

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2006) 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

82ND SITTING

2.00 PM

Wednesday 1 February, 2006

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 (37)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P.	- Prime Minister and Ministry of Public Works and Communications (Absent-performing the functions of President)
The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P.	- Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P.	- Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation
The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.	- Minister of Local Government and Regional Development
The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.	- Minister of Home Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P.	- Minister of Education
The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P.	- Minister of Finance
The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P.	- Minister of Housing and Water
The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P.	- Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security
The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P.	- Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)
*The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P.	- Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs

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*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	- Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- Minister of the Public Service (Absent)
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport
The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.	- Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Absent)
*The Hon. Harry Narine Nawbatt, M.P.,	- Ministry of Transport and Hydrolics
The Hon. Dr Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- Minister of Health
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- Chief Whip
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	- (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	- (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, 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-Shury, C.C.H, J.P, M.P.	- Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	- (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Dr. Moti Lall, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mr Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.	- (AOL)
Mr Neendkumar, M.P.	- (Region. No. 4 Dermerara/ Mahaica)
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.	- (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne)

* Non-Elected Minister

** Elected Member from The United Force

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Members of the Opposition (30)
(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	- (AOL)
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- Deputy Speaker of the N.A (AOL)
Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- Chief Whip
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 Basil Williams, M. P.	
Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dalglish 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)
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	- (Absent)
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	- (Absent)
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- (Region No. 3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara) (Absent)
Dr Carl Max Hanoman M.P.	
Mr Joseph Hamilton	
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- (Region No.1-Barima/Waini)
Mr Dave Danny, M.P.	
Mrs. Rajcoomarie Bancroft, M.P.	- (Region No.8- Potaro/Siparuni)
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- (Region No.6-East Berbice/Corentyne) (AOL)
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- (Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)

(There is one vacancy)

(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)

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly
Mrs Litawatie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

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PRAYERS

The Clerk reads the Prayer.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Death of Father of the Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

I am sure other Members will join with me to express our condolences on the passing of your father recently and I think that was the reason why you have been absent for a few of our sessions in the past.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC.

By the Minister of Health (Chairman of the Special Select Committee on the Needs Assessment of the Guyana National Assembly

Second Interim Report of the Special Select Committee on the
Needs Assessment of the Guyana National Assembly

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker in so doing, I would like to remind the House that this Special Select Committee was given a deadline of January 31 to complete our work. Since the initial mandate, our work was expanded when the Bradford and the Draft Standing Orders were also added to our mandate.

We are humbly asking the House to extend the January 31 date to the end of February. Thank you.

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The Speaker: If that was in the Resolution, you will have to speak to your colleagues to present a motion to amend that deadline date.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2006 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2006

The Assembly resum the debate on the Motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2006.

I notice the Honourable Member Mr Deryck Bernard is crisply dressed today and I have not alternative but to call him to make his official presentation. [Laughter]

Mr Deryck MA Bernard: Mr Speaker, my best shirt-jack for my Budget Presentation. Mr Speaker, those of us who are fond of or remember our classical studies will remember the story of the clashing rocks, the simple glades which were deadly rocks that stood the narrow passage between the Marmour Sea and the Black Sea. These rocks were located near the entrance and would clash together when any living thing tried to pass between them. As I was trying to grapple with a straightforward and honest way to understand Guyana's development dilemma, I think it is fair to say that Guyana is one of those countries which really is trying to pass through the clashing rocks and that our development choices are dangerous and difficult. I do not believe that it helps for anyone of us on either side of the House to try to pretend that the decisions we have to make to try and charter a course for Guyana's resuscitation are simple.

What do I believe are the two clashing rocks?

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On the one hand, there is the choice offered by a large proportion of economists, financial advisers, politicians and the western world which said, throw yourself at the mercy of the transnational corporations and their investment policies, liberalise your economies, remove your controls and by some magic wand, growth and development will be yours and you will enter into prosperity .

On the other hand, there are economists and practitioners of a perhaps more sensitive persuasion who acknowledge that countries like Guyana have deep-seated problems, problems of indebtedness, of human resource capacity and therefore they argued that what you need more than anything else is a lot of help - as much help as possible - debt should be forgiven and you should be given generous assistance in investing, in getting your human and physical infrastructure back into shape.

Mr Speaker, the trouble is that neither of these alternatives are benign or without jeopardy and the practitioners on both sides - the people who preached both of these things - whether they be politicians or people working for the development agencies never acknowledge clearly enough or honestly enough the jeopardies that lie with either choice.

The point I want to make this afternoon is that it is quite clear that the current government of Guyana has made a choice. I disagree with the choice, but I want to begin by emphasizing that I do not believe that the choice that they had to make and the choice that they have made, and the option that they have continued to pursue is an easy one, because to do that would be to devalue the discussion and really undermine a lot of what I have to say in criticism of this year's Budget Presentation.

If you are poor, you are caught between two prescriptions neither of which are panaceas and neither of which will give you the heaven that is promised.

I want to quote on one of the documents that has commented on the current state of policy on debt forgiveness, the Oakland Institute

document produced in 2005, shortly after the G7 and G8 proposals were made. It said:

The specified debt cancellation for the poorest eighteen countries requires nations to implement a number of economic reform and adjustments prescribed that essentially make their economies dependant upon the global economy.

They went on to argue that in fact one of the mistakes that people make is to assume that there is either a path called debt forgiveness and preparation for the reception of a large amount of foreign aid or a wild and thoughtless dependence on large quantities of direct foreign investments.

Mr Speaker, the truth lies in an understanding that the sensible way to look at the options is to regard the regimes and debt forgiveness options, the aid options as, and only as, preparation for a more robust and open participation in the global economy. As a country that either believes or practices a hope that in the arms of the development agencies and debt forgiveness lies a path to development is grossly deceived. The fact of the matter, as we look around the countries that are part of the grip of this regime of debt forgiveness is that there is no country through the practice of those policies that shows any sign whatsoever of coming to self-sustained growth using those policies alone. Therefore, the point that we must ask about the 2006 Budget, where in that Budget do we see the policies and the preparation which gives us hope that Guyana is transforming itself into a country which can compete and which can draw the relevant volume of investment in the international market that will give us self-esteem, growth. We can either go for growth or we can remain content with debt relief. We can go for growth and we can remain dependant. My conclusion is that if we do not go for growth, we will eventually be making a path on a contract for remaining in poverty.

Looking at the evidence of what is going on in our economy at its rate of progress, at the level of investment, at the rate of change one must come to the conclusion that whether consciously or unconsciously

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the PPP/C government is uncomfortable with large scale foreign direct investment. They are happier dealing with donors and receiving the gifts which they confess privately from time to time and sometimes given at the same level of understanding and charity as we had in dealing with the colonial masters in the past.

What explains the policy choice? Some people, and I am not one of those, may argue that it is difficult for those of us who perhaps have been well steeped in leftist dogma of our lives to become comfortable with the pursuit of large scale direct foreign investment.

Another explanation which I am not willing to accept on face value and I am willing to be persuaded otherwise is that perhaps we are more personally and psychologically comfortable, safe in the arms of the overseas donors.

Another possibility is that we have made a complete misunderstanding of what is development, what is prosperity. I had put in my speech as I prepared it a question mark ... I was going to say that I do not believe that that is in the thinking, but I listened carefully to many of the informal comments and heckles of many of my friends and indeed I listened very carefully to the presentation of the Honourable Minister Baksh and a lot of what he said both seriously and in jest made me tend to believe that perhaps he himself has confused the difference between the activities of government and development and so on and the preparation for genuine sustainable growth.

Mr Speaker, I believe that very often in our misunderstanding of what is necessary for development, we make some very big errors. I will give you two examples:

We heard from the Honourable Minister of Local Government, a very clear and erudite ... the only clear explanation of the relationship between our environmental global position in the world and our economic problems. If we agree that Minister Collymore's understanding of our environmental problems are correct, and if we agree that we are

a country whose coastal environment is under threat, that we deal with an environmental challenge which is new and growing and which we do not understand, one would have thought that one of the most important elements in the development strategy, and the Budget, and the understanding, and the debate in this Parliament and in the Budget would be, how is Guyana going to cope with that change and that there would have been investment in the institutions that would prepare us for this change?

Mr Speaker, the fact is, from a professional point of view, I happen to know that very little has been done with the institutions whether they be the research or the administrative institutions that have to do with dealing with environmental issues; with dealing with preparation for flood; with dealing with understanding and predicting the weather. I think it is four years in succession that we have been promised the new radar, but if we were serious of having sustainable growth and removing our incapacity to deal with the threat that would be in the front. Obviously, we are content to do business as usual and if floods come, we go once again clapping hands because we have done nothing to prepare ourselves and to deal with that problem.

Mr Speaker, our diagnosis of the Budget is that first of all, it has not given a clear enough acknowledgement of the poor performance of our economy. It has given a superficial and unacceptable account the causes of that poor performance and, therefore, as a consequence it does not accept and does not deal clearly with the jeopardies that lie ahead for Guyana, because of these difficulties. It tries to give the impression that because we have some flexibility, hard-won flexibility, grudgingly-given flexibility in terms of our capacity to deal with infrastructure and to make domestic investment that that is all that we need to do; that that will stave off the difficulties that are there.

Whether or not it is true that young people are finding it more and more difficult to find employment ... I believe that the official unemployment rate in the government statistics is between seventeen and eighteen percent for the young adults and for youths 36.1 percent (plus or minus a point);

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Whether we have a system of governance that is able to cope with the kind of aspiration for empowerment that people have;

Whether we have a plan of action that can genuinely get local and international private sectors moving;

Whether enough we have a clear vision that is able to cope with the whole problem of development - how we develop, the balance between Coast and interior, how we develop the balance on agriculture, how we get genuinely large scale industrial development going?

Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that we do not want to deal with these difficulties and so we have every year the platitude that we have sound macro economic stable figures. It is obvious even to first year students at the University in economics that if you have stagnation and sound economic figures that that is a inconceivable.

We have a situation where for the last five years our economic path has been downward. Now, the man in the street, the man in the shop, the housewives in the market understand decline. If my friend tells me that his shop is growing, it means that last year he made 1,000 business deals and now his little stall is making 1,000,000 business deals now it is 1,100,000 and then 1,200,000. He expects in a few years time to reach 2,000,000. If he tells me this year my shop made 1,000,000 and next year I expect to make less than a million and less than a million after that, his shop is declining. If your country year after year is in decline, then all the problems that we have about unemployment, of lack of opportunity, frustration of young people, frustration of business people, the sense of lack of opportunity, the encouragement that people have now to move in greater numbers out of the country, so we are losing skilled, semi-skilled, all kinds of workers is a part of the problem. At no stage in this Budget are we really given any explanation, which tells us that we understand the impact of the lack of growth and we understand what we need to do.

The claim of the presentation to be dealing with modernisation in a country which is so inextricably tied to the traditionally economic sectors

which continue to perform poorly and so no credible sign of modernisation or diversification is something which is very disturbing. The consequence is that we still remain dependant in a situation where we are relatively weak in a negotiating position. We remain in a situation where we cannot cope with the issues of marginalisation, alienation in our community, because we still remain in a situation where so many of the basic services and goods have got to be allocated by the State and even with the best will in the world a State which retains the capacity to give so much that the ordinary family and businessman and personal needs is a state which invites the difficulties of alienation and marginalisation. Then of course, we have reached the stage where we have reproduced our external dependency within the country.

I confess that every time I see a photograph or a picture of an Honourable Minister of government who is supposed to be plotting the development strategy with their face mask and their Styrofoam boxes saying this how we will resolve your social problems, I am embarrassed and ashamed as a Guyanese. Every time I talk to a representative to the donor community who finds this a source of amusement, I am even more embarrassed.

Eventually we run the risk of the kind of social disintegration and alienation that has nothing necessarily to do with politics as such or with religion or with ethnicity, it has to do with the fact that if a country continues not to grow people will have greater difficulty and insecurity in terms of understanding what their welfare and future are.

The truth is that I was very amused to find out when I went to the back of the Budget that the Ministry of Finance claims that they cannot find out what is the rate of external migration from Guyana. Mr Speaker, in case it was not properly explained to you, it is very easy; they put that the figures are not available, but the truth is that the Ministry of Home Affairs sends to the Ministry of Finance figures which say that these are the numbers of people who officially left the country and who officially came in. The people in the Ministry of Finance make a subtraction and then they tell that 10,000 or 12,000 or 14,000 people have left the

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country. The figures are now not available. Now, I know that the letter or the file that is moving from the Ministry of Home Affairs to the Statistical Bureau has been misplaced and that is why we are not able to say in the Budget. But that is one of the most important and vital statistics. You can make as much noise and have as much propaganda as you like, about what a wonderful place Guyana is, but if the average rate of migration ... if I use the figures that I have from the Statistical Bureau, the best estimate or the lowest estimate of how many people have left Guyana, not including those who have back-tracked and front-tracked and all other forms of 'tracked', at least 117,866 people have left Guyana permanently between 1995 and 2005 out of a country with a population of not even 800,000. Mr Speaker, that is not a country that is making progress and that is developing. Mr Speaker, there are official estimates, I have seen some in official circles of ninety-seven percent of graduates of certain types who have already left the country, but of course that is an exaggerated figure, because it is more in some sectors and not in others. But the fact is, a country which is unable to retain almost none of its professional people is a country that is in trouble, and no amount of noise of how many houselots you give people will explain the fact that a lot of the buildings in many villages and even in once prosperous communities in this country are now -empty. It is no point boasting about how many hundreds of people going on scholarships to Cuba, the reason why, is because we have not invested enough in higher education in our own country and almost all of those people are going very often to study subjects which could have been studied had we had the social infrastructure in our own country to provide for those people.

Mr Speaker, our position is that we are not comfortable as Guyanese citizens, as citizens of a country that is independent for forty years to live in an atmosphere when it appears to us that our policy is first of all to negotiate a comfort zone with the donors, accept their aid and to live on those alms. We, in the People's National Congress Reform make it clear that our understanding of how we should be dealing with the donors, and it was our understanding when we had to deal with the donors in the Economic Recovery Programme, and it will be our understanding when we have to resume the Economic Recovery Programme [*Ap-*

plause] is that debt forgiveness, aid, grants or any sort of form, is only a mechanism to prepare Guyana for massive foreign direct investment. Any other policy will lead to a greater and more profound loss of our national dignity.

Mr Speaker, I never believe that I would live long enough to see a country in which the basis of much of our national propaganda is how proud we should be that Guyana has been counted as one of the world's eighteen basket cases. In 1985/1986, a list was made of economic basket cases and when I saw Guyana's name in that list, I was hurt, embarrassed and ashamed. That is why in 1992 when a list was made of the hot spots in the world where the future was bright, the countries that were going to make it out of poverty, Guyana was listed. [*Applause*] And to find that we have gone back in the basket cases and are being advised to be proud of that position is something that we in the People's National Congress/Reform will never accept and it will never be part of our policy. [*Applause*]

Mr Speaker, what I find very strange is that the government seems not to understand that an economy that is growing, because it is investing, because investment within and without is growing in a massive scale, would be an economy that would deal in a more effective way with the issues of poverty, and the issues of brain drain, nurses' salary and teachers' salary, and infrastructure, and lack of empowerment and the problems of youth that they will be better off. We would all be better off and therefore I confess that I have never been able to quite understand why it is that we are content to sit among the world's eighteen basket cases. When I saw them list the basket cases from Africa and Guyana's name got into the list of basket cases, I thought that once again some European politician did not know the difference between Guyana and Ghana. When I discovered that this was not an accident, but we were proud to be there, that was one of the worst moments in my recent political thinking.

Mr Speaker, one of my colleagues on the government benches quoted from an Economist of whom I have a great deal of respect the

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Hon Dr Winston Dukarran, distinguished career in economics at UWI and then as Central Bank Governor and I believe he is aspiring to, if not yet sure of a high position, perhaps as leader of the opposition in Trinidad. I was glad his name was mentioned, because I read his work and I have lots of it on my desk. This is what Mr Winston Dukarran talks about development strategy:

The first generation of thinking of development strategy and growth focus strongly on the issues of natural resources, State intervention, State control of the Economy and building institutions, but gaps emerged, deficiencies appeared and we now need a new paradigm. The deepening of a reform process leads to an emphasis on the market-based economy, trade liberalisation, the freeing up of capital flows.

Then he goes on to say:

Some have argued that technical change still remains a driving force as it is the basis for productivity improvements. Others have advocated export net growth as the sure part of progress. The building of competitiveness of economies is another major platform for the exploiting of opportunities as the global landscape unfolds.

There are elements of truth to each explanation, but let us focus on the notion that people must now be regarded as the principal vehicle of development. Traditionally we have seen people as the object of development. We must now see them as the means to achieving that same goal.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, it is a dangerous mirage to believe is that we can have sustained development without growth. An even more dangerous mirage to believe that we can have sustained growth without massive and sustained foreign direct investment on a scale beyond anything we have ever experienced in this country. One of my ministerial

friends has objected to my use of the phrase Mickey Mouse to describe the scale of investment that the government has so far garnered. Therefore, Mr Speaker, you know that I am a very orderly and decent member of the House. I withdrew last year the use of the words *Mickey Mouse* and I would use more appropriate language *derisory*, *inadequate* and *bearing no comparison* with other countries in our position. You know, Mr Speaker, we are taking comfort in the fact that even though we are getting lapped in the economic development game, we are still ahead of Haiti and Bolivia. Mr Speaker, I have news for my colleagues. For professional reasons, I have been very interested in developments in Bolivia and they have got massive investment in their minerals, massive investment in their tourism. I am not talking of a few cruise ships a year, I am talking about massive influx of tourist from all over the world. In the information technology sector so that eventually perhaps by the next budget or two, if the PPP/C was to remain in office, the only people they would have to compare themselves with would be Haiti, because Bolivia... and the interesting thing is that Bolivia has elected a leftist president, but you better believe it that that leftist president is not disturbing the massive flow of direct investment into his country. *[Applause]*

What are the figures of Guyana's position in the world, Sir? In our Region:

- The top country is Trinidad ranked 38th in the world; then
- St Kitts which has just closed down its sugar industry;
- Costa Rica;
- Venezuela;
- Belize;
- Grenada - just had a massive hurricane that hit down everything, there was almost no building standing, no farms. Worst than a flood, but Grenada is No 6 in the Region.

We have not reached to Guyana as yet, because we have to pass:

- Dominica;
- St Vincent;
- Brazil -an economic giant which could be a source of direct massive investment to Guyana if we were to get out house in order.
- Jamaica with all its problems. Jamaica had three hurricanes in the period for which these figures were calculated.
- Peru had floods in that time;
- El Salvador had a hurricane, a flood and a landslide at that time;
- Ecuador had two massive floods at that time;
- Guatemala had everything including social upheaval;
- Dominican Republic;
- Columbia;
- Paraguay;

We have not reached Guyana yet. [*Interruption: 'Where is Guyana?'*]
We are coming to that.

- Honduras - political problems; and
- Guyana languishes at No.20 in the Region.

If this was football, we were in the relegation zone and after Guyana there is

- Bolivia, and
- Haiti.

And yet we come with a Budget that says, what a wonderful country we have for our young people. The reality is, let us always begin with the fact that -

- (a) Our income is low; and
- (b) The country's rank in the world is poor.

I have to repeat a point I made in my last Budget Presentation which is this, that the period for which the PPP/C government must take account and give explanation for this poor performance is a time for the best opportunity for investment and growth in the world. So that in Latin America there is growth; Central America there is growth. Let us forget about the European and Japanese, we are talking about countries like ourselves in the Caribbean Region, in Latin America, Central America and South America. The said part is, that even in Southern Africa and Western Tropical Africa, among some of the basket-case countries that are getting the same conditions, there is growth. One of the few countries in the world that has not managed to get its fair share of what is going on ... I am not suggesting that direct foreign investment is love. I am not suggesting that people invest in your country because they like you. I have no more trust for international capitalist than any one on the other side, but everyone except the PPP/C knows that the way to deal in this world is to go and make the deals in the world; make the best deal that you can, but ensure that money, technology and investment come to your country. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, I move that Mr Bernard be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member.

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Mr Deryck MA Bernard: One of the sad parts of all of this is that one of advantages that Guyana has for competing on that global market ... one of the advantages that we could have for dealing in a sensible and straightforward situation is that we have the capacity to put our human resource competitiveness in order. We have the opportunity and it is amazing if you look at the kinds of things that we have done and the opportunity and the opportunities that we have wasted. For example, the area of technical education and training, vocational education and pre-vocational education, Guyana which started with an advantage in the 1990s is now looking with envy as some of our colleagues stretch away and we are now re-introducing into our country innovations that were our idea in the first place, not recognising that that capacity of our people to compete in the economic market was something that we could have used.

Let us take a different example, culture is something which seems difficult to understand, but that cultural industries are just as profitable. In fact the cultural, informational and entertainment kinds of industries are actually growing faster than agriculture or even manufacturing. So we have countries like Barbados and St Vincent that are now major players in the world cultural music market. Guyana which was the pioneer in recording and all of these industries is now nowhere on the world's cultural map.

For example, if we take information technology, Mr Speaker, people are not aware that during the year 2005, the World Summit on Information took place and the strategies were laid out, networking was done. Countries were able to lay out and to offer themselves in the big market that was out there for information technology. I checked the website to make sure that Guyana had taken its exhibition booth and had sent a high level government team, certainly if not the Head of State himself. I was surprised to discover that Guyana was not officially represented at the meeting, we had no exhibition and therefore we were not in a position to compete in what I am sure everyone agrees is the most important growth industry in the world. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I do not understand how the government could come to us with this Budget and say

that they are dealing with the problems. We were absent, we were missing in action.

Mr Speaker, one of problems that we need to deal with is the issue of transparency. Transparency would be dealt with as a moral problem about whether or not people steal and whether or not people pay bribes, but that is not the issue for serious discussion and do not let us for a moment believe in the cultural paradigm which says that people in the northern countries are honest and the people in the dark southern countries are thieves. There is a lot of hypocrisy in talk of transparency, but the fact is this, the perception of whether a country's institutions are transparent or not, is an important determinant in whether we will have large quantities of foreign direct investment. It is *incompetence* and I think that is the only strong word Parliament allows me to use, to sit and say that it is a perception and therefore we do not have to do anything about our transparency and that we have done enough. The fact is that it is a matter of important government strategy to meet the requirements and conditions of potential investors. Whether it is in terms of:

- our public service; or
- our public policy; or
- our legal system;
- our systems of procurement;
- our system of regulation;
- our financial service; or
- our systems of taxation and certainly;
- our systems of communication, telecommunications and international activities.

Mr Speaker, we are not doing the things that are necessary to make us

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competitive. For example, we are in a peculiar situation, where the government seems as a matter of policy to believe that the way it would improve the education system is by having civil war and guerrilla warfare with the teaching profession. Mr Speaker, I confess that I am not objective in this matter, because I was born to teachers and I have been a teacher of some kind for most of my life, but this I know that if the government of the PPP/C ever thought that they were going to get improved productivity from teachers and improved commitment by war, they are sadly mistaken. The way of confrontation with teachers is a way to poor productivity, poor morale and eventually failure. There is no way; no government in any part of the world in history has discovered a way to bully teachers to do what you want to do. *[Applause]* That is non-negotiable. If you want teachers to go into the class and love their pupils and love their work, you will pay them, you will listen to them and you will treat them with respect. A word to the wise is enough. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, I want to note the issue of partnerships and development. Let me tell you how partnership works. First of all, you invite the PNC/R to take part in a Budget discussion after the Budget is presented. Then if you noticed that the PNC/R's representative is scoring telling blows, you call the television station and cut the programme. Then you ensured that after that for the rest of the Budget Debate process:

- (a) You have no more panels with the PNC/R's representatives; and
- (b) If you are going to broadcast their speeches, you broadcast them after twelve o'clock.

Mr Speaker, that is known as development co-operation. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, the Minister in his presentation said:

For the most part, the general demeanour of our people suggests that while we have a far way to go, we have come a long way down the road.

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Sir, are we talking of the demeanour of some of the farmers that I was meeting in another capacity in an NGO, who having been ruined by floods for the second year in succession are now doubly bankrupt and broken hearted, sitting in tears watching their vegetables, fruits and dead animals. Is that the demeanour we are congratulating ourselves on?

Or the demeanour of the vendors at Parika who now have about one-tenth of their trade they used to have before the administrative bundling and mix-ups which have left many of them in serious trouble and in serious debt.

Is it the demeanour of the mother from the East Coast running secondary school to secondary school to try and find a place for her daughter, because there are inadequate school places on the East Coast?

Or is it the demeanour of the same parent when she finally accepts that she as a poor, low-paid government worker wants to send her child to a private school, because that is the only proper secondary school? Is that the demeanour we are looking at?

Is that the demeanour of the father who said to me that his son is now getting in to exam class so he has to find fees for maths lessons, physics lessons, biology lessons, English lessons, computer science lessons and Spanish lessons? You know, I am always amused of how we boast of our percentage passes, because the names of the lessons teachers (I was going to say maths teacher, but she is my friend) are never in the papers. The schools boast about their percentage passes.

Is it the demeanour of people who have to send for money from their families not to invest in business, but to pay school fees because our secondary education system is still in a total mess?

Are those the demeanours we are talking about?

Are we talking about the demeanour of the face of the UG graduate with a science degree who was going to the twelfth interview... this is remarkable; this is the first time in the history of this country that a science

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graduate cannot find a job, because the jobs do not exist. Is that the demeanour we are talking about?

Or the demeanour of the contractor who said, well, he is giving up now, he is going to Barbados because he was told frontally, *you are not building another school for the Ministry of Education until you talk to the boys*. I did not bother to ask who the boys were.

Are we talking about the demeanour of the householder on the East Coast who built up a wonderful little business and the bandits came and he was robbed, his wife was beaten and his daughter was harassed. When he picked up the telephone to call the police, first of all, the police phone was not working and when the police answered the phone they said, well you got a car you could come and bring us? Is that the demeanour that we are looking at?

Or are we talking about the demeanour of the family who went to get their visas and they got their paper at last and they are abandoning the farm, the two minibuses and their two-storied concrete house with television and carpet, because they are gone? Is that the demeanour we are talking about?

Are we talking about the demeanour of the carpenter who went to Barbados where they put him on a bench and they threw him out? He went back to Barbados and this was the fifth or sixth time when I saw him. He said, *chief A get through* and that was the demeanour I saw - smiles. Is that the demeanour that the Minister is talking about?

Mr Speaker, the time for self-deception is past. Guyana is a country with serious problems; white-wash and grey-wash are not going to help.

I want to conclude with a story that I always remember when I think of the situation Guyana is in. It is the story of the man who jumped off the 200 storey building and as he was going down, he saw one of his friends at the 100th floor and the chap said, *how is it going?* He said, *so far so good*. When I looked at this Budget, it is like the man on the way down. How are we going in Guyana and my friend says, *so far so good*. Mr

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Speaker, there is no reason why Guyana should be so incompetently managed, let us be honest, a lot of us on all sides of the House could take blame for that, but the time has come for Guyana to turn around and to march proudly. I am afraid, Mr Speaker, that my friends cannot do it. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Education

Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey: Mr Speaker, I stand in support of Budget 2006.

Mr Speaker, unlike any other, ours is truly the age of innovation, the deliberate and systematic human transformation of this environment. In a December Edition Newsweek Magazine carried an article which claimed that IBM alone annually registered some 3,000 patents. If every thing, this is truly indicative of the kind of world in which we now live. Given this level of innovation and the speed in which the factors of production particularly capital can move from country to country having creative, better skilled and capable workers becomes essential for attracting and holding good jobs and a good standard of life.

Another Article in the same Magazine claimed that working smarter and smarter rather than harder and cheaper is the wave of the future. Indeed, Sir John Ross, the Chief Executive of Rolls Royce contended that in this so-called flat world, that is the world in which more and more people, for more and more places have more and more tools to compete and to collaborate and to connect. In this flat world we will speak less and less about develop and developing countries and more and more about smart, smarter and smartest countries.

Those companies or countries that suffer from what we may call a deficit of thoughts are more likely to be the same countries that will have large financial deficits and weak economies. Of course, we all have thoughts and reasonable thoughts at that, but the quality of thinking is unequal. Creative value-forming thoughts are what is needed. It is those

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countries that are able to take advantage of their smartest people that will become smart countries and have the good life. In this brave new world knowledge is everything and the basis of the knowledge society is education and its institutions. As a result, the education system must seek to be as inclusive garnering the talents of its entire people. Of course, to be successful education policy must be rooted in sound social political and economical policies, but given the prerequisites each country must locate its education system within this broad global tendency. I believe that the Ministry of Education is so focussed.

Mr Speaker, it is also in this context that I would like to make a few comments as I pass on the presentation made by the Honourable Member Mr Bernard. I think it was last year that the Honourable Member Mr Dev introduced the concept of the straw man and in logic there is such a thing as this straw man kind of an argument.

