, where we will be replacing all the old pipelines, because of the high leakages, to improve the water supply system - Zones W2, W4 and W14. Let me go through it because, as I said, when I complete this presentation, I do hope we do not hear about marginalization and discrimination. We have been taking a very balanced approach in development for the people of this country.

W2, north East LaPenitence, East LaPenitence, South Ruimveldt Gardens, East Ruimveldt, Stevedore Housing Scheme and Tucville..

W4, West Ruimveldt, East Ruimveldt, Roxanne Burnham Gardens - different areas, different parts. My friend, you are an engineer, you are not a surveyor, you should know that there are boundaries, different

boundaries. In terms of the boundaries for W4, there is another portion of East Ruimveldt. I have to educate you.

W14, Lamaha Gardens, Section K Campbellville and Prashad Nagar.

We also intend to ensure that residents get a high quality of water, so two iron removal plants will be built, one at Central Ruimveldt, and one in Sophia, to ensure that the iron, which is very heavy in the water, is removed so that you have a better quality of water. The vision is to ensure that over the next couple of years, you can drink water out of your taps.

Apart from that, we will be spending some money, rehabilitating the shelter belt, to ensure that it continues to provide the necessary services to the population

Mr Speaker, that is only for Georgetown, but we have already built so many other water treatment plants and major water supply systems and, across the country at Pouteroyen, serving thousands upon thousands of people across the country, and reducing the incidents of water-borne diseases. At Pouteroyen, at Eccles, those of you who live in Eccles must speak out, because you are getting top class water supply at Eccles. Speak out!

Rose Hall is supplying 40,000 people. At LBI on the East Coast, we are having some problems because people are enjoying the treated water so much, they are using too much, so we have to meter them in order to ensure that we cut back on consumption, so there is a problem on the East Coast, which we have to resolve over the next couple of months. I am giving you the little difficulties that we have to face. I mentioned Bartica already, and then the New Amsterdam water treatment plants. So we have been moving. The Honourable Member was not listening when I said that two iron-removal plants will be built to reduce that problem. Shortly, with the support of the World Bank, we have three new areas which will come on stream for water treatment systems.

One will be at Anna Regina, because they do not have any water treatment facilities in Region 2. We cannot complete all of this at one time, then when you talk about discrimination and marginalization, no water treatment in Region 2. We are now moving to put it in the township of Anna Regina. We cannot cover the whole of the Essequibo Coast. Then, at Parika, we will put a water treatment plant at the other end. There is one at Pouderoyen, and then we will put another one at Rosignol.

The objective is to supply the population with treated water over the next couple of years. It calls for tremendous resources, with which we are on track, and we are moving ahead. Mr Speaker, in terms of the hinterland, I mentioned the projects which are going on, but that is supported by a hinterland strategy document that is already approved ... *[Interruption: 'Where is the document?']* I will send you one, Honourable Member. There is a hinterland strategy document, which speaks to the sustainability of the water supply systems for our hinterland communities - for participation, for control, by the users of the water supply; and for training of personnel in those areas. All of these things are being implemented, as I speak. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, your time is up.

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

Question put and agreed to.

**Hon Shaik KZ Baksh:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. All in all, you can see the very sound programmes in the housing area, and I am pleased to note that there has not been, so far, much criticism in this area of the Government programme, in terms of housing development. It must be applauded, and this is unprecedented in the history of this country. The financial provisions in the budget of 2004 \$2.1 billion was provided for housing sector, and, in 2005, \$2.4 billion have been provided for the housing sector. By any stretch of the imagination it tells you that this is a caring Government which provides for their needs for shelter and settle-

ments. I do not want to hear any criticism, because I do not want to go back to the past. Do not let me give you the figures. I do not want to go back to the past. I do not want to. I have a vision, and the Government has a vision for the housing sector in this country, and not only the Government, the private sector also.

I now want to speak about the role of the private sector in this housing drive, in this housing programme. Nearly 50 private housing schemes have gone up from 1992 to 2004. *[Applause]* We have created a facilitated environment to induce and to attract the private sector to come onboard. No, you go for the records - ask, and it shall be provided. They have been contributing to the housing drive in this country, not only in establishing housing areas, but also in building houses in the Government building estates. There is a public/private partnership in this and that is why it is making so much progress. In all of this we have been developing the communities. We believe in community development, all told, in all the areas we are working with the communities. We do not go into Sophia and start infrastructural works without calling the people and discussing with them, and giving them the documents. We do not do that. If you go to the East Coast, to Mon Repos, to Vigilance North and South, the people have the documents. This is the modus operandi of this Government - people's participation in their development. If you go to Caneville ... only on Saturday I was up in Region 6 - the squatter settlements at Williamsburg, Hampshire and Belvedere - 1000 houselots, and I addressed the people, and they participated, and I gave them the documents so they can oversee the programmes, which this caring government is delivering for them *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, I visited not all ... I may complete them in another two weeks, but many of the housing areas. I have gone into those housing areas. I have gone to Bare Root, which is being regularised by this Government *[Applause]* and, by mid-year, Bare Root will be getting titles for the land they have occupied for so long *[Applause]*. Yes, I have gone into Bare Root. They have called me. So I am going all over. A, the major roads will be built in Bare Root shortly through the SIMAP agency. Mr Speaker, all over we are delivering.

What is the plan? Not plan, what is the programme? We have gone beyond plan. What is the programme for 2005? I heard that the Member for Region 10 had the audacity to tell this House that house lots are not being given out at Wisroc and Block 22. What can be further from the truth? The newest scheme at Wisroc – 700, not 2,500, 700 houselots, and we have given out 700 houselots *[Applause]* As a matter of fact, many people have paid, and they have already gone up for titles. In two or three months they will get the titles to the land at Wisroc. *[Applause]* Also, shortly, we will be building roads to the tune of \$33 million. So this is what we are doing. We have already regularised Block 22, which is a squatter settlement, and so we are ready for the take-off at infrastructural development. Let me tell you how much we will be spending at Block 22, Wismar. \$150M will be spent on roads, water and drainage. *[Applause]* I am giving you the facts. You see how important the figures are. If I do not tell you the facts and figures you would not believe me. These are the precise figures. I can leave this with you after we leave tonight. I can leave this with you, and you can check on it.

Mr Speaker, in other areas - there will be a major development of a housing area in Corriverton, because at Corriverton there is the massive development of the new sugar factory. New employment will be created, so we have a major housing development. Already the surveys have been completed. Works will start in June, July at Corriverton, 2000 house lots at Corriverton.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Housing and water also has a Town and Country Planning Department. Last year, we have approved now the Georgetown Development Plan, with all the stakeholders onboard. After 50 years, we are finally able to get a Georgetown Development Plan, and what we are doing now, this year we will complete town development plans for Lethem, Corriverton, Charity, Parika, and Bartica. Those are the areas. *[Interruption: What happened to Linden?]* We are working on Linden, New Amsterdam and Rose Hall for early next year. For those we have limited expertise. We have two town planners with us, and this will be working hand-in-hand with the urban de-

velopment programme, which Minister Collymore alluded to. Plans are afoot. Additionally, Mr Speaker, there will be a major programme out of the Georgetown Development Plan. We have three major implementation programmes.

A seawall development plan for tourists and citizens of Georgetown - from Camp Street to Kitty a major development is currently taking place. We want to attract the citizens of Georgetown to have leisure on the Georgetown seawall.

The D'Urban Park area - already the topographical survey has been completed. We will convert, transform the D'Urban Park area. It will be in a phased way for sporting activities, and we will start putting some money into D'Urban Park this year.

The Stabroek Market Development Plan - We have a plan for the Stabroek market area. We all know the chaos there. It will be a challenge, but we have a committee set up and the Central Housing and Planning Authority is taking a key role, a pivotal role, in the Stabroek Market development area, and we are hoping this year to complete that development, but there are so many stakeholders and the consultation process I know will be very long, because we want to bring all onboard on the Stabroek Market development plan.

So those are other areas that the Ministry of Housing has been working on.

Mr Speaker, I before I conclude, I have not heard any speaker from the other side, including the Honourable Mr Ming. He spent a long, long time on his Guyana 21 Plan. I do not want to comment on this Guyana 21 Plan at this stage. I am not saying it does not have good elements. I will be the last to say that it does not have good features, but the Government also has its own priorities. So I do not want to comment on that.

But I want to end in pointing out the improvements in public sector

governance, because there is always this talk about bad governance, poor governance, and all kinds of things. I want to touch on this area of public sector governance, in particular public management, especially financial management. Over the years, the Government has been moving to improve what we inherited. I must say that.

In 2003 and 2004, we had a plethora of legislative measures:

- the Bank of Guyana Act;
- the Financial Institutions Act;
- the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act with the regulations.

We brought the regulations. There were many doubting Thomases over there. The regulations came and they were published. So we will be moving to improve it.

Now the Minister, in his Budget, has outlined a number of measures, and to support the Audit Act, remember, we passed the Audit Act last year to give more independence to the Auditor General's Office, and the Auditor General's functions. We have done that because we are interested in these reports, every year it comes out. You know that, and what we want to do is to support that. We have now provided in the Budget US \$600,000 for the institutional strengthening of the Auditor General's Office, and to provide for consultancies. *[Applause]* You see, Mr Speaker, all the donor agencies, they understand, they respect, they appreciate what we are doing, and that is why the monies are flowing through all the time. We are not mismanaging the money. It is good governance. Now US \$600,000 is going to improve the Auditor General's Office to provide training, computerization. I am telling you this. To support this, too, let me announce, because it missed many of you. I do not think anybody commented on that, even many members of the Public Accounts Committee, because there will be tabled in this Parliament this year a Treasury Memorandum to support all that we have been saying, to ensure that all the comments made by the Auditor General for

the improvement of accounting systems in the government ministries and agencies is taken note of. I know that the Honourable Member, Mrs Holder, she always says that in her presentation. We have taken note of that. You must have a balance; you heard what the Honourable Member Mr Ming has said. He said, *give praise where praise is due*, and now it will come to this Parliament to say what? That each ministry must be able to say how they will rectify these weaknesses in their systems, and this is indeed a positive development of public accountability in the management of public finances in this country. Do not let it go. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** I move, Mr Speaker, that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable Member.

**Hon Shaik KZ Baksh:** I will take ten minutes, Mr Speaker.

In the area of Project Cycle Management Systems, again we want to ensure that PSIP Projects are well monitored and evaluated, and this is provided for in the Budget, that there is a linkage to the PRSP and the Debt Strategy. There must be a close relationship to the two, and this now ... Listen, I cannot repeat those things ... They are in the Budget for you to read. You have the provisions here in the Budget to strengthen this area of project cycle management.

Now, Mr Speaker, in terms of the overall management of the public sector, this Government has a record, indeed a record - a proud record, and these are not things which are remedied in one year. We accept that. It will take time, but we have moved a far way through, especially the Auditor General's Office, to highlight some of these weaknesses in systems, and to bring public officers and others to make them more accountable for their actions over time.



Mr Speaker, in all of this I do hope that Members from the other side will take note of the many points I have made, in terms of the housing sector, the water sector, and the importance of the PSIP for the people of this country, and also for the measures in the Budget for good governance by this Government. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

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

While it is shortly before 17:00h, instead of having somebody else speaking and interrupting him, I am recommending that we take the suspension now.

Members of the Business Sub-Committee are reminded of its meeting during the break this afternoon in my office. Your refreshments will be served.

**16:50H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

**17:35H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING**

**Mr Ravindra Dev:** Mr Speaker, I rise to offer my contribution to this Budget 2005 Debate.

When I first entered this Parliament, four years ago, I wondered aloud as to whether what we may be doing in this august House may not simply be adding to global warming. Recent events have made me believe that I was a bit prophetic. So that brings me to the flood, about which I speak with some trepidation. I am not sure as to whether we may speak about it, but our Honourable Minister, in his conclusion, did say that he referred to the recent ... and I quote, on page 55:

*The recent unprecedented flooding that inundated several parts of the country demanded decisive leadership, organisational capability, and innovativeness. This ...*

he asserted

... was provided by the Government.

Mr Speaker, one cannot, in this or any other forum, speak with such conclusiveness on matters of fact. It will never be accepted in any form that an individual, who speaks for the Government that is in office, that was overseeing the affairs of this country, while this unprecedented disaster, in his own words, occurred, could simply pronounce as to their effectiveness in dealing with such a challenge.

Mr Speaker, I would therefore propose, if we are to go anywhere in this country, that we have to mount a commission of inquiry to actually find out what are the facts. The rule of law demands no less for an individual that might have committed gross negligence. I think a Government demands no less an examination.

Mr Speaker, the Budget this year has been labelled *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development*. Sustaining growth and development, but when we look into the Minister's own facts presented at the back of his Speech, and we look at the growth that Guyana has experienced, which we are supposed to sustain, page 56, we find that, in the five years that are mentioned, in terms of how our GDP grew, if you were to total those five years, you would see that our growth has averaged not more than 0.6 percent. Mr Speaker, these are some figures which we all know have been heavily massaged - heavily massaged to create inflation in the figures themselves, and still they amount to a mere 0.6 percent. Is this what this Government wants to sustain? To sustain a 0.6 percent figure! In other aspects of living, those who have problems in sustaining things, there is now help for them. It appears that this Government really needs help in getting these figures up and sustaining them, if they can ever get these figures up, 0.6 percent will just not cut it.

Mr Speaker, our Minister also set out ... Individuals might say that there was no vision, but our Minister said they do have a vision, and again on page 55, he adumbrated that:

*... vision to create a modern, democratic society with abundant opportunities and a high standard of living.*

Mr Speaker, there has been growth in this world without development, but there has never been development without growth. There is not an economic text book, beginning from economics 101, that would ever sustain such an assertion. There could be no development without sustaining growth, and 0.6 percent just will not cut it. Even by the millennium goals that this Government had signed on to, there is no way that this Government can reach those goals. So when I listened to the speakers from the Government side that preceded me, especially the Minister of Housing and Water who spoke just before me, I wondered in which planet he was speaking from, because, when we speak of development, and you listen to the Honourable Minister's presentation, you would think that Guyana is one of the most developed societies there is on planet earth, but we know it is not so. If we are to talk of development, I will come back to the 0.6 percent. The Government Ministers and their speakers would like to talk about other economies in the Region do not grow by that much. Other economies - Trinidad for example, might not have grown that much, but that is disingenuous. 0.6 percent of an economy is less than a billion US. It is certainly less, Mr Speaker, by any calculation that 0.6 of an economy that is a trillion dollar economy. So, here again, we hear of individuals playing with numbers, and it just would not cut.

I listened to our Honourable Prime Minister yesterday plaintively bemoaning the fact, and I quote it, because I do not want to be putting words into our Honourable Prime Minister's mouth, to say that we are saving, but we are not investing, and he echoed the Minister of Finance to say that we have a liquidity management problem.

Mr Speaker, this, in a nutshell, is the fact that has confronted Guyana from 1997, when Cheddi Jagan died, to today. But Guyana's problem is not a problem of money. Imagine that the Prime Minister has forced our Minister of Finance, has to admit and bemoan the fact that our problem is that we have too much money. A liquidity problem is a

good word, and I have referred to it before. You know, liquidity slushes around like the flood. We are being inundated by money in Guyana. We are drowning in money, and the Government's problem is to manage liquidity. Something has to be wrong. I am not talking about Hamlet in Denmark. Something is wrong right here, Mr Speaker. Why is it that with money, money, everywhere not a drop is being invested? Why? Why?

I will tell you why, because Mr Collymore gave a clue. He said if you want to know where we are heading, look where we have been. Well, we have been at 0.6 percent growth last year, and I guess that is what we are supposed to be looking forward to. The point is that there is no articulated vision in this document here. There is no articulated strategy for utilising the money that we have already in our country, and to develop this country, so there can be growth, and there can be no real development in the lives of our people. There is no strategy.

Mr Speaker, we have ... and I have said this again and again, but the Government hears, but they do not listen. It is an important distinction, Mr Speaker, If they would listen, maybe we could work together, to come out of the morass in which Guyana is stuck. Let me elaborate. A Budget is supposed to do three things:

- to take resources through taxation, and other measures, and it is supposed to have a distributive effect. You are supposed to try to distribute the money so that there is more equality in a country.

*continued in Pt II*

# National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

## Part II

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50TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Tuesday, 01 March 2005

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*cont'd fr. Pt 1*

This Government has not seen fit to raise the income tax threshold so that the ordinary people can have some more money in their pockets so they can be able to have a better standard of living. How can the Government say in one breath . . . and I quote the Minister, that he is looking to create a better standard of living, and you cannot take a fiscal measure which can put money into their pockets so that they can be able to have a greater spending power.