Mr Bernard proceeded to do just that a moment ago. He set up a whole scenario of what he purports the PPP/C believes in and he is comfortable with and then proceeded to destroy it. For instance, he said that the PPP/C is comfortable, it loves poverty, it loves no growth. Where have we or anyone ever said that? Where in the world he got that? Then he proceeded to destroy this concept of people liking poverty and wishing to wallow in it. It is amazing that Mr Bernard feels that this government would not want to attract a foreign investment, but that is a different argument. He cannot stand there and argue that we do not want to attract foreign investment because we love being poor.

Here Mr Bernard went into some specific policy recommendations and some of them having to do with the school system. Mr Bernard said that we cannot confront teachers. He said that we must not fight with teachers. Are we trying to do that? Not at all! He said that we should not fight with teachers, but we should pay them, but no one in this country has been more responsible for the destruction of the standard of living of teachers than Mr Burnham. *[Applause]*

When Mr Bernard took office in 1986, teachers were getting US \$

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90 per month at the minimum wage. When Mr Bernard left office in 1992, the teacher salary was US \$25 per month. I am not here trying to blame Mr Bernard for this. By the way where was this Teachers' Union at the time? Never mind! That is another issue. I am not trying to blame Mr Bernard for this, but what I am trying to say is that it is always easier to sit and talk and make policy recommendations. When you are there the situation is a different thing and he found himself in that exact mind. Of course, he spoke and I would say something of *this down the road*.

I would admit of what he started his presentation with. He started his presentation by saying that the road to development may have different paths, but they are all difficult pathways and you have to take one. Because he needed to present an architecture for discourse, he went down the road and said, guess what the PPP/C has done? The PPP/C has accepted the bit that said the donors are going to pull them out and develop the country and then he went on to argue in half of this presentation that the donors cannot do that. We have argued that the donors cannot do that. There must be more people on this side of the House who dislike the present process, and maybe on that we have so argued. The point is that the road to development is a difficult one and I agree with him on one thing. At the end of the day, I can show you that the PPP/C is not particularly uncomfortable with foreign investment. There has been foreign investment, but I would admit, not sufficient foreign investment to get us where we want to go as quickly as possible. I would admit that and he could have said all of that, but then if he said that he had to answer the issue in a more than partisan way of why? He had to say why and there are numerous reasons why? They run from the political to the judicial and all sort of things that to a large extent maybe not even within the control of any one political grouping. So let me say that I accept the end product of the presentation, but not the architecture and the arguments within that architecture that came to those conclusions.

Yesterday, let me just see my friend over there Mr Kadir, a qualified engineer. Mr Kadir spoke about the glorious revolution of the PNC's tradition ... [Interruption: 'You are the one, you were there too.'] I

was there and I was there closer than him and I would not refer to it as a glorious revolution of those days. I have never denied that I was there and I would never deny that I was there, but the truth is and I spoke just now about ... *[Interruption: 'I was not there?']* "No, you were not there, Deryck. I am a honourable member." 'But you were there.' But the point is that we are all here ... When we make statements in the House, they should be helpful. A statement like this cannot be helpful. It does not add value, because it is untrue. The PNC might have built roads, they might have built bridges ... *[Interruption: 'Might?']* They did build roads and bridges, but for God's sake they were in power for thirty years, they were taking our tax money. Who was supposed to build these things? The question is not how many you built and what you built, the question is, what you built in relation to what you should have built in comparison. *[Applause]* The truth, is Mr Kadir, as we know, when you came to office, Guyana was considered one of the most (I hate to say) developed countries of the Caribbean. When you left it was at the bottom. That was your tradition and that is a fact, but listen that does not gainsay the fact that there was not an attempt to build, but we need not embellish it with the concept of glory. You left the country in poverty, in ruin. That is the only way we will move on, if we try to accept the reality. You did build and you did try to build. Nobody went there and break it up. Of necessity, it happened. But we need to move on.

Mr Speaker, I have something on the Budget and the Ministry to deal with, so I better proceed a little. As I proceed, let me say to my friend, Miss Amna Ally that the education sector is governed by a five-year 2002 - 2007 Strategic Plan. If you want a copy I can give it to you again. It is governed by that plan and therefore it is not true what you say Madame that all the government policies are ad hoc. It is not true. The Budget promised that this year we will do a mid-term review. However, we intend to do more than that. We will also begin the consultation that will lead to our new medium term plan. Contrary to popular opinion, strategic plans can be extremely destructive if not done at the correct level. It is now widely accepted that strategic planning will best be located at local levels. It is our intention to use the regional strategic plans as the basis of our 2008 to 2012 National Strategic Interventions.

Mr Speaker, given what I have said about the global directions and the relevance of our current efforts, it may be useful to remind you also that the vision that drives the Ministry of Education is the development of a citizenry able to modernise Guyana and live in mutual respect. Our present mission is to eliminate illiteracy, modernise the education system and strengthen tolerance.

These are all very important issues, but today I want to focus on literacy and functional illiteracy. I want to do this because literacy is the foundation of modern living and must take priority over concerns about hardware. It is clear to all concerned that in our times much less in the future, the functionally illiterate cannot attain or help us to achieve the good life. However, since they will also aspire to that good life, many such persons are likely to become a burden on society and perhaps even a danger to fellow citizens. This is a clear and present danger and it is incumbent upon all of us to do all we can to prevent and remove the scourge of illiteracy and functional illiteracy from our society.

Schools that send children who cannot read into society are failures, so also are the parents. Schools, parents and communities must work together and use innovative means to see that every child can read to its grade level.

Mr Speaker, it would be wrong for us to call upon schools and communities and not recognise that the Ministry of Education also has its role to play. Our strategies include:

- Reviewing and revising the Curriculum of nursery, primary and secondary levels;
- Implementing new methodologies to teach literacy and introducing performance norms at the nursery and primary levels;
- using radio-interactive radio instructions - to teach mathematics in Grades I and III;

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- Training and retraining of teachers to implement the literacy programme and to facilitate IRI;
- Raising the proportion of trained the teachers at all levels;
- Establishing a system of ongoing school - based assessment of literacy in addition to establishing national assessments at three key stages -Levels II, IV and VI.

Mr Speaker, the Budget indicated that most of these activities are, indeed, ongoing. In 2005, we employed clustered advisers and regional assessment officers for every region in Guyana and although there were some logistical problems, it is widely accepted that there are more books in the school's system now than there have been for two decades. Last year, we spent some \$600,000,000 on the provision of books and although there are some logistical problems, there is no doubt that the book situation has improved tremendously.

In 2005, some 500 school teachers graduated from the Cyril Potter College of Education. The government policy which emphasizes the hinterland has created a Distance Education Programme and established eight Distance Education In-service Training Centres in Regions 1, 7 and 9. Approximately 200 hinterland teachers are today pursuing the Teachers' Certificate Course.

The DE method of training has advantage over the face-to-face method in that teachers can go to classes at the same time as they teach.

Mr Speaker, it has been said ... I think, it is the Honourable Member Miss Allen who said the day before yesterday ... *[Interruption: 'You were not here. It is hearsay.'* "At least I was told that she spoke to the Ministries unwillingness to pay teachers. " I have already mentioned something of that and there is an Ad in the press today that clearly indicates ... *[Interruption: 'Twenty-eight years'* "No, not twenty-eight years at all." We are saying that the teachers' salaries have increased over the decade and couple of years by about 700 percent and that is why I gave you the numbers just now. That in 1992, US \$25, today it is

about US \$110, to remove any notion of this concept of inflation and so on. Therefore, there has been tremendous improvement in their salaries. I am not for one moment suggesting there should not be more improvement. What I am saying is that we must accept that there have been improvements and significant real improvements. Mr Speaker, you know that we are living in different times and the time today is not the across-the-board payment, the international agencies are not accepting that. It is this government that went to the World Bank and quarrelled for remote area allowance. This is a wage supplement. Normally these institutions would not do that, but we quarrelled that if we cannot get trained teachers in the hinterland, the EFA Goals will not be fulfilled. After much

to-ing and fro-ing they decided, *alright we will help you with a bit of remote area allowance*. So we have remote area allowance that we are today paying to certain teachers in the hinterland. The point is, we have also developed a most improved school mechanism that will pay teachers according to performance. These people are not going to just provide resources for us to pay teachers across the board. I said to the unions, let us sit down and work on this methodology, because the IDB already has it and they say, they are willing to work with us to try to come up with a method that can help to maybe pay teachers according to performance. They would not hear of it. Two weeks ago we had a donor coordinating meeting at the Ministry. I insisted that the union be invited to come and make ... these are the donors. According to Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Framework, if the donor in-country agreed on a programme that is necessary to take you to the EFA/FTI goals, then automatically that programme would be funded. It does not have to go to the World Bank, once the donor in-country agreed. I called a meeting; I invited the union to the meeting. I am yet to see the union at the meeting. They did not turn up, but this is a union that wants to call the workers out, and all sorts of spurious ... *[Interruption: 'You did not invite them.'* "I did not invite them? I specifically asked the lady yesterday, was the union invited? She said that not only was the union invited, I have a signature of the person who took the invitation".

15:12H

[The Presiding Member Mr Belgrave assumes the Chair]

So I am saying to you that if this union is really concerned about teachers and wants to modernise the education sector, they will have to do much better than that.

Mr Speaker, these are only examples of our intervention to improve literacy in the school system. However, I have argued that if our country is to prosper, all of our people must be capable of making a meaningful contribution and as such there is another important and related problem.

Each year about 18,000 children are born, of whom 9,694 took the CXC Examination in 2005 and of these only 5,000 gained marketable qualification. This has been a trend that has been going on for some considerable time. Therefore, a substantial number of persons have left the system without the capacity of making a good life. This is unacceptable and the Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive plan, which if properly financed can substantially reduce this problem. I emphasized finance, because the delays in getting the alternative pathways plan off the ground has been one of my greatest disappointments. The idea is to utilise the facilities to be used in the provision of our alternative pathway curriculum to institutionalise a nationwide adult education programme.

15:25H

[The Speaker resumes the Chair]

The basic competency certificate programme which we have been piloting over the last two years and which is now about to be rolled out is one of the branches of the alternative pathways. The BCCP is a one year to eighteen months competency - based programme, not a book programme, but a competency - based one that students will complete at around age

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fifteen and gain a Level I National Vocational Qualification in the given area. These National Vocational Qualifications are based on the Caribbean National Vocational Qualification which themselves are based on international standards. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member.

Hon Dr Henry B Jeffrey: Thank you Mr Speaker. A Level I qualification creates a semi-skilled operative and therefore is a basis for further training and employment. The practical instruction centres and the technical departments of our secondary schools which will deliver the BCCP in the school system will be utilised in the evenings to provide essentially the same opportunities to out-of-school persons. The first such programme will begin around the Beterverwagting PIC in about April and other communities may participate. When fully in place, this approach should fairly comprehensively address the issue of alternative pathways in the school system and continuing basic adult education.

Mr Speaker, I turn to the University of Guyana. Last year, we requested, and the University of Guyana is in the process of refining, its Strategic Development Plan for 2006 to 2011. This plan is guided by the University's goals essentially on how it can serve to support national policy of higher education and training and how these may be financed. It contains the vision and the strategic direction of the institution in terms of academic development, management, student intake, the service to national development and finance. By way of government's subvention and government's provision for students' loans, the University received about eighty percent of its approximate \$1.3 billion income in 2005. In 2005 1,500 students graduated and the University has a present enrolment of 5,200.

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Last year, it expended \$70,000,000 on the Library; \$275,000,000 on Science and Technology and the computer centre is now fully equipped. Courses in computer literacy for each student will commence in September 2006.

The Berbice campus has also acquired a science block at a cost of \$75,000,000.

Mr Speaker, the University recognises that funding will still not be sufficient even if government's subvention increases and so it is looking to increase income from other sources. One major avenue of such major income generation is its attempt to gain foreign students. Here I want to speak to my colleague and friend the Rt Hon Max Hanoman. Dr Hanoman said (was it yesterday or the day before yesterday?) that he wanted to transform the University and bring money and extend the medical school to take other people - foreign students - but the Rt Hon Dr Ramsammy is a humbug more or less. The truth of the matter is, that has a red herring. Dr Ramsammy has not the mandate to say anything to Dr Hanoman. Dr Hanoman works for the University Council. If Dr Hanoman wishes to bring foreign students he could talk to the University Council; if he wants to transfer, sell or whatsoever, the medical school he must go through the University Council. He cannot be gaffing us here that he spoke and he cited Dr Ramsammy and then Dr Ramsammy put some spokes in the wheel. That is a red herring.

The University also has difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified and experienced staff. Therefore among other things, it has to rethink the present retirement policy and seriously re-consider the recruitment of junior staff and the funding of staff development.

In the interest of quality control, the University has embarked upon measures to improve the quality of its intake through further revision of its matriculation requirements and the open-entrance examination.

These are laudable steps, but at the end of the day we need to provide a holistic picture and I dare say that as I was leaving my office the Univer-

sity had completed its strategic plan and it was there for me. So we will look at that to see where the University intends to go.

Mr Speaker, at this point, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Professor Clive Thomas on his installation as the first distinguished Professor of the University of Guyana. [Applause] All of us who are here when Professor Thomas was a member of this House surely must have missed his searching contributions.

Mr Speaker, success in the modern world depends upon our capacity to innovate. That is our ability to understand and positively transform our environment. Many issues must be addressed if we are to successfully build this kind of creative environment. However, literacy is at the base of all of them. Let us work for universal functional literacy in Guyana. Thank you. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Deborah Backer

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Mr Speaker, with your leave, I would entitle my two-hour presentation [Laughter] The Bottom Line. I think I would get your attention, Sir, when I say that. I am not wont for fancy language, so I do not want to call it Transforming Guyana through Modernisation and Partnership; I simply want to call it The Bottom Line.

Mr Speaker, the PPP/C has a couple of jingles that we all know well:

- Twenty-eight years jingle;
- Blame it on the rain jingle; now it is the second year;
- Blame it on the high price of oil jingle;
- Blame it on the PNC/R jingle; and

the one I like the most:

- *We spent more money than you ever did* jingle.

So those are the jingles that one can associate with the PPP/C in Christmas and out of Christmas, but I want to share with this House a simple illustration.

It is an illustration that involves a male member of the PPP/C and a Member of Parliament. He is not my Honourable Friend Mr Ramotar, so he can relax. *[Laughter]* He went about to woo a young lady and he spent about \$1 million on the exercise, but he was unsuccessful. A PNC/R male member spent a very small portion of that money and was successful. Sir, I use that example to say that it is not how much you spend, but what impact your money has. *[Applause]* It is not how much you spend, but what positive impact that spending has. That is the bottom line that I speak about here, Sir. *[Applause]* So I would expect that when my learned friend, my colleague and my sister gets up to speak immediately after me, I know she is going to tell us how this increased money is spent every year ... "Police is getting more money; crime and security is getting more money... but she must say to us how this has impacted. Do they now have more cars? She would say yes. Does that mean when you call the police station, they will no longer give an excuse that they do not have cars. We heard from Mr Bernard that those excuses are still being made.

I would like to turn initially to traffic, which I always maintain is quite uncontroversial and for the life of me, I cannot understand how the Government and the Police Force have not seen it fit to use traffic as a testing ground to get the support of all Guyanese. People may be surprised to know that we lost more people on road accidents last year than we lost through murders - 182 people died on the road by traffic accidents and I think homicide was about 124/125. So we had an increase. What was the bottom line?

- Did this increased money allocated and given to the traffic police impact positively on the safety of our roads?

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- Have we had a reduction in fatal accidents? No!
- Less accidents generally?
- An increase in traffic offences?
- Have we had an increased respect for the five Cs of the road?

I did a little quiz last night and I will be very honest, very few people on the PNC/R's side knew what the five Cs are and they are all qualified drivers. They could not remember all five. I would want to suspect that if I am to take my learned friend Mr Belgrave, he would not know more than three, but I want to remind us:

- Care
- Caution
- Concern
- Courtesy and
- Common sense.

Have we had an increase in those?

As we sat for the last two days of this year, we had another jingle coming from the PPP/C and that was a Rohee/Teixeira composition and it goes like this -

Give us solutions: what are your solutions?

A nice mix of voices - the baritone (not tenor, you cannot be a tenor) a soprano. *[Laughter]* Well, I want to share with this House and to share with Guyana some solutions that are not difficult and do not need to wait on donor aid:

- (i) Install built-in speed controls in all vehicles being used for public hire. You can do that manually. So you can restrict them. If you want them to go at sixty miles, you can do that. They cannot go above it.
- (ii) Ban all music on public transportation [*Applause*]
The PNC/R will be completely (not behind) alongside you in that drive. We commit ourselves now to doing that.

Sir, I have here my favourite newspaper - the Stabroek News - I have not yet received my remittance for them from last year, but I trust it will be forthcoming. Probably more relevant is that we see here, Sir, about the loud noise ... A Canadian Research undertaken the year before last showed clearly that loud music seriously hampers a driver's reaction time and can cause accidents . It takes up to twenty percent longer to perform physical and mental tasks in such situations. So we have the Canadian Report and our common sense would tell us - and we are all people with common sense - that we have to get rid of music completely from all public transportation.

- (iii) Hand-held cell phones - Guyana has one of the highest rates of cell phone. You could know that on weekends, when you try to call people - Sorry, the cell phone has been turned off or it is out of the service area and you are right there. The cell phones are jammed. We have too many people using cell phones.

I want to draw the House's attention to a horrific accident - we have too many - but that was a horrific one we had in April of last year, when four young people lost their lives by the Houston bypass. The evidence was that the driver had been distracted shortly before the accident by a cell phone. An experienced driver trying most probably to speak to a young man or a young woman and four young people lost their lives. So that is another suggestion.

- (iv) Start prosecuting persons for motor manslaughter as it is

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still in our books rather than just causing death by dangerous driving. It is a more serious offence. It carries a higher penalty and it says to the people that we are serious.

- (v) Spend more money on dark roads. Mr Allen, our Traffic Chief said that speeding on dark roads are the two major causes of accidents in Guyana.

Mr Speaker, while we are on light, I would like to do things graphically (not all things, just some). *[Laughter]* This tells the story - traffic lights. There is one traffic light in Georgetown, and I dare say in the country, that works and that is the traffic light by Cuffy. That is the only one that works. I do not know if it is to stop him or if he oversees it that is why it is still working, but the reality is that it is still working. This is what the Stabroek News said about that and quite factually I thought that it was amusing:

Earlier research by British RSC Motoring Organisation had found that drivers ... however, are twice likely to skip a red light while listening to music.

However, that might be a bit irrelevant in Guyana, because there are no lights - red or green except that one. So we have some examples and we have some solutions.

- (vi) Aggressive public campaign on drinking and driving. I see some people are looking uncomfortable. Get someone else to drive if you are going to drink.
- (vii) Make narrow streets one-way streets. This can be done tomorrow. For example, Akawini, Bonisika and Canje. Make each alternate street a one-way street. So there could be that kind of thing that was done with Duncan and Garnett Streets.

So these are some of the solutions that would hopefully silence the jinglers. *[Interruption]*

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The Speaker: Honourable Member, can you include in your list the removal of the mini-bus park at the corner of Croal Street and Avenue of the Republic?

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I so include, Sir.

Sir, I turn to a less comfortable and perhaps a more controversial area - *Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Against Women and Children and sometimes men*, but the bulk is against women. We accept, Mr Speaker, that women make up roughly fifty percent of our population.

Secondly, a nation is often judged by human rights bodies and other important institutions on the way a nation treats its women and its children.

I do not have the figures for 2005, but in 2004 there were 2,395 reported cases of domestic violence and in 2003 there were only 1,100 reported cases. So there was a hundred percent increase in reported cases.

We have a 1996 Act, but people have not been particularly kind to that Act. They have said that the Act is not working. They have not put in place the regulation that should bolster the Act and as such we need a re-look that.

Firstly, I want to offer a few solutions to Domestic Violence.

Public campaign to change societal attitude, because all the statistics show that societal attitudes are the hardest to change, but they are the most critical. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I would like to read from the Editorial of the Stabroek News of the 26 November last year. They spoke about the World Health Organisation Study and it says:

The study which interviewed 24,000 women ...

Not Guyanese, but it related to Guyana too, we can see the similarity.

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... from ten countries also found that even in war-torn countries and those with high rates of other crimes, women were the most at risk from violence in their homes than on the streets.

So even when a country is at war a woman is safer out of her house than in her house. World Health Organisation spoke about abuse as being a human rights issue. So, Sir, that is what we have. I would say train more health workers; introduce appropriate school programmes; NGOs should be encouraged to get more hands-on - I am a proud member of the Lions Organisation and we would be more than happy to play whatever little part we can.

We should also implement sections of the Act that have not been implemented even as we look at it with a view to reform.

Sexual Offences - There were the Age of Consent Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act and these are steps in the right direction. I dare say without any hesitation that the Government should be complimented for piloting those two Acts through the House. However, Sir, what is very, very depressing is the Guyana Human Rights Study which showed that sexual violence conviction rate is not a deterrent. They have done a very comprehensive report and if my learned friend, the Minister of Human Resources or my colleague, Miss Teixeira, has not read it, and I am sure that they have, I would commend it. It shows that we have a conviction rate of 0.6 percent. That is the conviction rate on sexual offences. It is very, very difficult to have a conviction. I am suggesting, and the PNC/R is respectfully suggesting and submitting that we need to implement with the same haste that we did the Trafficking in Persons Act - which was done largely to satisfy the donor community; I have no problem with that, because it brought benefits here. The PNC/R is recommending strongly that we implement as soon as possible a Sexual Offences Bill, which has already found its way into the law books in Trinidad and Barbados. In fact, there is a CARICOM model since 1997, which I have here and I can make it available, so we do not have to invent the wheel. That is what I would recommend for sexual offences.

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Mr Speaker and Members of the National Assembly, the *violent crimes* are the crimes of course that are sensational and what we read about and that is why I was surprised to see that the road traffic fatalities were higher than homicides. We have had a decrease. Our friend from Region 6 was happy to tell us that and he should be. Last year there were 125; the year before 131, in 2003 - 206, in 2002 - 142, in 2001 - 79; we have had a decrease, but the question is, how many have we solved? We have a good rate of success with domestic violence, where everyone knows that Mr and Mrs Allen had a fight and he stabbed her - of course not our Mr Allen. He went with a bloody knife to the Police and said, *oh God I killed my wife*. They have a conviction that is easy. But when we have the other types of crimes - the murders and the executions like the one that took place on Monday, and I am pleased to see that all sides of the divide are calling for speedy justice in the execution of Mr Waddell, further, I say not. Well, some say in explanation, some mass of things. So we have these sensational murders, but the Police are still using antiquated measures and methods to try to solve these problems. That will not wash.

Chancellor Haynes as he then was in the case the State versus Gobin and Griffith - a celebrated Guyanese case quoted an old English case and this is what he said about confession statements, because our Police are still tied up in this thing. If I beat a man or woman sufficiently and they confess, I have a water-tight case and then see horror as the case goes down the drain. This is what the case said, a confession statement is evidence, but it is the worst type of evidence. The Police will do well to understand that and the policy makers need to understand that it is forensic expertise, it is proper investigative capacity that are going to solve the crimes, not beating and brutality, not Operation Stiletos.

As a woman, I could have advised (and I am surprised that my learned friend did not) Commissioner Felix that a stiletto heel is not necessarily the easiest thing to wear and he found that out. The Police also found that out. They went in there with their stilettos and they were unsuccessful. That is not going to solve crime, proper Police work,

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proper investigation, getting the support of the communities. That is the kind of Police work that will increase our capacity to fight crime.

Mr Speaker, some of the recommendations include *speeding-up trials* and we want to recommend *paper committals* instead of preliminary inquiries. That is something that has started in the Caribbean and is catching on and I see no reason, I suppose Mr Bernard would say, why we need to wait until only ourselves and Haiti are left with PIs. Let us move now and go for paper committals that will remove the need for preliminary inquiries.

Let us increase the days that the courts sit. I would invite any of you to go to Bartica. Bartica courts sit only two days per week and it deals with the entire interior - I mean a very big area. There are two days and it is like a jamboree, Sir. I went there the other day and it was almost frightening. I thought that the PNC/R was having a political meeting. So many people were there, *[Laughter]* but it was just court meeting. We need to do that.

We have to remove non-core Police work from Police ranks. As I have said before, we can from tomorrow appoint qualified lawyers to prosecute important cases in the magistrate's courts. The magistrate's court is where most of the criminal works take place and we have too many people being set free whether they are drug lords, potential drug lords, sexual offenders or petty criminals, because the prosecutors are not doing their work. No blame to them, they have not been so trained. We have enough lawyers out there and I am not seeking employment here, Sir, when I say that there is a lot of lawyers here who need.

To go back a bit, I nearly said backtrack, but I know some members over there are sensitive about that word. If we were to go back a bit, my learned friend from Region 6 spoke about the decrease in crime, but what he did not say was that there has been a sharp increase in gun-related crimes. So he did not give us the whole picture.

Rent-a-gun fuels crime spree - This is the Stabroek News of 4 Sep-

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tember last year. Guns used in 780 robberies as opposed to 516 in 2004. So there is an increase in gun-related crimes. Sir, we know that those are the crimes that are invariably the worst crimes. In case people thought I was exaggerating when I spoke of the low conviction rate, unless it is a domestic matter or neighbours, I want to remind people of Monday, 23 January of this year. Five brutal murders unsolved for December:

- Thomas Orderson - an execution on the seawall;
- Ricardo Ramsarran;
- Nigel Green;
- Ora Mohabeer - I think one of them was almost decapitated.
- David Thompson - a member of the NGO at the Le Meridien at the same time.

Those were the five in December still unsolved.

Sir, I want to turn briefly to a non-controversial area. I am trying to mix it up a bit and that is the *Prison*.

Overcrowding continues to be a problem in the prison. Georgetown Prison now has 200 percent of the population it was built to have.

The food is completely another matter. If you want to lose weight, go to prison. All of you who are spending money on Buddy's Gym and all these gyms forget it. I had a client who was about 200 lbs, he went to New Amsterdam which is better than Georgetown and in six months she was a trimmed 162 lbs. There is where you have to go if you want to lose weight. Mr Speaker, do you know what happens? Just to continue to have home food, people appeal their decisions, because if you appeal your decision you are allowed to get food from out of the prison. They know that they do not have a case, no hope of winning the appeal, but

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they appeal so that they can get home food. So everyday their mother or their aunty or their father, who is not working anyhow will go down to the prison - according to Mr Bernard - line up, have the food checked to carry it in. So we need to look at the prison. We do not expect gourmet meals, but the fact that they are prisoners; they are still entitled to proper food.

Of course, with the overcrowding there is an increase in TB. Thanks to Dr Ramsammy, I understand Aids is under control. There was a massive distribution of condoms. So the Ministry of Health is working.

Security in the Prisons continues: every now and then there is a *prison outbreak*. The Editorial of the Stabroek News reminds us of the prison outbreak. There were two in November and the more important question which I want to ask my learned friend, what has happened to the Williams Report which was pre-jailbreak 2002 and the Kennard Report which was post 2002? How many of those recommendations were deemed feasible? All would not have been feasible or have been implemented and at what stage was the implementation?

Mr Speaker, I cannot move from prisons without speaking about the insanitary conditions at the prisons. I do not want to go to the US State Department's Reports. Sir, I want to go to one article from Stabroek News again, 3 December. The Headline says, WOMEN, INFANTS ENDURE HELL IN LOCK-UP. This was the lock up at the police station, because police stations have holding cells (so to speak) and the point is that many times the holding cells are in worst condition than the prison. There was a report - the Simmons Report in 2000 - saying that our holding cells at Brickdam are totally insanitary and should be locked down forthwith. Sir, on a rainy day as today, if you drive-pass Brickdam slowly enough with your window down, you will understand what I mean and perhaps at the break, before you eat you may want to go there... not after you eat.

Sir, this is what a lady said about the lock-up and remember in the prison, you may have been found guilty or at least you are charged in the

lock-up, you are only being investigated and this is what an ordinary citizen said, *the cell was rekin' of urine and faeces. There was nothing for us to sit on, nowhere to urine and we were forced to urine on the floor of the cell.* Sir, I am coming to the worst part. *There was an old cupboard in the cell which was full of faeces, which had apparently been used on several occasions by detainees.* Not Debbie Backer, not the PNC/R an ordinary woman, one of these three women having gone into a cell, because two of them had some *bused-down* story as we would say in Guyana.

Sir, we have to do something and we can do it now. I am sure that the inmates of those holding cells would be more than happy if they are given the necessary tools, detergent, hard brush and so on, they would be quite happy to improve their conditions - their temporary lodging.