- to allocate resources within the country, so that the country can develop as a whole - the allocated function.
- The stabilization function. We noticed that, year after year, all that the Minister can speak about is the stabilization function.

This gives us a clue as to why Guyana cannot grow, and will never grow, if it follows the same path, because what we are focussing on is a one shoe fits all formula that has been handed to this Government by the IMF, World Bank, that has worked in no other country, Mr Speaker, that has experienced growth. That has never, I would like anybody on the Government's side to show me of an example of a country that has followed the IMF dictates, which the Washington consensus in its trinity of simply following privatisation, liberalization and stabilization, just follow those three principles and show me where the growth is.

Mr Speaker, I will tell Honourable Minister what the choices are, all I hope is that they would listen, because this is not just Ravi Dev speaking, as I have been doing since I entered this House in 2001. A former Chief Economist of the World Bank, Stiglitz, says the same thing - that the IMF *one shoe fits all* strictures cannot work for economies in transition. Look at those that have followed it. Look at Argentina, Mr Speaker, where is the finesse? This is what I am calling this Government to do.

This government is the PPP's government. I don't know about this civic component. The PPP was founded by Dr Cheddi Jagan, who always looked at the IMF/World Bank with great scepticism. Now is the time, Mr Speaker, for this Government to again look at the dictates of the World Bank/IMF, in terms of their economic strategy, as to how to come out of this. The World Bank, Mr Speaker, wants us to liberalise our markets, but what does liberalization mean to an economy like ours? To economies that did not liberalise when it was their turn, and which are now telling us that we must open up our markets totally, even financial markets, even Chile refused to go the whole-hog, and Chile has done much better than Argentina.

Mr Speaker, we come back to the nitty-gritty, as Honourable Minister Rohee said, so, what do we do? Implying that we are somehow bound hand-and-foot to kneel at the altar of IMF/World Bank. Well, I would like, in a sense, to pay a backhanded compliment to this same government that the World Bank/IMF had already reached an agreement. There was a document just waiting to be signed to privatise GUYSUOCO, and this Government stood up and argued against the World Bank and IMF mandarins, who came down to dictate, and the privatisation of GUYSUOCO was put on the back burner. It means, therefore, that if this Government is committed to a particular vision, Mr Speaker, it cannot plead being hog-tied. It knows that if it puts forward a coherent strategy, and if it has the support of the Guyanese people, it can sell such a programme. I will come back to the second part, in terms of having the support of the Guyanese people.

But I come back to the first point as to what is the alternative to the IMF dictates, in terms of the policy of growth. The first thing I will say, Mr Speaker, is that we cannot use ... listen to the name, we cannot use a *poverty reduction strategy paper for growth*. It is like I am poor already, and all I could ask is how I could do better. In other words, how can I do better? Meaning how can I distribute what we have. Take from Tom and give to John. That simply creates dissent. It creates doubts, and it elicits cries of being unfair, of marginalizing, and not being equitable in one's efforts. The answer is that we have to have a strategy of growth, and once there is growth, the pie becomes bigger and it becomes easier to share. How do we do this? I have spoken before that the IMF, according to Stiglitz, its former Chief Economist, former Chairman of the Economic Council to Bill Clinton, who created the most prosperous America in a century, listen to what Stiglitz says, that it is the Government's role to take a position on growth, and that the IMF consensus, in following the dictates of capital - this is Stiglitz, an American, saying this - following the dictates of capital on Wall Street, simply wants us to open up our markets, but what are we going to get from it? Stiglitz points out the experience of China. In our own day and age, and I have to tell a Marxist party this - that China did not follow the dictates of IMF/World Bank. China did not simply deregulate just like that. You had to handle things on a case-by-case basis. There is no ideology. We all know that the age of ideology is dead. The PPP says this, but in their attempts at being pragmatic, they have sold their souls to a vision that will ensure us no growth, according to Stiglitz.

What has been the experience of those economies that have growth? Stanley talked of Singapore - same old story. In 1965 Lee Kwan Yu had to talk about a strategic vision. Lee Kwan Yu said, *what will be the hinterland of Singapore?* Meaning *which market will we serve*, and Lee Kwan Yu's answer was a strategic answer. He did not rave against the structural conditions that bound him. He saw the answer was not necessarily structural constraints and railing at them, as we keep on doing. We are stuck in primary production. Lee Kwan Yu had naval bases that he was never going to use, so what would he do? The point is, he

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had a strategic vision and he said that America and Europe will be his hinterland, and he followed up, *what will it take to service that market?* He created, therefore, direct infrastructure, not simply infrastructure there for the sake of infrastructure, a bridge here and a canal there. He had a vision, Mr Speaker.

This Government, for instance, has talked about a continental destiny, about being a gateway to South America, but when I looked at the plans of the Government, I neither see such a strategy articulated, nor do I see any programmes in place to take us further towards that plan. I had to snicker, I am very sorry. I have great respect for our Prime Minister, but for our Prime Minister to say that we have to wait until we can ship goods, then build a harbour, something stinks in this land. My naani used to tell me, *yuh kyan't wait till yuh belly hurt to build latrine*, Mr Speaker. Something will definitely stink. *[Laughter]* It shows a lot. If indeed, Mr Speaker, we see that we have continental vision than all eyes would have been turned south, the Rupununi would be our bridgehead into South America, and we should be looking to see what is happening in the Rupununi, and how we may connect the Rupununi to this trench that we have created and called a coastland. I do not see the steps being taken in such place to effectuate such a vision, if ever there was one.

I had a conversation with a top PPP leader. I will not mention his name because he might be expelled from the central executive. We had a good conversation and he told me this, *I would love to see a road to the hinterland. I would love to see that we can open up our interior that we could have development.* So it means that it is not that the PPP is oblivious to these things, but I want to place my finger on what I believe to be the crux of the matter, that the decision-making on economic matters, Mr President, has become so centralised in the hands of one man whom, I am told, I cannot mention in this House. I do not want to be muzzled, Mr Speaker, so he, capital H, shall remain unnamed, but I think this is the crux of the matter, because here was a top PPP leader, who knew what needed to be done, but it cannot be done, it is not being done - a top PPP leader, not a civic man, PPP old-time, die-hard, head to the bed.



Now, Mr Speaker, we therefore come back to the matter that it is not mere fortuity that the PRSP Programme is run out of the Office of the President ... can I mention Office of the President? It is okay? It is not mere fortuity that it is run out ... and as you look at the Budget Presentation, the whole process is driven by the PRSP.

Mr Speaker, I was told, I was taught by my nana and naani, who raised me, that if you want to achieve anything in this life it cannot be by mere words. Our Minister cannot speak just about vision. There has to be a foundation built under that vision, or else it is not a vision. It is merely building castles in the air, and castles in the air will collapse once you try to do anything with them. I am very disappointed that the addition of a grey beard to Mr Ramotar has not elicited greater wisdom, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter]* *[Applause]* I had hopes for my fellow Uitvlugt man, (so to speak) but I come back to the topic, Mr Speaker, that we have to be able to articulate a vision that is grounded in reality. And, again, what is the reality? The reality is that Guyana has money. It is very obvious that our own investors are not investing. It could be due to a combination of reasons. One can talk about the crime, the insecurity, but I still call upon this Minister, and I see him adumbrating that crime is one of the reasons that we do not have investment. Yet this Honourable House, having passed a bill which called for a swat team, this Government has still not seen fit to put together such a crime-fighting unit, leaving individuals to have to then create death squads, possibly. Mr Speaker, if we see a problem, we have to be able to address it. Yes, insecurity is one of the problems, but I do not think it is the major problem. We have to be very, very clear that we have a business culture in Guyana that is not possibly as matured as need be, and that is a consequence, obviously, of our tremendous rate of migration. Our last figure showed over 12,000 individuals net that we are losing every year, and that's just the official figure. Imagine what the actual figures are, and many of those come from the middle-class which, traditionally, would have invested.

Mr Speaker, it brings us again to the role that Government in the modern world must play in fostering development, and I throw it back to this Party - the PPP again, that, unlike what the IMF would do, there

was no question of Government's intervention in the 1970s in getting ownership failed, failed in Guyana. The whole concept of State capitalism failed here, but we should not forget, Mr Speaker, that it was the same IMF/World Bank that provided the money then because, at that time, the fashionable thing was to fund these grandiose projects. The World Bank/IMF was simply following the dictates of Wall Street. You had the oil boom, so Arabs had to put their money into America.. America had to put their money somewhere. The World Bank therefore said we got to lend you, it doesn't matter what the big project was; you got money for it. So Guyana's debt problem definitely is a consequence of the former Government's ineptitude in certain respects, but also it was the World Bank simply skiving off money for investments of Wall Street. Similarly today, Mr Speaker, I mean it does not take anyone ... I am as capitalist as it comes. I grew up in America, but if you have to understand whose interests are being represented by this total insistence on liberalization, on privatisation, and on stabilization without growth, it means, therefore, at all times, like what the Far East countries have done, we have to look for and ask what are our national interest, and chart a course that suits our national interest. Even as the late as 1997s crash, when there was thought of a melt down, South Korea followed IMF dictates, Malaysia did not, Mahathir said he would not contract and cause a greater recess in his country. Who came out of the recession faster, Malaysia or South Korea? Go and check the records - Malaysia. The point is if ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, I rise to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable Member.

**Mr Ravindra Dev:** Mr Speaker, I again come back to the need for the Government to have a vision that is grounded in reality, and I am quoting

the realities of countries that have succeeded in bringing themselves up and out of poverty to reach standards of living that now approximate the west. This is not airy-fairy pie-in-the-sky, and I am saying that, in each and every instance - whether it be Japan, whether it be Taiwan, whether it be South Korea, whether it be Indonesia, whether it be Thailand, any one of these countries, or Malaysia. In each of them the Government had a pivotal role in stimulating growth. How was it done? Because we all accept that you cannot have the heavy hand of Government controlling, because we found out to our cost in the Eastern European economies that it is too much for you to direct, meaning you need markets. Well, one simple solution to the necessity of markets is what these countries all did which was to identify strategic areas that they wished their private business people to enter, provided cheap money to those entities with a caveat to which that *if we lend you this money, x percent of your production must be for the export market*, which is the most competitive market in the world, because you have to face world-class firms, not just protect markets. The whole system of having protective markets made fat cats, but in a new dispensation, you give cheap money and yet you ask, not yet, but you ask that you have to face international competition.

So these firms had an opportunity to be able to invest. In no country in the world, I don't care who you are, no one can borrow money at 21 percent and turn out a profit. You have to be dealing in something else than the product that you are selling to be able to make a profit. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, you need cheap money, meaning money at lower interest because the cost of money is the cost of interest. As I have been saying every year since I came into this House right now the Government has sterilized, \$50 billion. That is a quarter of a billion US dollars that is sterilized, meaning the Government has taken it out of the system, kept it like snow white - pristine and pure, seven dwarves could not touch her, pristine and pure they have to be kept, and do what, pay an interest amounting to over \$3 billion a year to keep out money. Why? Because the IMF said that if all these monies were to be in the banking

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sector they would lend the money too cheaply and you might have inflation. Now, my goodness, how much of a circular argument can you make? So you sterilize the system ... did I hear one Minister saying where did we get this from? Apparently economic strategy is kept even tighter in one hand than I thought. Maybe even the left hand of the individual does not let what the right hand know. My position is that Guyana has to be able to provide funding.

Last year, Minister Nadir said that such an infusion of funds into the economy would generate excessive inflation. I bounced this off some economists of the new School of Social Research in New York and they pooh-poohed it for two reasons:

1. In any investment of factories and of equipment to produce, let us say, in agro-processing, you will be talking of not spending the money within Guyana. You will be talking of bringing the equipment from outside.
2. You will begin to be creating money through your export.

I come to a specific example where an opportunity is in front of us today - the Demerara sugar plantations. We heard about investment at Skeldon, and I am happy to see that the Government has decided to go ahead with a cogent plan. Two years ago when I spoke about it, the Government had not made up their minds. I am happy, and I compliment the Government to go ahead with the cogent plan at Skeldon, but if we are to look at what the Minister calls the strengthening of the traditional base as part of their strategy, what do we see? We see that the Demerara plantations cannot be sustained. The cost in the Demerara plantations is still over eighteen cents per pound, excluding any depreciation or financing cost that the Skeldon expansion would entail. Since this Government has already signed off a memorandum to the World Bank that there will be no investment in factories, then all the improvement is left to field husbandry, and since there is also a stipulation for no increased employment in the industry, that has to be cut by three percent a year; then where will these field husbandry people come from? It means, there-

fore, that we have left the Demerara plantations out to dry. I say, again, as I have been saying since 1998 that, in terms of a strategic vision, I have no quarrel with the Skeldon expansion. I think in the near and medium term, it is the best that we can do. I believe that ... *[Interruption]* Clement, I said this on a programme with you so you cannot be speaking so now ... at this juncture we have to look at these Demerara plantations and use it as an example of making strategic investments that would propel us into agro-processing at value.

We are sitting around wringing our hands that no businessmen are investing. It is not going to happen. Our business culture is a timid one caused by both the previous government instilling a certain culture, and this Government perpetuating a culture where business people have to be supplicants to the Government's straw.

At this point, Mr Speaker, I believe that the Government can signal the way if it is brave enough, and I feel that it should not be a political decision. It should be a statesman like decision to show Guyana and Guyanese the way forward that, yes, we are facing world market forces that make production in the Demerara plantations not viable. Brazil can churn out as much as they want. Their production is not geared merely to produce sugar. They have a strategic interest because they want to have a fuel backup strategically into the next century, so they produce sugar cane as much for alcohol. So they will always be low-cost producers who are even be willing to dump. Therefore, let me say, Mr Speaker, let this Government take monies, create a development fund, and utilize it to identify crops in the sugar plantation acreage, give those land to peasant farmers, to the workers, and then have factories that they can build with these monies and have young new managers like Taiwan did - to hand over new factories to managers who have shown their competence to manage these things.

This Government, Mr Speaker, has to take a risk in allowing people to get rich. This Government sees this as a great risk, but I see it as an opportunity that we have an opportunity to be able to utilize what is seen as something negative into becoming something positive.

Mr Speaker, what I speak of is nothing new in the literature, and I am sure Mr Ramotar, who will speak after me with his new-found wisdom, knows about the creation of what is called a catalytic State. A State which can promote development by targeting strategic firms and being willing to work with these firms.

But there is another risk that this Government will have to take, and that these countries that have developed have shown, that if you want to be able to push development in that direction, you have to be able to create a public service that is par excellence, that is so educated, that is so qualified that it can deal with these businessmen on an equal footing. So we have to be willing, and I know this Government might see it as a risk, but in the long run it is not a risk to be training citizens of Guyana to have the competence to be able to guide, direct and regulate such enterprises.

Mr Speaker, I am not saying that they are not risks, but I would like to say that the largest risk will come if this Government were to embark on such a policy and maybe this is what prevents them from embarking on a policy, which I know they know of, is that, for such a policy, you cannot have a country divided. Malaysia, which has a population almost exactly mirroring us, and where the Malays were the majority, but were not economically active. The Chinese were a large minority, but were not economically active, and the Indians were the buffer reflecting our African, Indian and Amerindian population in Guyana. What that Government did through its federalism, and through its programmes was to have a Government of national unity. In fact, because in such a scenario you cannot go forward, Lee Kwan Yew could do it because he had a 70 percent majority. In this country here, any Government that hopes to propel Guyana such a far will have to have the support of the country by and large or else it opens up itself to attacks as to who is getting which factory and who is not.

Mr Speaker, I therefore would like to conclude on this note, that once again we come and we go around and we have to arrive at where we started. How can we get this country forward? How could we have

the vision that Minister Kowlessar articulated, which is one in which there is development and higher standards of living for all Guyanese? It has to start from a political solution where the PPP/C will have to have the maturity to have an inclusive government where individuals have real input into the decision-making to take a risk and to have that done and, under such a dispensation; to have a government take charge of Guyana's destiny. Both Forbes Burnham and Dr Jagan, who are both departed today, had a vision of an Independent Guyana, a Republic Guyana. We can neither be Independent nor a Republic when our economic plans are written in Fifth Avenue, Washington, and we merely have to copy the sums in lines that are already drawn. We cannot be reduced to this, Mr Speaker.

I conclude by saying that I hope that this Government will listen, and that we can all get our shoulders to the wheel to build this nation. I thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

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

Honourable Member, Mr Donald Ramotar

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, I rise to also lend my support to the Budget, presented so ably by the Minister of Finance.