Solution - give them the job to do, you do not have to pay them, if you cannot make it, the PNC/R will donate detergents to look after holding cells around Guyana. *[Applause]*

Fire - Fire is doing fairly well. I was impressed; a fire in Enachu Street, I went there as a concerned citizen - a friend of mine and there was a lady, I do not know if because her name was Deborah, but her name was Deborah Stephenson and she was very efficient. When she came up and you need to listen to the ordinary people ... a man said, *boy she is a bad woman. When that woman come that fire will out now.* It did not out right away, there was a lot of community help, but it showed a level of professionalism that is creditable and we must commend them and we so do. *[Applause]*

Fire Hydrants - Is the Guyana Water Authority and the city and the fire still trying to decide who owns the place? Sir, perhaps Cameron and Shepherd may be able to give them some free ... I am not lobbying for them, but perhaps they can have this thing resolved one way or the other. We are also recommending mandatory regular certificates of compliance for public buildings *vis-à-vis* electricity. When you wire your house, you should have re-wiring certificates at regular times and we need sta-

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ble electricity. A lot of the fires are caused when there is a surge or repeated surges. Stable electricity can go a long way. I think the Sacred Heart Church - I am coming to Sacred Heart just now in another way - but that church was as a result of an electrical fire. *[Interruption: 'Steady!]* My learned friend is saying steady - stable and steady,

Corruptions, Scams, White or Blue Coloured Crimes - Sir, we have had GUYFLAG. I myself was amazed at this post-insurance - the insurance of a building after it had gone up in flames. I hope that the Minister or someone, after today, will be able to tell us what is happening with that. Sir let us look at *corruption*, people do not like to hear that word and this is what Transparency International ... and I know that my learned friend, my Chief Whip is very au fait with Transparency International on what they say, but this is how they defined corruption in the public sector:

Abuse of public office for private gain

I repeat, abuse of public office for private gain. Mr Bernard gave statistics about where we are, just above Haiti and where we are in the world. But Transparency International out of a score of 10, which would be a perfect score (let me be accurate) gave Guyana 2.5 - out of a possible 10 and ranking it 117 out of 159. We were 117. Barbados was 24; Trinidad was 59; Jamaica with all their problems was 64; Suriname was 78 and good old Guyana was 117. This is what they say:

Corruption tends to fuel poverty as it subverts the normal means of distributing economic gains, only enriching the procurer of the graft and the person who commits it.

Corruption is here and is true, it cannot be wished away and as Mr Bernard said that even if you do not accept it, the perception of corruption will keep away those major investors that even my learned friend Dr Jeffrey accepts ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, could you allow the speaker to have another fifteen minutes to continue?

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Another aspect of corruption and graft, as we called it, blue-coloured crime, is under-invoicing and sometimes absolute avoidance of custom duties. This country loses billions of dollars every year through under-invoicing and actually non-payment of customs duties. So it is not only the 125 people who have died by murders or the 18e2 people who have died by road traffic accidents, it is all this money lost to the Treasury and then lost to all of us, in terms of what Dr Jeffrey is saying, for paying higher salaries to the teachers, to the police, infrastructure works. All of those are a result of corruption and as such it is a serious crime. In some countries like the United States, when I hear that there is some man Enron, he may go to jail for 137 years. That is what they said, I do not know how long they expect him to live, because he is an elderly man now, but he may go to jail for 130 something years.

Mr Speaker, I cannot leave corruption without going to fuel. We know all about the huge fuel bust at Buddy's Farm. Then the ship with the oil that disappeared and then the tankers that disappeared. PM ordered a probe. I was hoping that I would see my dear friend the Prime Minister to ask him as to where the probe goes, but seeing he comes not, I cannot ask him where the probe goes, but I am hoping that I will be able to do it before he leaves. I think that the Stabroek News sums it up beautifully and I do not even have to read anything from it. The headline says it all *FUEL BUST PANTOMIME*. If that was not a pantomime with a ship moving, ship being repainted, trucks moving away, man being called away... Sir, what is next. Those are crimes just as serious... I remember Mr O'Lall's big statement, if you find that the fuel market has been tampered with, you know it is impossible and then of course he had to recant. I learnt that and I am not one

who is always quiet. My mother always said to me, be careful about your mouth because many times you may have to swallow your foot and that is what happened to him. He had a lot of swallowing to do, because within forty-eight hours of him saying that the fuel market could not be compromised, the evidence was that the fuel market has been compromised and well compromised.

Drugs - and not of the prescriptive type, So Dr Ramsammy does not have to worry ... I am not speaking about his type of drugs. Sir, last year, I engaged this House in a fairly lengthy conversation with shipment of drugs and I gave them several examples:

- Drugs in fish
- Drugs in molasses
- Drugs in timber
- Drugs in Chowmien
- Drugs in coconut
- Drugs in drugs almost. *[Laughter]*

Sir, we have not had that amount, that number of major busts that we had in 2004. We did not have that last year. Well this is what I am going to say ... Does it mean that Guyana now has a better drug record? No, Sir. What has happened is that they have refined their means of moving drugs so that even the developed countries that were catching them ... because we did not catch them, we never caught a big fish ... since in Commissioner Laurie Lewis' time, I still have the carton with him and his big net going around the place. He has never found anything and we have not found to date. But even the developed countries have not found and all it means is that the drug barons are more integrated into the society; they have increased their payroll and they have widened their net in terms of staffing. So they have members of staff in all agencies, and they are well protected.

Sir, I want to give a few examples:

- The US Report in March 2005 - Drug Fight Here Weak. We know that.
- Agricola blood bath - Remember, this is one where one person was actually decapitated.
- Drug link - Thursday, 27 April - New York Drug Bust, twenty-seven people charged - and this was a chowmien and fish one.
- Credible evidence of the drug cartels in the timber sector. This was a statement made by the PNC/R. I see it is attributed to Mr Case, but he also wrote, but it is a PNC/R statement. I know the Honourable Member will ask me for evidence, but we can deal with that evidence shortly.
- Felix links gun with growing drug trade.
- Six Guyanese remanded in Barbados. This was in December. The largest cocaine find in the history of Barbados, six Guyanese were involved. So no wonder sometimes there is a problem of being admitted into Barbados.

Mr Speaker, last year I shared with this House also ten major indicators used worldwide to determine if a country is in danger of becoming a narco State and I posited then that we were on the brink ... we were at the gate so to speak. I want to share with you one or two of them which I think we have passed and unfortunately this is one time that I wish Guyana would have failed, but we passed this one.

- The degree to which the laundering of illegal drug money has distorted and corrupted the financial markets of the institutions;

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- The extent to which crimes which are related to drug trafficking such as illegal and firearm trade and people smuggled have grown;

We have just heard that guns and crimes with guns and many related to trafficking of drugs have grown.

- The degree to which despite the declaration of war on drugs, the drug traders
- operate without significant detection or prosecution; and the last one
- The extent to which operations and connections of known drug lords affect public policy.

Mr Speaker, no one can seriously doubt that this economy is being aided by uncleaned money. The Stabroek News Editorial of 16 January 2006 said:

The conspicuous spending by numerous previously unknown entities in a depressed economy struggling for investment is the clearest and classical sign that the country has been heavily penetrated.

Well Sir, we have been heavily penetrated and I do not think that anyone can deny it. Mr Anthony Interlandi, Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States Embassy in May of last year while addressing the Press Association spoke about the national level, the trade also paints a largely distorted picture of the country's economy. And as we are at election season (so to speak) he went on to speak about Columbia and drug lords buying loyalty from political parties. I flagged that as we enter the election period or as some people would say the silly season that drug lords in other countries have penetrated even political parties. The Jamaica Government and the main opposition party have accepted and have taken steps to have public disclosure of funds, who they funds from and so on. I am flagging that sir, because it is a very real likelihood.

Hopefully, it has not happened and hopefully we can bring it back.

Mr Christopher Ram, as he reviewed this year's Budget spoke about the illegal economy. This is at Page 15 B of the Business Supplement Friday, 27 January of this year. Sir what he said is worth repeating and is worth taking very seriously. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing this economy and indeed the country is that of the narcotic trade and its companion evils money laundering and tax evasion. He spoke about the Money Laundering Act which is still in the machine, because it has not come out. He spoke about political parties trying to outspend each other and may be tempted to go to drug lords.

Sir, my honourable friend and colleague Mr Shaik Baksh, and I have much in common in addition to the fact that we are both short *[Laughter]* ... I think he is a bit shorter than I am. He spoke about this booming housing sector and that is true and I give him and the government credit for that. I am sorry that he is not here and I said that with all sincerity. What he did not tell us about were some of these private house developers. I heard somebody at the back talking about dreaming or dreamworks. I do not know, Sir, but we have a lot of private housing developments going on that the government will do well to look into seriously. *[Interruption: 'And pull out' "I have been advised to look into and pull out.]*

Mr Speaker, what is to be done? The National Drug Strategy Master Plan, Five Year Strategy - a lot of pomp and ceremony. I think the minister may have been confirmed on that day. I cannot remember, but it is here for us. Many of us went, but what came through when you read it, they are talking about the fact that a lot of things that should have happened in the previous drug plan from 1997 to 2000, up to 2005 had not yet come into being. So one wonders if this is, as the lawyers would say, mere sales puff or if this is a serious effort to enter into a contract with the people of Guyana to rid our country of the drug barons.

Sir, previous to the 2005 drug plan, we had NANCOM, JIK, JANOK, NASDER and CANU which we all know about. Of all of

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these five, only CANU is operational and these are things that came into being not in the 2005 drug plan, they were continued in the 2005 drug plan and we sincerely hope that they will be implemented now. This is what the consultant said and I am going back to what you said that we do not have proof about drugs penetrating the Guyana economy. Page 12 of the Report says:

The ostentatious living by dealers/producers in the society portrays to the community the economic benefits of the illicit trade. This quick-rich image fools youths in particular to be susceptible to the vagaries of the drug dealers in the communities.

So the consultant has taken as a given the ostentatious living of drug dealers. He is saying that here, they are living above their means. They do not work anywhere, but they have houses that even in our wildest dreams we just cannot have.

The National Drug Strategy had some good things in it and I am hoping that it does not become just another plan, because a plan is only a plan until it is implemented. AS we sit here in February 2006, I know of nothing in this National Drug Plan that was launched with all the sales puff in June last year that has come into being.

Sir, we hope that the Law and Order body launched in November ... in fact it was ironical as we were launching the Law and Order Body Commission ... I see Minister Gail Teixeira smiling ... She had to rush up to Tain, because there was a big eruption in Tain. While we were launching in Region 4 ... Region 6 said, you are launching in Region 4 ... you have diverted ... We are going to give some trouble and we supposed had a gay and another Committee and another probe into that. I do not think that anything has come out. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, your time is up.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Sir, could you give the Honourable Member Mrs Backer another fifteen minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member

Mrs Deborah J Backer: Thank you very much, Sir. We of the PNC/R are satisfied until we see some concrete efforts from the government's part. We think that it is reasonable to come to the conclusion that the government is not serious about stamping out drugs in this country, and we say that without fear of contradiction. Last year, when Mr Khan spoke about voodoo economics, my learned friend Miss Teixeira took him to task. She even wrote him, which she is entitled to do, and a part of her letter said, turn over your evidence to the Police. There is a lovely picture of the two of them, they make a nice couple. [Laughter] Sir, well I have some evidence, but my problem is this, my evidence is so large that I cannot give her, I have to take her to it. I have to take her to the buildings that have gone up around Guyana by people who do not work anywhere. I cannot bring the buildings, but I am prepared, again at the break, after we have passed Brickdam Police Station, the holding cell, to carry her to see one or two of these buildings and let her use her clout to speak to Mr Sattaur and let them together see what can be done about these buildings. [Applause]

Mr Speaker, recently this year in the States a David Narine was charged and according to them he has a big building in Georgetown and he is just one of the many people.

As I am about to conclude, let me quickly turn to human resources:

- Change the name of the Guyana Police Force to the Guyana Police Service. We have been saying that for years. It is a service, it is not force.
- Cadet Scheme - the Guyana Defence Force - use them adopt it as you see necessary and bring people into the Police Force directly as officers once they go through that period of training.

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- Early retirement with full pension, after ten/fifteen years that may attract young men and women into the Police Force. Train them, there is no short cut to that , but you have to make sure that the people you train or the people you want to train are trainable. That is why you need to increase even you basic entry requirement from primary school education to at least a secondary school experience.

Sir, crime affects all of us; it affects us on a personal level; it affects the prosperity of Guyana; it distorts our economic reality and it affects migration. Mr Da Silva said in April that skills exodus is linked to crime and then in July, the Poverty Reduction Report by the government said, crime and the security situation will have to be dealt with to minimise migration. So there is need to decide which is which.

Sir, I am happy and I am confident as I stand here, despite the problems in crime and security, and you know why? Because the PNC/R has a draft plan, we are not just talking . . . we have a draft plan to cut crime. This is election year and that is why I am also happy, because this year is going to be a win-win year for the Guyanese people. You are not going to have losers, it is going to be a win-win year, because when we win and I make no mistake about it, we will. When the PNC/R and the other progressive parties, the PPP that is one of their names, join with us . . . I am just saying progressive parties, I am hoping they are progressive. We in keeping with our commitment to shared governance, will extend the hand in all genuineness, in all sincerity and I dare say , Sir, with all humility to the PPP/C and to all other political parties to join us as together we try to move Guyana forward and make Guyana one. Sir, let us together confound our old colonial masters who are now invariably our donors, and who I think, in their quiet moments feel that we as a nation do not have the capacity to come together. Let us confound them and let us overcome our historical difference and then we can meet our donors as equal.

Sir, may God bless you, the Government, the PNC/R and all the people in Guyana. I thank you. [Applause]

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The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member

It is almost time for us to take the usual suspension.

16:25H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

17:12H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on my sector and also to compliment the Honourable Member Mrs Deborah Backer on the other side of the House for making a very positive and interesting presentation on the criminal justice system in Guyana, I think there were very many helpful points.

Mr Speaker, we meet at a time that is rapidly changing. Social economic realities and policies of States separated from us by vast distances, cultures and levels of economic development are having profound effects on the pace and direction of our nation.

We meet when the sugar industry, the foundation of our economy, is being threaten and when the spectre of the January floods are still looming large with us from the last year and this year as well as the oil crisis and the price of fuel in the world.

Mr Speaker, I therefore want to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance for presenting an outline, an architecture for this year 2006, and for looking at the theme of the Budget dealing with modernisation and partnership as the answer and the way forward for Guyana.

In relation to a number of presentations made over the last two days, we have talked about a number of things and I just want to comment briefly on those. In Guyana, we sometimes treat ourselves as if we are isolated from the rest of the world and partners and trends in the world and sometime in this House we have scoffed at a number of global trends including the global environmental changes particularly when my

colleague Minister Collymore was talking about global warming.

But there is a reality, the fact that we are in a global economy, globalisation brings the positive, the negative and the ugly with it. It brings a world that is smaller, more connected, but highly more competitive and obviously while it offers more advantages to us in the developing world it offers amazing challenges for us to be able to meet and compete in the world with very highly developed nations.

The fact that global warming is a reality and the fact that the United Nations has set up all sorts of studies and scientific groups to study this, it means that we as a country also have to take that into our account and look at in what way we as a poor developing country would have to study a number of the things that were done a hundred years ago, fifty years ago some of the drainage and irrigation that was removed twenty years ago, those that now have to be, even new areas that are being introduced as we as a country develop and open more and more land for development for housing, agriculture, roads, et cetera. These will all pose new challenges for us.

One of the comments that was made about the *brain drain in Guyana*, and as I was sitting here last night and looking at the House and who were here it suddenly struck me that of the sixty-five Members of the House, I think, if my numbers are right, almost twenty of us across the whole House either emigrated or re-migrated back to Guyana, studied abroad, came back and therefore that is not a bad figure that out of the House of sixty-five there are about twenty of us here who returned to Guyana. We have a choice, we could have lived elsewhere, we could have made a lot more money than we are making now, I am sure, but that we chose to return - some choose to return when the PPP/C came into Government, some were there from when the PNC/R was in Government, therefore we have to be careful with some of the figures.

My friend the Honourable Member of the other side Mr Derek Bernard referred to some figures I have never seen before, on the number of persons leaving Guyana and I therefore treat that with some caution,

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because I do not know where those figures came from, certainly not from the Ministry of Home Affairs. And therefore it could be people leaving Guyana but not necessarily all leaving because they have their papers or whatever. But one of the interesting factors that globalisation is creating, as well, cultural changes and work ethics amongst peoples in the north, that as the population is aging and migration patterns are changing radically. If we look at the United States, one of the studies that have come out, shows that young professional Americans, large groups of them are working overseas, not in the United States as do many British professionals as well. And so there is a global trend in terms of people looking and moving around the world in a much easier way than, say when I was a child, when it was a great thing to uproot oneself and go around and move completely to a new country. But migration patterns in the world are changing and obviously they are complex, because some of them have reactions that have braced us as we have seen in Europe recently with the riots in France. And so I do not think we should look at the issue of our people moving and returning and moving again as being a phenomenon that is terrifying. Obviously, it is of concern because we need to keep as many people here as possible. But the fact is, I think we have to watch and to see that many people leave and come back quite frequently and they look for opportunities, but I also know and many of you know that too, that when we go to New York and we meet the elderly Guyanese who are babysitting their children who are working and trying to make money and everything else how much the elderly Guyanese long to be home to be in the warmth of the weather to see their friends and neighbours. And so these trends that are taking place we have to look at them as the aging population of the north continues to cause serious problems more and more they will be the pull factor from the third world countries to provide labour and professional skills in these countries.

When we look at the oil crisis that challenges us, the developing world and all over the world with the issue of alternative energy, how can we reduce the energy cost? How can we find alternative energy sources whether it is solar, wind, et cetera? Of course, I think, these are going to be things we have to deal with as a country to save money and

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I know that the President will be coming out in the near future with an initiative that could save us millions and millions of US dollars just by a simple initiative.

Always there is going to be the balance and the struggle to find the balance between sustainable development and environmental protection. Do we go to mining and timber? Do we try to protect our environment, our rain forest? All the time the challenges will be one of management and how we will be able to enforce and to control what is happening in many of the areas? I think it is not a black and white issue of either a pristine forest or development. It has to be the balance between the two.

Obviously, the trend in the world today of the transnational organised crime particularly the narco-trafficking, is of deep concern to all nations, but more particularly those in the developing world who are least capable of fighting it. But I think, too, that we also have to look at balance again. The Honourable Member Mrs Deborah Backer talked about the bottom line being her paper, mine is about balance and seeking to find areas of common ground, so my title is a bit longer, but I tend to be more long-winded than Deborah, anyway. We have to look at the challenges we face and the criticisms of how we do that, but at the same time no one can deny in Guyana that there is movement forward.

In terms of investment, these have been presented by other speakers, of US\$70 million investment. The bauxite industry that was floundering from about 1980 to 1985 is beginning to come back onto its feet again and being able to meet more of its export market. The whole change in terms of the investments in timber and the call-in centres, these are going to offer opportunities in jobs and demands on the educational sector for greater skills for us to diversify even some of our skills base, so that we can prepare our people to take on the new challenges of the investments to take place in Guyana.

But without the infrastructure development that we have done since 1992, the reconstruction of Guyana in terms of roads, drainage and so

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on has been preparing Guyana for foreign investment. Because if we do not have access in communication, both telecommunication and roads and so on, improvements, a better educated population we would be unable to attract investors as we are now beginning to see that despite concerns at the political level and so on, which are flagged all the time internationally and the crime level, people are coming here and beginning to put their money into Guyana. As we have seen, a number of companies were listed earlier.

But there are some interesting developments for the future as well, the whole governance issue. All the changes that are taking place in Parliament. These are very positive things in terms of modernisation. Modernisation is not only about roads, drainage, housing and education, it is also about the consolidation of democracy and what does that mean in terms of Parliament, in terms of the functioning of the Public Sector, even the functioning of the private sector, the NGOs and communities? It is about people learning to be able to share space and to be able to recognise that you will win some and you lose some, but we cannot say that these are not areas that lead to an enhanced environment for greater movement forward by our country and to give people greater confidence.

When we are talking about anti-corruption mechanisms the issues that is important is the Integrity Commission, when. The Integrity Commission is important because we are supposed to report what we have, we are supposed to be able to declare what we have so that they can be scrutinised. It is not just those of us sitting in Parliament, it is also Judges, certain levels of Public Servants and so on. Therefore we have to support these mechanisms even though sometimes one may feel uncomfortable with declaring and your right to privacy is in some ways undermined.

The important thing about this Budget is not only that it provides the financial support to the sector and the Ministry of Home Affairs, Police in that the budgetary figures have moved to \$4.79 billion this year for current and capital, but it is also looking at all the other issues in human

services, education and water that can improve the conditions of life of our people.

Certainly one of the many issues when we look at building confidence, we can say proudly in the Ministry of Home Affairs that we have taken very seriously the attempt to build confidence and trust at many levels and I will just give you a few examples of those:

- In terms of partnerships, at the international level, we have been able to get support from the UN Office on drugs to be able to start a massive training programme. Here in Guyana, we are training officers and ranks in terms of drug interdiction.
- The role and assistance we get from SICAT in even preparing the drug master plan.
- The IDB in terms of two major areas:
 - (1) Directly to the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Guyana Police Force.
 - (2) The Citizens Security Project in which we are now in the project preparation phase.

But also with a view that when we go to the Board of Directors of the Bank that we will be able to draw down on loan that will help to deal with some of the very issues that the Honourable Member Mrs Backer referred to in terms of improving our capabilities, our skills, equipment and so on. But also recognising one of the important components of that project is developing better community policing relative to building confidence and trust with people and looking at some of the same issues of domestic violence, for example youth violence, abused areas which obviously we can try to make a change at the inter-sectoral level as well as among political parties, NGOs we are talking about anti-corruption mechanisms and so on.

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At the bilateral level, we are working with USAID, DIFID in the UK, in terms of training and assisting us in better helping our police to be trained, to use only necessary force and to develop all the protocols and SOPs, so that we can control some of the abuses that took place before.

The other IDB Project which is where the Police and Home Affairs come in as well is in the Justice Sector Strategy Programme which we are now involved in and which will look at the continuum of the community to when there is a crime, to the role of the police, the judiciary, the prosecutors and right through to rehabilitation. So again, there are two major investments. To me, that shows that we have the confidence and the capability to be able to make changes and to improve the vulnerability and weaknesses that we have.

The fact that there will be a DEA Office that will be opened here hopefully it will obviously be a fillip to helping us to be better capable of dealing with the narco-trafficking that is taking place.

Certainly at the local level the issue of partnership is critical and so there is a number of areas for example the National Road Safety Council had not function from 1990 and so we have had very broad based meetings from November and there was an interim committee set up to prepare for the launching of the National Road Safety Council. This is not a body run by the Minister of Home Affairs. It is an NGO, which I feel would be important, because road safety and the very issues that the Honourable Member raised are so critical, non-controversial, once they can bring us into having more lawfulness and more lawful behaviour on the road that my role in it has been to try to facilitate the resuscitation of the Council. So the interim committee has been working and the Council will be launched by the end of March. It is very broad-based to have all the NGOs, sectors and regions involved in an effort to try to make our road safer.

continued in part II

National Assembly Debates

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2006) 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**

82ND SITTING

2.00 PM

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fr. part I

At the level of the mining communities both in terms of crime and with the foreign workers, we have a number of very important meetings with the Gold and Diamond Miners Association, the GGMC, GRA, Forestry Commission to try to look at some orderliness and to improve the crime fighting capabilities in the areas particularly in the middle and upper Mazaruni. So, the development of a more open-door policy to try to draw people in on issues to be able to make our society safer. I think, it is an important intervention and there is openness in many areas of the police to work on that. Obviously there is resistance at different levels, but certainly not from the top, the Commissioner of Police.

The other part is the National Commission of Law and Order which has been formed. It is an advisory body, which will make reports and I believe that after this year is over, we may want to think of doing what St Lucia did and it is the only country in the CARICOM that set up such a Commission on Law and Order as agreed to by the CARICOM Heads of Government Conference that it is only St Lucia that went to an active Parliament to make it enshrined in their legislation. All the other countries including Guyana have started out more as advisory bodies to make recommendations for changes. But I believe, in Guyana that if we can get the kind of spirit... we have twenty-six members... I have invited

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Mr Ravindra Dev, I have not got an acknowledgement from him, but all the political parties are represented who are members of the House. So, I am hoping that that body can not only re-invent the wheel, but there are many, many reports, documents that have come out, but we can also hbe forced to be able to bring changes, bring recommendations and to be able to influence our constituencies and to get them involved in helping to make our society crime-free or at least reduce crime and to have some law and order.

I think it is important to refer to the international level and what is going on at the CARICOM level in terms of the CARICOM Regional Task Force on Crime and that the ad hoc Ministers of National Security that has been set up at the CARICOM level to discuss preparations for Cricket Work Cup 2007. So a number of issues of immigration, customs, anti-terrorism and so on are part of those meetings that have been going on.

I believe that this strengthening across borders not only with CARICOM, but also looking at the counterparts in Suriname, French Guiana, Venezuela, Brazil and further afield to help share intelligence, information and to help us in terms of interdictions are very important initiatives. The Association of the Caribbean Commissioners of Police is also another network system that is becoming stronger and being able to assist countries across borders in dealing with the transnational nature of crime.

When we look at the initiatives that we have taken for example some of them have already been expressed in the newspapers and I would not refer to the Stabroek News as frequently as my friend across the House, because I do not think that I get as much coverage there, but anyway, I sometimes have to look at the way we do things. I am not criticising Stabroek News, they are free to write what they want. The initiatives we have taken are all important.

When we met with the Private Sector Organisations, we had meetings to discuss crime and initiatives we could use to reduce crime. Out

of that, a number of conferences that were called by the Private Sector Commission in collaboration with the Guyana Police Force came out with a number of recommendations and some of them are being implemented. In that discourse with the Private Sector, came up the whole issue of being able to encourage them to have greater internal security mechanisms and to be able to have duty free concessions to bring in surveillance cameras and so on, a number of which have been done. The problem is, as with all crime fighting, there is no magic bullet and so if the cameras are not on or they are dirty, they are not going to be that helpful.

In our engagement with the Private Sector - the private security organisation - the Guyana Association of Private Security Organisations we are looking for legislation which was around for quite a while we are looking to bring that into the House in terms of regularising the Private Security Organisations which they wanted and we are interested in that as well. So there will be some regularisation, because you do not want any and everybody getting too reckless in forming security organisations without some methodology in ensuring that everything is above board and the quality and conditions for the workers as well.

But recognising that we have a shortage of staff in the Guyana Police Force ... the 1975 establishment of the Guyana Police Force put the figure to 4,000 ... we publicly say to the people that we have 600 vacancies, therefore we are operating with about 3,400, but I want the House to understand that that is a 1975 establishment. The society has grown. The areas in which we are operating, the challenges across the border, parts of the country which was no man's land fifteen to twenty years ago, are now opening up for all sorts of activities in terms of development, but also in terms of access for illegal activities. So, one of the things to my mind, is recognising when we say that there are 600 vacancies that is on the 1975 establishment and in fact if we were to do that all over again, we would probably say that the Guyana Police Force should be in the range of about 6,000 persons and not 4,000 persons.

Another initiative that has been taken is to encourage community-

based support for the Police Force and to have community-based cops as they say. This has been done in a number of UK towns and villages where they are called community-based law enforcement personnel. We are calling them here neighbourhood police. They are at the level of a rural constable and we were recruiting in the villages and the NDCs approximately two for every NDC across the country and in the interior locations. We are ready to start training with the first batch in the next month and so we will do that when the regional interviews are over. But part of the process is to consult the NDCs, the communities to see if the persons who have applied are people that they trust. They must be people resident in those communities and people that they would listen to and trust. These are live-in 24/7 community based police.

In the area of Community Policing-Ministerial Unit that will be set up is to try to ensure that the role and the relationship between the Community Policing Groups and the Police is a harmonious one which does not lead to vigilantism, but also works with the police, because more and more the police are recognising that where there are community policing groups functioning and really functioning in partnership with the police and the police station, there is really a reduction of crime in the community. Therefore we need to broker a better relationship between the two and to ensure that what we are not sacrificing is a safety at the community level and the reduction of crime in those areas.

The reference was made to the National Drug Strategy Master Plan. One of the complex things of it is that we are looking for staff to develop it, but a number of areas have already started, looking at forensics, the prosecutorial training and so forth. The Plan deals with a whole range of issues to do with narco-trafficking including legislative reforms. Some of the areas of legislative reforms are being considered, some are in draft and will help to strengthen our capabilities in fighting the narco-traffickers and it is in tandem with the drug strategy.

One of the initiatives that we are working with the Canadians on is the introduction of the Crime Stoppers Programme, which if you like, you can look on the Trinidadian website. There are many such pro-

grammes all over the world, but it started in Canada. It is a 1-800 number website where persons can call in with information and the identities are not known and so on. Trinidad introduced it and when you look at the statistics for Trinidad, it has been helpful in dealing with kidnapping and very serious crimes. Therefore, we are interested in providing a facility for people who may wish to share information, but do not wish for their identities to be known. Therefore that would help to give them some protection. We will be getting support in relation to that.

In terms of strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Home Affairs, references were made earlier to statistics and so on. One of the things is the development of a Social Statistics Unit which will deal with the collection, analysis and management of information for decision making purposes and it will be growing and developing over time, because we have to link-in a number of agencies that are not developed as yet in terms of being computerised such as the births, deaths and marriages, for example, whether it is traffic accidents, crime data, health data, customs and so on. That will be developed and evolved as time goes on and as we are able to link-in the various units that are ready to go and those that have to be developed.