I would like to begin by taking up where the Honourable Member, Mr Dev, spoke about the theme of the Budget and only saw, and only equated development with economics. But we have seen in many other countries, for instance, in Pinochet, Chile, where you had some level of economic growth, but I do not believe that you could have called that development.

Mr Dev, of course by his own admission just now, spent most of his time abroad. Most of his life he lived outside of this country so, I don't think that he appreciates, or that he has any kind of appreciation, for what real human development is in our society.

- He was not here when people were policed and soldiers

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were harassing people in the dead of the night, searching them and arresting them.

- He was not here when freedom fighters like Micheal Forde, like Jagan Ramassar and Bholā Nauth and Walter Rodney were killed because of the opinions that they held.
- He was not here when you could not hold a public meeting in our city, or any part of our country, without the fear of it being smashed.

Today, there is a breath of fresh air in our society when we can speak our minds without looking over our shoulders.

- He was not here when press freedom was totally destroyed in our country. So he cannot speak from experience. He is speaking, not from experience, but he is speaking from personal political ambitions.

Mr Speaker, development is much more than mere economic growth and economic figures. But even if you go and look at it from the point of view of economics, I think that we have to see this Budget as another building block in the developmental process of our country.

Honourable Members, you have to realise that our country was practically devastated ... [*Interruption; 'By the floods.'*] ... I am going to talk about the floods ... that what is needed very, very badly is that we had no infrastructure to build on. Mr Dev speaks about development and equates development with all kinds of different countries, where he had very powerful infrastructure. But let me say this, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members over on the other side, yesterday and today were speaking about the glorious days of the 28 years of the PNC.

I do not know if the Honourable Member Dagleish Joseph was in the company of Mr Dev living abroad during the period of time that he spoke about last night, but let me read from the budget of 1988 by Mr Carl Greenidge, and this is what he said:



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*One of the most glaring consequences of our prolonged fiscal crisis has been our inability to maintain social and economic infrastructure*

I repeat, these are not my words, Sir, don't get wild, don't get excited. These are Mr Carl Greenidge's words, *our inability to maintain social and economic infrastructure*.

He continued, Mr Speaker:

*There has been, as a consequence, considerable deterioration of the infrastructure, ranging from sea defences, to schools, housing and roads*

This is what Mr Greenidge admitted, and this is worse than what the PPP/Civic government inherited when we came to office. This is what we actually inherited in that period of time.

Let me continue and go to the wonderful days that we heard about from the other side. Let me go to the 1989 budget of Mr Greenidge. *[Interruption: 'This is 2005. ']* This is important. You have to compare, my friend.

*The performance of the economy in 1988, as measured by GDP growth, was very disappointing. Real GDP declined by 3 percent. Sugar, rice and bauxite which were projected to grow by 4 percent, 9 percent and 40 percent respectively fell short of both their annual production target and their 1987 performance level.*

This is what we inherited, and hear from the PNC's Minister of Finance ... I am trying to show you what was inherited in this country. He even admitted it. Let me tell you what he admitted, that ... *[Noisy Interruption]*.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, let us have some order. *[Pause]* Honourable Members on both sides of the House, let us have some

silence.

**Hon Donald R Ramotar:** ... our country, Guyana, which, almost from its very beginning, from the very history that we know, has been a producer and exporter of sugar. We exported our first sugar to Holland via the Pomeroon in 1658. Under the PNC, Sir, here is what Mr Greenidge said:

*We were, of course, forced to undertake the importation of 3,556 tonnes of sugar during the year.*

This is the great performance. And why is that, Sir? That has happened because of lack of investment. You have to burn the canes to cut it, but this had to do with lack of investment. This had to do with a total lack of investment in the productive sector of our country, Sir. For instance, if you take DNI between 1986 and 1991, the PNC regime hardly spent anything on DNI. My friend and colleagues, my comrades on the other side, the Honourable engineer, Mr McAllister, was speaking a lot yesterday about Region 3, and how much work needs to be done in Region 3, and Region 3 is a very important agricultural area. But if you look at their record, Sir, in 1990 they spent \$299,000 in DNI in Region 3. They spent \$2 million in 1992. This year, Sir, we will spend \$29 million on DNI. *[Applause]* In fact, if you look at the PNC's records, they never spend a cent on DNI in Region 10. My friend Mr Kadir likes to talk about the agriculture in Region 10. How would you get agriculture if you do not spend a single cent in none of your Budgets in Region 10 on DNI preparation? This year, we are spending \$15 million in Region 10 for DNI to develop a diversified economy in that society. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, in totality, if we look at the capital expenditure alone, because this is important because it relates to the floods that my friends were referring to from time to time. If you look at the capital expenditure, which our country was starved for before the PPP came into government, we were starved for any kind of infrastructural development for the whole country. In 1990, \$115 million was spent on DNI. This

year alone, we are spending \$1.2 billion to develop the agricultural infrastructure in our society. *[Applause]* So I think, Sir, when we talk about development, we have to take a host of factors into consideration. Professor Stiglitz would have talked about those things. My friend, of course, maybe he only read what was convenient for him from the Professor.

But we have to talk about building and infrastructure. We had to talk about building below zero from which we had to start in our society. In every area, we heard Mr Dev trying to trivialize our construction of roads and bridges. Here, I want to point again, those of us who lived here and who have a memory of what happened in this country, will know that there was not a single road in this country that you could have driven on without falling into some huge potholes. There was not one which we can think about that you could have driven on without having the danger of destroying your vehicle. In fact, many people were contemplating to buy some small tractors to run in the city because vehicles were being destroyed at such a rate. All of those we had to rebuild in our society. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, please, be quiet.

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, the honourable members are obviously and understandably upset, because of the destruction that they had carried out in our society. Let me give you some figures, Sir. In 1990, we produced 129,000 tonnes of sugar. Yesterday, I heard Mr Jerome Khan talking about voodoo economics and making a point that we did not reach our target in sugar, then how come we earned more money in sugar? Well, obviously the gentleman, quite rightly, is migrating from economics into law, and he is welcomed into that profession, because he obviously has not had an inkling of an idea about economics. We did have an increase in production, not a shortfall in sugar, from last year to this year. Last year we produced 302,378 tonnes of sugar, and this year 335,317 tonnes. It was 3,000 tonnes short out of the 328,000 tonnes that we had hoped for. And how did we earn more? It is because the price and earnings that you can earn out of sugar is a function of several other factors; it is a function of what stocks were in hand; it is

a function of when you sell. Last year, the country benefited enormously from the positive exchange rate between the Euro and the US dollar, and that is how the country earned much more. *[Applause]* It was nothing to do with voodoo economics. It has to do with good economics and production, but we did not have any to sell in 1990, we had to import all of these things.

Mr Speaker, again, this is important. I want to stay away from some of these subjects, knowing that my comrades on the other side get so upset when you speak about the past, but I cannot help it after listening to the Honourable Member Mr Dalglish Joseph last night, and listening to the Honourable Member Mr McAllister, about all the wonderful things, the milk and honey, that were flowing under the PNC's time.

Mr Speaker, the actual fact is, we have had a decline in the real income of the people of our country. What the minimum wage would have bought in 1985, it could have only bought half of that when we got into the Government in 1992. Sir, let me give you some figures to establish what I am saying.

- In 1980 the per capita income in this country was US\$720.
- In 1988 it went down to \$390; from \$720 it declined to \$390
- In 1989 it went down to \$290.

I am speaking about US dollars. It only started to go up after the PPP/C government went into government in 1992.

- In 1993 it started to go up to \$350; and
- This year it is \$850

Mr Speaker, our colleagues have done a horrible job in managing the affairs of our society, but today they still come and talk as if they know that they are the people with all the wisdom and yet they de-

stroyed this country when they were in office.

I also want to take up another point that was raised by Mr Dev. He argued that the IMF/World Bank prescriptions do not work in any way. I am not a big sympathiser of neoliberal economics, and I do not think that that is a secret in this place. I am not a big admirer of neoliberal economics, but then we have to also see that there is a kind of dynamism. We have to see the dynamics and the changes that are taking place in our world today. We have to understand that the interrelation of the world is becoming so great that it is impossible for the developed world and these institutions to ignore the conditions of the Third World at this point in time. And while it is true that China developed without an IMF/World Bank prescription, India is growing as fast as China, on which the Honourable Member claimed to be a specialist on; it is growing as fast as China and it has an IMF/World Bank programme to deal with. Again, it is not true, it is absolutely misleading, to state that no country could develop with these types of programmes.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member, while on the one hand is claiming that we have accepted, and that we are accepting everything that the IMF/World Bank writes for us, and at the same time, he accepted again that it was the resistance of this Government that prevented the privatisation of GUYSUICO. He is very contradictory in his speech. He is a very confused young man, I must say, or maybe he appears young because of the treatment to his head. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I want to deal a little with the flood since it was a topic elaborated on so often in our debate so far. In particular the PNC/R and Mr Dev seemed to join in a chorus just now in his speech. They have been arguing, more or less, that this was not a natural disaster, and I believe that their intentions are to try to see how much resources they can squeeze from this Government and to prevent it from carrying out its developmental works all over the country, because this position that we are taking now is a changed position from what we have.

I want to quote from a speech made by the leader of the Opposi-

tion, the Honourable Mr Robert Corbin, and he was speaking on 24 January 2005, and this is his new year's message posted on the PNC's website, and this is what he had to say:

*When a large-scale natural disaster strikes, it provides a test of our moral fibre, our resilience, and our integrity. The reactions necessary by the nation to natural disasters are not new.*

And he went on to speak of the need for disaster preparedness, et cetera. But here was the honourable gentleman accepting, in this speech on January 24, that this was a natural disaster and then, a few days later, he changed his mind and started with a lot of wild accusations. They were making all kinds of accusations. On one hand they were saying that they wanted to support the Guyanese people in their problems, and on the other they were calling up WLIB in New York and cursing up the government about discrimination, raising funds on the basis of a strike, probably for the re-election causes.

Mr Speaker, it is true that we had a bad disaster with the rains recently in this year that flooded a large part of our country. It is true that it is going to have an effect on our economy this year, particularly in the production of sugar in Enmore and LBI Estates. It would not have an effect on this crop, but it will have an effect on the second crop and the first crop of next year. So it is true that we have had some serious problems as a result of this natural disaster. But Mr Dev spoke as if the Government is doing nothing to improve our condition; yet, as I have shown before, our per capita income grew enormously over the period that we have been in Government. But we have been doing more than that, he referred to a project that he is on record of attacking, condemning and demanding that the sugar industry be closed. He is now referring to how he agrees with cogeneration and what have you, but this was always part of the Government's Programme not only to be a producer of raw materials, but to try to add value, and that project in Skeldon will not only produce sugar but, hopefully, we will have a refinery, and moreover, we will even have cogeneration, as the Honourable Member men-

tioned, and quite possibly a distillery as well.

As we are looking at all the other industries, all the other sugar factories in our society, to find value-added products, or new products, so that the industry can not only be saved, but the industry can continue to make a meaningful contribution to the country, as it has done in the past.

Mr Speaker, we can say the same thing about bauxite. We can recall that we used to produce in this country alumina. The aluminium plant was closed. From being a producer of semi-finished products, we were returned to a situation of producing raw material. Today we are working with international co-operations to get investment in our society, to not only to return the bauxite industry to its past glory, but to make it surpass the glories that it had, because part of our vision, and part of the relationship which we have been developing with these co-operations, is to try to go back to make alumina in our country once again.

Mr Speaker, I think that I can talk and point out all the deficiencies of the opposition and what we have been doing consistently to develop them, but we will have other opportunities. The Budget is a developmental tool. I am talking about the Budget, but you want me to talk about rice. That again, as you know, many, many people in our society, and some of my friends on the other side, have been earning a very comfortable living from the rice industry.

Mr Speaker, I want to touch a little on my colleague's comment just now about the electoral database. We have had a big debate in this House in relation to the electoral database and I do not think anything has changed from then to now to call for a changed position. But we must be suspicious, Sir, when all kinds of unreasonable demands are being made. We recall, Sir, before the 1997 elections, there was set an IPCER, including all the political parties in this National Assembly, to look at all the arrangements for a national election. We recall that we have an agreement with that Committee about how the elections should

run, including the voter's ID card. We brought that matter to this National Assembly and it was passed unanimously, yet lo and behold our colleagues on the other side went to the courts to call for the elections to be vitiated on the grounds that the voter's ID card was used.

We did a house-to-house registration in 1997. In 2001 we did another house-to-house registration, because each person had to go once again to get his photograph taken. The Honourable Member spoke about biometrics, but there is biometrics at the Elections Commission, Sir. You have a photograph and a thumbprint in the Elections Commission's database. That is biometrics, but our colleagues are now calling for ten fingers, and maybe the next time they will want your toes to be printed. What I want to point out, Sir, is that, in every database, in every electoral roll, in every list, there will be some errors. That is unavoidable, even if you take all the people now, by tomorrow morning, you will have some changes, some people might die, some people might leave the country, et cetera. What the tactics of the opposition has been all the time is to try to look at small issues, small problems, to talk about them and to say that these are huge insurmountable problems and that everything must be scrapped. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable Member.

**Mr Donald R Ramotar:** Mr Speaker, every time the Opposition cries foul, the Elections Commission brought in people from abroad, independent people, to examine these things. Here is what they said about some the problems at this stage, as far as the database is concerned. This is a report from the Audit and Systems Review of the 2001 elections process in Guyana by the International IDEA. Here is what they tell us on page 27, paragraph 11.8.7 and paragraph 11.8.8:



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*In spite of this, GECOM managed to print a final voters' list of reasonably high accuracy, which can stand up to international scrutiny, and is comparable internationally. In essence, in a voters' list of approximately 440,185, the errors discovered were fewer than 1,000, and were mostly due to misallocation.*

That is how you all have some of these people dislocated.

Less than 1,000 mistakes from a list of 440,185... *[Interruption: 'Let us get Griffith Report.']* Griffith did not know forensic audit, you know that, you like to call for forensic. The report went on to say:

*The existing system for the registration of voters and list compilation is a very good base for the continued administration of elections. As such it should be developed into a more permanent system for population registration, of which elections are one component.*

There is no doubt that the elections database is by far the most accurate database in Guyana, and it would be a waste of resources for it not to be properly utilised. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the position that the Opposition takes on this issue is totally unreasonable. Again, I do not know if this is to distort or if this is an attempt to try to squeeze, as much as possible, the resources from the Government and to probably create donor fatigue in this country so that we do not have support for our democratic elections in our society.

Mr Speaker, I do not understand. I have regards for the People's National Congress/Reform, and I think that they have been a Party with the capacity to do their political work on the ground, but their behaviour and their actions are telling me that they are losing support very, very rapidly, because what they actually want to do, what they are actually asking us in practice, is to get the Elections Commission to do the scrutinising work for them. That is what they are trying to, do and I do not think that it is fair to spend taxpayers' money to do the work of political

parties, when it is the task of the political parties to do these things themselves.

Mr Speaker, I believe that we can, if we are all reasonable, but our opponents' reason on the other side seem to have fled them. They seem not to be taking any type of reasonable position, but I am sure that if they come with a reasonable position, reasonable arguments, we can find a lot of agreement, and we can move this country forward. I therefore urge them . . . They are pushing at an open door. The PPP/C has always been fighting for unity in our society. We will always be fighting to build unity. We have developed in this country. The Honourable Member, Mr Alexander, mockingly spoke with the Constitution in his hand and said that today we always say that this is the best Constitution in the Caribbean, and that we are violating it. It is totally untrue. It is distortion and cheap politics to take such a shot at us. We have been the ones, since 1992, who tried to change this Constitution. The PNC/R boycotted the first constitutional Commission that we set up in order to change the constitution before the 1997 elections. For more than a year they stayed away, but we were patient. We waited after the 1997 elections. We worked with them to get a new constitution that we can all be proud of. But, lo and behold, from the moment we made the Constitution, they are calling to change the Constitution once again. Before the ink is dried, they want to have the Constitution changed once more.

Mr Speaker, I think in many, many ways we sell ourselves short. We are the only country in this whole region that have Standing Committees where opposition and Government members chair and interchange. Ask Mr McAllister if the Economic Services Committee does not work; ask Mr Lumumba if we did not call the Prime Minister, who heads all of these agencies, to come before us to explain their positions, to explain their policies, and to give us an opportunity to develop. We called;

- the Minister of Trade;
- the Minister of Works;

- the Minister of Local Government; and
- the Minister of Housing

in front to develop policies and plans in our society. Mr Kadir knows, he was the Deputy Chairman, or he is now the Chairman of that Committee. Are you the Chairman of the Committee? *{Interruption: 'Not yet. '}* Well, you and Mr Lumumba got your own story. But they have been working. We have been bringing these people together and dealing with these issues.

I had a conversation with a Speaker of a Caribbean country that visited here, and he told me that their Public Accounts Committee did not, meet over the last five years. We have the 2003 Public Accounts Report out and reports are ready to go to the National Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that there are lot of things that we can do together if we all put our shoulders to the wheel. Stop trying to take cheap political advantage and changing positions on what is a natural disaster and what is not a natural disaster. Let us work and build this country of ours. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Dr Norton.

**Dr George A Norton:** Mr Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Budget Debate of 2005. Like my Honourable Colleague, Mr Jerome Khan, I congratulate the Minister of Finance on the Budget he presented to this Honourable House, especially the theme he affixed to it, that is: *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development* for, in examining this Budget, one can surely conclude that all the citizens of Guyana will be certainly confronting challenges for survival, especially the poor, the disabled, the disadvantaged, the Guyanese of rural precedence, and the Indigenous people of Guyana.

Like the situation of the Ministry of Labour, as was pointed out by

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the Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams, no mention was ever made in this Budget of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. It might be interesting to hear how the Minister of Amerindian Affairs will lend her support to this Budget, since it is the norm for the respective Ministers to rebut presentations made by Members of the Opposition as though it is the Opposition who is presenting their Budget. If it was the other way around, it would certainly allow for less rhetoric, less beating of the press and creating space for advancing a more purposeful plan for the future of this country.

On page 23 of the Budget Presentation, paragraph 4.4, the Honourable Minister stated that *the Government will continue to invest massively in the physical infrastructure - education, health, water and sanitation*, among others. Let us examine the situation as it stands at this moment, with respect to each one of these areas.

In the area of education and training, the Honourable Minister did say in his Budget Speech on page 35:

*A well-educated, healthy and secure population is essential for overall economic growth and reduction of poverty.*

While this is commendable, I urge that, not only should the rural area incentives be implemented by the Ministry of Education, but that it should be done immediately, or as early as possible. Teachers in the rural areas seem not to want to return to their hinterland community when they come out to the coastland for training. Hence the dire need to expand, in no uncertain terms, the Distance Education Programme, not only in the area of Ishalton that was stated in the Budget, but to all other riverain areas. This will certainly help to solve the problem of shortages, or under-staffing, that is plaguing the schools in these riverain areas. Not only are the teachers lost in the coastland after their training, for whatever reason, justifiable or not, and I do advise that mechanisms be put in place to address this but, while the teachers are away from the schools for training, the schools are left short of staff, with vacancies that are not

reflected as such, since these teachers remain registered as employed at the said school, even though physically they are not there in the school, hence those vacancies cannot be filled. Mr Speaker, this situation needs to be corrected speedily in order to prove that the Minister's statement is in fact so.

With respect to health, we find that the increase in the Budget for the health sector, as has been expected year after year, is higher than it was before. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to know that, regardless of the large sums of money allocated *to start construction, equipping and furnishing of new a hospital complex*, as was stated on page 37, that the Guyanese doctors, especially those locally trained, will continue to leave, not only the Public Service, but they will continue to leave the country as well if their working environment, especially salaries, are not addressed adequately.

Right now, in the hinterland locations, our Guyanese doctors are much more suitable to be placed. There are foreigners, particularly the Cubans, filling these positions. Probably, like the Ministry of Education, there needs to be a rural area incentive for these doctors. For this reason, I urge the Minister of Health to give some thought to this idea, even if it means attaching to the post graduate training a stint in the rural area, for, at this moment, there is no doctor present in Region 9, and there was never one in Region 8 and Sub-region 1. In Region 9, at this moment, the health portfolio is managed by a medex, who certainly is not anywhere near qualified to function in the place of a doctor.

The situation is the same for dentistry. For the whole of Region 9, there is only one dentex, or dental technician, as is in the case of Region I in the Mabaruma Sub-region. This certainly is not good enough. We need to do better as a nation, especially when one considers the ravages of HIV and TB in the hinterland communities, along with the decimating of these very communities by Malaria.

The malaria situation requires a national emergency response since, even though it might have been inaccurate, as was stated in the Stabroek

News not so long ago, that the entire village of Fairview was infected by malaria, yet this was not far from the truth, for it is quite possible for that to occur.

It is the obligation of this administration to put systems in place so that the residents of these communities have ready access to suitably qualified personnel. It is stated in the Budget on page 38, paragraph 4.44, that *a sum of \$280 million has been budgeted for the management and care of STIs/HIV/TB. Also, Guyana and USAID are funding a US\$20 million HIV/AIDS Reduction and Prevention Programme.* I do hope we do not go reinventing the wheel, and that we do take a leaf from the book of countries like Uganda and Thailand that have managed to reduce the rate of infection of HIV, and this was done, or achieved, primarily by concentrating on the stopping of the infection by sexual transmission, which so far has proven to be very effective, by the use of the device of a condom. Sample analyses, random inquiring, in villages in the interior locations at times reveal that sometimes not even a single condom is available. I urge that this situation be corrected and that there should always be a surplus and very easy access to that device, which means so much, with respect to the survival of a people, and of a community as a whole.

While the Budget did speak of an optical health programme for the aged, one must question the possibility of duplication of this programme, and the measures that are in place to avoid this duplication, since the National Insurance Scheme is already providing such a service to its pensioners. This is very important, for accountability is called into play, especially since person or persons who have so far been involved in this optical health programme, are being asked for their resignations, due to practices that are not compatible with good governance.

It is somewhat surprising to see this G\$50 spectacles programme being mentioned here in this Budget, since the newspapers have been carrying articles about this programme since 2004. But we questioned if this programme is the best there is to offer to the Guyanese public, because the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation was providing a simi-

lar programme of a higher quality, for before a patient is refracted, or tested for spectacles, he or she is properly examined by an optometrist, who decides whether or not the use for spectacles was needed, or was necessary, and who can also diagnose the presence of blinding disorders, such as cataract, glaucoma, retinal detachment, diabetic retinographies that can be treated by a specialist, or the unearthing of dyslectic problems that need to be referred to the appropriate sub-speciality of the education personnel for proper management.

The Optical Health Programme does not employ the services of an ophthalmologist, and the walk-in system is employed and testing for spectacles is done by anyone, regardless whether that person suffers from systematic disorders that might be decompensated, such as diabetes, hypertension or any other systemic disease that has a direct effect on the status of vision. This programme might not only be short-changing the public, but might also be giving a false sense of security that all that was needed was a pair of spectacles when, in reality, there is a much more serious condition that requires expert management.

One Honourable Minister did credit a cataract programme to this Budget, where some 3,000 cataract surgeries are supposed to be performed. Quoting from a newspaper, unless there are two such projects, then that project is completely isolated from this Budget, and I refer particularly to a document that I have here, Project Title: *Expand the capacity of the Georgetown Public Hospital to Deliver High Quality Cataract Service Using Intra-octal Lens*. This is a programme for over three years duration in which 3,000 cataract surgeries will be performed. Project Starting time September 1, 2004; Total Budget US \$561,571 contributed by ORBIS. This is a programme, and I refer to the programme referred to in this document, that is to take care of the backlog of cataract cases that exist at present at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation due to, among other factors, lack of adequate supply of consumable operating materials that the hospitals simply seems unable to acquire.

One must question how useful this project is to the country as a

whole, and when it is understood that a cataract outreach programme, that is, surgeons going into these hinterland locations, as was done on previous occasions, then probably we might be reaching to more patients, who are in much more need of the cataract surgery, than leaving the situation for them to leave their hinterland locations, or outside of Georgetown, to come to the Georgetown Hospital to have their surgeries done. We know how difficult it is. We know how inconvenient it is for hinterland residents to not only wish the city, but to come and have access to the services of the Georgetown Hospital. I just hope that the Honourable Minister of Health will take this onboard, and bearing in mind that cataract surgeries are no longer a situation that requires hospitalisation, and that in the past visiting teams from the Georgetown Hospital, with some support, have done these programmes in all the regions of this country, including Region 8.

The Budget on page 28 refers to the allocation of *more resources to non-traditional agriculture sector so as to provide technical assistance to more domestic producers to obtain certification and meet international standards* but, Mr Speaker, the peanut growers from Region 9 have been begging for the alpha-toxin free certificate for their peanuts for the longest while, and all they received were promises. Promises that they received when they pleaded for a reduction of the withdrawal of the tax that is now fixed to peanut production, for as this situation now stands, the peanut growers in Region 9 cannot compete with the imported peanuts for the local market and without that certification, they cannot access external markets.

These farmers in Region 9, like those in Region 1, Mabaruma Sub-region, are calling for suitably qualified agricultural officers for their regions. In the case of Mabaruma, the Agricultural Field Assistant has no means of visiting the farmers in the outlying villages, for there is no means of transportation - either by boat or by road. As a matter of fact, the Agricultural Field Assistant at Mabaruma does not even have an office from where he can work, for the one that is there at present is uninhabitable, yet we have been told here in this House about the great things that the organic farmers are doing in that area.



The Budget also spoke of \$175 million that has been budgeted to commence infrastructural work under the Secondary Township Project but, for some reason or the other, Lethem and Mabaruma have been left out of those mentioned, with their roads in a deplorable state as one can imagine, and may many times impassable.

In the case of Mabaruma, this is in spite of the large amount of money spent on machinery to do the same, and these are only left as they described them, as yellow and green elephants, for these equipment were freshly painted in yellow and green when they were bought., but they were in no condition to do the work that they were supposed to do, and they were left abandoned.

The residents in these hinterland communities are crying foul and, in spite of the lofty descriptions that the Honourable Minister Shaik Baksh painted about the water situation in Guyana, yet the communities, like Hosororo Hill, Bunbury Hill, Barabina Hill, Wauna and Kumaka, are now only receiving water one hour a day if they do get. For many days they are without any at all. We hope that with this \$1.2 billion provided in this Budget that this situation will be corrected.

These residents in Region 1, Mabaruma Sub-region, are still suffering from the unreliable means of maritime transportation. They, however constantly remind you of a certain individual, who is now a minister, and who used to describe the steamer as a slave ship and that it will be abandoned as soon as he gets into power. Now we are hearing of money allocated in this Budget to rehabilitate the slave ship instead of acquiring a new boat.

The residents of Regions 8 and 9 must be, to some degree, accurate when they expressed the feeling of being discriminated against for, in the whole of the country, they are the only residents that pay a toll to use the road to gain access to their homes. There is \$2.8 billion allocated to continue improvement of the road network on the coast of this country, yet these roads require no toll for their use. On the other hand, the Lethem/Mabura road, with no budgetary allocation, continues to

extract a toll from these residents. The residents of these two regions are calling for the Government to pay for the upgrade and maintenance of this road, and to ease them of this burden.

On page 33 of the Budget, mention is made of sea and river defences. Please be informed that, while tourism is mentioned as a promising new growth area, yet local tourism, with the powerful jet boats, which are used to carry the tourists to their destinations, are causing so much erosion that there is much need for river defence, especially for villages in the riverain communities and around the different tourist resorts. Yet nothing is mentioned of river defence in this Budget.

While much praise is sung to the Barama Company Limited for the US \$35 million and the 500 jobs that will be created, I urge that we make sure that these jobs land in the hands of Guyanese. I say this, because this seems not to be the case with this particular company. At this particular time, Guyanese can do well with jobs that are now being performed by foreigners brought into this country by that very company, and I do not speak of highly-skilled jobs. Jobs like drivers and so on. I see no need for Barama Company to be bringing in workers to do those jobs when Guyanese are without jobs.

Barama was praised for being in the process of obtaining a certificate for the protection of flora and fauna after being evaluated. This is commendable, but I urge that a similar social impact assessment be also done of this company, especially at its Buck Hall operations. For if we are indeed serious about the Bill which was tabled in this House not so long ago, about the trafficking in persons, then there might be an opportunity where this Bill can be brought into action following that evaluation. I do hope that this is taken much more than just a little hint. For we must not be content to say that we can only go up to where our information allows us to go, but we must be prepared to go further to eliminate all doubts that all is not well. But not only Barama being a foreign company operation in Guyana, might be guilty of not providing jobs for Guyanese, I think, some interest or attention should also be paid to the situation of the Brazilian miners, for some reason or the other, they seldom employ

Guyanese to work with them and if they do, they have a ... if I might say ... a special selection based on the ethnicity of whom do you employ. I bring this to your attention.

On page 47 of Budget 2005, Paragraph, *K. Governance and People Participation*, mention is made of *the move of the PNC/R last year to end the constructive engagement*. This was done for different reasons, and I will point out one of those reasons to you.

Following the dialogue, then the constructive engagement, a task force on local government reform was put in place, and we heard from the Honourable Minister about this task force is still working and, from what we have been hearing, it is not only active but dynamic. As one of its mandate, this task force had to deal with legislation, not only for the traditional local government, but also for the Amerindian self-government. Notwithstanding this process, the Government has gone ahead with a parallel process of the revision of the Amerindian Act, completely ignoring Amerindian governance in the context of local government and, as a result, we now end up with the Draft Amerindian Act. While we agree that the present one is outdated, the Amerindian community had hoped that the Government would fully recognise the rights of Indigenous people, particularly their rights to the traditional lands, territories and resources, and to maintain and develop their own forms of social, political and cultural organisations and their state of autonomous, self-determining, indigenous people would have been adequately recognised and protected by law.

However, according to the draft legislation, there are so many disappointments. In some ways the draft legislation represents a step backwards for the existing protection of their rights in the laws of Guyana. Discrimination against the indigenous people remain entrenched and is manifested in the draft legislation, and the rights to land, territories and resources and to self-determination are neither adequately recognised nor protected. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Your time is up, Honourable Member.

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**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** I wish to move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

**The Speaker:** Proceed, Honourable Member.

**Dr George A Norton:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We observe, with great disappointment, that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs has disregarded many of the recommendations made by the indigenous people during the initial stages of consultation on the draft legislation, as well as disregarded most of the recommendations of the international legal experts hired to provide advice on the draft legislation in compatibility of the International Human Rights Laws.

Mr Speaker, we urge the government not to adopt the draft legislation in its present form and to enact a legislation that truly would protect the rights of the indigenous people of Guyana. It is important that this situation be remedied before it becomes law. It is reflected in a publication by GINA, which says that, *before 1992 Amerindians were treated as second-class citizens. Today, Amerindians enjoy the same rights, facilities and opportunities as any other group.* Mr Speaker, this is a Government publication. I am saying to you that, not only is this a conceptual misrepresentation, but if we do allow this draft legislation to become law, then in reality the Amerindians in Guyana would then be, by law, second-class citizens. I refer particularly to where the draft legislation creates a distinction where communities holding titles for their lands and those which are about 30 to 50 indigenous communities that have neither. This clearly establishes a second-class status for those indigenous people that the State has failed to legally recognise. To my mind, that is when, and only when, Amerindians would be treated as second-class citizens, and, it has nothing to do with before and after 1992. With respect to first and second class, I, as an Amerindian, the only class I am familiar with is my first-class honours that I got as a specialist in ophthalmology. *[Applause]* I quote from the same book, and it went on to say

that the Amerindian Act will be revised and will be tabled in Parliament in October. That would have been in October of last year. Now, this document was in a package that was supposed to be a hand-out to foreigners who came to this country, and this was given by GINA.

Mr Speaker, one cannot bring oneself to think how we can physically be associated with persons of this thought to have printed something as reprehensible as this to a people with a distinct culture, with dignity and pride. *[Applause]* It is a level of insensitivity that I have never experienced before, and I am telling you that it is really a surprise that some of us have acquiesced to no uncertain terms to this repulsive statement. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

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

The Minister of Amerindian Affairs.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues:** Mr Speaker, I rise to add my support to Budget 2005, and join in congratulating the Honourable Minister of Finance and his staff for a job well done.

Mr Speaker, preparing a Budget is no easy task, especially when you have, as an imperative, the need to include something for everyone. I have no doubt, Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the challenges, that this Budget has included something for everyone. If this is not seen then perhaps those looking have not looked hard enough, or are just not interested in knowing the truth.

Mr Speaker, the needs of individuals are infinite and when one need is met, another is created. This is only natural. It is not possible to please everyone. However, it is important at the individual community and national levels that we recognise from where we came, measure the progress made, and identify and work on those goals that are outstanding. It is not good enough to identify the problems. This is the easiest thing to do. It is equally important to identify solutions, and an even tougher job to make them reality.

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Amidst all the challenges of globalisation and our own local challenges, it is my view that our Government has done well. It is in this light that the theme of Budget 2005 *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development* is so appropriate.