One of the issues which is useful we are borrowing or looking at from Columbia is the crime observatory in which there is a special unit collecting data to do with crimes which take hours, days, time, place and street. It is a tool that has been used in Columbia to be able to effectively use your resources. So we will never have all the resources we want and the police will need, but are we using them effectively? So this will help – it is found as a management tool and is using a public health research methodology which my friend, the Honourable doctor across the House would be familiar with.

I think, one of the areas that we have to look at in terms of the various initiatives, as I have explained, is the ability to build partnerships with a variety of people. If we go back to the road traffic issues for example as the Honourable Member correctly pointed out, we will see that the figures of road accidents are very high. Accidents and fatalities

- 162 persons; 158 accidents in 2004; road fatalities in 2005 182 versus 168, 21 children died in both years. But what is interesting is the classes of road users that are killed and the majority are pedal cyclists and pedestrians. The pedestrians are the largest number of persons who are killed in road accidents even though we do focus a lot on the vehicles. In the categories of crime in 2004 the rate was 2,593 and in 2005 it was 2,476. So the proposals made by the Honourable Member are in fact part of what already has been stated in relation to the road safety issues. For example, under the IDB road maintenance programme, the police will be getting an additional twenty-one motor cycles and spares to be able to do better patrolling and road safety work and also in enforcement areas.

We have had meetings not only with groups of citizens and NGOs dealing with road safety, but we have also been meeting with the minibus drivers and the hire car drivers from various parts of the country to look at a number of interventions and to get them to be more compliant with the laws, but also to look at major issues of reducing congestion in the Georgetown area particularly in the car parks. So that a number of issues we have looked at in terms of the location or relocation of certain car parks.

On the issue of the ban of music in the public transportation, we have had a number of consultations with the drivers and mini bus guys with the Interim Committee on road safety. They both agree, so I am very happy to hear my friend on the opposite side of the House is coming out very strongly with that. So I know that I would not get any picketing and any problems. The ban on music does not mean that you cannot play a radio. We are talking about amplification on public transport.

The issue of driving under the influence which is not just alcohol but also drugs ... we do know that there are persons driving under the influence of narcotics and who are also causing accidents or risks. We have purchased breathalysers and we are examining a number of pieces of legislation to be able to bring that into this House and I look forward to

the support of the entire House on this issue of driving under influence... There are very strong measures and we are following the combination of what are the legislation in Jamaica, in Trinidad and also in Canada and Europe to ensure that we have the right measurements with the breathalysers so that it could stand up in the court of law.

Convictions - I was asked about user resources. The number of cases that were made was quite substantial and just to give an example of the kind of cases that came out:

- 1,052 helmet cases; and
- 1,782 seat belt cases during 2005;

so that when one looks at the almost 7,000 cases in traffic, there are other problems that we have to overcome in terms of the traffic court such as some of the legislation would have to be amended to allow for harsher penalties and so on. So those are all issues on the table and we hope that we will be able to get them done in 2006... I cannot promise that all those issues will be done before elections.

On the issue ... [*Interruption: 'Is traffic light on the table too?'*] ... of the traffic light ... Thank you very much Honourable Member for coaching me. As you know, the traffic light issue comes under the Ministry of Public Works, but it is a major intervention to do with road safety. We have been able to get three estimates from an Indian company. The most recent one is from a company that provides a lot of electronic equipment for the Indian Army and Police. They have done a study here in terms of solar traffic lights and looking at a combined grid of the grid of electricity and solar. So we will be examining the three different estimates to do traffic lights that would start at the Harbour Bridge and go all the way to Ogle and bringing in traffic lights into new areas. Obviously, we have to be able to look for funding for that and the hope is that we will be able to get a line of credit. So while my friend Mr Bernard was critical about getting loans and grants, if we do not go to look for loans and grants, there are many important interventions such as

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this that will be unable to be done. Why? We can make criticisms about all we want, where money is going and what it is used for, but there is a limit, there are only 700,000 people. No matter how big and how fast this country goes forward, the pool for revenue generation is basically from that population and with the threshold the government has given, it has also reduced that level of revenue generation in order to improve the quality of life. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Mr Cyril CL Belgrave: I wish to move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed Honourable Member

Hon Gail Teixeira: Thank you. There will always be competing demands of whether it is water or roads versus traffic lights; houses, education versus equipment for the police. There will always be those competing demands and it is always within any government's judgement to make those calls of where the money goes, but in terms of the conditions of life of our people, this government has continuously taken the line of providing the social sector with sizeable support to improve the quality of life. The crime situation here has a lot to do with what is going on outside of Guyana and inside of Guyana. There is no one variable you can find in relation to crime and law and order that can be the one issue that if you intervene could make a tremendous change:

- because a lot of the crimes are transnational;
- because there is narco trafficking and money laundering;
- because there is also the illicit trafficking in small arms;

and all in the countries in South America in particular are feeling it. They expressed it, all the governments talk about it, but once there are those

combinations, they make the crime more difficult and more sophisticated. Therefore, it requires a transformation of the Guyana Police Force. It is something that will put more and more demands to face those realities.

The Disciplined Forces Commission's Report which is before a Special Select Committee in Parliament has been going through the recommendations. The House may be interested to know that a number of those areas for the Police, Fire, Prison and the GDF ... [*Interruption: 'How far have you gone?'*] ... I cannot remember the exact number right now. I am not thinking about number right now, but we are meeting. I think, my friends on the opposite side of the House should advise the chief man here ... [*Interruption: 'He is not here.'*] ... well deputy chief, of all the great agreements we have when we meet at the Special Select Committee. Even the Honourable Member Basil and I agree. There is progress, I cannot remember the exact number we are on, but we have been coming along relatively well, productively positive. I want to let you know that the agencies Police, Fire and the Prisons have already been looking at the recommendations and bringing some of those changes into being, so that there is willingness, because you can provide money, but if you do not provide the leadership and the management skills sometimes nothing happens. The one issue that I am convinced of is that there is a real desire to make changes.

We can say that the police that are found to be corrupt or rogue or attitudinal or improper in their behaviour or abuse or whatever are being disciplined, are being removed, are being taken to the court and therefore it is a signal that we are willing to be strong on these issues and to ensure that we have a professional and well-constructed Police Force that will have the admiration of Guyanese. In order to do that one has to look at recruitment and obviously, as I pointed out, with the number of vacancies we still have a problem with recruiting; one can talk about the salary and everything else. Obviously, all those issues are concerns that everybody could raise, but one thing one can be sure about in the Police Force is that once one comes in, one is continuously trained and exposed to various programmes, seminars, workshops to ensure that even

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if persons come in and they may not have all the best of the qualifications, that they are exposed to, and helped to have upward mobility. For example, 1,493 officers were exposed to fifty-seven local courses and seminars, including ranks being sent overseas for training from anything to intelligence gathering to financial investigations, fraud as well as narco-trafficking and narcotic investigations.

The Police Force has benefited tremendously in the last two years from even greater injection of funds. In the last year, we had \$90,000,000. However, by the end of the year, we were able to access \$284,000,000 in terms of providing more vehicles, single cab vehicles and so on for the Police Force. In one year, we were almost able to triple the amount that the police would be getting and they will be arriving in the first quarter of this year. We are trying to ensure that the Police Force is better equipped, not only in terms of the patrol vehicles, but also in outboard engines, in terms of being able to have the type of equipment that they could work in interior locations, whether through the trails and roads and to be able to better monitor what is going on and to have faster interdictions.

The three new Police Stations which we spoke about in the last budget are coming along well; also the stations that were listed were all completed. A few that started in the latter part of last year will be finished in the first quarter of this year.

I know, the Honourable Member Mrs Bancroft was begging all the time for Mahdia and I know that Mahdia construction has been going on and I have asked a person to monitor and to let me know if anything is going wrong. I have not heard anything, so I think, it is going on schedule.

For the strengthening of areas, I am looking at Eteringbang, Acquero and all these other areas are important, because many of these stations needed upgrading.

As we are dealing with narco-trafficking, illegal smuggling through the

borders, whether they are guns, aliens or whatever else is the going thing that we need to now look at more new stations in areas of Guyana, as I said, years ago would have been no man's land. That is going to put additional challenges to the Police Force and to all the crime-fighting bodies.

In terms of equipment, which were bought from the budget last year, a number of issues which were very important including forensic equipment that would allow us to improve our investigative capabilities and there is money in this year's Budget again for such equipment. Last year, we had \$105,000,000 for equipment, everything from bullet-proof vests to breathalysers and as I said, very detailed forensic equipment that would allow us to deal with finger printing, gun residue tests, ballistic tests and so on. This will improve our capabilities tremendously, because certainly in terms of conviction rate, it is to do with good, solid police investigation as well as forensic and having witnesses who will be able to stand up in court, otherwise the cases evaporate. A number of presentations were made, sometimes cases are made and when they are called in the courts, the witnesses do not turn up and eventually the cases are dismissed.

Certainly, the DPP too, in terms of improving the prosecutorial aspects so that they are stronger in the police and the DPP in order to win more cases. There are many disappointments in cases, in the courts they are evaporated including persons that have weapons on them who are sometimes given bail; persons who have narcotics, who are given bail and these are concerns that are raised with the justice sector to try to ensure that we are all on the same track in terms of protecting the society.

In terms of the crime figures that were presented, some of them were presented earlier and I would not dispute those. I think it is important to note that certainly there is a reduction in the murders, in the number of homicides, but also in that category, although the number of murders or homicides have been reduced, what we have seen there are some great concerns where there are murders relating to domestic violence or disorderly conduct.

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Whilst we have seen a decline in robbery with violence, robbery with aggravation and even rape has declined from 181 to 157. At the same time we have seen an increase in robbery with violence and robbery under arms. So we have seen increase in the number of arms and this is probably the one area that we have not been able to bring down as we would have liked, but I believe if we can continue with some of the solid police work that we are trying to do now that we can try to reduce the gangs and to try to reduce the availability of weapons.

Last year, we were able to seize more than double the weapons than the year before. These are illegal weapons. One of the factors that has been raised in the Press and obviously among people in discussions and community discussions are the issues relating to deportees and the fact that there is a slight decline in the number of deportees coming in. In the Ministry of Home Affairs, we made a distinction between those who are deportees and who have illegally overstayed and those who have been charged with serious crimes. So what is our concern is that the majority of those who are charged with serious crimes and did a sentence generally live in two divisions of the country and in those two divisions that we also have the highest level of crimes, but that does not mean that there is not a direct link between deportees with serious crimes and those factors. It is felt that there are persons who are involved with criminal activities and that is something that will have to be researched as it has not been done so far.

In the comparison between 2004 and 2005, we have also more than doubled the eradicating of cannabis plants - 19,000 plants were destroyed versus 41,000 plants the year before. However, there were not many convictions in relation to drugs and narcotics. In fact, some of the figures from 2000/2004 showed probably that 131 cases were brought and for narcotic activity about 51 cases completed the courts and were convicted, the rest - the majority - were either dismissed sometimes for the persons were not appearing in the courts. In relation to the narcotic activities, we will also have to be dependent on and to work with a variety of forces, because one of the things that we must recognise is that in the United States a lot of the drug interdictions - the big

interdictions - including Columbia and Plan Columbia have been a recipient of almost US\$5 billion by the American government to deal with narco-trafficking and it is only now - years and years this thing has been going on - that you are beginning to see some of the very big drug barons are being caught and brought to justice or in gang-violence are being killed. [*Interruption: 'Guyana!'*] I said Columbia not Guyana. What we do know and this is substantiated that some of the biggest drug interdictions ... I am not talking about catching the cocaine, I am talking about the paper trail and some of the biggest drug lords have been found just like the Mafia in the 1950s and 1960s had to do with solid work with the paper trail dealing with money laundering and dealing with where the money takes you. In one of the big seizures by the DEA a few years ago, it had taken them five years on following the money through various countries in order to apprehend a very major drug lord in the United States.

What I am saying is that the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Inland Revenue Services, Customs, Police, the Anti-fraud groups, these are many bodies that have to be involved, but if we think that we are only going to get the drug lord by catching him with the cocaine in his hands, that is going to be much more difficult to do, as many of them are not going to be the ones actually moving it around. Therefore, it is very difficult, but I believe that the will is there. I believe that narco-trafficking is a danger to our society, it undermines the social fabric of our society, it invokes havoc in families, it creates opportunities for other crimes, gun crimes, robberies and so on, it enhances and encourages other areas of prostitution and alien smuggling. We know that from the work we are doing that there is also in many parts of the world the combination of drug-trafficking and smuggling of humans. Those are the two big money makers in the world and so we have to look at how we can protect our society. But all the issues of crime whether it is narco-trafficking, whether it is domestic violence, it cannot only be done by the Police, it has to be done on the basis that all of us are involved; it is everybody's business in fighting crime. It is our businesses in our families that if our children are coming home with expensive things and they are not working, then we need to know where they are coming from. It requires families to take

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ownership and responsibility; it requires communities to be able to have safe neighbourhoods, to have neighbour watchers, to see if there are strangers coming around. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Mr Feroze Mohamed: Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed Honourable Member.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, I believe that more and more we have to deal with the multi-dimensional areas of crime fighting and being able to get more and more partners involved and to be able to see not only in crime fighting, but in the area of Prisons where the point is made in relation to the prison population and the length of time with the number of cases.

I just came from a meeting with the Prison Officials, who are having a retreat in terms of looking at being able to improve a number of areas and strengthen a number of areas in the prison in terms of rehabilitation, training for the staff and the prisoners and also to look at improving the quality of the service as well as to ensure that persons who are dangerous to our society cannot easily escape.

The Investigation Committee we had at Mazaruni has been very insightful and helped us to know how to improve it. The Honourable Member asked about other reports on Commissions that were done, all of those are under review and being examined to see that we are not repeating ourselves.

18:05H

[Presiding Member Mr Cyril Belgrave in the Chair]

We can go back and see what recommendations were done, what were implemented, what were still outstanding to be implemented.

This year's Budget in terms of the Police, Prisons, Fire, Registry as well as the Police Complaints Authority, a lot of efforts have gone in over the last few years to try to improve for example the Police Complaints Authority, the response by the Police to requests, abuses by the Police and so on. I do say that there has been some improvement, because if you look at the GHRA's Report in the 1990s, you will see that it reported that the number of complaints about the levels of brutalities to the Police Complaints Authority in the first year of its existence that is in 1991 was 571 the highest ever it received and up to today that is still the registered highest in 1991 of complaints of Police brutality. We have never reached that level of complaints as yet. The Police Complaints Authority is an important place for the public to take their complaints, their grievances about Police behaviour and to get redress. There is also the office of professional responsibility of the Police that there can also be a way of having an internal audit in relation to the department of Police.

Certainly, I am sure that all the capital works in the Budget we will discuss next week in terms of all the stations and the equipment, vehicles and so on will be coming forth. What we will be including which is not reflected in the Budget and I was waiting for the National Commission on Law and Order is the budget for that body, so that we can take it to Cabinet for that to be equated as a subvention agency, so the Commission will have financial resources to do its work and to be able to clearly have an impact on the cross-party in a broad based body to be able to reduce areas for criminal activity.

Obviously, there are many issues in relation to crime fighting, and to be able to bring changes in our society I believe that one of the things we have going first is that there are instances that worry us and the recent killing of Ronald Waddell is extremely disconcerting. It was a brutal and vicious act and we will be doing our best to investigate it and to find the

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perpetrators, but one of the things we have to recognise as Guyanese is that crime is a problem. There is no denying of that, but we also have to be fair to ourselves as Guyanese. We are beginning to turn around the situation, but it will require many people to be involved, it will require communities, the police, the judiciary and the prosecutors to be able to sing almost from the same Bible, so that those persons who are bringing illicit weapons into our country will be treated seriously, because there is no reason, you will bring in a weapon illegally and unlicensed unless you want to do some sinister thing. We will be able to turn things around. I think, there are some important initiatives that have been introduced and they can bring a change. What is required of all of us is to ensure that they are working as best as they can. The Neighbourhood Police that I spoke about, the community policing groups that I talked about, the Commission, the Road Safety body, the drug strategy... There are many interventions going on.

Now my friend across the House referred to the PNC/R strategy on crime and I sat and read it last night in great detail. *[Interruption: 'Only now.']* I read it before, but I was more interested in reading last night, so I had greater interest in it last night, but what is interesting is that in the strategy, when we look at the proposals, the issue of Buxton gets tabled in 2009. The beginning of the turnaround of Buxton is 2006 to 2009. I pray and hope that the proposals by the PNC/R are totally wrong that it is not going to wait until 2009 for us to be able to have Buxton return to normalcy and the civilians and citizens of Buxton will be able to live a comfortable life without being frightened.

Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure, we have worked hard and we are working harder to be able to turn around the situation in Guyana, to be able to build greater confidence between the various partners both at the political level and all the levels of society. I look forward to working with a broad cross section of people. I do not believe that as the Minister of Home Affairs, that we can bring all the changes we want to make without that involvement. It may require in time a number of investigating committees. The one at Tain, Port Mourant... the group is finished meeting ... they went right through from Skeldon to New Am-

sterdam, they are meeting people and I expect a written report sometime this week. Therefore, what issues are there to try to address?

No one can say that there is a perfect world. What we are saying: Are the mechanisms there for giving redress. Are the mechanisms there to bring correction? Are there mechanisms there to call on people to behave in an orderly manner and not to have violent reactions or feelings that people can do what they want, when they want and how they want? So it is also about everybody not saying that the law is for someone else and not for themselves.

I therefore hope that the debate that we will have next week on the items that Members can ask specific questions, I am more than willing to share and to answer those questions. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Dr Dalglish Joseph

Dr Dalglish Joseph: Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the People's National Congress/Reform to add my voice to this debate on the 2006 Budget Presentation.

Let me first make this point to the Honourable Minister Gail Teixeira. There has been some concern in relation to road safety as it relates to drivers of vehicles and also bicycles who used our roadways and have varying degrees of visual impairment and also physical impairment. As it is today, no one is evaluated medically prior to the receipt of a licence and probably this is an issue which should be addressed urgently, people acquire disabilities even with licence and people are licensed with disabilities. The presentation reflected that there is an increase in the incidence of road traffic accidents and probably this is an area which needs urgent attention.

Mr Speaker, I listened with attention since this debate commenced on Monday, and for one moment I thought that our colleagues on the

opposite side never enjoyed benefits of housing under the People's National Congress. I was worried that they also did not even benefit from free education from nursery to university. I was seriously worried that none of them benefited from health care provided by the hospitals, health centres, health posts constructed by the People's National Congress. Mr Speaker, it will appear from their mouthings that all good things happened in Guyana in October 1992 after the People's Progressive Party came on the scene, but that is not so. Yesterday, I listened with some amount of nausea as the Honourable Member Dr Jennifer Westford who is not here today made bold to say that no PPP scholars were trained under the PNC in Cuba. This is far from being true. One example that quickly comes to mind is a colleague of mine who is none other than Dr Bhairo Harry who was a PPP scholar ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: I do not think the Honourable Member said that.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: She said so.

The Speaker: Well, I will try and get the records. I do not recall her saying so. I will ask for the records.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Dr Bhairo Harry benefited from specialist training in Cuba under the People's National Congress government. May I continue, Mr Speaker, my colleague Dr Moti Lall also benefited from training under the People's National Congress era. I made bold to say that he worked in the People's National Congress, Ministry of Health, and also made serious contribution to tuberculosis control in Guyana. The Honourable Member Dr Westford also received her scholarship under the People's National Congress administration and she has also benefited big time from other services under the People's National Congress government. I know the facts and she knows the facts. So let us put to rest this myth that all good things came to Guyana when the PPP/C eagle landed in 1992. That is not so.

Mr Speaker, I wish to now turn my attention to the 2006 Budget as presented by the Honourable Minister Kowlessar, but before going spe-

cifically to the 2006 Budget, I wish to reflect on some of the promises made in the 2005 Budget that were not achieved.

In 2005, the PPP/C stated that it will start the construction, equipping and furnishing a new hospital complex in Linden, Region 10. This has not happened. They allocated \$160,000,000 to do just what I just stated and therefore we need to know what has happened to this money. The nation needs to know where this money has gone.

In that same Budget the PPP/C promised to start rehabilitation of electricity, potable water and sewerage systems including that of the Georgetown Public Hospital. In 2005, we are yet to see the fulfilment of this promise. They have not delivered what they have promised here.

Again, the PPP/C promised to hire a number of health specialist to improve the organisational structure and functions of the national health care system. Mr Speaker, I ask the question, where are these specialists? The answer seems to be that they are on their way to Guyana. They are somewhere, but they are coming...

Mr Speaker, in 2005, the PPP/C promised that under the Basic Nutrition Programme basic nutrition supplements would have continued to be available to children and pregnant and lactating mothers. Pregnant and lactating mothers are still looking and waiting for these supplements throughout the ten regions of this Cooperative Republic of Guyana. Failed promises!

Mr Speaker, in 2005 the PPP/C stated that it will allocate the sum of \$280,000,000 and I repeat \$280,000,000 for the management and care of STIs, HIV and TB. This money was intended to be spent in National TB prevention and control and to strengthen community health care. To date, none of these programmes have achieved-and I am positive here-their overall goals and objectives.

In 2005, the PPP/C promised to spend over \$2.5 billion to increase access and improve housing facilities for local for low income families. Under the Low Income Settlement Programme \$1.8 billion was allo-

cated to developed 8,000 houselots in area such as Amelia's Ward. I know Amelia's Ward. I go there and I have colleagues who live in Region 10, and as I speak to you, Mr Speaker, no infrastructural works - by this I mean roadways, water and electricity-have been provided. These are promises that have failed. They were made, but they were not achieved. Mr Speaker, in 2005, the PPP/C promised to spend almost \$630,000,000 to construct iron removal plants at Ruimveldt and at Sophia. I repeat, iron removal (water treatment) plants at Ruimveldt and Sophia. We are to find out from them now whether these plants are operational and where is the iron.

Finally, in 2005, the PPP/C promised to enhance the safety and environmental soundness of the Mandela dump site and continue community participation and public awareness campaigns. To date, none of these have been achieved.

By now it should be clear that the PPP/C is good at making promises and very efficient in their non-delivery on those promises. 2005 has not been a good year for the nation's tax dollars. Millions of taxpayers' dollars have been lost as a result of damaged vital re-agents at the Kingston bond. This money will never be recovered, but its loss has denied the people of Guyana access to care and that is the PNC/R's concern. If you do not spend the money wisely, and the money is lost it denies you and me the opportunity for care and that means breaking the contract, Mr Rohee.

Mr Speaker, the floods of January 2005, caught the PPP'C regime without a disaster preparedness plan. Listening to all that have been said so far about the flood. What is clear as crystal is that the PPP/C had no disaster plan. The PPP/C government was not in good standing with CDERA, the Caribbean premiere response agency of which they are signatories. An analysis of the flood of 2005 revealed that the PPP/C regime failed to conduct the necessary maintenance and surveillance of the East Demerara Conservancy Dam and its water levels. That is the crux of the matter. The main contributory factor to the 2005 flooding of the Coastal Regions of Regions 5, 4 and 3 is nothing less than negligence

on the part of the PPP/C government in the management of this major water way. Heavy rainfalls were just incidental. I repeat, heavy rainfalls were just incidental.

In 2006, the PPP/C proposes to enhance the socio-economic status of our population in the provision of quality healthcare and the promotion of healthy living. This not only requires money, but also requires human capital and by this I mean key human capital in the health sector. However, with the continuous exodus of key and critical healthcare professionals, this promise can only be an elusion. The People's Progressive Party's Minister of Finance make bold to say that the increased investment in the health sector and broadening of the range of services have had a decisively positively effect on the population made evident by the improvement in several health indicators. Well, Mr Speaker, I am looking for these health indicators and they are nowhere in this document.

I turn to the tables of the 2006 Budget, Page 65, Appendix I - One of the first health indicators is the infant mortality rate. Going through here, it is not stated. Another is the maternal mortality rate. Here it is not stated. The Crude Death rate is another indicator. Here, no information is given.

Mr Speaker, this is the 2006 Budget Presentation and if one has to look seriously and critically at the Budget of 2006, figures that are of vital importance cannot be hidden in your analysis of what was done and what is proposed to be done.

Since when the amount of cataract surgeries - and this had me worried - in one particular hospital in Guyana is considered a health indicator. When one reads what the Minister of Finance says here, it appears as though cataract surgery is also a health indicator. What is evident here is both frightening and terrifying and by this I mean there is nothing to boast about like Dr Bheri Ramsaran wanted to boast about - how many cataract surgeries were being done at New Amsterdam hospital. The PPP/C government should be concerned as to why so many Guyanese are

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going blind. That is the key. They must be concerned why so many Guyanese are losing their visions. This blindness needs to be investigated and halted now and if they do not do it, we will do it.

Mr Speaker, we have heard from the PPP/C's side of this House since the commencement of the Budget Debate of the number of doctors that is currently being trained in Cuba. Thanks to the Guyana/Cuba collaboration which started under the People's National Congress of which I am a proud product. Today, I make bold to say here that during the thirteen years of the PPP/C in government no physician has been trained as a specialist. I repeat, no physician has been trained as a specialist. Now if that is not an indictment, you tell me what it is.

This year, in the 2006 Budget the PPP/C proposes to commence the construction of the hospital at Mc Kenzie, Linden. Well, I sincerely hope that having checked out what happened to the \$160,000,000 of last year that they make sure that this year the project commences. I know for sure that the people of Region 10 are eagerly awaiting the commencement of the construction of this hospital that has been travelling on a turtle's back since 2003, 2004 and now 2005 has gone and we are about to commence the 2006 era.

One of the most important health indicators of any nation is the infant mortality rate. As I stated just now, it is absent in this Budget. This absence raises many concerns and a question: Is this Government so tardy that they are unable to determine the infant mortality rate of 2005? I repeat, is this Government so tardy that they are unable to state in their Budget of 2006, the infant mortality rate of 2005?

What about the next important health indicator - maternal mortality rate? Is it so elusive to this government, unknown, known, hidden - I would like to know it, we would like to know it, the people of this country would like to know it.

The ten leading causes of morbidity in Guyana or in other words, the ten leading causes of diseases in Guyana have been listed in descending

order:

- Malaria;
- Acute respiratory diseases;
- Ill defined signs and symptoms or in other words unknown conditions;
- Hypertension,
- Injuries and accidents;
- Acute diarrhoeal diseases;
- Diabetes Miletus and its associated complications;
- Worm infestations;
- Rheumatic arthritis; and
- Mental illness

This morbidity profile suggests that with a comprehensive primary healthcare programme, we can significantly reduce the incidents of these diseases in our country. Mind you, I have not yet mentioned congenital malformations, HIV/AIDS, cancer, alcohol and substance abuse, et cetera.

Mr Speaker, primary healthcare should not be given lip service, but must be delivered in real terms to the people of Guyana. The people of Guyana need a comprehensive primary healthcare programme that the Minister can come here and boast that we, through our primary healthcare programme, have impacted positively on the incidence of malaria and we have malaria in control in all the endemic areas in our country. He cannot boast about that. A comprehensive primary healthcare programme must be able to address the issue of acute respiratory diseases in all our ten administrative regions. The Minister should be proud to turn up here

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and boast about the successes of his primary healthcare programme, but he cannot do that. The primary healthcare programme must therefore not be given lip service only, but must be able to provide the requisite care that the population of Guyana requires and needs.

The PPP/C government has failed to provide a comprehensive environmental health programme that addresses the major health issues in our regions.

The breeding of mosquitoes is out of control. I repeat, the breeding of mosquitoes is out of control in our country. Failure of vector control can only lead to an increase in vector borne diseases especially those transmitted by the mosquitoes and Guyana has failed to effectively control the breeding of mosquitoes. The floods of 2005 and now of 2006 will definitely create a nidus for increased mosquito breeding and will obviously lead to an increase in such vector borne diseases like Dengue Fever, Malaria and Filariasis, just to name a few. Malaria cases continue to be diagnosed in our coastal belt and in the interior regions of our country malaria is widespread and out of control. In every rural community of our country patients die as a result of malaria infestations. Malaria prevention and control is practically non-existent in the regions most severely affected. On this I need you to take note.

However, what is lamentable is the fact that the Honourable Minister of Health does not see it fit to strengthen the capacity of local health systems and authorities to effectively manage this disease and that is what has to happen. In many of the affected regions hospitals have no doctors, laboratories are non-functional, multi-purpose technicians are under-utilised and medexes are working to capacity without the direct supervision of a registered medical practitioner. I repeat, medexes are allowed to function without the direct supervision of a registered medical practitioner. That is in breach of the Medex Act.

Filariasis is now endemic in our country and once the government fails to control mosquito, they will also fail to control filariasis. Dec salt was hailed as a very good project once upon a time. Indeed, Mr Speaker,

the Minister of Health was in the forefront of the Dec salt campaign and I supported him, because I know the merits and demerits of Dec salt, but one will ask the question now, what has happened to Dec salt? What has happened to the project of Dec salt? The project of Dec salt has died a natural death and so with it filariasis control. Therefore, what we have been seeing at our regional hospital and the Georgetown Hospital, et cetera, is an increase in the incident of hydrocele as a result of an increase of filariasis. We have failed to control filariasis. Dec Salt has failed. That is a project that the Honourable Minister of Health Dr Ramsammy championed, but it has failed and he needs to tell the nation why it has failed.