Mr Speaker, Budget 2005 is as far as we can go. Our Government has a responsibility to ensure that there is equity as far as is possible and, in some cases, this very equity necessitates some groups having more than others in order to balance. While we struggle with this locally, we cannot turn a blind eye to the global overcast that hangs over us. It is probably usual opposition political posturing to ignore these other factors, but they are real and we cannot hide from them.

Mr Speaker, the external environment is one that is becoming less friendly to small countries like ours. We have to play the game, but on many occasions we have no input in making the rules. It is becoming the norm for these rules to change, as we have seen in the sugar sector, and these changes are more often than not to the detriment of small economies.

Mr Speaker, globalisation can do many things and there are many theories out there, but I would urge that, for us in Guyana, it instills in us a sense of nation-building where we must stick together and keep the Guyanese brand name. We must work to confront the challenges.

In the Budget debate of 2004, I spoke about the need to inculcate positive attitudes. Just a few days ago, I heard on the radio by someone who spoke about countries that are far advanced and have little natural wealth, as compared to Guyana. I think an example cited was Holland. The person concluded that the attitude of the people in that country was a major factor in their development. In this light, I will repeat what I said last year, that we have, as Guyanese, to examine our attitude towards our children, the elderly, the environment, development, and generally towards life.

We have to stop denigrating our country, and it was sad to hear the

Honourable Member, Mr Basil Williams, ending his presentation by saying, *woe to Guyana*. I refuse to accept that this is the kind of message we, at this level, should be sending to the rest of the population. In fact, I believe that once we decide to take a seat in this Honourable House, it is because we believe that we will make a positive change. As Guyanese, on many occasions, we are the first to denigrate our country. We tend to see only the negatives. What has happened to patriotism? We have to remember that we have to love ourselves before we can love others.

Mr Speaker, while the Ministry for Amerindian Affairs manages some specific programmes, it is more a Ministry of collaboration and advocacy. Since its advent, it has grown considerably. The general mandate of the Ministry is to address the concerns of the Amerindian people, with the ultimate goal of improving their lives. I must admit that, for a very long time, the greatest challenge has been to ensure economic viability of these communities. The high transportation costs and the concomitant high cost of living conspire to undermine economic opportunities. But, to date, significant strides have been made, in terms of access to the hinterland.

The Honourable Member, Dr Norton, spoke of the fact that communities or residents of Regions 8 and 9 have to pay toll, but the road to Lethem has effectively decreased transportation cost by more than 250 percent. *[Applause]* You can now go to Lethem and return to Georgetown at a cost of G\$12,000, as opposed to an airfare of G\$40,000. I have just returned from Paramakatoi in Region 8 and I was informed by the residents there that trucks have started to ply this route, a route which is the brainchild of the Honourable Minister Mr Harripersaud Nokta. *[Applause]* The road is still rudimentary, and I heard the Honourable Member, Mrs Bancroft, refer to it as a dry-weather road, but Mrs Bancroft is very much aware that you have to start somewhere and that, some years ago, the Lethem road was considered a dry-weather road too. Today things have changed.

Mr Speaker, as I turn my direction to education, I cannot help but state that the PPP/C's record of education in the hinterland is second to

none. Dr Norton spoke of the Distance Education Programme being established in Aishalton this year, but I have to tell Dr Norton that we have already established centres in Region 1, in the Moruka and Mabaruma Sub-regions, Annai and Lethem. So Aishalton is the fifth such centre that this Government is going to establish.

Mr Speaker, the Fast-Track Initiative Programme has already seen teachers benefiting from an incentive, and I take note of Dr Norton's recommendations for us and, in particular, in the Minister of Health, to look at the aspect of incentives in terms of doctors, and I am sure that the Minister of Health will respond appropriately.

In his Speech, the Honourable Minister of Finance said a well educated, healthy and secure population is essential for overall economic growth and the reduction of poverty. Mr Speaker, this is what our Government believes in, and has demonstrated in so many ways, that education is a top priority.

Mr Speaker, our Amerindian communities have suffered for a very long time in terms of access to secondary education. The statistics are there to show in lessening the gap of inequity, several measures have been put in place. While a mere ten years ago - just ten years ago, Mr Speaker, less than 200 of our Amerindian children had access to secondary education, in just one decade this has increased to 3,500 at any one time. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member, Mr McAllister, indicated during his presentation that he cannot identify, or that he is finding it difficult to identify, anything that this Government has built. Perhaps they are too many, he cannot differentiate, but he is not here at this time, but I would take this opportunity to invite Mr McAllister to come with me and he will see what we are doing in the hinterland. He would see that we now have: eight secondary schools at Santa Rosa, Mabaruma, Waramadong, Paramakatoi, Anna, Aishalton, St Ignatius, and there are many others that are either in the pipeline, or being built, for example, the one at Mahdia.

Mr Speaker, you would appreciate that precarious settlement pat-



terms of the Amerindian communities make it impossible to place a secondary school in each community. It is for this reason that eight dormitories have been built, and these accommodate more than 1,000 students. Meals and accommodation are provided free of cost. This year, both the Santa Rosa and Mabaruma dormitories will be extended to cater for additional students.

Mr Speaker, in addition to these regional secondary schools, this year the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs will be spending more than 40 percent of its current budget on the hinterland scholarship programme, which caters for an average of 225 students. These students are those who have gained more than 470 marks at the Common Entrance examinations, and others who are not fortunate to benefit from secondary educations. Our allocation for this programme has been increased from \$37.7 million from 2004 to \$55.3 million in 2005, representing a 68 percent increase. We intend to further expand this programme, and to provide opportunities for those who otherwise would not have them. Working with the Ministry of Public Service, we also intend to increase the number of scholarship students attending the University of Guyana. At present we have 80 such students. Mr Speaker, at no other time in the history of our country has education for Amerindian people have been this great. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I could see with the Members on the other side of the House, when these initiatives may seem modest, because secondary education is a basic need, but to many, just over a decade ago, it looked like a far-off dream. We have seen the effects where most persons today over 35 are now learning from their children as they were not that fortunate.

Today, things are different. Our Amerindian children have reason to aspire since there are opportunities for education, not only in their regions, but general opportunities created by this Government. Mr Speaker, our hinterland children have shown that, once given the opportunity, they can excel at the highest level. Last year, we had very positive results at the CXC, both at the regional and national levels. Our hinter-

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land scholarship children held the top positions at CXC at the Anna Regina Multilateral School, President's College, and also at St Stanislaus College, where one of our hinterland students topped the country at the CAPE Examinations.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry is also working very hard to ensure that we have a decent communication system. Last year, we provided 25 radio communication sets to Region 9. That completed the number of radio sets required by that region. An additional 15 radios were provided to communities in Regions 1, 2 and 8. This year, we will continue this programme to ensure that all the villages are equipped with this vital facility.

Last year, I spoke about our intention to train leaders of Amerindian communities. We started a programme in October, 2004 and training will be completed by the end of March, 2005. More than 300 leaders have been trained, covering more than 90 communities. The areas are:

- governance;
- project management;
- public administration and finance;
- community development and decision-making; and
- environmental management.

Mr Speaker, this is part of our mandate, to ensure that we build the capacity of our leaders so that they can improve the management of their communities.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry, together with the Geology and Mines Commission, have completed the training of community mines rangers. Several of these trainees have been employed by the GGMC to monitor mining activities in the different regions.

As I mentioned last year, in my presentation to this Honourable House, continuing with training with assistance from UNDP, the Ministry has now embarked on a natural resource management programme. While it is commonly felt that Amerindians are protectors of the environment, this tradition has been compromised by increased populations and the need to earn, among other things.

As I indicated last year, many of our communities are involved in forestry activities to earn a livelihood, but while this should be encouraged, we have noticed that, in some areas, it is done in a way that is not compatible with sustainability. This is causing severe problems for our communities, especially when the forest is raped and there is no benefit to show. As such this training is necessary, and it is the response to request of nearby communities due to unsustainable harvest practices. The 16 communities of the North Rupununi are involved in this project, and one of the deliverables is the formulation of rules, which will follow ratification by communities, form the by-laws of the various villages. Comprehensive management plans are also part of this project, and we hope to repeat this in other regions.

Mr Speaker, in 2004, we continued with the birth certificate programme and, together with the Ministry of Home Affairs, and in particular the General Registrar's Office, more than 4,000 birth certificates have been issued. The Ministry intends to complete the backlog of outstanding birth certificates in 2005.

Mr Speaker, we are very cognisant of the need to provide better service to the people we are mandated to serve. In this light, in a matter of weeks, the Ministry will be housed in a brand new building situated at the corner of Quamina and Thomas Streets. *[Applause]* The much-needed space and improved accommodation and outreach will only serve to move the Ministry forward.

Mr Speaker, this is not all, the Ministry has also extended the northern wing of the Amerindian Hostel in Princess Street to cater for the increased number of persons seeking temporary accommodation.

The Honourable Member, Dr Norton, touched on the Amerindian Act, and while this Act will be coming to this House for us to debate, I think I would have to answer some of the questions posed by the Hon Dr Norton.

First, Mr Basil Williams is not here, but he can tell this Honourable House that, when the Local Government Reform Outreach Programme was ongoing, the communities spoke loud and clear. I am not sure if he visited Dr Norton's village, and perhaps he should do so. But I want to say, Mr Speaker, that the revision of the Amerindian Act is something that has been called for, for a very long time. Let me tell you, Mr Speaker, that the first set of people that I invited to discuss this, and to tell them that we are moving forward to revise this Act, was the Amerindian Non-governmental Organisations. Dr Norton has a number of caps and he was wearing the NGO one at that time.

I remember this like yesterday, the Honourable Member Dr Norton said to me, *Minister, we are very happy that you have taken this initiative to have this Amerindian Act revised.* Mr Speaker, that was in 2002. Alright! So after that the Hon Dr Norton and other Toshaos were also involved in formulating the process to revise the Amerindian Act. This process has a number of stages, and we are at the stage where we have not only consulted the communities when we needed their recommendations, but we have actually taken the draft Act back to them. Mr Speaker, this is unprecedented in South America and, I daresay, in the world, where a Government has consulted with more than 95 percent of the Amerindian communities on the laws that will affect them. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, the draft Amerindian Act ... I can probably take this opportunity, and perhaps it would be good if the Honourable Member, Mrs Deborah Backer, listen so that she would not say things that are out of line ... We have received those recommendations, they are being summarised and Cabinet will be considering those additional recommendations. Mr Speaker, when it comes to this House, the Act will go to a Special Select Committee ... *[Interruption: 'How you know?']* *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, please ...

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues:** I can tell you this, because ... *[Interruption: 'Did the draft reflect what they want?']*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, this is very unfair to the Honourable Member.

**Hon Carolyn Rodrigues:** Mr Speaker, unfortunately I do not know if it is the time, but apparently the Honourable Member is on the other side of the House, and does not know that it is the Government on this side, and we can decide what goes to a Special Select Committee and, in this case, we have decided this. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member made specific mention of making Amerindians second-class citizens in this country. I have spoken about a lot of what we have done, and I think that has certainly made sure that everyone in this House recognises that this Government treats Amerindian people the same way as any other citizen in Guyana, and that is as first-class citizen of this country.

It is a little disturbing that the Honourable Member on the other side would even have the audacity to speak about this Act when it was here since 1951. This Amerindian Act is more than 40 years old and they did not touch it. We are doing this and they would be given an opportunity to speak about it. *[Applause]*

I have to let this Honourable House know that, because there has been a lot of misinterpretation as it relates to the draft Amerindian Act, and I know that people have several agendas, but I want to let you know that one of the criticisms of the existing Amerindian Act is that it only catered for title communities. Those are communities that have received titles to their land. The draft Act catered for both titled and untitled communities, and the only reason why we distinguished community groups from village councils, because legally we all know what is titled and what is untitled. Perhaps Dr Norton can consult with some of his counterparts over there and they would be able to explain a little bit

more.

Mr Speaker, as it relates to the plan for 2005, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, in its efforts to improve transportation facilities, we would be purchasing a cargo/passenger boat for Orealla at a cost of G\$14 million. *[Applause]*

We will also be providing a tractor and trailer for the 72 Miles community, better know as Kaburi in Region 7. We will also continue our programme of constructing village offices and ten village offices will be constructed this year, bringing the total to thirty village offices to be constructed. We will also be constructing a hostel at Suddie to cater for persons accompanying referred patients from the surrounding communities at a cost of \$10 million. We will also be providing electricity to St Cuthbert's Mission by purchasing a 75 KWH generator for that community. We will also continue our school uniform programme where we will be providing school uniforms to all students of Amerindian communities in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. Last year, we completed Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. We will also continue our land demarcation programme.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned before, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is one of advocacy and collaboration. The Government, in its planning ... and perhaps this is why the Honourable Member, Dr Norton, did not see the words Ministry of Amerindian Affairs because, when the Government is planning, we include all Guyanese and does not embrace a policy of separating Amerindians from others, except when it is a case to ensure equity. As such, a number of my colleagues would have spoken, and others will speak about programmes and projects that have benefited, or that are intended to benefit Amerindian communities, especially in the areas of health, education, human services and transport.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to inform this Honourable House that, with respect to the *alpha toxin* certificate required by the farmers of Region 9, the Government of Guyana and USAID are aggressively working on this and we are hoping that that certificate will be available within three months time.

Mr Speaker, as I close, I want to let you know that highlighting the achievements are in no way meant to convey that we have arrived at our destiny. I wish to add that providing adequate social and other services to Amerindian communities remain a challenge, but we have done well and our record is unmatched.

The Government will continue to do its best to improve the lives of the Amerindian people and Guyana as a whole, and I take this opportunity to invite the members on the other side of the House to join in this effort. I thank you. *[Applause]*

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

Honourable Members, I think this is a convenient time in which we can take a break for fifteen minutes.

**20:05H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

**20:25H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING**

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Member, Miss Amna Ally.

**Miss Amna Ally:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of this House, I stand to add my voice to the Budget Debate, but before I do so, I want to clarify a few things, and to state the facts.

Earlier today, the Honourable Member Mr Baksh spoke of over 100 housing estates established by the PPP/C and that you can barely count the housing schemes on your fingers that was done by the PNC/R. But what the Honourable Member did not tell this House are the following:

- That the PNC/R established proper housing schemes with good infrastructure like roads, et cetera
- That the PNC/R never pointedly selected areas to put roads and lights. They did so for all the established housing areas.

- The PPP/C government has been asking people to pay large sums of money to back them up of acquiring land.
- The disparity in the size of the houselots must be noted, and I am sorry the Honourable Member is not here.
- The PPP/C gave houselots; the PNC/R gave completed houses; keys for your homes.
- The PPP/C has been giving out squatter settlements, not housing estates. Several housing estates were built by self-help.

Secondly, the Honourable Member, Mr Ramotar, averred that not a single road you could have travelled on without potholes. Well, Sir, I am convinced that the Honourable Member, Mr Ramotar, is experiencing lapses in memory, and I wonder if he has forgotten that the Georgetown to Rosignol road will stand its testimony until today; the Corentyne Highway; the Linden Highway, and the roads in Region 3. I must remind you, Sir.

Thirdly, Mr Speaker, I would like to let the Honourable Minister of Amerindian Affairs know that she has just nullified the democracy that you on that side and the Government always speak of. Where is the democracy when the Minister has announced that the Amerindian Act will go to a Special Select Committee? You do not care what the discussion would be, but you have decided, usurping your governmental function, to say that it has to go to Special Select Committee.

Mr Speaker, Budget 2005 *Confronting Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development*. As I analyse the theme of the 2005 Budget, and as I reflect, I said to myself that Guyanese really have strength to confront the challenges of 2004, and maybe they have to have more strength to confront the challenges of 2005.

The question of sustaining growth and development leaves me to ponder. What exactly are we sustaining? Is it the 1.6 percent the Min-



ister spoke about in his Budget Speech? Is it the depreciation of the Guyana dollar by 2.9 percent and further? Is it the inflated living conditions that the Guyanese people have to endure? Or is it the newest trademark of narco-trafficking.

Mr Speaker, what this Budget really provides for is heightened depression, a recipe for stress, and further disaster.

I want to focus primarily on Region 5. As you know, Region 5 is an agriculture-based region and the region where an important drainage and irrigation project exists. Sir, as we examined the 2005 Budget, we see a number of projects, some drainage projects, repairs to schools and roads among others. But as we examined and analyse these projects, we see a number of deficiencies being quite visible. I submit poor management and bad governance pervades proper execution of these projects. Sir, I will venture to allude to some of these deficiencies.

First of all, let us take a look at the Health Sector. Very often we hear from the Government side, *oh, we built this health centre; we extended X hospital*. But, Sir, what is the purpose of having new buildings and no staff? How functional can it be, and of what service can that be to the people of the community? A large region as Region 5 has one operating doctor. Mr Speaker, I am not speaking of a medex acting as a doctor, I am speaking of a real doctor, a qualified doctor. How can one doctor service such a vast region? Mr Speaker, the operating theatre at Fort Wellington has not been working for three years, and this was since the departure of Dr Sangster. The exodus of midwives, nurses and other health professionals, many of whom are migrating to other countries. Well, even the mortuary is not working; buildings and more buildings, but no service for the people.

The PNC/R, recognising this, has been engaging in medical outreaches to various communities as the need arises. Our colleagues, Dr Joseph, Dr Hanoman, Dr Norton and others have been in the forefront of these medical outreach programmes.

Mr Speaker, I see in the programme outlined for health services, Region 5, a meagre increase for wages and salaries for health workers, and I really wonder how the Minister plans to effectively provide proper healthcare for the people.

Sir, contained in the Estimates, I looked at the project profile dealing with extension work for the dental section at Fort Wellington, as well as the X-Ray Department at Mahaicony, and I trust that those will not only be buildings for news items and stand as white elephants, but will be functional and will provide service for the people of the community. If the health professionals are becoming depleted, train more. The PNC/R is on record for having trained a number of health professionals, and maybe it is an opportune time to call on the Government to take a leaf out of the PNC/R's book. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I now turn to some very important sectors - agriculture and public works. I cannot over emphasize the importance of our farming communities, and agriculture generally, which happens to be the backbone of our economy. We must pay due attention to these sectors.

As you will recall, as a result of the massive flooding, many people suffered great losses. You are no doubt aware of the effects of that flood in Region 5.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Finance, on page 33 of the Budget Speech, paragraph 4.32, averred to the aftermath of the recent flooding in Guyana, but I hope that this is taken seriously. Mr Speaker, drainage and irrigation must be very important in any agricultural area. A major scheme such as the MMA Scheme is treated like just another day by this Government. Therein lies the interest of the Government only to sell and to collect for their own benefit. The poor management and maintenance of this scheme resulted in a vast reduction in production. Many have abandoned their lands; many farmers cannot afford to pay their land rates. Farmers are now required to maintain the secondary channels while MMA maintains the primary drainage and irrigation system. A division in labour, I guess you may want to argue.

On page 34, I see \$350 million will be spent on Drainage and Irrigation structures in the MMA. For the entire 2004 nothing was done at MMA, and that is why farmers continue to suffer. I want to put the Government on notice that we will be monitoring this amount of money very closely, because members on the other side of the House believe that this amount will be used for electioneering. You have another thought coming. We, in Region 5, must see what this money will be used for. It must be used for what it is intended.

Mr Speaker, 2004 Budget spoke to a sum of \$345 million to be used for the construction of sea defence at Profit/Belladrum, page 27 of the budget speech. The situation at the project site is gloomy. Sir, the Minister may wish to explain where all that money has gone and, moreover, why flooding in that area continues to be so? Imagine, until now we are hearing of boulders and stone in some place. Nothing has been done. I have been living and going in that region very often, and every time you passed the area, you see a whole set of boulders by the road side in a little place. Nothing is being done - \$350 million, since last year's Budget, and up to now flooding is still there. Mr Speaker, that leaves much to be desired. *[Interruption: 'That is what area?']* If you were listening you would have heard that it is the Profit/Belladrum area, for your information.

Mr Speaker, the question of maintenance of kokers, sluices, dams, et cetera, must not be overlooked. The Honourable Member, Minister Sawh, in his presentation, alluded to some areas in which infrastructure work will be done, but what are the feasibility studies done on those project areas highlighted? I submit that a careful analysis has not been done, and the May/June rains will come and we will be in problems again if you do not act now.

The Honourable Minister of Finance spoke of having a supplementary budget later in the year and so, towards this end, I wish to call on the Government to give consideration to the following:

- the reconstruction of the sluice at the Burma canal;

- the clearing of the Catherine canal;
- the koker at Catherine/Recess, which drains the agricultural land is doing not good at all;
- providing relief or aid ... , I do not want to say compensation, because I understand *compensation* is a bad word for this Government ... to farmers and other residents who have lost their livelihood, so that their lives could be put on track once again.

Mr Speaker, right now a lot of roads and bridges are under construction. Some of them were done in 2004 and some are listed for 2005. Sir, I want to take some time off and refer to a particular road project at Ithaca, and specifically Anthon Street. When contracts for projects are given, isn't there any monitoring mechanism? Who supervises whether it is Government subvention or international funding whatever? I ask these questions, because I wonder if there was a new form of sophistication whereby the contractor used a motor car to roll or level off this newly-built road. *[Laughter]*

Sir, I have been hearing in this very House criticisms of the Guyana 21 Plan, and somebody from over there said something about the Guyana 28 Plan. Well, I wonder if this is a new thing in this Guyana 28 plan where you are rolling the road with cars to level off the gravel. *[Laughter]* And so, Mr Speaker, that is why I have to concur that the reasons for the roads to break up no sooner they are built, it is because no one manages; wild-west operations; poor governance; no one cares if the right material or substitute material is used. No one cares if the methodology that is being employed is right.

Mr Speaker, there are several projects listed, and I want to call on the Government to ensure that the execution process is properly managed. Let us not take it for granted, that is why we have a lot of falling down and a lot of bad and wrong things happening. We must monitor.

Finally, the inadequacies of financial allocations leave much to be desired. Very often we hear of so many millions allocated for X community, for Y project and B community and J project. Sir, the Government must not utilise the space it occupies for cheap self-aggrandisement. Works, subventions, monetary allocations must pass through the Parliament. Monies must be voted to the RDCs and the NDCs and the City Councils and the Town Councils to execute programmes of works, and the Government must stop giving the impression that certain RDCs and City Councils do not know what they are about when, in fact, the Ministry of Local Government is stifling them for funds. Mr Speaker, it must be clearly understood that the Government of the day has the responsibility to provide services for the people of this country, not some of the people, but all of the people. Let me repeat that so that it will go down in your stomachs - all of the people and not in a piece-meal fashion, but in an organised manner.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, let me place on record that it is unfortunate that the government displayed no vision in preparing the 2005 Budget. It is sad that Budget 2005 resembles three consecutive years, thus an un-chartered course for this nation under the PPP/C. I thank you. *[Applause]*

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

The Honourable Member, Mr Odinga Lumumba.

**Mr Odinga N Lumumba:** Mr Speaker, Members of the opposition, my colleagues, the Guyanese public, first of all I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance for a job well done, and also it is important that we, on this side, ensure that at the next budget herein that we are in a position to say that everything that the Minister promised has been taken care off. Also, we will like to congratulate the Members of the Opposition who made recommendations as to where we should go, because I believe that part of this process is not just to gossip and make this a talk shop, the opposition has a role to play, and your role is to monitor and to make recommendations.

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For a number of years, I have said that the opposition has been totally useless and have not represented the people of Guyana. At least I would like to commend my fellow Parliamentarian, Mr McAllister, my Buxtonian friend, Mr Kadir, and also Mr Alexander. They have come of age and I recognise that, even though there might have been some problems with your presentation, I think it was a good attempt, in terms of moving us in the right direction where you accept the fact that you are the Opposition, and that your role is to identify problems and make recommendations, and do not spend the rest of the year trying to get involved in power-sharing.

In terms of Miss Ally, very nice and someone who is very special, but I think, and it is important that we note and accept the fact that yes, of course the PNC gave houses to several individuals and to several persons, but the end result of most of those activities was to leave the country broke at the end of the day. So how important was it? *[Interruption: 'You are talking economics now.']* And you know that I know it.

They also recognise that the exchange rate in Guyana moved from 2.55 in 1980 to 127.50 in 1991, all under the leadership of the People's National Congress.

Mr Speaker, I would like to deal with one particular issue tonight, and I think it is an issue fundamental to our country. This whole issue of discrimination, in particular as it relates to the allocation of our resources. As you know, in a poor country, our resources is meagre. What I found interesting, as I listened earlier today to Mr Ming talking about the US billion dollar project in a country like this, it is amazing that Trinidad, which is doing extremely well, cannot even project 20 percent, in terms of the scale of the project that Mr Ming had in mind. Mr Ming wants us to build roads in areas with 100/300 people, ten houses, fourteen cats and two dogs. It is amazing. I do not understand where this fellow studied economics, but again ... *[Interruption: 'I never did.']* he never did, okay. But before I move to some specifics, there are two quotes I want to leave here for my fellow Parliamentarians on the other side ...

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*[Interruption: 'Dolphin quote.'] ... well, Globe Trust quote [Laughter]... where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevailed, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organised conspiracy to oppress, to rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be saved. [Interruption: 'You are talking about Guyana there. ']* I am talking about the Opposition.

One more, and this is important, *no man can put a chain around the ankles of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened around his own neck.* You think about it. I will give you a copy.

Mr Speaker, this Opposition has the potential to be a good opposition, but sometimes I think they get lost. If a stranger comes into this Honourable Chamber and listens to the opposition, one would believe that these are some gentlemen and gentlewomen from another planet. You would not believe that these were the same individuals who existed when they had the glass factory; you would not believe that these were the same individuals with a Parliamentarian who was a minister of education who wanted to put schools in garages in Amerindian communities that even a plane cannot land and not even accessible by a war tank. Mr Speaker, they would not believe that this Opposition was part of a government whose Minister of Housing was provided with a budget of GY \$70,000. My eleven year old child would not believe that a Minister of the Government, in 1989, would announce publicly that Guyana does not have any land for housing when, in 1992 to date, Minister Shaik Baksh has delivered over 100,000 houselots on the same land that does not exist. *[Applause]**[Interruption: 'If Jeffrey did not do anything. ']* Jeffrey was a philosopher king, he laid the groundwork.

Mr Speaker, would you believe that this opposition want us to forget the role they played in the abuse of the constitutional rights of the people of this country? Mr Speaker, the opposition must accept the fact that they have single-handedly destroyed the black middle class of this country. This is a fundamental issue.

Mr Speaker, they talked about the Budget and the allocation of resources and why we have to do this and that. This opposition refused to give the police resources during their time in the Government and they gave the army guns without bullets to protect our borders. This has to be a big laugh. I mean this is Parliament, this is not a circus. Why would the Opposition come to this Parliament and accuse this Government of carrying out policies of discrimination.

Mr Speaker, let us look at this Government today and see the dozens and dozens of black contractors, Amerindian contractors, small contractors. Where were these contractors when the PNC was in power? Who was discriminating against the black contractors? But maybe it was not discrimination. Maybe it was just the fact that there was no work for anyone.

Mr Speaker, one of the foremost intellectuals in the world, Walter Rodney ... under whose governance did he come to his death? As far as I know, Sir, Walter Rodney was Afro-Guyanese. One of the richest men in this country was a man named Mahaica, a gold miner. Under whose power was he brought to his knees and destroyed? Who had the power when villages like Buxton and Beterverwagting could not get a road repaired, could not get a school banister for \$3,000 replaced? Ow, Mr Speaker!

They said that we are discriminating, so I painfully took my time and firstly I went to my colleague, the Minister of Housing and I said, Minister Baksh, to my understanding, information came to me that you are discriminating against the people of this country. He said that does not make sense. So, at a minimum, I went through some of his documents. Mr Speaker, I went through some of the projects and I saw the following:

- Parafait/Harmony;
- Eccles;
- Hope New Lands,



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- Belfield;
- Vigilance South;
- Amelia's Ward;
- roads, drains and structures; and
- an allocation of \$284 million.

So I said, who will live here? This certainly must be totally Indo-Guyanese communities, or they must be occupied by Venezuelans, or they must be people from Mars living in these communities. Then I found out that these were predominantly Afro-Guyanese communities and, out of this \$450 million, over 50 percent of this funding went to these communities. I still decided that possibly the Minister erred and possibly these wanton acts of discrimination that he is accused of by the opposition might be true, so I decided to look further. It is an obligation for me to look further, for me to do cheaper research. I went back and I saw:

- Diamond;
- Hope Low Lands;
- Parfaite/Harmony
- Mocha;
- Enmore/Haslington;
- Vigilance;
- Sophia;
- Paradise;
- Grove;

- Bartica; and
- Wisroc.

I said \$1,319,000,000, \$801 million spent on these communities. Again, I called around, I went to the University of Guyana and said that I want someone to go and check out who lived in these communities. Are these people from India? Are they from Pakistan? Are they from Shrilanka? Are they from Venezuela? They said, *no, Mr Lumumba, 80/90 percent of these people are Afro-Guyanese*. At that point, I recognise that the opposition was spreading rumours, mischief makers.

Mr Speaker, I went further and I said maybe we are doing a good job in housing and water. Maybe I should look at another sector. So I called my friend Minister Jeffrey, and the reason why I called Minister Jeffrey is that, a few years ago, we had a series of complaints, some people came from the Paradise area and said that Minister Jeffrey was discriminating. He was not giving Black people houselots in Non Pariel, Paradise and Enterprise. So I went downstairs to Minister Jeffrey and I said ... I thought he did before I got the information ... *why are you doing this?* Jeffrey jumped and asked, *I am not giving Black people houselots?* I said that was the complaint from a large number of people. I said, *my friend, Mr Vincent Alexander, just came here with a letter*. He said, *what?* I said, *yes, Vincent does not lie, not the Vincent that I know*. Then I got a call from a friend, Basil. All these people are calling and I said, *well, we have to look at these matters* Jeffrey said to his Administrative Assistant, *bring the records*. He brought the records and we went through the records and what did we find? 52 percent of those people who were allocated houselots were Afro-Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, I have in my hand a copy of the capital programmes for 2004 for the Ministry of Education. This is not from the Region, this is direct from the Ministry itself. I notice that there is an amount here of \$387 million, and again I want to do some assessments to determine whether the Minister ... even though he is my friend and my colleague,

and even though he is from Beterverwagting and he is definitely an Afro-Guyanese, whether he had a problem with his folks. So I said, let me check and see what is happening in his Ministry/department and I saw these schools:

- Winfer Gardens;
- South Ruimveldt Park
- West Ruimveldt
- Smiths Church
- Sophia Nursery; and

I want to stop, because if I am an Indo-Guyanese when I saw this list, I want to know if the Minister is only working for black folks. I would have had a serious problem with the Minister, because I went to:

- the University of Guyana;
- the New Amsterdam Technical Institute;
- Linden Technical Institute;
- Carmel;
- Kuru Kuru College;

Vincent, you must know about Kuru Kuru. I think Minister Jeffrey taught you there

- Critichlow Labour College.

Mr Speaker, again, basically the services that are provided at these institutions and these places where these funds were allocated were predominantly Afro-Guyanese.

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So, Mr Speaker, this issue of discrimination has to be squashed once and for all.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, I went into the regional allocation. I said, maybe the problem is in the regions. Maybe the problem is Minister Nokta. So I looked at Regions 4, 6 and 10. What was clear to me was, when I looked at Region 10 and I made a comparison with Regions 4 and 6, Region 10 had \$110 million, and what is more interesting about Region 10 was the amount of developmental projects allocated for Region 10, moving Region 10 from a desert that was left by the PNC and turned into a promised land.

Mr Speaker, Region 10 is supposed to be the base for the People's National Congress and they single-handedly destroyed the character, the social structure, the people, the future, the admiration of the people of Region 10 by destroying the bauxite Industry.

I have in my left hand a copy of a document *OMAI BAUXITE COMPANY*:

- Phase I, \$21 million dollars to be spent;
- Phase II, \$16 million dollars to be spent;
- Phase III \$10 to \$15 million to be spent.

This is planning, over US\$45 million from Omai Bauxite Company to be put into that community; Region 10 Call Centre, LEAP.

We recognise that in Guyana we have problems; and we recognise that we have ethnic problems. We also recognise that we have economic problems, but it is important that, sometimes, we do not try to lay blame at each other. The time for finger-pointing must come to an end and ... [*Interruption: 'You cross over.'*] I say that to my colleagues not to finger-point. I say that to clear the air. I think the first part of my presentation was to clear the air on some issues.

But we all have talked about the flood, and I am not going to talk about the flood in the context of criticising anyone, but I will deal with it in the context of Budget preparation and planning.

Mr Speaker, I stumbled on a report prepared by RF Camacho during 1994. It is called *Policy and Environmental Aspect of Water Control Scheme*, and I would like to quote a portion of it.