Mr Speaker, malaria is endemic in Guyana and the regions most affected by Malaria are Regions 1, 7 and 8. The local health system in these regions is unable to respond to this epidemic and we have been losing valuable human resources to this disease. A recent visit to Region 1, Matarkai Sub-Region, which comprises Matthews Ridge, Arakaka and Port Kaituma has been very revealing. The Pakera Hospital which was once the best district hospital constructed in this country by the government of the People's National Congress has been neglected by this caring PPP/C government. What I am about to say to you, Mr Speaker, will frighten you, I am sure... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Before you frighten me, Honourable Member, [Laughter] you will need some more time.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I ask that the Honourable Member be given ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Dr Dalgleish Joseph: Matthews Ridge is the only facility ... the Pakera Hospital in Matthews Ridge is expected to perform deliveries; it is the only hospital between Arakaka and Port Kaituma where patients from those two areas are being treated. It will surprise you to know that that

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hospital has been without running water for a number of years. I repeat, this hospital has been without running water for a number of years. Now tell me, Mr Speaker, how is it you want to provide quality health care as stated in the Budget of 2006, when you have hospitals that are allowed to function without running water. Tell me, where is this caring PPP/C regime?

Mr Speaker, the final stage of my journey took me to Port Kaituma. What a time of my life I had at Port Kaituma? Last Year, the Honourable Minister Nokta said that he had plans - glorious plans - for roadways in Port Kaituma; that he had allocated funds for roadways in Port Kaituma township which included the road from the airport. On my trip, I decided that I was going to take these pictures which I considered Parliamentary exhibits. This is the Honourable Harry's road:

- *Exhibit No. 1* - This is the Honourable Harry's road;
- *Exhibit No. 2* - Harry's road;
- *Exhibit No. 3* - Harry's road;
- *Exhibit No. 4* - Harry's road;
- *Exhibit No. 5* -- If you look at the background, you will see a school. That school was built by the People's National Congress/Reform and it still abounds there gloriously, Port Kaituma. But if you want to take a further look, you will see that there is a roadway to the school. When the rain is falling the children take off their shoes.
- *Exhibit No. 7* - The Port Kaituma Hospital. This hospital was supposed to have benefited from rehabilitation works. Well the only thing that has been rehabilitated here is the painting on the sign.
- *Exhibit No 8* - The school that we built is still standing strong.

- *Exhibit No 9* - I just want this Honourable House to take a good note of this. Well, do you know what this is? This is a morgue - a white elephant morgue, because the people of Kaituma said it was ill conceived to build this morgue where it is and they were not going to use it. So this morgue with the big Government of Guyana sign stands there as a monument which goes to the zoo - a white elephant.

Mr Speaker, the people have refused to use this morgue, because its location is within the location of persons living there. There is a valley behind this morgue where people are living from where they get their source of water. Therefore, they are all in opposition to the morgue being where it is. I sincerely hope that the Minister for Regional Development takes their comments into consideration.

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend the valuable contributions of our nurses colleagues in the formulation of a National Cancer Registry. Two colleagues have been playing a very important role in ensuring that the medical profession and, indeed, the Guyanese society at large become aware of the incidence of cancer in our society.

The National situation in relation to cancer requires a strategy that seeks to provide relevant infrastructure and human resources that is specialised and capable of effective adequate responses. Under a PNC/R government, we will establish a primary healthcare programme that will emphasize cancer prevention, early detection and multi-disciplinary approach to cancer therapy.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS have continued to increase unabated. The increase continues to impact negatively on our population, the family and the individual. We are still unable to proudly stand up and say, yes, we are now making an impact in the war against HIV/AIDS. This present trend only leads to the creation of a perpetual disintegrated family structure and greater socio-economic burdens on our ailing population. Mr Speaker, I believe that I am a voice crying in the wilderness on behalf of

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the professional nurses of Guyana. During the last Budget presentation and since 2001, I have sought in this House to highlight the failure of the PPP/C to effectively devise a plan of retention and development of our professional nurses. Once again in 2006, I will set forth a current analysis of the impact of the exodus of the nurses of our country which amounts to a denial of quality care to the people of this country to which the Honourable Member Mr Kowlessar stated categorically clear in his Budget that the PPP/C government is committed.

The National Strategic Plan 2003-2007 has noble goals and noble objectives among which is a promise that the citizens of Guyana will be among the healthiest in South America and the Caribbean. I repeat, the people of Guyana will be healthiest in South America and the Caribbean. This Strategic Plan is less than one year short of completion and a random look at the goals and objectives that were set forth will only tell you that these were good objectives on paper, but not achieved in reality. Without doubt, Mr Speaker, professional nurses are vital, if not the vital unit in the healthcare delivery system. Once a healthcare system has identified its key and critical staff, the next business of the day is to retain what you have, attract what you do not have and to get about the business of developing them and also to seek to provide health services desired by the population.

The PPP/C regime has not been fully aware of vital role of our nurses in the healthcare delivery system. The PPP/C regime also knows that this perpetual exodus of our professional nurses from the public healthcare system is crippling the delivery of quality healthcare to every section of our population. This situation has been allowed to fester for too long and has gotten worse under the Honourable Member Dr Ramsammy's tenure. Under his watch the exodus of our nurses has worsened to the extent where the PPP/C is now seeking to patch a patch - any patch work - to remedy the situation. The nursing profession did not sit idly by or allowed the situation to reach uncontrollable proportions, but they developed their own strategic plan, which, if the PPP/C wants to seriously address the situation of our nurses, would have taken on board the numerous recommendations entailed in this

document. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Mr E Lance Carberrey: I ask that the Honourable Member be given two minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker the PPP/C regime is the current custodian of the nation's health. The failures we have highlighted so far do not qualify them to continue to govern this nation any longer. The people of Guyana have heard and will judge them at the polls come August 2006.

Finally, the legislative agenda of the PPP/C's Ministry of Health has clearly stated that they will submit the following Bills to this House:

The Health Promotion and Protection Bill - This Bill has not been submitted and 2005 has already concluded.

The Draft Allied Paramedical Health Professional Bill was promised to be laid in this House by October of 2005. This has not happened.

The Draft Medical Facilitates Licensing Bill was to be laid in this House in 2005. It has not been laid.

Mr Speaker, now that the PNC/R has highlighted the problems, difficulties, inefficiencies and failures of the PPP/C regime during the period of review, we invite the Guyanese people to enjoin us in a *rendezvous* of prosperity. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Health

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Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, I have absolutely no hesitation this evening in getting up and supporting the Estimates for 2006. In so doing, I congratulate the Minister of Finance and his staff. I think under the circumstances they have done an excellent job of presenting a prudent and practical Budget and they have managed to ensure that the government's short-term and long-term programmes can be effectively implemented.

Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity to apologise to my colleagues over the last several days for my tardiness. I am one of those Members who normally sit through the Budget Sittings and all of our Sittings, listening to the contributions of everyone. Over the last several days, I have had to be absent and I do apologise. I find people's contributions, their ideas interesting, sometimes I disagree, sometimes some are absurd and I am going to be kind to my friends Dr Dalglish Joseph and Dr Hanoman. I will be gentle and kind.

I have had a chance to listen to some of the contributions here and I have seen some on TV ... [*Interruption: 'You saw us on TV.' Yes, plenty of you ... 'Where?' ... "You guys are sleeping when I am working. I have read some of the reports and I have seen some of the notes."*]

Mr Speaker, I will steer away from the comical, I will steer away from the nonchalant approach that I have seen some Members take. I will try not to make light ... certainly I will not make light of the achievements and yes, some of the weaknesses of our programmes and some of the deficiencies. Certainly, I will not make light of the contributions from our colleagues on the other side.

Mr Speaker, I must admit that at times listening to the contributions, things go through my mind ... I do not want to use the word - I want to take the kind of follow-on on the Honourable Member Mr Bernard earlier ... So I am not going to use some of the words that go through my mind when I hear some of the presentations.

For example, this afternoon I listened to my colleague and friend Dr

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Joseph, I like Dr Joseph. We get along quite well ... *[Interruption: 'You do not like Max at all.']* ... and I like Max too. I am coming to my friend Dr Hanoman also. So let us take Dr Joseph.

Dr Joseph spoke for forty-seven minutes and throughout those forty-seven minutes ... If I were the Leader of the Opposition ... I mean here is a member of my party who for forty-seven minutes was wrong in every single thing he said.

Let us take them one by one. Last year, I corrected the Honourable Member Dr Joseph on CDERA. He said last year and repeated the exact line this year that Guyana is not in good standing with CDERA. The truth of the matter is that Guyana is not only in good standing; Guyana was in excellent standing with CDERA then and is now. On 19 and 20 December 2005, we hosted in Georgetown a Comprehensive Disaster Management Plan for all the territories. It was hosted in Guyana. Significantly, and this is why I hope that it is ignorance and I hope that it is not a malicious mis-representation by the Member. Do you know that the PNC/R was represented by the Honourable Member Mr James McAllister? Obviously Dr Joseph is unaware of what is going on, but he stood up in this House and misrepresented the facts to us and to the people of this country. Do you see why people cannot trust you? Indeed, because of our performance we are charring CDERA. Dr Luchon co-chaired the last session. So I think, we must know our facts when we come here and present them.

Yes, the CDC last year had some difficulty, but we must understand that the CDC was a major contributor to the relief effort in Grenada, when our problem came. These are facts.

I do not know the scholarship arrangements for Dr Bhairo Harry, but when the Honourable Member Dr Joseph stand in this House and inform all of us that Dr Harry represented a PNC scholarship to the PPP activist, I never know that my friend and colleague Dr Bhairo Harry is a PPP activist. Dr Bhairo Harry is a Guyanese professional, who deserves a scholarship. *[Applause]*

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Mr Speaker, Dr Joseph spoke about the Linden ... *[Interruption: 'Dr Ramsammy, where you got your scholarship from?' ... "Not from you and not from anybody."]*

Mr Speaker, we hear about the proposed new Linden Hospital and we did not keep our promises. You see, we do not do things like Dr Joseph and his colleagues to just show up and do things. You have to have a plan, a conceptual designs, architectural designs and all the arrangements were done in 2005 and right now those architectural designs have been made available and the government has put out a tender for contractors *[Applause]* and we hope that the construction starts in March/April. So the work started in 2005 and right here in the Budget Estimates in 2005, it was Dr Joseph who asked where the money was and what was going to be done and exactly what I said (check the records) what would happen in 2005 happened in 2005.

Mr Speaker, we heard about the STI/TB Programme, you see it is okay if we want information, but do not come here and say that we have done nothing with the STI/TB Programme. That Programme was fully executed in 2005 and will continue in 2006. Mr Speaker, information system, laboratory systems for STIs and TB have been in place. The TB culture lab is functioning at the Georgetown Public Hospital right now. The laboratory facilities at West Demerara, New Amsterdam and Linden for TB have been up and running. Our STI programmes are functioning now at the Georgetown Hospital in Region 4, Region 6, Region 10 and Region 3.

The DODS Programme which is a direct observation therapy programme where workers go out and observe TB patients for their treatment ... *[Interruption]*

Dr Dalglish Joseph: On a point of order, the Honourable Minister of Health has stated that I misrepresented the truth in all my presentations and I would like to quote here from the Budget of 2005 ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. A point of order refers to

the rules. You have to point out to me which rule has been broken. [Noisy Interruption] Order, please, Honourable Members, let us get on with the nation's business.

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member talked about the nutrition programme for lactating mothers and for children. In 2005, the programme started with thirteen health centres where vouchers are provided to pregnant women for the purchase of supplies at the local stores - vouchers that amount to \$1,000. There were also sprinkles provided for pregnant women and for children six months to twenty-four months. In 2006, that programme will continue to be expanded to thirty-two health centres throughout the country and with our new indigenous health programme; it will be expanded into several more health centres in the regions.

Mr Speaker, there is a number of other things and I will come to them as I get to different areas of my address. We, in the PPP/C have gone through many discussions of the proposals in the Budget and sometimes we all think that this is something that imposed, that we on this side of the House never debate this issue, that the ideas are only coming from one side, but I think the Minister of Finance and his staff will tell you that so far with the debate in this House, they have had a harder time in debating with us internally than we are having debating with the opposition. They would rather have that debate than to talk with us.

There are many things for example we laud the Ministry of Finance for its income tax proposals, but we also wondered whether we could afford it to go even a little further. We accept the gradual movement upwards of the income tax threshold, but many of us wondered whether we could not have gone even further with the progressive principle of the income tax regime. In the end for the time being given our financial position the income tax proposal of the present Budget seemed the most practical way forward, but for many of us this debate is not a closed one.

Mr Speaker, we hear these arguments. I think it was the Honour-

able Member Mr Alexander, who bemoaned what he described as a lack of cohesion. Indeed, the Honourable Member stands indicted for the very sin he ascribed to the Members on the government's side, of listening, not hearing. Mr Speaker, we do listen, we hear and we see, but if my colleague would just listen. The cohesion of the Budget, the underlying themes - there are several underlying themes one of which is modernisation - the modernisation of our country. We had always since the beginning of our tenure in 1992 recognised that we need to rebuild an entirely new country. We recognised with great agony then the fact that Guyana seems stuck in another century. Our goal therefore was to rebuild, modernise our country. I can go on in great detail to show how throughout the Budget, looking at all the sectors, this underlying theme of modernisation is reflected, but I am not going to go into all of the details; I will just mention a few points.

If we take the infrastructure in 1992, it was in total collapse; it was in decay, but the challenge then was not only to rebuild, because it was also an archaic infrastructure; our roads and bridges were built for few vehicles, carts and bicycles and we have to change that. Over the years that is exactly what we have been doing. Our road network is being rebuilt and made more appropriate for contemporary and more modern usage. Those bridges, where only one vehicle could pass at a time or two with great difficulty, today they have been widened and strengthened. In 2005 we commissioned the Mahaica and Rosignol bridges. I am sure my colleague Minister will talk about the modernisation of our road network, our bridges, our transportation system.

We see the same thing in terms of our buildings both in the public and private sectors. Our new airport now provides more modern facilities for entry and exit in and out of our country and we cannot deny that. We, as Guyanese should be proud of Guyana's new airport. That is a process of modernisation. We should be proud that we in Guyana provided a modern new headquarters for CARICOM. In our environment that provides a sense of the modernisation of our country. The new stadium that is going up, the new convention centre are all part of the modernising of our country, but we must also modernise the legal frame-

work.

We inherited an archaic, sometimes obsolete legal framework and we need to modernise that and the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs will speak to those modernisation attempts, but it is not only the law, it is the norms and standards under which we work and we see the modernisation of these things. Just late last year Minister Nadir piloted through this House, the CROSS Q Bill in which Guyana is seeking to bring our processes, our norms, standards and quality to modern day contemporary standards.

If you also look at the IT sector, our telecommunication, it is gradual, but it is beginning to modernise - the modernisation of our industries as exemplified by the modernisation of the Skeldon factory. So you can see that underlying theme. Whether you are dealing with the social sector, the legal framework, the industry, the road network and so on, you will see that that is weaved into the Budget.

Mr Speaker, one of the strengths of the PPP/C government is that it is always people oriented. Its working class history has been sustained and maintained through every single national budget it has presented. *[Applause]* Throughout the 2006 Budget, you will see that. For example, I have already talked about the income tax regime. The raising of the threshold to \$25,000 means that another 20,000 of our people will pay no tax as of 2006. Mr Speaker, it used to be at one time \$10,000, I note my good friend the Honourable Member Mr Murray said that he was uninspired by the Budget; uninspired by the fact that \$25,000 is now the threshold, but the same Mr Murray was once very inspired when it was \$10,000. It means now that every single worker in this country as of this year will take a little more home. The minimum salary has increased; pensioners have been given more money; public assistance has been increased. Now it is more than \$3,000. At one time it was \$290 and this used to inspire my colleagues. The exemption of pensioners paying water rates means that the government will spend some \$200,000,000.

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Let me come to another people-friendly action of this government, the Eye Programme. In 2004, we provided \$13,000 spectacles to pensioners. In 2005, we provided more than 1,500 spectacles and in the 2006 Budget we are catering for more than 2,000 pensioners and needy children and I will talk about the children's programme in another few minutes.

Mr Speaker, the Cataract Programme that both Dr Joseph and Dr Hanoman spoke about in derogatory ways, the fact of the matter is that in 1992, we had a cataract surgery rate of about 200 in Guyana. The fact also is that in 1992, we had a cataract incidence rate of about 800 per year, which means that every year we are adding to the backlog. In 1992, the backlog was over 12,000. If we were continuing at the rate of 200 per year, it would be hundreds of years before we could take care of everybody with cataract surgery. The experts came and said that Guyana needed to raise its cataract surgery rate to 1,000, when means that with 800 new cases per year, if you raised it to 1,000 it will take between twenty and thirty years before you could remove the backlog. It was this government that says that it was unacceptable and we must eliminate the backlog not in twenty or thirty years, but right now. So, we decided that increasing the cataract surgery rate to 1,000, is simply inadequate. We have to raise it to more and our goal for 2005 was 3,500 cataract surgeries. Mr Speaker, this is our accomplishment. At the New Amsterdam Hospital, we completed 1,250 in 2005. At the Georgetown Public Hospital, we completed 998 cataract surgeries. In addition to those surgeries, we did 550 surgeries in our outreach programmes and together with our collaboration with our Cuban colleagues we have completed another 1,200 surgeries in Cuba.

I heard Dr Hanoman bemoan the fact that we have to send people out. We have always said that we will bring solutions to our people's problem, to Guyanese problem, through partnership and if we have to partner with international governments, we will do so. *[Applause]* Mr Speaker, we have accomplished that and this year again, our goal is 4,000 cataract surgeries. Mr Speaker, the cataract programme is going to continue and we will expand the eye care programme. We are intro-

ducing this year, indeed in the next two weeks time, for the first time, glaucoma surgery and retinopathy surgery will be performed at the Georgetown Public Hospital. At that time we would have provided a comprehensive eye care programme in our country to supplement this programme we have started to work in other areas. We have started a vision screening programme. I have talked about the spectacle programme where optometrists are travelling across our country and in order to assist people who have been screened to obtain glasses, we have started with the Caribbean Society of the Blind and Orthoptic a spectacle laboratory which is located at the Ptolemy Reid Centre. It has a capacity to produce twenty-five spectacles per day and in collaboration with the Cubans in 2006, we will expand its production to seventy-five spectacles per day so that it will become affordable to people. The intention is to enable us to expand the programme from beyond the pensioners to our children. We recognise that children in our schools need early screening so we could diagnose deficiencies early. So in our schools today, we have started a vision screening programme where we have begun to train teachers and parents to do some of the initial screening and the optometrist works with them. At the moment thirteen schools have already introduced the programme:

- St Sidwells Primary;
- Enterprise Primary in Lodge;
- Sophia Primary;
- St Angela's Primary;
- St Agnes Primary;
- Chateau Margot Primary;
- Mon Repos Primary;
- Enterprise Primary;

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- Anns Grove Primary;
- Redeemer Primary;
- Rama Krishna Primary;
- St Ambrose Primary; and
- Winfer Gardens Primary.

So far out of a target of 2,710 students in 2005, we have screened 2,364 children in these schools. Every Child with this programme will undergo screening at Grade I and then again in Grade VI. So that when they start school, we could diagnose any deficiency and recognising that these may occur later, and again screen them in Grade VI. This programme is eventually to be in every school in our country. Mr Speaker, there is a comprehensive programme being planned because this government has always focused on the social development of the people we have invested considerably in, in the social sector. We remembered those old days when the budget used to be under ten percent for the combined social sector. Today, forty-five percent of our national budget goes to the social sector and therefore the people oriented type of budget of this government.

The health sector has benefited considerably from this focus. Eleven percent of our current budget in 2006 has been allocated to the health sector \$8.5 billion has been allocated to the health sector and just a clarification for my colleague Dr Hanoman, it is not \$2.5 billion, it is \$8.5 billion for the health sector. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Honourable Member, at that point I think that you are moving on to something else. Your time is up and since we are close to our regular time of suspension, I think we can take that now for the usual period.

19:27H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

19:58 - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Honourable Member Dr Ramsammy, you will need some more time to continue.

Mr S Feroze Mohamed: Mr Speaker, I move that the Honourable Minister be given fifteen minutes to continue his speech.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: You may proceed

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, as I was saying the government has allocated \$8.5 billion to this sector, which means that in 2006, the government will be spending about US \$60 per capita on health. We have taken over the years the investment in health gradually upwards from less than \$7 in 1992 to \$60 per capita. It is because of that that we see the many things that we have accomplished over the years. Some of which I have already talked about, but because there is time constraint, I want to go quickly to some of the other initiatives that we will see in 2006.

In 2006, we will be introducing cardiac surgery, open heart surgery at the Georgetown Public Hospital. This is a huge advancement for our people. *[Applause]* We have already signed the memorandum of understanding with a Guyanese group led by Dr Gary Stephens who would be arriving in the country on 15 February. We have already begun to prepare the space at the Georgetown Hospital; \$2 million were spent in 2005 towards the preparation of the space. Mr Speaker, the equipment has been shipped and we expect that by the end of March the facility would be ready for the service. We would start with the diagnostic services in March/April and by the summer surgery should be available.

In addition, we will be introducing cancer treatment at the Georgetown Public Hospital. An oncologist will be heading this programme. Dr Prethi Jane has been hired and will be arriving in the country in the middle of February. The linear accelerator equipment has

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already arrived and is present in the building. The infrastructural preparation has already been done. On 28 February the technicians will be arriving to complete the installation of the linear accelerator and so for the first time we will have state-of-the-art radio therapy treatment for our cancer patients.

Mr Speaker, more than three years ago, the public sector entered into an arrangement with the private sector to provide CT and MRI. Many patients at the hospital now are being referred for CT and MRI and they have been able to obtain these services in the private sector. We will continue that programme.

In 2005 a CT was donated to the Georgetown Public Hospital. A contract was issued in 2005 for the installation of that equipment. At that time CASI Medical Services in Trinidad a GE Subsidiary was contracted and they discovered that a camera was missing from the CT, those were purchased and within the next seven days, the same team that is doing the installation for the cardiac equipment will also complete the installation of the CT Programme.

So Mr Speaker, a number of these things are going on. The new Lethem hospital is already under construction and it should be completed by September. I have already spoken about the new Linden Hospital. The new in-patient building for Georgetown Public Hospital will begin construction also in 2006. I might add that the Linden project is US\$7.8 million and this year in the national Budget \$565 million was allocated to that project.

The Georgetown Public Hospital conceptual design has been completed and architectural design is on the way. As part of this project Dr Joseph mentioned that the project which started in 2005 looking at the sewer system, the water system, the electricity system will be completed in 2006. A new public health lab is being constructed within the Georgetown Public Hospital Compound for the first time. Guyana will have a public health lab and a lab that will be a state-of-the-art modern lab in all of the Caribbean.

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A new blood bank is being constructed right now and the Georgetown Public Hospital Compound and a contract has already been signed for a new blood bank at the New Amsterdam Hospital using our HIV Funds in addition to the US \$7.8 million for the Linden Hospital. Money will be assigned to add a blood bank for the Linden Hospital.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce that a new poly clinic following in the pattern of the successful polyclinic at Enmore will be located within the Diamond/Grove area during 2006.

A new Mabaruma Hospital conceptual plan has already been done and funding through Basic Needs will be pursued in 2006. It started in 2006 with the conceptual plan and for 2007 a new Skeldon Hospital is being planned.

The Modernisation of the Food and Drug Department has already begun in 2005. It is through that modernisation process that we are able now to certify doing aflatoxin tests so that our peanut farmers can now export their peanuts. We have been collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to ensure that EU standards are met. The Food and Drug Department and the Analyst Department can do all these tests that we used to send abroad.

Mr Speaker, let me deal with Dec Salt since it seems to be of special interest. The Dec Salt programme is alive and well and the Ministry of Health in order to ensure that every resident in some affected areas like Lodge and New Amsterdam have taken on upon themselves to purchase the Dec Salt from the supplier and we go every month in Lodge and New Amsterdam house to house and distribute the Dec Salt for free to these people. There are Members who are unaware; even though we talk they do not listen, they do not see, but it is there for them to see, it is there for them to hear about. So a number of these things are happening.

Let me deal with HIV/AIDS very quickly. Guyana has been recognised by the WHO, UN/AIDS and others for the aggressive pro-

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grammes they have been pursuing over the last five years. Indeed, I have a document in which the WHO having done a survey of the programme in Guyana, now categorise Guyana as one of the best practices for developing countries. The Honourable Members are hiding their feelings, because they know of the things we have done. We introduced in a collaborative programme even though Dr Hanoman and others try to hide the fact. The course that is being conducted by the University of Guyana is funded by a Guyana Government Project with CIDA. [*Interruption: 'Developed by Max'. "Far from it!"*]

Mr Speaker, we have seen Guyana articulating in 2001 universal access to prevention treatment and care. We are delighted that the world has joined us now. In 2005, UN/AIDS and WHO came together to announce that universal access to prevention, treatment and care are programmes that Guyana articulated in 2001. It was Guyana that started the manufacturing of affordable anti-retroviral drugs. Guyana was the first country to provide free drugs and testing to people living with HIV/AIDS. Mr Speaker, in Jamaica, in Trinidad, in Barbados, in Botswana, in Tanzania, in Haiti, they now have ARVs, but everyone living with HIV/AIDS must provide some part of the cost for those treatments. Right now, Guyana is the only country that provides entirely free service from diagnostic test to treatment and care. In 2006, through our HIV/AIDS Programme, we will provide the support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security for a foster care programme. We will ensure that children in vulnerable situations could be provided with care not just at an orphanage, we are talking about foster care where families will be supported and will be given a certain amount of money so that they can be cared for, and support children in vulnerable conditions, and not just children from HIV/AIDS family, children in any kind of vulnerable situation.

Our PMTCT Programme is regarded as one of the most successful programme in developing countries. Today we have fifty-six functioning prevention mother-to-child transmission programmes and by the end of 2006, we expect that more than seventy-five percent of pregnant women in our country would have access to PMTCT Programme. Our goal is

for 100 percent access for PMTCT in Guyana. Our PMTCT Programme does not only provide counselling and testing, but our PMTCT Programme provides support with milk substitute for others. We provide additional support and all of these mothers, HIV pregnant women, will be given additional support. We are working with the Ministry of Labour on these programmes.

Our Public/Private Programmes for HIV/AIDS have not been recognised. There are more than fifty private companies with workplace programmes. Minister Bisnauth will talk of some of these that are supported by the government. Today, it is our programmes that support NGOs. More than fifty NGOs through the different programmes are now supported within these programmes and we see the result. Our prevalence among pregnant women, when we did some studies before 1999, showed seven percent. It went to 4.1 percent, 3.5 percent, 2.5 percent and at the end of 2005 it was 2.1 percent. We are seeing the results among commercial sex workers. Prior to 200, a study showed that 45 to 48 percent of those tested were positive for HIV. In the study completed last year, we see a prevalence of twenty-five percent. Among mine workers, we did two studies before 2001 that showed seven percent and eleven percent prevalence. In the later study done last year, we see a prevalence rate of 3.9 percent, all positive results. We see an impact... *[Interruption: 'Where?']* "In the whole country!"

Mr Speaker, people hear and see these things and they are not studies done by the Ministry of Health alone ... CDC, CAREC have been involved so that nobody could doubt the results. But there is a number of other issues that I would like to cover very quickly. We have a number of other programmes that we are working also in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs; we have a vehicular accident programme that the Honourable Member Mrs Backer spoke about in her presentation today. The Ministry is working assiduously to ensure ... because vehicular accidents cost this country between \$500 million to \$1 billion annually. Even though there are 182 deaths per year, there are more than ten times that number of people who in a short term or permanently suffer from disability and those cost-impacts need to be taken

into consideration. The Ministry has been working in all of these areas.

In terms of child and mother safety, besides the PMTCT Programme, our integrated management of childhood illnesses - the IMCI Programme - is now being expanded throughout the country in all ten regions. I heard all the cries for us to address the mortality rate. Let me say to you, to this House and to this country right now, our infant mortality and our maternal mortality are still far too high. They are unacceptable. This government has been working and addressing that. In 1992, the infant mortality was recorded as seventy-eight and UNICEF estimated that it was 120 per thousand. In 2005, thirty-four were reported and we had estimated that with some under reporting that it is between thirty-four and forty-eight. So we have significant improvements. It is unacceptable to us, because our objective is that in 2008 we should bring it down to fifteen or sixteen more equivalent to the Caribbean standard.

What about maternal mortality? It used to be between thirty-four and thirty-eight per 10,000. In 2004, we brought it to less than ten; in 2005, it is just over ten per 10,000 and that is an accomplishment. It is an achievement, but it is not ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member

Mr Cyril CL Belgrave: Mr Speaker, I rise to ask that the Honourable Member be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed

Hon Dr Leslie S Ramsammy: Mr Speaker, We do have achievements in these areas. We must take pride in what we have accomplished. We have come a far way and it is not about blaming anyone. Guyana has accomplished much in the health sector and if we work together, we can accomplish far more, whether it is in primary healthcare, in secondary healthcare, in our health promotion work, in tertiary healthcare as we see now.