*An assessment is made of the current situation and operation status of flood control, drainage and irrigation works in regions 2 to 6. These works are now generally in a deplorable condition and, in some cases, in a state of collapse due to insufficient revenue and inadequate provision of resources for maintenance of the works.*

Mr Speaker, this report speaks for itself. The People's National Congress, without the Reform, or maybe a bit of the Reform, did absolutely nothing for the last ten to fifteen years while they were in power, in terms of repairing or rehabilitating infrastructure of the kokers. *[Interruption: What is the point? ]* But, Mr Speaker, I am getting to the point. Mrs Backer wants to know the point, so here is the point. A classic case of institutional discrimination and wanton display of the exercise of power and politics was the PNC government, assault on the predominantly Indo-Guyanese population of Mahaica/Mahaicony. We are dealing with discrimination and, Mr Speaker, this is the point.

I submit physical and empirical evidence to this House, and call for an extended debate at another moment in particular, during the call for commissions, which now seem to be a culture of the opposition. The Opposition has the responsibility to explain its past behaviour. I believe they have a tendency that what they did ten years ago must be hidden under the carpet. They are now cleansed. They are cleansed with the democracy that we fought for. *[Applause]* I know I will catch you with that one.

Mr Speaker, the white race of South Africa had to explain why

blacks were driven from their homeland, and why water was diverted from agriculture land in black communities in South Africa.

The PNC/Reform has a constitutional and moral obligation to explain why their pool ... they like to talk about education ... of qualified engineers selected the Kunia Sluice which drained excess water off the East Demerara Conservancy to the Demerara River to be sold to the Barama Company Ltd.

Mr Speaker, the Kunia 20 foot-sluice represents one of the few sluices that, under certain conditions, functions non-stop for twenty-four hours. This sluice has the capacity to drain 200 cubic foot of water per second, or over 60 million gallons per day.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Mr Speaker, on a point of clarification, is the Honourable Member still quoting from the report? I just want to know.

**Mr Odinga N Lumumba:** The Honourable Member is not quoting from that report.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** Oh, you are finished with the report? This is your rambling?

**Mr Odinga N Lumumba:** No, it is a quotation from information we received from another report. But you are the number one Rambler here, so what are you worried about? *[Laughter]*

We need to find out whether the decision to sell that koker and the sluice to Barama was a mistake? Was this a mismanagement or was this a wilful attempt to penalise residents of Mahaica/Mahaicony for not supporting the then administration politically. The evidence will show that the capacity of the Kunia Sluice, if operational, would have prevented the flooding of residential and farm lands in the Mahaica/Mahaicony regions. This is a serious issue, and it is a historical policy of the PNC government then to discharge water from the Lamaha into the Mahaica River, hence destroying crops cultivated in that region. The Lama sluices

were opened in 1996, again in 2005 agriculture production in the Mahaica/Mahaicony regions rose by approximately 200 percent during 1992 to 1996, and that happened because flood control systems were put in place by the PPP/C government.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I hope that we have a better future in this country, and I always say that it is an effective role for the Opposition, and I also always say that many of my friends in the Opposition are brilliant, but they need better guidance. So I leave them with this: *there is no struggle, there is no progress ...* [Interruption: 'Who are you quoting from?'] As a rambler you should know that this is Frederick Douglas, but probably you do not know who is Frederick Douglas:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress.

Those who professed to favour freedom and are met with agitation are men and women who want crust without prowl of the ground

They want rain without thunder and lightning

They want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters.

Thank you. [Applause]

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

The Honourable Member, Miss Judith David.

**Miss Judith David:** Mr Speaker, please allow me some time to introduce my region. Region 7 Cuyuni/Mazaruni is divided into three sub-regions. It is populated by Amerindians, Afro and Indo Guyanese and the mixed races. The local economy is mainly timber, stone, sand and mining. The employment in sand, stone and timber is limited, while the mining aspect attracted investors from all parts of Guyana and foreigners, mostly Brazilians.

Mr Speaker, the Budget of 2005 is only different from the previous

ones by figures under this present administration. It was noted that no mention was made of correcting the conservancy dam and preventing any further floods, even though the Budget was delayed for one month.

As I read the newspapers of February 28, 2005, I was amazed at reading that the Budget is people-oriented, and that it provides tangible benefits to the poorest section in this beautiful country of ours.

Mr Speaker, is the Government trying to tell the visitors that G\$1,350 and G\$2,005 per month are tangible benefits for pensioners and public assistance recipients. What an insult to the poor section of Guyana's populace.

The fact is, even before the Budget, the consumption tax on certain goods went up, for example, the fuel price is escalating, thus all transportation costs have increased, and citizens were left to pay as much as G\$1,500 by speed boat from Bartica to Parika. The average Guyanese works for US\$117 per month, and then that is compounded with a large percent of jobless citizens and continuous crime and poverty. Where are we catering for the poorest people in Guyana, moreso in the interior regions of this country? Not forgetting the five percent increase that is forced upon the people at the end of the year that is taxable by one-third of it

Mr Speaker, there are promises for the people of Guyana. It is time the Government come clean with the citizens and give them the respect due to them.

*continued in Pt III*



# National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT  
OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE  
REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

Part III

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50TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Tuesday, 01 March 2005

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*cont'd fr. Pt 11*

As one of the Regional MPs of Region 7, it would be remiss of me not to represent my constituency. The Government has boasted about its Budget of \$86.4 billion for 2005, but the region's proposals are never fulfilled. The Government always determine what is important for us in the region, while we are answerable to the residents in the region. Region 7 is the least amount approved to the value of \$68.1 million from a proposal of over \$200 million for capital works. These regional budgets are always slashed by 70 percent, especially the ones under the governance of the PNC/R. Mr Speaker, it is less costly to give the regions their budgetary allocations rather than using the money to have ministers flying by aircraft to find out from communities what they need and enhancing ministers to do their political campaign.

Health - Mr Speaker, the healthcare system has left much to be desired in the Region 7. While we welcome the Kamarang Hospital for the people of the Upper Mazaruni, no doctor is present there and, based upon information, when one is assigned to the Kamarang Hospital, he would only be there for two weeks for every month. So for the other two weeks he will be out of there and the hospital will be manned by itself. There is need for specialist in the region.

The Bartica Hospital is without an RHO for fours years now, and this was promised by the Hon Dr Bheri Ramsaran since November, 2003. Where is he? There is only one Cuban doctor assigned to the Bartica Hospital and one medex. We need a paediatrician and a gynae-

ologist. Why should a young woman lose her life on the rough waters due to problems in childbirth at a time of around February 12, 2005? That mother has left to mourn five children, ranging in ages from eight years down to a one-day old baby. What a caring Government we have. Patients, sometimes at their own expense, have to traverse the rough waters to seek medical treatment, while the helicopter is used to bring one video cassette to Bartica to alert the residents of Bartica about the steps taken by the Government with the United Nation in respect of the Suriname Border issue.

Mr Speaker, I can remember that, under the PNC/R, we had doctors coming to Bartica to perform surgery; we had helicopter touching down, if it is five times for the week, for our patients. Why can't this be, if we are speaking about development in Guyana, under the PPP/C government?

Mr Speaker, my speech tonight is one that is unique and different because, as a politician, young and inexperienced, I deal with realities, because my motto is to represent my constituency and see development as a reality for our youths and our people.

The theatre is non-operational and the Malaria Department is closed from 3.30 p.m. on Friday and opened on Monday at 8.00 a.m. even though malaria is prevalent in the region, Mr Speaker, the Bartica hospital needs an everyday, twenty-four/seven malaria department, because we are dealing with hundreds of malaria cases in and around Bartica. The department is woefully understaffed and lack of equipment to deal with testing, and other things relating to testing of malaria, typhoid and all the other water-borne diseases in this country.

Our second highest position in this, the Caribbean, with HIV/Aids, tells a story about our economic crisis, and the rate of poverty existing in Guyana.

Education - Mr Speaker, please allow me to be brief on this aspect. We often hear about the education system blooming, but there is

still some hiccups, especially in Bartica, whereby short-staffed schools are assisted by volunteering parents, who know little, or nothing at all, about the work being taught to our children. Anyway, I would like to express my gratitude to our parents. *[Applause]* There are places in the interior where children do not attend school, because there are no teachers and teachers' quarters, example Kurutuku. So when we are speaking about promoting education in the Amerindian villages, we have to search the entire Guyana to make those statements. *[Applause]* The government should give our teachers in the interior higher allowances, so as to encourage them to take up positions in the interior. Is this second to none, Minister Rodrigues? I would like to hear about . . . You, the Honourable Minister, spoke about the upliftment in education and life of our Amerindian brothers and sisters. All the statistics were given, but the Minister failed to give the statistics of all our youths who are drug addicts, who are homeless, who are abused, who are drop-outs, and the street children. I am glad to hear the Honourable Minister of Amerindian Affairs say that the government will be referring the proposed Amerindian Act to a Special Select Committee, as this act is so shoddy, it will need a mammoth clean up to make it digestible, because I want to remind the Minister *[Applause]* that she is educating the Amerindians as she claims, and they are holding on to that education, and they are valuing it, and they will attack her because, once they learn something, it is well digested. I also want to remind her that the Amerindian Act that she has so recommended to a Special Select Committee is an act that is shoddy and it needs a mammoth clean up, because you will find opposition, not from the PNC./R, but from the Amerindians themselves in their communities. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, while we welcome our new water system in Bartica, there is still suffering in neighbouring riverain communities who, up to this date, have no potable water supply, even though they were discriminated against during the OMAI spill, and they still suffer psychologically because of that spill. No interest was paid by this Government to revisit those areas and to ensure that they have potable water to exist and have a quality life. There is need to train personnel to operate the water system that Minister Sheik Baksh spoke so big about because, whenever the system closes down . . . and he fails to mention

how many times the system has already closed down, and if my friend, Mr R. Ally on the other side is on it, he will give them the statistics about that. We need trained personnel to come to Bartica, train our workers so that they can fix a problem, rather than the residents of Bartica having to wait for two weeks for somebody to come from Georgetown to fix it.  
*[Applause]*

Housing is still a burning issue, Mr Speaker, because focus is placed on one housing scheme at Four Miles and the others are neglected. This is so because the women of Bartica stood up to the Minister on television and demanded what they need. This is the only way the PNC/R constituency gets what they need. They stand up, fight, protest and make it public in front of them about the discrimination and the needs. There is no road and light for the allottees of the western side of the Secondary School, and the Charles Housing Scheme.

Mr Speaker, I want to remind the Minister of Housing that people have to pay as much as \$500,000 for a spot in the Tuschen and Diamond areas without a house. Under the P.N.C government, we never, ever had to give people that opportunity to pay that amount of money. We gave them a home, with a key.

Mr Speaker, I must tell this House that, alas, the Bartica Police Station is now completed after two years and changing of contractors. Mr Speaker, Region 7 has asked for the sum of \$30 million, under the heading of other equipment in the 2005 Budget, and none was granted. We see this as discrimination, because our roads are in deplorable state, of which the Honourable Prime Minister can testify, because he recently visited Bartica and the interior district. This money was to purchase a grader to assist in keeping our roads in Bartica, and one to Seven Miles, and from Shurima to Seventy-two Miles, in good condition, seeing that there is a big voice of promoting tourism in Bartica. Mr Speaker, it is very costly for vehicle owners and the people who are living in the four miles housing scheme that the Honourable Minister Baksh boasts about as soon as he gets the opportunity on television. Mr Speaker, the residents of Regions 7 and 8 would like to see the all-weather road from

Bartica to Mahdia that once stood under the PNC/R. *[Applause]* I must tell you Mr Speaker, that Mekdeci takes care of the seven miles to Shurima stretch. I do hope that the Government can treat this with some urgency. I'm well taken care of, Sir, as you look at me, you can see. *[Laughter]*

It is evident that mining has taken another form. The pork-knockers are neglected, and emphasis is placed on large-scale miners, and Brazilians. Mr Speaker, even the local miners are at a disadvantage to the Brazilians, who are given priority over them. Brazilians are now emigrating, with their entire families, illegally into the country, without work permits.

This Budget does not project anything for our small miners. The roads to the mining areas are all dry-weather roads and are now in a deplorable state, while miners and vehicle owners have to pay a large fee for toll and crossing. The presence of illegal arms and ammunition is very much on a large-scale among Guyanese and Brazilians, not forgetting the back-track shifting of gold from the interior by aircraft.

Mr Speaker, the youths of the interior are neglected of the opportunity to perform their rightful role in society for, as the school year ends, educated and qualified youths are seen jobless. It is evident that there is a rise in drug using and drug trafficking in the interior. There is a rise in teenage pregnancy and prostitution in our young women, especially in the hands of the Brazilians.

Mr Speaker, I wish to debunk the statement made by the Honourable Member, Mr Odinga Lumumba. When the PPP/C came to power in 1992, he was a member of the PNC. He was the right hand man of Mr Hamilton Greene, so it is strange that he should say that he fought for the PPP, unless he was working as a double-agent, or a spy for the PPP. *[Applause]* I also want to say that, if anyone is guilty of committing a crime against Mahaica and Mahaicony. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Please, Honourable Member, do not let us worry with

this crime thing.

**Miss Judith David:** Any act against Mahaica and Mahaicony residents, it was the PPP who flooded out the Mahaica River, and citizens almost ran the Honourable Minister out of Mahaica Creek.

Mr Speaker, there is need for focus on macro-investment in the interior district so as to give the youths a job, a sense of life, and a hope for the future. The Honourable Minister spoke of her Ministry's role on child abuse. My question to her is: how will she protect our young women in the interior from abuse by both Guyanese and Brazilian men?

Mr Speaker, Guyana is a rich country in natural resources, and it is time that the Government use the right strategy to move Guyana forward, but I guess this will only be possible when the PNC/R wins the next General Elections in 2006. The Government must realise that they are obligated to the Guyanese people to provide services that are required. The Government should only boast when all classes of people are living a comfortable and affordable life, when poverty has been diminished, and when Guyana is once again the breadbasket of the Caribbean. Whatever is required in this country by the citizens, it is the duty of this government to give it to them, and to provide it, so there is no need for boasting. It is their duty and they must do it.

Mr Speaker, I guess this presentation must have surprised a lot of people, because I am not one of the politicians who will preach and not do; and who will point, and at the end say do not point. I will stand firm, able to represent my constituent and my country, because I would like to see development, and I would like to see Guyana once again being recognised on the world map for its progress and its production. With these few words Mr Speaker, I thank you. *[Applause]*

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

Honourable Member, Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury.

**Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury:** Mr Speaker, I stand tonight to con-

gratulate the Minister of Finance in presenting to us a Budget of \$84.4 billion and, as it says, *Confronting the Challenges - Sustaining Growth and Development*. I must say it is a masterpiece and tonight, Mr Speaker, we of the PPP/C do not only have a vision, we have a mission to bring relief to all the people in Guyana, to answer to their needs and their aspirations, but we will do it - not to tell them that we could reach the clouds, but we will do it in time. Now, criticism is good, very good, but constructive criticism and not destructive criticism. *[Interruption: I gan call Hammie fuh yuh, that you couldn't talk while you were in City Council.] [Laughter]* You thought so.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, please do not carry on a dialogue.

**Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury:** Now, Mr Speaker, as we look into this Budget, I heard a lot of speakers, and all sort of things were said but, first of all, I would like to send out, to all the people who suffered during the crisis of flooding, to congratulate them for their patience, their fortitude, and their understanding, irrespective that you had saboteurs in the midst, that you dared to thwart what this Government was doing for the people in this country. *[Applause]*

You know, the PNC/R would like Guyanese to help them to wash away their sins, urging that they have changed, and is now operating on a new plane of high moral values, but you could fool some of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all the time. The people in Guyana are coming to realise that the PNC/R are there to create trouble, and I will tell you why.

In dealing with a housing problem, they wait until the Minister of Housing is out of this House, and they are talking about completing houselots, and how many houses they built, but I would like to reveal some things here tonight, because it is said that facts and figures speak without passion for paper, but they are irrefutable.

Now Wisroc, yes, they did have self-help houses, but ask many of

the people when the PPP/C took office, they let the people do self-help, but none of them were given titles for their lands.

De Kendren, they let the people work, and if this government was bad, then we could have taken away the land, but they are Guyanese. At De Kendren, what did they do? Again on the West Coast, and my honourable friend knows this very well, they again, encouraged people to do self-help, but did not give them titles for their lands. Now, in Sophia, Mr Speaker, the people went there to squat because, for over twenty years, *[Interruption: 'Twenty-eight.']* you are not putting words in my mouth, for over twenty years, the PNC did not give the poor people houses. They had their friends, so therefore the people went into Sophia and squat, but what they did? They sent dog, horses and whips to beat the people out of Sophia. Mr Speaker, and not only I, you can ask the people in Sophia, but today they could drive in there, because we built Dennis Street road. The PPP/C gave the people in Sophia access road to go into A, B and C. The people in Sophia are getting roads now to connect to A, B, and C and D, Cummings Lodge and Cummings Park and, as the Minister rightly said, we are now going to have the exercise. Mr Speaker ... *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, please allow the Honourable Member to speak and to finish with the people please

**Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury:** The truth hurts badly. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mrs Backer, I just asked Honourable Member ... You have no respect for me in this House.