We are poised to achieve much greater accomplishments in this sector. When I talk about pride, we must not be like the Honourable Member Mr Alexander, who can stand up in this House and say that I am proud that we imported sugar. In this country with our history, we must never ever be proud of importing sugar. We should be thoroughly ashamed of ourselves.

I hear the Honourable Member Mr Bernard who talked about how proud he was in 1992, I was always proud of my country even when things were not great, but if we are ashamed of Guyana in 2006, we should have been thoroughly ashamed of where Guyana was in this world in 1992.

We have made significant improvements and you can hide your heads in the sand. Mr Speaker, we have had accomplishments that we ought to be proud of in this country, but none of us should be happy where we are in 2006. We have many more things to do and we can do so if we work altogether. The Honourable Member Mrs Backer spoke about this and I am glad that I have been part of a government and a governance model that has brought hope again, that people can dream. I was very impressed and delighted that the Honourable Member Mrs Backer can dream and believe that they can win an election. We created the environment where anyone can now go to a national election and believe that they can win. *[Applause]* I wish everyone luck, because if I go to a free and fair election whoever wins would have been the choice of the people. The people would have had their say and that is what we want to create. So I hold my hand out to the Honourable Member Mrs Backer, dream on because that is what we have created and our country can dream on, because with the progress we have made, we can accelerate progress, because the PPP/C will lead Guyana in this early part of the 21st Century and we would accomplish the promise that this country has to live in peace, to live in prosperity and to have progress every day, like we see it today. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member for your impassioned please presentation.

The Honourable Member Dr Joseph

Dr Dagleish Joseph: Mr Speaker, on this point of correction which I requested based on what the Honourable Minister has said. In the 2005 Budget on Page 37 it clearly states:

The work under the US \$25 million health sector programme which seeks to improve the effectiveness, equity and equality of access to healthcare will be stepped up this year. An allocation of \$160 million has been provided to start construction, equipping and furnishing of a new hospital complex at Linden.

That is what I stated *start the construction, equipping and furnishing.*

Secondly, when I spoke concerning health indicators, I referred to Page 65 of the 2006 Budget presentation and here none of the figures in relation to the key health indicators I related to infant mortality or maternal mortality are indicated here. This is also a fact.

Finally, UNICEF 2005 Report says here:

On Guyana in Glance

That Guyana's infant mortality rate for 2004 is forty-eight.

This is not me, this is UNICEF. I thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ravindra Dev

Mr Ravindra Dev: Mr Speaker, I rise to speak for the last time from this side of the House on this Budget [*Applause*]

The Budget has been entitled *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*. Following the lead of the Honourable Member Mrs Backer, I offer a subtitle based on the thrust

that I will take which is the *Elusive Quest for Growth*, because that is what the budgets starting from 1993 have been, that the PPP/C from 1993 have focussed on two primary facets of economic development:

- (i) To focus on the stabilisation of the macro economic indicators: and
- (ii) Out of that to promise growth.

Well, we have to look again at what is happening this year and I quote so that I am sure to be on track here that the Minister says on Page 27:

This Budget is a continuation of the policies and programmes of previous years that are geared to transforming the economy and making it more competitive, securing growth and expanding permanent employment in the medium to long term , reducing poverty and improving the general standard of living of our people.

So it is in line with what is happening. What I would like to do is to take the very goals of the Budgets that have been presented since 1993 and see how they have performed and then we can go forward to say why and maybe what can be done.

When we look at the fundamental thrusts of all these budgets which is to deliver growth, we have to conclude based on the objective evidence that the government has failed in delivering this primary product of any governmental intervention in the economy. That is what budgets are supposed to do, to be able to allocate the resources of the economy in such a way that it will deliver growth and that is not happening.

When the government took over in 1993 to 1997, the growth rate that had been delivered by the PNC by 1993 which was a seven per cent growth rate in 1992, it continued in 1997 as the economy basically expanded to full what has called its productive possibility frontier meaning that the economy because of regulations and other factors had been performing under its capacity and when those restrictions were removed

the economy expanded. But when you look after 1997 to today basically we have no growth in this economy. So no matter how we slice it, dice it or puree it that is the bottom line that we have had no growth.

I, unlike many others do not believe that the PPP/C wants to keep this nation . I do not believe that they want to keep us ... well not pregnant but barefoot and struggling. I do believe that the lack of growth which they do see is as a result of two primary factors:

- (i) That they have been in an IMF/World Bank Programme and they have allowed our economy to be totally dictated by that programme; and
- (ii) and not unrelated to the first part have refused to embark on any strategic vision that may lead us out of the morass that that programme has led us into.

Now, even when you look at the requirements of that programme which is:

- Stabilisation;
- Privatisation; and
- Liberalisation.

... If we are to look at the privatisation aspect that is more or less complete, and I do not believe that anyone would say that the privatisation has delivered to this economy any kind of boost that was promised at the beginning that would make us get out of the doldrums. So privatisation was done by and large and has not delivered what it was supposed to deliver by the mandarins of the World Bank/IMF.

When you look at the second aspect of liberalisation, by and large the government has worked assiduously to liberalise our economy, to open up this economy to world forces and it has not again delivered the kind of investments that were promised if one were to liberalise the whole

economy to be opened to investment. Now, we may argue as to why and there are many factors, there is no mono-causative reason for it not coming, but the bottom line is that we have to accept that we have not been able to attract the kind of investment that liberalisation was supposed to deliver.

Now, even within liberalisation, we did not in a coherent fashion negotiate with the World Bank to talk about our peculiarities, because as I have said many times in this Honourable House there is no economy in this world that has grown by completely opening up the markets, by completely liberalising itself just because of some mantra out of Washington. It has not happened. Washington itself, America itself went through a period when their economies were growing, where they protected their markets. Germany did the same. In fact the fellow who promulgated the whole theory of the infant industry protection is a German. Japan did it; Taiwan did it, everybody does it. We did not have a coherent programme on liberalisation for reasons that I believe go back to this adherence to the IMF/World Bank Programme and we can talk about that a little later.

It is not that the PPP/C does not understand that, that you have to protect some of your markets, but I do not think that they have executed those times when they interfered with liberalisation to make it a coherent policy. For instance, when we protected our infant chicken industry by imposing a tariff of 100 percent, I think that it was a very good move. If you want an industry to grow, you do want to pay for all the chicken quarter legs that are coming out of America at a very low price that was tantamount to probably dumping. But what other economies that grew did, and we did not do, was to tie that 100 percent tariff which gave our local manufacturers that leeway for growth for them to become competitive internationally. The example of Japan and other countries in the Far East and other economies that have grown after World War II is that whenever you try to protect your infant industry, you just do not leave them to become fat cats internally. You have to subject them to some kind of market discipline where they are forced to become competitive. What history has shown is that the export market, the international mar-

ket is the greatest discipline on any producer. So what I am suggesting for example if the government had a coherent programme on liberalisation and not to go to the old hog and to offer some kind of infant industry protection was that when it does so, it was part of a programme, where that manufacturer who is protected is forced to export a certain amount of the goods, so that the manufacturer is subject to market forces, becomes more efficient and not in a small way provides foreign currency to the country that in a sense justifies the protection. We have not done that only in that one sense, but in a general sense, we have not gone into other markets that we could have protected from dying.

For example, the coconut oil industry ... We have allowed an industry that at one time provided employment throughout this land for over 40,000 to 50,000 people to be destroyed because of cheap imports. Now if there had been a coherent programme on the coconut oil industry in a holistic fashion as to what we can do with coconuts including the oil and to offer some area of protection, which is allowed incidentally even by CARICOM rules, I believe, by forty percent tariff on agricultural products. Therefore, we could have been more along in terms of being self-sufficient.

But I want to come back to the primary focus of our government which has been to have the macro economic indicators very stable and that was supposed to lead us to the nirvana of high growth, but it has not. Even by those criteria, we have not succeeded very well. I have spoken about this at every budget debate that when we look at budget deficits, we are averaging double digit budget deficit every year for the past five years or so, but to what end? In a sense if you are going to incur budget deficits under the modern dispensation of how economies are going to be run, that deficit is supposed to further and to promote industries or economic activities that will deliver return. One can not have those deficits just to finance infrastructure that do not have a direct economic impact, because the pay-back on that infrastructural development is too much spread out for it to have an impact within the timeframe that you are supposed to pay back that loan. As the saying goes something is going to hit the fan sooner rather than later.

So we come back to other economic indicators - Inflation, while it has been under ten percent, the inflation rate also has not been as steady as one would have thought based on this complete adherence to the IMF/World Bank dictates. For example for the last year inflation rate of eight percent plus has eaten away at whatever rate increases there were for the ordinary man in the street. That does not speak well in terms of improving the standard of living much less of eradicating poverty.

We have to be positive and I want to get to the point that as to what we can do and what we ought to do. I do believe that the government has to begin to put together an exit strategy from the IMF/World Bank conditionalities. There is no question that we have to do this. Argentina and Brazil recently paid off all debts to the IMF World Bank, because they know that after they do not have those conditionalities, they can be much freer in choosing their economic policies. I am not going to say that we have the ability to pay off our debts, but I do believe that we have to begin to work on an exit strategy. That means that the government has to work with all forces in Guyana as Dr Jagan had worked with the PNC and Burnham back in the 1970s, when there were certain conditionalities by the IMF/World Bank that were totally unacceptable for where Guyana wanted to go at that point in time. Whatever we may disagree with the vision then at least they had a common position *vis-à-vis* the conditionalities. In a similar vein, I do not see that there is any gross discrepancy between the parties in Guyana as to where we ought to go and what we ought to do. So basically, I believe that if we could have a coherent exit strategy and everybody can sign on to it, we can work towards that. I believe that exit strategy will be tied to a more direct strategic approach to growth. Even though I am not a Marxist, Marxism does not have a monopoly to say that government should have a direct intervention role to stimulate growth much more than what the IMF/World Bank/Washington consensus want us to have. The whole Far East - Japan, Taiwan, all of them - have done it openly, they disagreed with the IMF/World Bank. They understand what role governments need to play, to have a focussed industrial policy and I believe that if our government can articulate such a policy, I do believe that all of us

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can get behind that. I said on many occasions that money is not our problem. While we are busy borrowing money, our local reserves are still over \$50 billion that have been locked away in Treasury Bills and we are paying over \$3 billion per year, just as interest to lock away money. It means that our banking intermediation system is just not working or we have not been able to intermediate our money into investment. In fact, our Minister of Finance points out to a gross anomaly that even though the rate for T-Bills, has risen, yet the spread between those rates and the prime lending rate has increased. It means that even though the banks are in a sense regulated through government's policy - the government is attempting for the bank to lower its rate... I think the T-Bills have been lowered. They attempted to have the banks lower their interest rates. The Banks have gone in the other direction. So the policy which works in other areas like in America, where it is felt that if it is lowered, interest rates will lower, has not worked here. So it means that there are other factors that are preventing our banks from intermediating that money. We can again get into many of the reasons. I believe, the bottom line for the last decade is that we have not been able to intermediate our money into investments for our country, so the country's economy is not growing, while we are washing money. Here I believe that the government has to play a much more direct role into getting that money into there. For example, I absolutely believe that we need a development bank where we can identify particular industries and not only wait in a passive sense for investors to come in, but we can be able to identify certain strategic industries and be able to fund them through development banks and rates that are attractive to investors, but as we know we cannot do that because of IMF conditionalities, because money cannot be borrowed only based on certain criteria which cannot be fulfilled at the present time.

I believe the third area is (and I am rushing my presentation because I want to finish under this time that is given to) that we have to select some avenue of growth that makes sense to the future. I believe that I have spoken before about Singapore in 1965 where Lee Kuan Yu made a strategic decision as to how Singapore was going to grow if the

British would leave those bases, and he did not have any money to pour into the economy. He made a strategic decision as to what markets he would service and he picked as to what he called his hinterland, Europe and America, which were thousands of miles away from Singapore. He picked markets there and worked out a strategy as to how he will service those markets. A lot of details, but we can get to them.

I would like to posit that we do not have to go that far, because everybody else wants to service those markets, but right behind us in Brazil we have what everybody conceives as one of the three major players in the next few decades. India, China and Brazil are all conceded to be the next super powers in terms of economic development and maybe in other areas. So we do not have to look for that, we should orient ourselves strategically with whatever industry we will choose with Brazil to be able to serve that growing economy, be part of the penumbra of the economy and it will catapult us into high growth rates.

Now, we have to put our money where our mouths are. If we are going to be talking about, because the government has spoken about, Brazil ... The government has conceded that that is one way to go, but I do not believe that it has made a much focussed, targeted approach. Take for example, the highway from Brazil ... We have not spent enough time in putting that to bed, in getting the *t*'s crossed and the *i*'s dotted to get that to be a reality.

I do not believe that we have put enough stress on the Rupununi in terms of development to be able to integrate itself with a Brazilian economy. If we are serious about Brazil, then we have to look south. Rupununi has to be a great centre of our economic activity and we do not have to wait forever, we have to begin now.

So Mr Speaker, the gist of my presentation is that there is no use for us to play the blame game. All Guyana concedes that our economy has not grown and if our won economy does not grow at a ten percent rate annually, so it is compounded growth, we ourselves will not be able to meet our millennium development goals that we have signed on to as

our targets much more to double our income. So growth is essential.

I would like to summarise what I have said. I do believe that we need to work out an exit strategy from the IMF/World Bank conditionalities. I do believe that we have to have a very concrete programme of government's intervention in the economy to target strategic industries that will grow.

Thirdly, to focus directly on Brazil with whatever government programmes plus whatever we can be able to integrate ourselves with Brazil.

I do not see this as a panacea, but I see it as the beginning of some kind of game plan that will bring this nation together to work towards that. I think the key to the success will be by the very nature of needing a national consensus that we will need for all of the groups in Guyana to work together. For that, as I have done for every budget speech that I have made, I do believe that a government of national unity will be the only vehicle that will be able to deliver such a programme for Guyana. I would like to commend such a programme to this Honourable House. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ramjattan

Mr Khemraj Ramjattan: Mr Speaker, first of all I must begin by congratulating the Honourable Minister of Finance Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar for presenting a Budget in these very dire, constraining circumstances and doing that this early.

I want to also be on record for stating that notwithstanding the very difficult time that he must have had presenting such a Budget, that indeed, I do have some criticisms, which I even indicated to him that I would like to put on the records.

I must say that some of those criticisms emanated out of the Honourable Member Mr Winston Murray's presentation and also just now

from Mr Ravindra Dev. I just want to state that we seem to be having more of the same as regards the underlying principles of economic Development and that is literally maintaining a traditional hold on what is regarded the traditional sectors rather than spending more in training and ensuring that we have the skills to diversify our economy, to ensure that we have the growth that we are not having for some five years now.

The link to a vision for the future development of Guyana ... We seem to have forgotten that indeed there was an elegant document called the National Development Strategy, of course which needs updating and revision from which we ought to refer all the time so that at least we can have as a guide post that which will be a concretisation of the vision that that development strategy had indicated for us. We simply do not have that emanating out of this Budget.

Additionally, we have not done the sectoral wealth creation that we thought we would have done and when being a member of the PPP/C and that was just a couple of months ago, that we had talked so much about, that each sector will have a certain strategic plan and then the execution thereof. We seem to have missed that in this Budget.

We also have a very serious criticism and that is the plan for the repayment for the borrowed funds from external agencies, something that the Honourable Member Mr Ravindra Dev mentioned just now. How long are we going to take to ensure that we start creating revenues out of our own industries to pay back those debts that we have since borrowed and it is accumulating almost US \$900 million foreign debt and a whole lot of billions with the public debt - the local debt that has been borrowed from our banking system.

We agree and we are very happy to know that there has been tremendous debt forgiveness, but our borrowings continue to the tune of over \$150 million over the last two years. We seem not to be in any position to do otherwise of creating revenue so that we can do especially our capital expenditure work. How long will that take?

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We know the difficulties. We appreciate that there have been flooding in 2005 and even worse flooding in 2006, it would appear. Unless we start thinking of how we are going to create wealth from the outside traditional sectors, we are not going to be in anyway in any position to deal with paying off our debts and as a result start being liberated from the IMF/World Bank/IDB conditionalities as mentioned.

How do we get out of that? It is my proposal that more emphasis ought to have been placed on what should be now the new sectors of development and we did not see that. We have to emphasize, because we are as we always say loaded with pollutants; potential in fisheries, potential in forestry, potential in manufacturing; potential in the IT sector. Our President goes around saying that there will be major investments in these sectors, but hardly do we have and do we manage to continue keeping the skills that can manage these sectors. So it is indeed very important that we start laying the development strategies and the programmes that could ensure that we do have a manufacturing sector that is going to want to do business here, a tourism sector, an IT sector, a forestry sector and so on that is going to simply not cut the logs and send them out of the country, but go on to do as we have always been saying in budget debates, Tertiary value-added products. Where are these? It is important to know that the revenues of this country, although we talk about those big resources, ninety percent comes from the Customs and Excise Department, Income Tax and Corporate tax.

Where is it that we are creating the revenues from these potential sectors that we have been talking about? There are some reasons for this. A couple of reasons have to do with what the private sector has been talking about. There is tremendous bureaucracy; there are tremendous taxation levels at thirty-five and forty-five percent that we will have to reduce. There is also tremendous red tape.

Moreover, we have to also spend more monies in relation to the training of our graduands. Plenty of them come out of Universities with degrees that are not probably relevant to these sectors, but they come out. They would have had the intelligence to deal with these sectors if we

can only add that little additional training. There are very many people who are graduating and not having jobs, but we need personnel in the tourism industry. Have they done anything to set up the tourist education sector to ensure that these graduands stay here? That is the difficulty. We can also say that we can put money, but do we have the personnel that stay in this country? I am urging that this must be a platform in which - at least for the couple months going on to the end of this year that something be done. If we do not have the personnel wanting to stay and do these kinds of work, we are not going to have the kind of development that we are talking so much about.

We also need to mention that a lot of the criticisms that will come to what I am saying is where you are going to get the money from. We always have that. The money cannot come from the IMF, because of constraining factors. Well, I want to say, urge that there are lots of monies that can be obtained by restructuring what we have existing now. A lot of people indicated that we do not have money. Money, as I know it, can come from the Lotto Fund. In the year 2004, from the computation that I have, twenty-four percent for every dollar, it comes up to \$230 million. In 2005, there is at least \$250 million coming from the Lotto Fund and per annum there will be in the vicinity of \$200 million. Where are these monies going? When the talk is *Mr Ramjattan we do not have the funds to do these things*. Why can't we? We always have the principle, we are going to reduce the amount of Ministries; we now have twenty. Why don't we reduce it as the public sector reform paper states? We have been always saying this and reduce it to eleven or thirteen that was promised. You can save a lot of money on that. At least you can save right away nine Prados and all that goes with the expenses on them. [*Interruption: 'And you used to drive in them.'* I never drove in any Prado].

What is also very important too is that we try and extract as much money for the purposes of these projects by ensuring that we are stringent and strict with our taxes; taxes from smuggling, evasion and avoidance that comes from all kinds of tax evasions.

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We also want to indicate that this must also come from a clean-up of Customs where there is a tremendous under-invoicing and revenues from at least the Private Sector Commission itself; revenues can increase by at least thirty percent.

Mr Speaker, I also feel, because this is my point here, that it is a lot of talk that we cannot find the money, but I am urging that the money can be found to do these things. Tighten up also from the gold and diamond declarants and how much they are doing there.

We love to ensure that those big ones have further tax relief, duty free and tax free for even (let us say) the Head of the GRA. It is a shame ... [*Interruption: 'Pay your tax.'* I always pay mine, I hope you pay yours".] Mr Speaker, if you can just appreciate this. There is a Head in GRA that has tax free salaries and they come here saying that they will want taxes from \$25,000 and a little more from the salaried workers. Very many people are getting all these exemptions that are over \$500,000 and more. It would appear that Mr Neendkumar likes these things. I do not know if he has a Prado. I also want to say that millions could be obtained, because this is a principle that we fought for. You know that Mr Speaker. Reduce public spending, reduce the amount of Ministries. You know that the great Cheddi Jagan was saying that for long, long years, but we do not only increase it, we also increase the amount of advisers in the Office of the President. There are lots of them. I do not know, it would appear like it is for jobs for the boys. I want you to understand that when this big talk and criticism is made that we cannot find the money; we can very well find the money just within the framework of the IMF from these things that I am talking about. If you can also indicate the amounts that could be collected from those who smuggle all kinds of things ... That is a big loss that we have ... if we can just ensure that there is better enforcement. Those are the points that I want to make in this short intervention that these are ways and means that I did not see in the Budget whereby the Minister could have indicated to us that these are going to be strengthened so that the necessary finances could have been found to ensure that the skilled personnel we want to train could receive that training in the sectors that could develop

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this country. We are not finding that. This is but a major criticism that I have. I know it was a difficult Budget for the Honourable Minister of Finance Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar, but these are some of the points that I wish ought to have been emphasized. We can still go somewhere in getting these things done and I hope that these are going to be done in the coming months. Thank very much Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Dr Moti Lall

Dr Moti Lall: Mr Speaker, fellow colleagues in the august Assembly, friends, please be advised that this peace-loving Buxtonian is once again in town. *[Interruption: 'You sound like Odinga.' ["We are villagers"]. [Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I stand here this evening in this Honourable Chamber to give my unequivocal support to this \$102 billion Budget and to congratulate the author, the tireless and hard working Minister of Finance, the Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar and his staff for a well-researched and an excellent sixty-four page document. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, during the course of this important debate, we have had important interventions from both sides and the level of the debates has been good and the camaraderie shown from all sides during their presentations has been very encouraging.

Regrettably, Mr Speaker, there has been from time to time from the opposition certain sporadic outbursts from certain Members claiming that victory will be theirs in the forthcoming general elections. To all of them I say, *[if wishes were horses beggars would ride.]*

The PPP/C is on the record for never having lost an election. Indeed our party has been cheated, but not defeated prior to the 1992 elections. With the restoration of democracy and having this working class government at its helm, Guyana is on the road to progress. *[Applause]*

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Mr Speaker, this government will continue to defend democracy at all levels and to reassure all Guyanese citizens that their rights shall not be trampled as in the pre-1992 era. Since 1992 we have witnessed a rebirth of our nation and with such vibrant leadership victory for the PPP/C at the forthcoming elections is a certainty; a stark reality that all Guyanese have already acknowledged.

Mr Speaker, before I get into the specifics of my presentation, I would like to make a clarification in a statement that was made by my esteemed colleague Dr Dalglish Joseph, when he mentioned that I went to Cuba under a PNC scholarship ... [Interruption: 'I did not say that.'] "Yes, you mentioned my name." For the records, I left for Cuba on 29 December 1962 on a PPP scholarship and I am proud to say that I was the first Guyanese to have set foot on the Cuban soil to study medicine. [Applause] Having finished my studies in Germany, I returned in 1970, but what my colleague did not speak about is that when I returned, having gotten my credentials as a registrar, I was refused a job here in Guyana by the PNC. I can recall that I was invited to the office of the late LFS Burnham and do you know what he told me? He said, Cde Jagan has sent you on a scholarship, he should employ you. Colleagues, it is a shame.

Thereafter, I left for Canada where I got a job within a week and I returned to this dear country of mine on my own volition in 1974, where I joined the Ministry of Health until I resigned in 2002, after serving twenty-eight years with the Ministry of Health. So I want to get the records straight.

continued in part III

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2006) 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.

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Secondly, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Member Mr Ravi Dev for his very good presentation and he means well and I wish some of my friends from the opposite side would follow his footsteps and make such pronouncements. The five points that he made among other things to create an exit strategy from IMF/World Bank must have a strategic approach to growth, stimulate investments and to engage Brazil as an ally in development is encouraging. I can reassure him that these ideas will be looked at and maybe implemented. So thank you Mr Ravindra Dev for an excellent presentation.

Mr Speaker, regarding the specifics of my presentation here this evening, I would like to amplify on what the Honourable Ministry of Health has said among other things, for example, on health. I wish to address this problem especially to my dear friend Dr Max Hanoman, when he said that the AIDS Programme is in a mass of confusion and we do not have statistics to show. Well, indeed I do have and I would like to provide him with a copy so that he can peruse it at his disposal if you so desire.

In Guyana, we have had an AIDS Programme for treating people and the records have shown that Guyana has officially recorded 7,512 cases at the end of 2004. For those of you who are statistically minded, the year-total for:

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2004 - 1,185;
2003 - 1,179;
2002 - 1,023;
2001 - 844; and
2000 - 955.

So the basic thing is that we have statistics to show that we have been following these cases and we have a programme.

The Government of Guyana had moved from a centralised treatment programme to providing treatment nationally. Questions were being asked: 'What were you doing, ' But my dear friends treatment with ARVs (Anti-retroviral drugs) started in April 2002 at one treatment centre and that is the GUM Clinic. Since then we have had several new centres introduced in the public and private sectors. At the end of 2005, there were eight public health centres offering treatment and care including the provision of ARVs and CD 4 Testing, this is the Cell Testing. Now, these centres are located in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10. In addition, treatment is being provided in Regions 1, 8 and 9 through visiting special teams. The St Josephs Mercy Hospital is a private hospital that also offers treatment and care under the Ministry of Health's programme. I would tell you that these treatment and care programmes are offered free to PLWHA (Persons living with HIV and AIDS) that is the abbreviated form. Now, the number of persons who accessed treatment have accelerated since, because we have the drugs available and what we have seen that during the first quarter of last year, the number of these patients were approximately thirteen per month. This increased to twenty-three per month in the last quarter. So you see, we are getting them very quickly at our institutes and our clinics. I can reassure you that things are going well so far.

Now, my dear friend Dr Dalgleish Joseph has been talking about the Ministry of Health not providing Crude Death Rate - no health indi-

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cators. Indeed, I have that for the HIV problems and I can tell you that for:

1999 it was 39.2;

2000 it was 62;

2001 it was 51.6;

2002 it was 63;

2003 it was 49; and

2004 it was 46.9;

which indicates that we are having less reports regarding mortality. The drug system is working. In the 1990s, I can tell you that the amount of deaths that were attributed to HIV/AIDS was confused in certain quarters, because as you may know, the cause of death of most of the patients ailing with AIDS is Tuberculosis. We have seen because of this the peak of TB is going a bit higher, but I can reassure you that with the advent of more modern drugs that we anticipate, TB will be given another boost.

Moreover, when we celebrate or commemorate World TB Day in another two months time, we would be telling you more about TB.

Before I leave the AIDS section, there is one other aspect to inform my dear friend Dr Hanoman that in Region, in 2005, there were only four HIV cases.

Mr Speaker, I have great respect for my colleagues Dr Hanoman and Dr Joseph and cases like these have to be properly investigated before a diagnosis can be pronounced. You have to examine a patient in details, because I have seen many of these patients are confused, the diagnosis is always mixed. Many times it refers to the chest clinics saying that they have TB whereas they are loaded with HIV/AIDS. So we have to

investigate them and that is why we have these health centres to do the cell count and the HIV tests I and II provided free of cost at these centres. Mr Speaker, the question of AIDS is being looked upon very much by our government and the mere fact that in the Budget a substantial amount has been earmarked for this programme is encouraging. I can reassure you that in another couple of years when this same government here (and I do not know who will be the spokesman on health) will say AIDS is on the decline. I can reassure you of that, because we have the programme, we have free drugs available and that will be a problem in the past.

Before I conclude on AIDS, it is interesting to note that I received a Communiqué from China from a Province in Na Ning which states that they have produced locally AIDS vaccine being done on certain patients - volunteers - and it is envisaged that this vaccine may be the solution for the future whereby we could have a life AIDS vaccine. We will be looking forward to seeing this report.

Mr Speaker, the subject Minister on Housing alluded yesterday, among other things to the problems of Housing. I am happy to note that no one from the opposition has said anything about the housing problems. The mere fact that it is a success story within our government's policies, we are also willing to tell you that among the things that we have inherited from the past government were the squatting areas. They have not expressed it here at this forum, but they have said it many times on the radio, I have been following it that the squatting problems here in Guyana has been caused by the poor PPP/C's programmes, which is totally wrong.

Mr Speaker, I want the Members of the Opposition to listen to this, the principal causes of squatting are:

- (i) The un-affordability of high rentals;
- (ii) Overcrowding;
- (iii) Motivation of home ownership, the desire to escape from

slums; and

- (iv) The lack of government's policy.

Mr Speaker, the 1964 disturbances in Guyana led to serious social and economic dislocation and further exacerbated the movement of people seeking protection in numbers. At least 15,000 people moved from racially integrated to segregated communities because of racial conflicts. The principal areas affected were Linden, East Coast and East Bank Demerara. This resulted in a squatter regularisation by the *ad hoc* emergency Squatter Resettlement Committee mainly on the East Coast and the guidelines that they used were to maintain to statutory minimal size of 3,053 square feet, which is an extra-nuclear housing scheme statistics.

Secondly, minimising as far as practicable further dislocation by the removal of squatter dwellings, but over time with the marginal assistance from central government, but by consorted individuals and group efforts and on the part of the squatters, there were seven areas, 729 lots have developed into acceptable residential areas over the years. That is under the PNC's time. The Committee faded into oblivion in the mid 1970s and by the early 1980s the government's commitment to house low income groups as well as others was non-existent. By early 1985, the government had also ceased funding co-operative housing and had decided to sell all its rental housing, therefore denying tenants the right to future maintenance and repairs. By 1990, the Ministry of Housing was abolished. The much touted Feed, House and Clothe Programme was finished and the CHP therefore assumed its housing functions. Mr Speaker, because of this when the PPP/C government won the elections in 1992, apart from inheriting this \$2.1 billion debt, et cetera, it also inherited 216 squatting areas throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. Today, Mr Speaker, I am proud to tell you that after thirteen years, from these squatting areas 145 from the 216 squatter settlements have been regularised and 100 housing schemes established. So, a lot of money has been pumped into the system and many people are now having their lots.

Now the much touted Low Income Settlement Project ... For last year there was a total of 11,180 in twelve schemes in Regions 2, 3 and 4 provided with infrastructural services, but the success for last year was 4,287 transports were provided for allottees in housing schemes and squatter settlements for the period January 2005. Last year, we also had 4,927 allocated with 2,427 lots allocated in squatter settlements. So you see things are happening, but when you look at the provision of squatter settlements, we have had our teething problems. I wish to draw your attention to Region 3, where there are such problems. In Region 3, from that 216 we inherited 51 squatting areas and as I am on the ball, I will tell you that from that 216 squatting areas, 109 were from Region 4; 26 from Region 6 and 51 from Region 3. To date, we have been regularising and in Region 3 we have so far regularised 37 squatting areas. I need not go into the squatting areas, but I can tell you that the low income settlement scheme has pushed a lot of money in these areas, for example, at Tuschen North \$133,717,000 and \$194,000,000 was pumped into Zeelugt North. So lots are being looked into and I can tell you that at the end of this year, these programmes that we have envisaged will accommodate approximately 2,500 lots. So far for last year in the housing scheme for Region 3, we have pumped in approximately \$846,000,000. It is a lot of money, but we are seeing the fruits. Mr Speaker, I can tell you that this year, we are thinking of expanding. We are trying to get more lots available, for those at Belle Vue and Parfaite Harmony in excess of 3,000 houselots.

Now, getting back to Region 3 - Things are happening in Region 3 and I can tell you for a fact that 2005 was characterised by natural disasters and events in Region 3 were not the exception for that. There was severe flooding along the West Coast and during the months of January and February, we set up shelters. In fact, two shelters were set up, one at the Uitvlugt Community Centre and the other at Shirley Field-Ridley Nursery. There we provided fifteen persons whose homes were destroyed by the high tides at Stewartville and they were interviewed for houselots at Tuschen Block 8, they were shown the houselots on 25 October and they were given the key to their new homes by the Food for the Poor on 2 December 2005, which is very good.

Mr Speaker, once again we see other things that we have to look at, but more on the positive side. We saw the commissioning of three primary schools and a health post in the Essequibo River. The road project in Wakenaam was completed and \$57 million ferry stelling was commissioned at Leguan. For the first time residents of Karia Karia can communicate with relatives and friends anywhere in the country with the installation of a telephone service. Several D & I projects were done at Aliko, Beribissiballi, Lanaballi, Hubu, et cetera.

I can tell you that things are happening in the rice sector, for example there is a drier seed processing equipment, et cetera.

Health services play a pivotal role in Region 3. We had an expenditure of \$12 million in that area and because of this we use some of it to build a new health post at Vive-La-Force and Good Fortuin. At the West Demerara Hospital, we have bought two cardiac monitors and two ECG machines. We do hope to buy a few more this year.

I can tell you that the agriculture development saw a lot of culverts being built, kokers, et cetera.

Mr Speaker, along these lines we have had a lot of progress

In the educational sector, Region 3 secured 19 of the top 100 places nationally with 59 placements at the President's College. The Region has also secured 80 senior secondary places nationally and 1,044 junior secondary places. Our top student came from Patentia secondary.

Mr Speaker, one can speak on and on, but I can tell you in Region 3, we have had our teething problems as in all agencies and I can reassure you that come this year in Region 3, not only will we be having more facilities provided at the health outposts, more schools, better D & I, but a township has been earmarked at Parika. Hopefully during the course of this year that would be realised.

In closing, I can tell you that we regard Region 3 as a Cinderella Region of them all. Mr Speaker, thank you very much for your tolerance and a

very good evening. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar

Mr Neendkumar: Mr Speaker and fellow Members of this House, I rise to support the Budget 2006 as presented by the Honourable Minister Saisnarine Kowlessar.

Mr Speaker, the theme of the 2006 Budget is indeed appropriate, Transforming Guyana Through Modernisation and Partnership. However, Mr Speaker, I found it extremely difficult to sit in this Honourable House and listen to my good friend, Mr Khemraj Ramjattan's contribution and I think that I must respond to him.

Mr Speaker, my friend Khemraj Ramjattan was talking about borrowed funds. He did not know about borrowed funds? He was a member of the PPP/Civic and he is talking about debt forgiveness? The PPP/Civic had to work for debt forgiveness. The former PNC Minister, Mr Greenidge, used to talk in this same Parliament about the many issues why they could not get it. It is by transparent government, it's by accountability, it's by getting the Auditor General's Report every year, that people recognise the goodness of the PPP government.

He is also talking about IMF conditionalities, this is not something new, Mr Speaker, he knew about this and I want to tell him, he should look at the IT programme at the University of Guyana, if he wants to see where we are going. I want to remind him that from 1992 to now, we have doubled sugar production and rice production. He knew about the Lotto funds and he knew long before that we had 20 Ministries. I think if that is how Mr Ramjattan is going to go, he should go out of Parliament because it is immoral for him to be sitting next to me.

Mr Speaker, the 2006 Budget certainly has something for all our people. Our friends on the other side of this House are attacking government on the impact ... *[Interruption: I am going to go.]* ... of the

plan. You see, Prakash is my friend and he knows that he does not have a place in here ... *[Laughter]* ... Thank you for leaving Prakash. But they refuse to accept that this caring and responsible government has done much to improve the drainage and irrigation system. His Excellency, President Bharrat Jagdeo has set up a task force, which is headed by Prime Minister Samuel Hinds and that task force, includes several eminent Guyanese, who are all very knowledgeable and above all, people who have this country and our people's interest at heart.

I want to talk about the flood because that is what all of you have been playing on. Mr Speaker, the task force for infrastructural recovery budget for 2005 was \$952 million. There were 129 projects identified and by December last year, 124 projects were completed. Mr Speaker, as a Member of Parliament, who is representing the people of Region 4, I am pleased to report to this Honourable House that I am satisfied with the drainage and irrigation works that were done for Region 4, during the period under review. It is noticeable that approximately \$819 million was spent in Region 4 - during 2005, this money was spent ... You stressed out ... you don't answer.

Further, we are having weekly visits through the region and we are monitoring the development in the region. Members of this Parliament must accept that several ministers are in the field and what is most important, we can see that most villages are clean.

Mr Speaker, the Government was elected by the people of this country and we are mandated to represent all of the people and all of the communities. I am confident that the thorough work of the taskforce will ensure that we do not get serious flooding on the East Coast of Demerara as was experienced in January 2005, I am confident of this.

Mr Speaker, I have been listening to questions about investment. I now turn to the bauxite arena. This PPP/C Government took over a sick, run-down bauxite industry in 1992. The PNC had the bauxite industry on sale but no one would buy it. They laughed the support of the bauxite workers when they were tear-gassed, beaten and locked

up. Bauxite production was unreliable and the workers in the bauxite industry were always uncertain about their future. Today, the PPP/C can report to this Parliament that the agreements were reached with the RUSAL Group for the privatisation of bauxite operations in the Berbice River. Listen Lance, I will tell you just now.

Mr Speaker, the PPP/C can proudly announce –

1. A sales agreement between Bauxite Company of Guyana Inc, BCGI and the RUSAL Group for the purchase of bauxite to secure sales contracts for over two million tonnes of bauxite per annum from the Berbice operation for the next ten years.
2. Agreement with Olden-Dorf Carriers for the barging, transportation and ocean shipment of bauxite for the next ten years.
3. Privatisation agreement with an effective date of 30 March 2006 for the transfer of bauxite business and certain assets of AMC to BCGI. BCGI would then be owned 90 percent by bauxite, aluminium mining venture, a subsidiary of RUSAL Group and 10 percent by the Government of Guyana.

Mr Speaker, RUSAL is the third largest aluminium company in the world with revenues in excess of US\$5 billion. The recently concluded agreements directly provide for a total equity investment of approximately US\$12 million by the RUSAL Group into BCGI and an investment by which Olden-Dorf of an estimated US\$60 million in facilities for the shipping and barging of the Bauxite.

Mr Speaker, this investment represents a recapitalisation and expansion of the investment in Berbice made since 1990 by AMC. Further, it secured markets, management and money for the expansion of production and sustainability of existing employment levels of bauxite production in the Upper Berbice River where the PNC was damaging.

Mr Speaker, Olden-Dorf Carriers is one of the largest shipping companies in the world, having control of over 200 large ocean-going ships and shipping over 80 million tonnes of cargo per annum. Olden-Dorf and BCGI have entered into contracts that guarantee shipment of over two million tonnes of bauxite per annum over the next ten years starting from this year 2006. Mr Speaker, in order to provide for such volume of bauxite shipments a transfer vessel has been reinstalled from 3 January 2006 which will be replaced with a specially built transfer station being custom built for the operation. This is investment, Vincent.

Additionally, Olden-Dorf has ordered new tugs – 20 new 3000 ton barges, which are scheduled to be in Guyana this year. Mr Speaker, further, the barges and tugs will be capable of crossing under the high span of the new Berbice River Bridge thus avoiding opening of the bridge for the bauxite barges. Over the next ten years mining will be carried out as follows for the next two years in Kwakwani and then the operation will shift to Krueger deposit. That is investment. Mr Speaker, I have explained this development in the bauxite industry to let Honourable Members of this House and all Guyanese know that the PPP/C Government is attracting world-class investors and the bauxite workers are enjoying better working conditions and are more supportive of the PPP/C Government today.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to report that CAMBIO is also making good progress in the Upper Demerara Linden Bauxite operations. In the first phase they managed to turn around the industry and in the second phase we are witnessing growth. Mr Speaker, CAMBIO's capital request is US\$19M for pursuing equipment and site, US\$5M for mining equipment and a further US\$6M for working capital, a total of US\$30M capital requirement. This is investment Mr Speaker. The workers in the Upper Demerara/Linden operations are also more secured with their jobs and they are now enjoying higher salaries.

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to sport. This Government has allocated \$67M on current expenditure and \$9M on capital expenditure in sports during this year, 2006. This is indeed a testimony of

the PPP/Civic Government's commitment to continue to pursue the further development of schools in this country. Mr Speaker, sports must be seen as a vehicle to bring peace and harmony in our country. This Government is spending much more money than this budgeted sum of \$76M for the development of sports. Millions of dollars are allocated and projects financed by the Poverty Alleviation Programme and the President's Youth Choice Initiative.

We will be looking carefully at improving training and other facilities for coaches and organisers. Coaches across the country are working with associations, clubs and schools. Our coaches are working very closely with the National Sports Associations and Federations. This enables the Government's sports development programmes to integrate with the programmes of the various national associations and federations. Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport works very closely with the National Sports Commission and we also work with other ministries. This excellent relationship between NSC and the Ministry of Education is yielding tremendous success. 97 schools are participating annually in the National Under - 18 Coca-Cola Football Competition. Mr Speaker, 109 schools are presently participating in the National Under 16 Secondary School Cricket Competition. *[Interruption: 'Bartica too?']* Yes, Bartica also. She doesn't know that. Significantly the NSC is insisting that all the students who are playing in these competitions must attend school regularly and they must achieve passing grades as a criterion to participate in these competitions. Mr Speaker, Volleyball, rugby, table tennis, netball, basketball and wind ball are also organised in some schools. We are confident that our students will benefit from a rounded development and our country will be a better place to live.

Mr Speaker, we recognise the seriousness of HIV/AIDS and as such the Ministry of Health and the NSC are working to educate our youth and student population about the killer HIV/AIDS. Further, may I inform this House that we employed a special officer in the ministry to carry out our HIV/AIDS programmes.

Mr Speaker, in the fight against crime and drugs our sports programmes are seriously concerned about the social upbringing of our young people. Recently Minister Anthony Xavier addressed the leaders of 27 sports disciplines and he urged them to work in unity. Mr Speaker, we will continue to make genuine efforts to foster unity among our people by organising more sport programmes among our youths in the various communities. Village competitions will bring good relationships among villagers. However, it is imperative that our village leaders and elders and all those in authority work for the good of our people. Mr Speaker, our Teach the Young sports programme is attracting thousands of youths across the country. This is an annual programme which is organised during the August school vacation in which we embark on programmes to introduce young adolescents to various sports disciplines. During this programme we look at their interests and help them to develop a positive attitude in sport disciplines of their choice. The Ministry camps are well organised and highly successful.

Mr Speaker, I am proud to announce that this Government is fully behind sports at the national and international level. Our sportsmen and women have received great support from the Government when they travel overseas to represent this country. Further, I must let this Honourable House know that we will continue the Inter-Guyana Games from this year, Guyana, Suriname and French Guyana will be competing in athletics, football, swimming, volleyball and basketball.

Mr Speaker, I cannot address this Parliament without discussing an event which demands the attention of all of us. I am of course talking about the 2007 World Cup and Guyana's preparation for hosting of matches in the Super Eight stages. Mr Speaker, our challenge is to get Guyana ready. That would mean so much for Guyana's future, but we have to work to put things in place. At Providence the stadium is the centre of attraction and it is taking good shape. The \$5 Billion investment will leave us with a proud legacy - a legacy that the PPP/Civic can be proud of. The Indian contractors are working to meet the deadline for the pavilion, stands and other facilities. The other contractors will complete the pitches and the outfield and provide good drainage et ce-

tera. However, the venue is not just Providence. The venue is all of Guyana. We have to extend our preparation to cover, among other things, the airport, health facilities, roads, accommodations, bed and breakfast and transportation. Mr Speaker, opportunities are here for everyone, hence our people as a nation will be hosting and it is our hospitality and organisation that will count.

Mr Speaker, this 2006 Budget is of great importance to our country. Our genuine, joint efforts will certainly be a source of pride for our people and our country. As our sportsmen and sportswomen dream about a stadium and better facilities, let us work for it to become a reality. The legacy that we will leave behind will be highly appreciated by our sons and daughters.

Mr Speaker, I would like to once more express my support for the Honourable Minister of Finance and his hardworking and effective team. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Ricky Khan

Mr Ricky Khan: Mr Speaker, I also rise to make my contribution to the 2006 Budget.

Region 1 - Roads - \$22.620 million. Every year there is an allocation for roads and by the end of the year from when the Budget is passed to the next budget, the roads would have deteriorated. We are now asking ourselves, what is the problem? Approximately three years ago, some equipment were supposed to be purchased - they were purchased, but they were unserviceable. At the time the equipment were really needed to do the roads. We have now seen that because we do not have the proper equipment that we are suffering for the last three years.

This year the \$22.620 million is for the construction of bitumen Roads at Mabaruma settlement and Hosororo to Bunbury. The Mabaruma Settlement road is partially done and it needs to be completed, but as usual

it has had a little improvement from being a piece of red mud road, but at what cost? Because from the time the money is spent to get the roads done in January, by the time the rainy season comes, they are back to square one. We lately have a piece of road done between Wanaina Bridge to the top of Wanaina. The rainy season is there and it has already been washed away and it did not even last for five months.

Mr Speaker, I can go on and on. At the beginning of the year, we had one contractor who is by profession a captain of a boat. Of course, he is a member of the CDC and that is why he got the contract in the first place. The contract was to do in front of the Kumaka Fisheries right down to the KMC Wharf. He decided to start it and put an average of twelve inches of sand. When it rained the tar started to float. When it was clear a few months later the road was worse than when it was repaired.

The second contractor was a minibus operator. At the end of the day the Kumaka Road from the end of the bridge to the Kumaka Wharf has been patched about three to four times and it still has holes in it. The road from Barima end to Mabaruma has had revetment work and it was maintained. If you go and look at it now, you will find that the road itself has deteriorated. Not many vehicles go there, if any at all.

The road from Wanaina Bridge to Wauna has been repaired several times, but the way they repair the road is that they put out a tender. Yes, and the normal contractors - of course, it is a field day for the contractors and they get loads of rocks which they put at the sides of the roads and they employ some men to fill the road and patch it up. As usual when the rainy season comes, it is all gone. That means if \$5 million or \$10 million is spent on that particular road, the money is wasted. Of course, the only person who is happy is the contractor.

Mr Speaker, I have heard my colleagues who had visited Matarkai speak about the roads. The Baramita road which is now opened to traffic from Matthews Ridge to Baramita, which was a trail a few years ago, is indeed a welcome extension of the road in the Matarkai sub-

region, but we must ask ourselves what has happened to all the money that was spent on roads in the Makarkai sub-region. What is the problem? Once again, we are going back to the root of the problem. There is heavy machinery in the Matarkai sub-region even more than in the Mabaruma sub-region, so the roads built without proper machinery cannot stand up. We are still pouring millions and millions of dollars into the roads and we know what the results will be.

The road from Kwabanna to Santa Rosa/Kumaka which is in the Moruka Sub-region, has similar problems. We have had maintenance about a year ago and we are back to square one. If you add it up in a five-year period, hundreds of millions of dollars were being spent and there is nothing to show for it right now. Of course, what has to be done ... and we are looking here at basically the road project in itself ... no matter what you do you will not be voting money for roads. Right now you will need money for equipment and proper contractors to have proper roads. It is a waste of time.

Bridges - \$7.2 million has been voted for bridges, but I want to bring to the attention of the House that there was a bridge right over at Kumaka itself that the contractors did not even consult the people at Barabina when they were putting up the bridge. The people of Barabina used this creek to ply in and out of Barabina. The bridge was constructed and that means that the traffic could not go in any more; on top of that they put a koker on the bridge that flooded out one side of the road. It was not planned properly, there was no consultation and at the end of the day, we ended worse than where we were. By the way, the bridge is still incomplete. This money - \$7.2 million - includes a bridge in Yarakita which is called the walking-over bridge, but we know it a hauling-over bridge. During the dry weather, this creek is totally dry down to a trickle. I am only hoping that I can assist by asking the Honourable Minister to intervene and put a proper contractor who can do a proper construction of the bridge, because during the rainy weather, it extends quite a distance.

Power Supply - \$8.9 million - In Kaituma, we have several people who

have to offer people lights and electricity privately, because basically the region itself especially in Kaituma cannot afford to give all the residents of Port Kaituma lights or long hours of electricity. So there is a lot of people in Port Kaituma who do a lot of things on their own. Today, the traffic in the whole of the region is centered around Kaituma because of its gold activity and so on.

The Mabaruma Power Supply which is a new plant is fairly good; it does a good job, but the maintenance of it ... every two or three days there is blackout, for what reason we do not know. Sometimes we hear it is fuel; when it is a week or two, we hear it is about parts. Twice there were parts problems. On my observation of the way that the plant is run, I see the government tractors on many, many days outside on the wharf collecting three and five drums of fuel. So at the end of the day, one would ask himself what is really happening. The fuel is supplied to the Region probably on a day-to-day basis; they are not running it as they should. What I am worried about is not only the way that they are doing it, but who are the suppliers? Where did the fuel come from? Is the Guyana National Energy Authority checking on the right people? At the end of the day, on electricity, we tried to speak to the Chairman and the Member several times to have a private sector meeting to make sure that the public and private sectors can be facilitated. It is the same thing, our programme is from six to ten and that is it. They have to learn a little from Lethem and Bartica. Maybe they will then understand where to go and in what direction to go.

Agriculture - \$3.8 million towards a nursery at Four Mile. Well, I am a little peeved about this agriculture problem in Region 1. Agriculture has had a dying trend for the last ten years. We used to ship so many provisions, oil palm and so many products. Today, there has not been a single plan in place for agriculture. The only thing that I can say is that I came here last year and I spoke publicly and I offered a solution. The farmers definitely need some guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture to say that look, we have people who export from Georgetown to Barbados and further afield; they export coconuts, bora or whatever commodity it may be. They need guidance, because at the end of the day, they are

looking for markets that have better value. We have not been getting any assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture in understanding what direction to take.

The importation of Irish potatoes would definitely mean that yams, eddoes and plantains will take a slide. It obviously means that farmers will have to go to other crops to make sure that they can have a living.

Let us talk about flooding in Region 1. We have been flooded out in the Region by the rivers not only today, but any time there is heavy rainfall, it is not different from Georgetown, but this is only the rivers. We see in Georgetown that members go out there and dole out money to those farmers and residents. In Region 1, when the farms go under water, the farmers get no assistance whatsoever. At the end of the day, you have to go with whatever it is and call it a day. I know the Minister had visited Region 1 and we look forward to see what form of assistance the Minister is going to give the farmers.

In Wauna, many years ago, there was a peanut project. We are still looking forward for the peanut project that we have heard so much about to be a visible thing rather than to hear that it is coming and that the farmers would be assisted. Many farmers come out on Tuesday to sell their produce.

This coconut project that we hear so much about ... at the end of the day, there are a few old trees that they are trying to rehabilitate and they have never been able to even make as much as a half or a little more than a quarter of a container. At the moment it is under the eyes of AMCAR, the people who help them to ship it out now.

Mr Speaker, our farms - the whole agriculture sector - in Region I, which was once vibrant... Under the People's National Congress there was GAIYBANK, which used to give loans; there were many field operatives who used to come and assist us. At the end of the day, we really need something to revitalise somewhere along that line. Well, of course if we do not get it done early, the People's National Congress/Reform

will be there with a proper programme... if you cannot get it done. We have been neglected for too long.

Health - \$24.5 million - Indeed, the services in some sectors have improved in terms of infrastructure, but once again we have to ask ourselves as the infrastructure improves who is benefiting? Certainly it has to be the contractors and only the contractors and of course the boys. At the end of the day, we can have a look at the health services in two sections. Have the services improved? Well, the MEDIVAC comes in quite often and on every Trans Guyana one can see a patient going out. You ask yourself, what is the competence at the hospitals in Port Kaituma and Mabaruma where I visited, because if they keep sending out patients at that rate, that means basically that they either do not have the equipment or the competence to deal with the patients.

Malaria and so many other diseases are still prevalent. Although many people have been trained, the problem in the region is that you have to have a comprehensive programme that meets the people. It is not happening. You are spending a lot of money and the taxpayers are not getting the worth for their money.

Education - \$34 million - Well, Mr Speaker, this is the contractors' paradise. [Laughter] Every year with all of those schools, they now import the contractors - of course, the boys from Essequibo. They fall in the bid contractual deal ... [Interruption: 'From my side?'] "Yes, Mr Allen from your side."

Mr Speaker, we have had a little improvement in terms of infrastructure... When I say a little, not in results alone and infrastructure; what has been happening right now, is that education has been watered down so much that our professionals ... we send so many people to be trained, but as soon as they get back home, you know the usual story... a lot of them take transfers back to Georgetown, so the region is always empty of professionals.

Transport and Harbours Department - Mr Speaker, I refer to this

Department which normally runs a boat every two weeks, sometimes the Kimbia and sometimes the Pomeroon or Barima boat. Well, these are the same boats incidentally that were going since the last twenty-eight years and the last thirteen years. There is nothing new ... *[Interruption: '41 years!']* "Yes, the same boats." Mr Speaker, our complaints about the boat service itself is that the passengers have to go through some conditions when they travel on those boats that are not only unsanitary, but totally ridiculous for them to travel. What we really need is a boat that separates the cargo from the passenger. We can have something, which separates the two, because there is wildlife on deck. They are almost among the passengers. *[Interruption: 'People and snakes; people and crocodiles!']* Almost everything!

Mr Speaker, I have heard so much about the flood, but what we are worried about is that who takes the blame for the floods? We have had one flood then a second reoccurrence and we are looking to see who takes the blame. At the end of the day, somebody must be in charge and know that something went wrong, not the rain alone. I know that it cannot be the Minister of Foreign Trade, it has to be the Minister of Agriculture. He is the ultimate boss in the drainage.

Mr Speaker, in my closing remarks, I would like to say that better can be done, but the administration seems to be stuck and they cannot do better. It is time for a change. Thank you. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Sukhai

Mrs Pauline R Sukhai: Mr Speaker, first of all, may I congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance Mr Kowlessar and the Budget Office staff for their hard work during the preparation of the Budget and their early presentation of this year's Budget to the National Assembly.

Presenting the 2006 Budget this early for approval by this Honourable House, provides a head start for timely implementation of plans and programmes for the year. It augers well particularly for hinterland com-

munities and regions where the implementation is always beset with logistical limitations whether transportation, communication and sometimes in carrying out the projects the unavailability of required material resources from within the region. So for the hinterland communities including Region 1, I think, it is quite a very good opportunity for the regional administration to begin to work very early in providing the services to people.

The Budget theme *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*, tells this nation how far our government has taken Guyana. It tells of the achievements that we have made and it also tells us the next step to which government is prepared to take Guyana at the next level of development.

The \$102 billion Budget provides the requisite financial resources, required for the implementation of the prioritised activities for the year. It also represents the government's preparedness to invest in meeting many challenges that face us as a nation.

Before I go to a few specific issues for the region I represent, I would like to make a few comments on some of the presentations that have passed yesterday and sometime before today.

Mr Speaker, yesterday the Honourable Member Mr Kadir, did make a loud and bold comment in this Honourable House. He said that the nation is ravished by crime and corruption. Well before I answer that I would like to say that I endorse the Honourable Member Mrs Shirley Edwards' statement that the opposition is living in darkness. I must say that the government is ever cognisant of the many constraining factors that tend to slow the pace of government's delivery of the goods and services to the people of this nation. Yes, our government has recognised that corruption has been identified as one of those factors which have slowed our efforts in moving forward. We have spared no bones in trying to fight corruption. Many of you on the opposite side have also debated in this House with us legislation that is meant to combat corruption.

Indeed, the opposition seemed to have very short-lived memories since they participated (like I said) in debates that saw coming into being of the Integrity Commission. We saw the introduction of the Procurement Act. We saw this House supporting an independent Office of the Auditor General. We also saw in this House, we supported the strengthening of the Fiduciary Oversight machineries. We have passed here and established committees with oversight functions that guarantee this government and this country some form of a tool to try to ensure that the working, the operation, the management of this country is lesser and lesser entwined in its role.

I will also like to say that we have ... and I repeat, we have identified corruption as one such factor which we must all be united on. I have said that this government spared no bones in doing that. Every time there is an incident of corruption being identified or discovered, it is fully investigated and put before the court. *[Applause]* What is lacking in this fight to eradicate corruption is the united support of the opposition. They need to take a very firm position and cooperate with us on this issue.

In relation to crime, indeed corruption is also considered a very heinous crime and in relation to other criminal and deviant behaviour, this is not a child of our government. Criminal activities have been a long time with society. However, what we have inherited was a society that had insured that corruption and criminal activities were entrenched and what our government has done over the years, if we have been looking at the spendings in terms of fighting crime, we will understand that we too have a burden of deviant behaviour which we must eradicate. We have not deviated from that position since we have been here over the last thirteen years.

Mr Speaker, I would like to respond to a few other points made by the previous speaker who has left this Chamber as soon as he has delivered his presentation and here I am talking about the Honourable Member Mr Ravindra Dev.

Mr Dev mentioned five major points which he said that he would like this government - maybe this Parliament to consider. One of those points was that we should consider forming an alliance with Brazil in pursuit of development. We are well aware that Guyana has been working in a cooperative way with Brazil; no doubt he failed to remember that we have had trade teams going to visit Brazil. There were exchange visits made by both Presidents His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo and His Excellency Lula. We have always promoted South South Co-operation in this part of our hemisphere. He probably forgot that we have been working closely with the Lethem/Brazil Road, the Takatu Bridge and the Petroscope Agreement. Mr Speaker, obviously maybe he would like us to intensify efforts in achieving much more out of cooperating with Brazil.

Another point which I think was also very good as the Honourable Member Dr Moti Lall said that he made some very good points in his speech - was the issue of the implementation of pro-poor policy by this government. Apparently Mr Dev has failed to understand that over the thirteen years, this government has been increasing spending allocation in the social services. We have also implemented the PRSP. Maybe he has forgotten that, because he has been attending consultations - he has taken part in consultations - to the run up of the establishment of the PRSP and I am sure he has been following very closely the progress made by that programme which is being headed by this government.

Another point which I want to raise is his points about having an exit strategy from the IMF and the World Bank. This is nothing new, any country which has agreements and conditions that beset their country that are asked by the IMF and the World Bank will definitely one day have to have an exit strategy. We cannot forever go on taking the contributions and support from such institutions. However, what he failed to realise is that this is an ideal until such time that we have the necessary resources to support our balance of payments. Until there is a realistic and manageable level of debts. We must remind ourselves that the position we are in today is not the making of this government, but of course we will not shed our responsibilities. It is the responsibility of this gov-

ernment to ensure that our people are taken care of and we provide for them at an adequate level.