**Mrs Deborah J Backer:** That is not true, Sir. I am sorry.

**Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury:** Mr Speaker, the assessment and the records will show that in Sophia, Sections A, B, C, D, Blocks R, E, Block S 90 percent are Afro-Guyanese. There is no discrimination in the distribution of land in this country. Mr Speaker, one of our Members of this House was talking about the Budget being a recipe for stress. Sir, it



was more than stress for the PPP/C government when we took over in 1992. We had on our shoulders a debt of over US \$2.1 billion that they left. They could not manage. They were spending money and did not care how it was spent.

Mr Speaker, talking on the regions, I do not think that it is fair that we have the complaints from the various regions that this Government is starving the regions, when it could be shown, and it could be proven, that many of the regions do not spend their allocations every year, and therefore ... you then have to cut it. I would like to state a classic case in Region 10.

Mr Speaker, I was the co-chairperson of the depressed Community Needs Committee, just to show you and just to explain that this money had to go to the region to do two areas - Victory Valley and Blueberry Hills. The regions had to choose the contractors, and a contractor was chosen to do to Victory valley and Blueberry Hill to build a road, and all he knew to do, all he was capable of, was building houses. On investigating, when we found out, what happened? This contractor, who knew nothing of building roads, was already given \$1.6 million. So therefore Victory Valley Road, that was to be done, was left halfway. The PNC region chose the contractor - Region 10. It is the only Region in Guyana that employed two engineers. You employed two engineers and still cannot get it right. Now, they were to do the roads on Blueberry Hill and my good friend, he is the one that drafted everything. When we went up there to investigate, instead of them doing the right road, which was Black Roses road, they did another one, so unto today Black Roses road is still not done, but the money is finished.

Mr Speaker, year after year we come to this Honourable House to present a Budget, to have discussion on the Budget, but what we are seeing every year is castigation of what this Government is doing, and what is happening is that they are trying to get abreast. They are talking about us having a political agenda, that we are going for election - and here one member was speaking about election and the voters list, we had an excellent voters list in 1997 – excellent. We also had eight mem-

bers going around to register those who were of age, and we are talking about people going abroad, but I think what is worrying the PNC is that we no longer could have overseas voting. If we could have overseas voting, they might have won, because we must remember the vanishing votes, the clip on the making of a Prime Minister. I could remember well the days of voting. We do not have anything to hide. We have nothing to hide, and as the voters list of 1997 ... and I can remember that very well, we had that election, but do not ever let us forget what happened when the Elections Commission discussed having voters' ID cards because, again, they always want to claim foul. They never change. So I am saying to let we, as a Government, get on with the job, and I know you cannot trust these people. We all voted in this same Parliament for the voters' ID card, and when the elections were finished, they took us to court. They took us to court after we had all voted here, and therefore I agree all the way that you cannot trust these people, because you do not know which angle they are coming from, but believe me they cannot win. The people of Guyana are coming to realise, and they are convinced, that all the PNC/R is doing is talking, and they do not care one minute about the people's welfare in this country. They are only thinking of their own.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ... Page 55. We have tried our best over the years since we got into Government, and we know exactly where we are going, because we have plans and programmes. We do not jump here and there. We know exactly where we are going with agriculture, housing, health and education, and they should have been the least to talk, because the education system dropped immensely during the regime of the PNC, 28 years when the PNC was in Government.

Health - You had a baby that died in Georgetown hospital, because it was covered with ants. It is a fact. We have brought this country from 1992 to 2005 to a place where we all could be proud of, a place for young people and a place for our children. There has never been the type of progress, the type of development that we have in this country today, and I think the members of the PNC/R should all be proud. That today, all of us should stand with our heads held high as Guyanese to say

that, bit by bit, every year, we have been accomplishing, we have been trying, and we are trying to satisfy the needs of the people in Guyana - all the people. They should be the ones to join with us to say this.

And finally, Mr Speaker, I would like to quote what the Honourable Minister of Finance said:

It is this Government which, over the years, has been laying the foundations for sustained growth and development. It is this Government that has been restoring hope and pride in our people - a people whose yearning for a better quality of life is steadily being fulfilled. It is this Government that has raised Guyana's international profile, as is evidenced by the leading roles we are now assuming in Latin America and the Caribbean. True, we have suffered a temporary setback as a result of the flooding. But we will be unwavering in our vision to create a modern, democratic society, with abundant opportunities and standard of living. This is our promise for our people, and we will deliver on that promise.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

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

Honourable Member, Mr Neendkumar.

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Ministers, fellow Members of this Honourable House, as I rise to reflect on this all-time historic Budget, allow me to congratulate the respected Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, and his reliable, highly-informed and competent staff, on the timely preparation and presentation of this year's Budget.

Mr Speaker, I would like to beckon and urge all members of this House, and indeed all Guyanese, to support this 2005 Budget, which certainly demonstrates that this caring and responsible Government had agreed to allocate for spending \$65,789,000 on current spending, and \$9 million on capital works in 2005 for sports.

This is indeed a testimony of concern and Government's commitment to continue to facilitate the further development of sports in this country. Mr Speaker, sports must be the way to bring out the ethnic value of peace and harmony in this country.

Mr Speaker, our country was not fortunate to benefit from the proper sports facilities from our colonial masters. Further, the previous government also failed miserably to provide our people with even reasonable sports facilities. They gave a Nelson's eye to the development of sports as an integral part to bring out the glory that suits our excellence, our activities and endeavours. Mr Speaker, this budgeted sum of \$74,789,000 dollars for the development of sports at the National Sports Commission must not be seen as the total amount allocated for sports in 2005.

This year we will witness one of the most exciting years for sports in this country. Certainly, our boxers will continue to defend their world titles. The cricketers are destined to play great cricket. Our squash players, our bodybuilders, are only a few areas to name those that will excel. However, Mr Speaker, our greatest achievement will be the beginning of the construction of the state of the art Cricket Stadium at Providence on East Bank of Demerara. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, while we must express our high appreciation and gratefulness to the Indian government, we must also thank our President, His Excellency Bharat Jagdeo, whose consistent and persistent initiatives are continuing to bring greater success to this beloved country of ours. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, now that sports are included in our school's curriculum, and it is offered as a subject at CXC, it is clear that much more money will be spent in the school system for a more all-round development of our students. Mr Speaker, from the current Budget allocation, we will be focusing more consciously at improving training and other related facilities, as well as the provision of more coaches and organisers. Our coaches across the country will be working more closely with various associations, federations, clubs and in the schools.

Mr Speaker, the excellent relationship between the National Sports Commission, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education and the National Sports Association, is a tremendous success, and will be further strengthened by the continued collaboration in pursuit of our national goals.

Mr Speaker, we also recognise the scourge of HIV/AIDS and, as such, the NCS is working along closely with the Ministry of Health to educate our children about the killer, HIV/Aids.

Mr Speaker, in the fight against crime and drugs, our sports programmes are seriously concerned about the social upbringing of our young people and are seeking to address this. Mr Speaker, I was tremendously impressed to see the fullest involvement of Government, and the efforts of all Guyanese and numerous organisations that came out and worked during the recent flood. Mr Speaker, President Jagdeo and our Ministers set the example. They were in the communities and, by their intimate roles and genuine concerns for people in time of need, the entire nation was thus motivated into action to give a helping hand. Let us acknowledge and congratulate all who came out and helped during the recent flood disaster.

I also want to condemn those who knowingly tried to cause confusion for narrow political mileage, both at home and abroad, during and after the flood. They know who they are. Mr Speaker, today, when more people, particularly civil society, are showing their appreciation with great interest and getting more involved in good governance in Guyana, we, in this Honourable House, must act as responsible leaders in this country and encourage that unity. We need unity of action to build a nation, a truly Guyanese nation, to fight against all odds and challenges, and to support all that is good to usher in greater progress and prosperity to all the people of Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I would like to bring to this Debate the real amount of money that was spent in drainage and irrigation works in Region 4 for 2003 and 2004. In 2003, \$80, 95 1,390 was spent, and, in 2004, \$162,

867 was spent. This is on record and open for inspection. Mr Speaker, we need to understand clearly that we are experiencing serious problems with the administration of Region 4, and we must address them if we are to progress. To this effect, I would like to read a letter, which is signed by Mr Shameer Samad, Regional Engineer, Mr Carl October, Senior Superintendent of Works, Region 4, Mr Stephen Glasgow, Superintendent of Works, Region 4. I have a letter here, and I want to show the type of governance we have in Region 4. This is a letter to the administration.

*Dear Sir,*

*In relation to the above subject, I wish to bring to your attention that I have observed that these projects, which fall under my purview, and is supervised by the engineer section, have been increasingly affected by irresponsible decision made by the executive of the administration and councillors of the Regional Democratic Council, Region 4.*

*This practice I find to be totally unacceptable and would like to see it stopped immediately by all involved. As a result of this kind of behaviour, it is indeed affecting the management and administration of the Engineer's Department, and these actions are seriously undermining the confidence and morale of this section.*

*I am particularly concerned about the selection of contractors for various projects, which are being made by councillors at the executive of the administration, and then being issued to me in the form of a list of directives that are to be implemented.*

We cannot condone this form of action, and I consider it to be obnoxious.

Mr Speaker I have the letter signed by these people.

**The Speaker:** What exactly did the Honourable Member say, Mr Alexander?

**Mr Alexander:** The Honourable Member has referred to specific officers of Region 4, who are not available to be given the opportunity to defend themselves.

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, while I am enjoying the conversation.

**The Speaker:** Were you referring to a document, Honourable Member? Were you speaking from a document?

**Mr Neendkumar:** Yes, a signed document. It is signed by the Engineer, the Senior Superintendent, and the ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Would you send up the document, please? Are you finished with it?

**Mr Neendkumar:** No, I have not finished with it yet, Mr Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Would you send up the document, and move on to another point, and let me see the document before you proceed?

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, I have yet another document, again written to show the type of administration that we have. I could send it up too, Mr Speaker. *[Laughter]* I can send it up too. *[Pause]* I will send it up to show the type of corruption and the bad administration.

**Mr Jerome Khan:** I think it will be appropriate, and you can rule on this for my guidance, if the Member who was speaking ought not to disclose who that letter was written to. He is referring to a document. He has not disclosed whom the letter is addressed to.

**The Speaker:** The documents appear to be genuine so I will allow the Honourable Member to speak. *[Applause]*

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** When you are finished, Honourable Member, could you let the clerk have the documents so that we can make copies of them?

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, my only reason for bringing this letter is because I want to be authentic, and I want to say that all of us must work together for the betterment of Region 4. The letter continues to say:

*I feel it is unfair to me to be immediately responsible for any substandard work and ultimately accountable to State audit and the Public Relations Committee for any poor quality work affected by unsuitable contractors through this process.*

*I am also concerned about projects that were being awarded expediently, especially in the drainage and irrigation area, and the education sector. More particularly, the Victoria Primary School, where three quotations were provided by the contractors in excess of \$4 million for a project that is now totally in excess of \$7 million, without an engineer's estimate provided before the commencement of this project, and which consists rates that are extremely high in comparison with that administration usually applies for painting woods, etc.*

*As a result of the implementation of this un-programmed work, the entire work programme of the education sector current programme has been affected, resulting in cut-backs in projects, reduction of scope of work, for many other projects.*

*In other areas concerned I am dissatisfied with the decisions taken to allow the same contractor to proceed ...  
[Interruption]*



**The Speaker:** Just a minute. *[Pause]*.

**Mr Basil Williams:** On a point of order, the fact that the Honourable Member can read from a document that we do not know who the document was written to, or who wrote the document ....

**Mr Neendkumar:** I said all of that.

**Mr Basil Williams:** ... and we do not know whether these people, in conformity with your previous ruling, would have an opportunity to defend themselves. I feel very uncomfortable with that. I feel it is no different from your earlier ruling that, unless the parties could come defend themselves in this Honourable august Chamber, then it ought not to be allowed.

**The Speaker:** My ruling is not inconsistent with my previous ruling. Proceed, Honourable Member. Identify the letter and the writers properly.

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, as I said, this letter was addressed to the Regional Executive Officer, Regional Administrative Officer, Paradise, East Coast Demerara, August 5, 2004. It was signed by the Regional Engineer, the Senior Superintendent of Works, and the Superintendent of Works (Ag.) It was also copied to the PS of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government; Regional Chairman of Region 4; Chief Planning Officer within the Ministry of Finance; Secretary of the Public Service Commission; Deputy Regional Executive Officer (Admin); Deputy Regional Officer (Finance); Principal Personnel Officer. It is a public document.

*With respect to supervision, I am also concerned with councillors of watchdog committees visiting project sites and superseding my authority by stopping work at locations without my consent and approval. This occurrence took place at the site of the now newly-constructed nursery school at Buxton, which has caused this project to stop for several weeks unnecessarily and, as a consequence,*

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*has affected the scheduled date of completion and possible contractor and clients' liability.*

Mr Speaker, I will now ask you to allow me to just briefly show how caring this Government is, and the type of attitude of the administration. I have another letter written by the Regional Executive Officer, Mr Mohamed Deen, to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Croal Street, Georgetown. I will just read the first page for you:

Dear Sir,

Warrant issued - Received from the Ministry of Agriculture for emergency works that were not programmed under the Regional Administration Programme, Region 4 in 2004.

Warrant No. 6 dated 2004-03-24	-	\$10,711,000
Warrant No. 17 dated 2004-07-06	-	\$9,065,000
Warrant No. 3 dated 2004-09-24	-	\$9,340,000
A total of	-	\$29,160,000.

These projects were undertaken when there was excessive rainfall early in 2004.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank Minister Shaw, for it was he and Minister Nokta who allowed this project. I also want to thank the Government. *[Noisy Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, the principal in this debate is Mr Neendkumar, not Mr Shaw or Mr Alexander. Proceed.

**Mr Neendkumar:** Mr Speaker, we constantly hear allegations about discrimination from the opposition. I am also hearing this, and I would like to say something about it. They should be the last, or do not speak at all, about discrimination. I would like to remind my colleagues over

there that, when we talk about discrimination of food, we must not forget that it was the PNC government that closed down all the small retail shops throughout this country and set up Knowledge Sharing Institutes (KSIs) to have direct control over our citizens' food. The import quota and licence system was introduced to directly have discrimination against some sections of the population. Colleagues across the floor know this.

We must remember that it was the PNC who introduced the green card system. The Labour Exchange Card was introduced to directly facilitate only PNC members to get jobs while others had to beg and toil for a living.

Mr Speaker, even the old age pensioners were discriminated against. The PNC did nothing for the notorious discriminating means test system that they had in operation. Thanks to the PPP/C government, the means test was removed and discrimination against our mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers was removed. Thanks again to the PPP/C government. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the opposition is talking about the free Press and the State media. I recall that all the bumper crops that we read of were not grown and reaped in the fields, but on the front pages of the then Chronicle Daily.

We must not forget the stifling and virtual ban on newsprint materials, and the difficulty experienced to bring out the Mirror, Catholic Standard and other publications. The media was used by the PNC to terrorise this nation. I recall the caption on the front page of the New Nation *THE STEEL IS SHARPER NOW THAN EVER* and, on that front page of that paper, there was a cartoon showing a muscular soldier, a policeman, Militia, a National Service person armed to the teeth. The PNC stifled the free Press.

Mr Speaker, the education system was also used to discriminate against our students. Compulsory national service was used effectively against our students. It was not used to encourage or develop a love for

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labour, to instil discipline, pose a sense of pride, or patriotism to build Guyana. Mr Speaker, the PNC institutionalised discrimination in this country. It had been a great evil which bedevilled our land.

In closing, I would like to quote the word of the late President of Guyana, Dr Cheddi Jagan, which was made in May, 1988, and most relevant and fitting to the theme of building unity and diversity:

*A new people culture is needed. It cannot be imposed from above. It will spring from the struggle of paucity and equality, as opposed to individualism and greed, for the appreciation, rather than the contempt, of human labour. We have a nation to build and a destiny to mould.*

Mr Speaker, I therefore support the Budget proposal for 2005, as presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, and urge this House to accept it so that we can move on to new heights of all-round progress and benefits to all the people in Guyana. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member. This brings us to the end of our Debate for today.

The Honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

**Hon Reepu Daman Persaud:** Mr Speaker, I move that the National Assembly stands adjourned to March 2, 2005 at 14:00h.

**Adjourned accordingly at 10:20h**