Stimulating Investment - This again is a very old stone maybe hat has been thrown everyday at this government. Our government has tried to create an enabling environment for investors. We have provided incentives and concessions; we have a much more stable macro economic structure and economy and we have also been passing legislation in this House to promote and to encourage investment. Government has attracted direct foreign investment in this country, but maybe not at a very massive scale. I think, just recently the Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar mentioned about the RUSAL investment. Indeed, that is another investment which we have attracted during our tenure. Of course, there is nothing that will come to this country very easily, because though we have created an enabling environment, there are many other hurdles that are put in the path of Guyana's development. I can probably just mention a few.

We have been faced with one which is more very recent having experienced flooding in this country,; we have been experiencing the results of the extra-parliamentary activities carried out by the opposition; we have also experienced a very high level of criminality in our society, which again I said, we have recognised and are working to reduce. Some of these have affected investors in our country and while we can talk about the PPP/C government not attracting investment, I think we all know the reasons why we have not been able to attract it enough in large and massive levels.

Mr Speaker, I now turn to some more regional issues. I must say that once again I am encouraged this year by the investment being made in the development of Region 1. Yesterday, the Minister for Amerindian Affairs Hon Carolyn Rodrigues did highlight in very detail the improvements in Region 1 and throughout the hinterlands.

However, I would like to make a few points on the infrastructural arrangements and improvements that have taken place in the regions.

Roads - According to the allocation this year, it is expected to complete the Baramita end of the road. We know that this will help very much in people traversing that area

Educational Sector - We have noted that this government is again trying to provide amenities for the teachers by allocating monies to complete teachers' quarters so that teachers would be much more comfortable and will want to stay in the Region and will also continue to serve in the teaching profession.

Other projects - This year's Budget also lends some support to other projects and yesterday I sat in this House and listened to the two doctors who have visited Port Kaituma . I am happy to report that Port Kaituma will be receiving a very hefty allocation and from that allocation there will be a number of projects that will be addressed. Work will be done on the old dorms, they will transform this dorm into a primary school; extension to the existing primary school will also take place and the construction of a new primary school at Port Kaituma Canal Bank will also be done.

Bridges - Of course, we must make mention of the Santa Rosa Bridge. Obviously that has been a questioning issue here. How long will it take the Santa Rosa Bridge to be completed? There were problems before, however, I am willing to report that that bridge has been completed and it will not only serve the Kumaka/Santa Rosa village, but it will also support the satellite communities where children come to attend the Santa Rosa school, the church and the Santa Rosa Secondary School on the Kumaka end.

Indeed, there have been some successes in implementation of the work programme for last year.

Health - In terms of health, there are plans to construct a health hut at Hariaku and to rehabilitate the Moruka or the Kumaka District Hospital. There will be environmental improvements like the establishment or the construction of incinerators at Mabaruma, Pakera and Port Kaituma

Hospitals. Also, the improvement for the securities of these buildings, fences will be constructed at Pakera, Kumaka and Port Kaituma.

My friend on the other side Mr Ricky Khan is not all dishonest. Indeed, there are many issues which we have to deal with in our region and I would like to say ... I have here in my speech ... support our call for later in the year for consideration for allocation to be given for the rehabilitation of the Pakera Hospital and to rehabilitate the Port Kaituma Hospital which was a gift from the Barama Company to the people of the Region. This will enormously help in safeguarding the further dilapidated state of these buildings. Of course, as we stand here we represent the residents of Region 1 and we would like to know that the interest or health facilities are very much important for them and they may not have a hospital like Georgetown hospital, but we need to ensure that the basic and primary healthcare and the facilities that go along with that are taken care of.

Referring back to the Budget theme *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*, this is in itself a call to face the challenge of transforming Guyana. Mr Speaker, over the last thirteen years there has been ongoing progress in our real sectors; progress in policy formulation and implementation; there has been important administration and legislative reforms that supported such a modernisation of our country. *Agriculture* - However, we need to extend a transformation and again I appeal to the hinterland. Therefore, I take this opportunity to encourage all sides to support transformation of agriculture in Region 1. Indeed, agriculture is the backbone of Region 1 and there needs to be some more serious focus and investment in the technical and extension services that can improve cropping techniques, improve yields and the introduction of new crops into the region. There should also be support for a mechanised form of cultivation, using tractors and implements as have been given to other regions, I hereby also ask that as Guyana grows and as we develop, and there has been more growth and development, more focus should be put towards those aspects.

I say so, because the coastland is experiencing a lot of flooding and Region 1 has been in the past the bread basket in relation to hinterland areas and therefore in the instance that the coastland will have issues with food security, Region 1 can come in very handy in supporting and providing food security for this nation.

Tourism Development - Another focus which I would like to refer to here on behalf of my constituency relates to tourism development. Indeed Region 1 is a very scenic region. We have very beautiful rivers, we have lots of birds, we have a very unique culture of Amerindian and Spanish which when blended together form a very unique form of tradition probably which we could promote as a tourism attraction so that we can generate some interest in the region by the private sector and also by foreigners. We also have the famous Shell Beach, the turtle conservation and protected areas which could be promoted much more aggressively bringing the region to a much more prominent place in this country.

With the recent flooding, I will also like to encourage that government looks toward trying to support the come-back of farmers that will be affected. I appreciate that immediate response was sent into the region when the excessive rainfalls were reported and I have very good faith in the two ministers that visited the region that their report will result in assistance to the farmers in the region. Again, that region depends very heavily on agriculture for their food security.

Fishing Industry - Of course, this industry may not be able to compete with those here on the coastland, however, it is another important sector which some more focus should be given to in terms of development for the region.

I point to these sectors because this is what will bring more relief and a more comfortable life for the families and the residents, whether they may be Amerindians or other hinterland residents that exist in these parts of our country.

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In closing, I would like to say that I congratulate the Minister once more for such a large Budget, \$102 billion, and I am sure that this Budget will set the stage for the transformation and modernisation of our country, but it will also set the stage for achieving our short-term and long-term plans and programmes so that Guyana will be a much better place for all. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Danny

Mr Dave Danny: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in his Budget Speech 2006, the Honourable Minister of Finance reminded us of what should be uppermost in our minds as we reflect on the year 2005.

It must be the devastating floods of January - First Page 1.2 - and in his closing of the first Paragraph, he also spoke of the extensive flood of last year, Page 64 7.1.

Mr Speaker, with all the meditation and reflection of the floods of 2005, one would have believed that come 2006 that the administration would have been fully prepared for the expected rainy season we are currently experiencing. This was not to be.

Mr Speaker, reflect with me on the presentation made by the Honourable Minister Bibi Shadick and I quote:

He who forgets the past is condemned to make the same mistakes in the future.

This is a relevant criticism for the government of which she is a part. Mr Speaker, let us all reflect on the devastating effects during and after the floods of 2005.

My personal experience, I received a call from Trinidad at 4.00H on 17 January 2005. My aunt was on the line, she inquired if we had floods in Guyana and my wife replied no. However, after putting down

the phone, we decided to look outside. Lo and behold, to my amazement I was shocked and horrified with what I saw. The water was at my doors with no notice, did not rap to enter my house, but like a thief in the night was forcing its way into my home. This was the beginning of one month of packing and cleaning. I would not go into the millions lost, items that cannot be replaced and I lost fifteen pounds which I cannot put on to this day. I tell you this story, Mr Speaker, because you have to experience the loss, the stress and to understand what it is like to live under these conditions.

Let us reflect further on Regions 3, 4 and 5. Nearly 400,000 persons, about fifty-two percent of the population was affected. What were the effects of the floods:

- Injuries;
- dislocation of people;
- large scale destruction;
- damage to infrastructure and property; and most of all
- damage or loss of life to our fellow Guyanese .

Mr Speaker, it is unbelievable to think after one year as I stand before you, we are experiencing the same effects of last year's flood. It would appear that the government has not learnt from 2005. Mr Speaker, the question we should ask at this time is who is responsible? What can be done to avoid this problem and how long would we have to wait to see the end of floods in our beloved land of Guyana?

Let us turn our attention to loss due to the floods. The report presented in March estimated the economic loss from the floods to be \$93 million, sixty percent of the gross domestic product. When we look at this great loss to a fragile economy like ours, we need to shift from reflection to action-oriented policies. Mr Speaker, I agree with the theme for this Budget *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISA-*

TION AND PARTNERSHIP. The only fear is that when it comes to partnership, only lip service will be given to this part of the theme. For partnership to succeed, it must be genuine and the decisions made should reflect that partnership.

Mr Speaker, please allow me to reflect on the theme of the Budget *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP.*

First, let us look at *modernisation*; Webster's New World Dictionary defines *modernisation* as *having to do with the latest style, methods or ideas; a person who lives in modern times or has up-to-date ideas.* Mr Speaker, how relevant is modernisation to us and the Budget? Page 1 Paragraph 1.2:

when we reflect on the year 2005, uppermost in our minds would be the devastating floods of January

22:30H

[Speaker withdrew from the Chair]

[Presiding Member Mr Ricky Khan in the Chair]

So, let us reflect on January 2005. First, the areas with pit toilets started to contaminate with the flood waters, animal urine and dead animals, et cetera. The end result, leptospirosis and death. Mr Speaker, how relevant is modernisation? As we can see there is need to change these primitive lifestyles. There is need to adopt modern lifestyles to avoid sickness, disease and death.

Let us turn our attention to *partnership*. Webster's New World Dictionary defines *partnership* as *the condition of relationship of being a partner made up of two or more partners.* Mr Speaker, how relevant is partnership to us and the Budget? Page 64 Paragraph 7.3:

We must demonstrate our maturity by holding trouble-free

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and transparent Elections later this year. All Guyana belongs to all of us.

No one can object to these statements. Mr Speaker, how important is partnership? For example, let us look at West Indies Cricket; there seem to be always an issue among the players or players and management. I do not believe that it is so much a problem with talent. If we look at Lara - World class batsman and recently I read in the newspapers Chandarpal being one of the second highest scorer to give an example of two. What we need is the harmonious relationship among the players and management, comraderie and team spirit, which in itself illustrates partnership.

Let us look at two issues as it relates to us. If there was a demonstration of true partnership then the issue surrounding the appointment of the Chancellor would have been resolved.

In keeping with the desire of the Budget Speech on Page 64 Paragraph 7.3 - this can only be achieved if a harmonious and working relationship is established between GECOM and the parties participating in the upcoming general elections. Mr Speaker, probably the clearest reflection that government is not disposed to genuine partnership is the way they handle allocation to Region 4.

Mr Speaker, under capital expenditure, Region 4 requested \$907.5 million. Approximately eleven percent of this sum was allocated to undertake capital works within the region and the sum approved in the Estimates of 2006 is \$105.9 million in comparison with Region 3 with less people and land which is allocated \$167.5 million. Does this reflect genuine partnership?

Bridges - The region requested \$78 million, but \$11 million is allocated, a mere 8.6 percent of the sum requested.

22:31H

[Speaker resumed the Chair]

Two examples of projects that were not approved:

- (i) Rehabilitation of bridge with greenheart - first bridge Crown Dam, Industry Front,
East Coast Demerara; and
- (ii) Rehabilitation of heavy duty bridge Triumph Housing Scheme, East Coast Demerara.

Buildings - Education - The Region requested \$353.5 million, but \$47.7 million was allocated approximately thirteen percent of the sum requested. Two examples of the projects that were requested and not approved:

- (i) Construction of secondary school, Hope Front, East Coast Demerara; and
- (ii) Swamy Purnanand - There is no where to house these children resulting in a shift system with the primary school. Further, the land identified for the construction of the school has been allocated for houselot distribution. One would have believed that education for our children would have been priority.

Construction of nursery school Dazzell Housing Scheme, Paradise, East Coast Demerara - This request was made to accommodate the growing school population in the Dazzell and Bare Root. housing schemes. This area urgently needs a nursery school for approximately 250 students.

Building-Administration - The Region requested \$77.5 million, however, no money was allocated under this head. There examples of projects which were requested and not allocated:

- Extension of the Regional Accounting Unit and the

construction of the strong room, Paradise, East Coast Demerara, the remarks stated that there is no need to construct the strong room to store safe and other important documents, et cetera.

- Provide a proper room for IFMAS and accommodation for staff.
- AREOs quarters are in a deplorable state. Urgent rehabilitation is needed to accommodate the new AREO.

Buildings -Health - The Region requested \$64 million, but \$12 million is allocated, a mere 7.7 percent of the sum requested. Two examples of projects that were requested and have not been approved:

- (i) Rehabilitation of doctor's quarters, Friendship, East Coast Demerara. The building is in a deplorable state and major rehabilitation is required.
- (ii) Rehabilitation of nurses quarters, Helena, Mahaica, East Coast Demerara. The quarters is in a deplorable state due to neglect over the years. As a result the nurses/midwives have to travel.

Roads - The Region requested \$110.3 million, but \$22.3 million is allocated, a mere 13.8 percent of the sum requested. Two examples of projects that were requested are:

- (i) Construction of Seventh Street with chip seal, Better Hope South, East Coast Demerara. Currently the street is of mud and is in a deplorable state. This street has not been properly repaired for over ten years.
- (ii) Construction of Second Street West over the railroad embankment from Victoria Middlewalk to Victoria sideline, Victoria, East Coasts Demerara. The street is a mud dam and with little or no repairs for the past fifteen years.

Agriculture Development - The Region requested \$62 million, but \$22.3 million is allocated, a mere 13.8 percent of the sum requested. Two examples of projects that were requested and have not been approved are:

- (i) Rehabilitation of Company Canal with long boom hymax, at Buxton/Friendship, East Coast Demerara. The canal is heavily silted and it was not desilted after the floods.
- (ii) Rehabilitation of a north drain trench, Supply, East Coast Demerara. This canal is heavily silted and farmers depend on this Canal for drainage.

Land and Water Transport - The Region requested \$20.8 million, but no allocation was made under this head. The Region once again has been denied its request for land and water transport. How can the Region carry out its mandate if they cannot monitor the operations in an effective manner?

Furniture and Equipment - Education - The Region requested \$40.2 million, but \$6 million was approved, a mere 2.4 percent of the sum requested.

Office Furniture and Equipment - The Region requested \$17.4 million, but \$1.1 million is approved, a mere 0.19 percent of the sum requested.

Equipment - Health - The Region requested \$5.080 million, but \$500,000 a mere 0.25 of the sum requested.

It does not appear to me that the needs of our people are determining the projects. The government should explain to this House why these projects, important as they are, have not been approved.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, it was acknowledged that all of Guyana belongs to all of us. We now need to apply the theory and give life and meaning to the theme; this can be done by adequate housing, roads,

electricity, a living wage for workers, and medical service for all to name a few. While the theme of the Budget is relevant, the practice seems to be absent as I have illustrated in my presentation. There is a lack of genuine partnership. To realise our objective and partnership, we must be sincere, otherwise this Budget, like the others before it, will be a document that could never be transformed into action.

Mr Speaker, what we need at this time is action that is well planned, has clear objectives and the means for implementing all of which seem absent in this Budget Presentation. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Lumumba

Mr Odinga N Lumumba: : Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the Budget brilliantly presented by my friend the Honourable Minister Saisnarine Kowlessar.

In addition, I also want to congratulate the opposition for their diligent and in some cases intelligent and constructive recommendations. I also hope that one day the presentations by the opposition members would not be only criticisms and outlining what has been done and what has not been done. I think, we have to reach the point where the opposition can propose amendments to the Budget and come up with ... *[Interruption: 'You have not heard the presentations.'* "I am not talking about the individual presentations, I am talking about the opposition as a group, I am talking about one collective document from the opposition saying that this is what should be done in every area. I think, what you have done so far is a good way forward - precisely counter budget. I think Mr Alexander, a future leader of the PNC had made great suggestions. *[Applause]* I did not say that to make my brother Basil Williams jealous in any way.]

Mr Speaker, before I proceed on my presentation, I would like to make a few responsive comments.

The Honourable Member Mr Ravindra Dev spoke at length - as far as he could take himself - in terms of the area of economics. I recognise that he has some limitations in the subject, so I would not press him on the issue. Mr Dev needs to recognise that there are three compelling factors that will create problems with development not only in Guyana, but in any society that would have these:

- (i) The impact of oil price; this must have a negative impact on the society;
- (ii) The impact of the two major floods. We can argue as to the reasons for the floods. We can argue all day, but the reality is, there were two major floods, two major seasons and they would have a negative impact on the economy. And finally on that issue ... *[Interruption: 'Twenty-eight years.']*

You know, it is interesting, when you spoke and everybody over there spoke, I just stayed quiet. *[Interruption: 'You were not here.']* But when I was here I was very nice, I was very humble this year and you know that. So just do the same.

- (iii) We must also recognise that political instability creates a negative impact as it relates to those who want to come in the society and invest.

No one wants to come and invest when there is turmoil. So we can sit here and come up with all the brilliant ideas, but if I have access to US\$10 billion and there is a peaceful country on the right and one with demonstration and disagreements on the right and one where the government and the opposition cannot work together to move a society forward, I am taking my money somewhere else. Those are important points that we cannot run away from.

Mr Speaker, the opposition in particular and some members of the society as a whole have raised the question of marginalisation. I think we need to address that, because I believe that this government has tried to

do the best to counter those allegations by the work it has done and what it has carried out in the society. So we need to do a little definition first.

The term *marginalisation* derives from the word *margin* which in turn is to be on the edge, at the limit, on the fringes and so on. *Margin* is related conversely to space and freedom in terms of scope, franchise and self-determination in the sense of being unlimited, un-conditioned and so on. Therefore, to be *marginalised* is to be limited in scope, space, freedom of operation and the right to self-determination. Mr Speaker, in the life experience *marginalisation* often involves exclusion, discrimination as well as rejection, omission and isolation; the practice of excluding a social group from the mainstream of the society, placing that group legally and socially on the margin of society. Mr Speaker, when the PPP/C came into power and when the PNC prior to that was in power, we could clearly state who was in charge in the society. They were a few members of the Indian elite, a few members of the black bourgeoisie and some old Portuguese men. Everybody else was marginalised - ninty-eight percent. The Indo Guyanese, the Afro Guyanese and the Amerindians were marginalised. The question is, who inflicted those acts of marginalisation? Mr Speaker, I am not going to get involved in who, we know is who? We are not going to get involved in that.

The Honourable Member Mr Ramjattan said that we need to train more people. The numbers will show and reflect that the amount of people who have been trained in this country are doubling and tripling annually... [*Interruption: 'And they are leaving' Thank you, I agree.*"] So the issue is not training more people. The issue is creating an environment for more investment. That is the issue.

The Honourable Member Mr Danny, my good and new friend, congratulations ... You batted well, but I do not want you to over bat, because the ball is moving. .. He said that he lost millions in his yard during the flood. I want to know what were in his yard to cost millions. He would need to inform us. A man lost millions in his yard ... he has to

be careful.

The Honourable Mr Danny raised the question of another region receiving more money or got a larger allocation than Region 4, but to my friend Mr Danny, a new Member of Parliament, when you are dealing with Region 4, you must add the millions that the government gives to Georgetown.

Going back to the issue of marginalisation, it is important that we look at government activities and how we have countered that area. Let us look at Linden, a predominantly Afro Guyanese community; we must see what the government has accomplished. Mr Neendkumar earlier spoke about the Bauxite Industry and what has been done to revitalise the industry. But my friend left out a few things:

- the investment by OMAI;
- the \$20 million investment in OMAI;
- the employment which is now at 735 at OMAI;
- the power plant.

Under this government, the people of Wismar and McKenzie, Linden or whatever you want to call it, will no longer be subject to long hours of blackouts. When we speak about Linden and that particular area, we must talk about LEAP Programme and what it has accomplished and what it has done to stabilise the economy and the social structure of Linden:

- GNIC Building has been rehabilitated at \$52 million,
- there are business centres and incubators;
- rehabilitation of McKenzie vehicle park;
- feasibility study for the expansion of water supply in Moblissa;

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- culverts and kokers at Wismar being rehabilitated;
- 6.1 miles of agriculture road rehabilitated;
- staff of LEAP provided technical assistance to ninety-four businesses and sixty-nine business plans prepared for Region 10 clients

Mr Speaker, we talk about marginalisation, but we cannot talk about marginalisation and do not look at the other things we have done in the Linden area.

Let us touch lightly on the area of *housing* - the most dynamic housing programme in Guyana:

- Wisroc: 7000 houselots;
 - \$34 million on roads;
 - \$34 million on water;
- Amelia's Ward: 1,000 houselots;
 - \$262 million for roads;
 - \$59 million on water;
- Block 22: 450 houselots
 - 4150 million on roads.

And in new housing programmes for 2006 ... I am focussing particularly in areas that in many ways my brothers and sisters on the other side will claim as their base ... but we are spending money all over Guyana:

- Sophia Block D;

- Cummings Park;
- Glasgow, Region 6;
- Parfaite Harmonie; G\$1 million for 2006.

Is that marginalisation? Is that discrimination?

Mr Speaker, if you want to marginalise a group, you will not spend so much money and so much time on economic efforts in their neighbourhood. *[Applause]*

Schools - We are talking about removing this issue of marginalisation and discrimination once and for all. New construction of schools:

- Aurora Secondary ... \$240 million;
- Bartica Secondary ... \$396 million;
- Mahaica Secondary ... \$225 million;
- Diamond Secondary ... \$400 million.

Mr Speaker, how can this be marginalisation?

Low Income Settlement Projects -

- Rigby West ... 541 houselots
- Diamond ... 2 446 houselots - these are new projects;
- Golden Grove, not Golden Grove in England; Golden Grove on the East Coast ... over 1,000 houselots;
- Amelia's Ward ... 1,000 houselots.

... this is fresh information, different stuff:

- Wismar Block ... 22 100 houselots;

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- Block A Sophia ... 77 houselots;
- Block B Sophia ... 1,328 houselots;
- Block C Sophia ... 813 houselots;
- Parfaite Harmony ... 3,206 houselots;
- Kanessville ... 1,206 houselots;
- Blocks A, B and C Sophia ... 34 houselots;

Please take your time Debbie, do not run down the step from the truth ... the truth will lick down anybody.

Water - We know in life that the most important element. When you love people, you make sure that they get water.

Region 4 - Major transportation line to Supply and provide improved water for Sophia ... \$100 million

Region 5 - Major water treatment plant for Rosignol ... US\$4 million

Region 6 - New Amsterdam to upgrade treatment plant and distribution ... over \$300 million

Region 7- Water treatment plant for Four Miles Housing Scheme, Bartica.

Region 8 - We have gone Hi tech to bring water from the mountains to the people - spring water, fresh water, pure water, water without chemicals... \$60 million.

My friend said four years are coming ... For thirty years we had to stay without water under your government, brother. Four from thirty is twenty-six. *[Applause]* What is four? Thirty years I had to drag water from basin. Ow, what is twenty-six years buddy?

Region 10 - To improve water supply... \$200 million

Roads, water and drainage - I want to move off from the point of marginalisation for a minute. I think I have made my point and I think the opposition accepted the fact that there is no marginalisation. No doubt, we have cleared the issue on that. Now we have acknowledged that there is no discrimination in this country, we can move on.

Mr Speaker, I want to deal with a specific issue, one that is close to my heart - the *Youth Choice*. There has been a time in this country where we can walk around as young boys; our people did not have any community centres, did not have any playgrounds. I remember not so long ago, the people of Anns Grove had to play cricket on graves, the graveyards and upon the top of coffins. I remember that in our society that our young people did not have access to computer, did not have access to a joinery set. I remember when our Amerindian brothers did not have access to a boat or an engine unless when it is election time and some comrades from the other side will give them a second hand engine or some old boat. Our President had a vision and understood that to move a society forward, young people must have proper roles. For that reason, we are asking you to visit Region 1 and find:

- young people learning how to use fishing boats and how to fish.
- young people learning how to participate in community centres;
- young people having access to their own boats and engines,
- young people having access to chainsaws,
- young people having access to computers at Santa Rosa Secondary School and the Mabaruma Township compound.

Mr Speaker, we can go to Region 2. We have been accused ... *[Noisy*

Interruption] ... Allow me to talk ... you talked the whole night and I did not say anything. You must not be afraid of the truth.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, let us have some order so that we can complete our business for tonight. It is already late.

Mr Odinga N Lumumba: Thank you Mr Speaker ... Protect me from them ... Your humble servant. *[Laughter]*

In Region 2, we have been accused of having centres and compounds with gates open and donkeys and horses grazing. But there are many others on the other side, if you're in their yards, there are donkeys and horses grazing in front of their doors, too.

Mr Speaker, our role was to build and provide communities with equipment and to ensure that they have facilities and active management groups, but you must bear in mind that this was in 2001. I would acknowledge that some of these groups have collapsed, but this is not something for us to laugh and gloat at or gimmick at. As citizens we have responsibilities to ensure that these projects work. *[Applause]* We did not build them for us; we did not build these projects in Freedom House. The young people are still utilising the wood-working tools at the NOC in Region 2. The people of Queenstown are utilising their community centre, also the people of Daniels Town and Dartmouth. The Honourable Member of Parliament Allen knows this. I am sure that Mr Allen can tell you that those buildings do not belong to us, they belong to those NDCs and those communities and we are not responsible for when they are going to open the door and when they are going to close the door.

Mr Speaker, every project under Youth Choice was selected by the community and by the young people - every single one. *[Applause]* I dare Member of Parliament Mrs Lawrence to find a group that would say they were not consulted. Mr Allen knows, he was there on many weekends when we had meetings, so you need to consult with your senior Member of Parliament before you get out of order. *[Laughter]* But I understand why some folks would haggle with the Stabroek News,

because even in the old days the local government elections were rigged. So you could not tell the NDC member what he should do or what he should not do, but we allowed democracy ... we will not tell the people of Dartmouth what to do with the centres.

Mr Speaker, I find this strange that in Region 3 ... and I am sorry that my friend Mr McAllister was not here, I understand that he has a back problem, I humbly apologise, if he need a doctor, we have several doctors on this side of the House. Mr McAllister never said anything good about Region 3 and in particular about this project, but we fixed the fence and the ground at Den Amstel, and we have just given Den Amstel \$17 million for a brand new pavilion. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the PNC/R has always said that Den Amstel is their turf and we have gone to their turf and we did not ask for any party card. We gave the people a community centre. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, the PPP/C does not deal with turf, we deal with the citizens of Guyana. You can also visit:

- Stanley Town;
- Stewartville;
- Uitvlugt;
- Nismes;
- the lovely ground at Tuschen;
- the fence at Cornelia Ida;
- the dynamic pavilion at Parika.

All are for our children from Project Youth Choice - everyone that I called.

Mr Speaker, allow me to talk quickly about Region 4:

- the computer centre and fence at the YMCA;
- the fence at Camptown;
- the fence and ground at Tucville;

A ground that my dear friend Mr Vincent Alexander attempted to steal from the youth of the *Fruits of Conquerors* and give it to the PNC/R group; but you are my friend. You do not like Youth Choice, but when the ground is finished and it is nice, you want to usurp its usage. Oh, we would not allow it. You could have asked to use it. You are my friend... I would have preferred you to use the building.

The fence and the upgrading of the ground at the Guyana Sports Club ... For years Guyana Sports Club, old BGCC, the first place the coloured - so-called black people get to play cricket on was turned into a dump yard. That is what they think about the history and the culture of our people and the PPP/C has gone to that ground and has rehabilitated it. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, we have provided a computer centre at Kumaka; a community centre and Home Economics at Lodge; the PP/C has developed Sophia. On your way to Berbice you will pass two fences at Plaisance and you will pass two fences in Plaisance, but you have no fence to paint. I might have no fence to paint. *[Interruption: 'You have a white elephant.']* "I might have a white elephant, but you had no elephant to colour. You never built any elephant. You have to get one first and then paint it." We can go to the ground at Success, the pavilion and women's training centre at Mon Repos a job which was well coordinated by the brilliant MP, Mrs Chandarpal.

We love all the villages regardless of race colour or creed. We do not have to say that we love villages ... we do things for them. I remember in Buxton (I am a Buxtonian) in the old days, I could not find \$300 to repair a banister at a school at Buxton. The Minister of Education said that he did not have any. Tickle me and I will call the name of the Min-

ister.

Mr Speaker, we are dealing with a basket ball court at Buxton plus the rehabilitation of the fence at the community centre ground. Should I speak of the work at Paradise, the work attempted at Haslington, even though the people are squatting on the ground? Rehabilitation work at the Unity playground; home of President Bharrat Jagdeo, home of West Indian Captain Chandarpal, home of West Indian Cricketer Colin Croft, home of Deputy Commissioner Wills.

Mr Speaker, before I go into Region 5 ... Was it wrong for me to stop the citizens of Anns Grove from playing on graves, because somebody forgot to give them a ground by the way of commencement of development work? Of course we have a drainage problem, but then we have not made a start.

I am now in Region 5. My car is picking up pace. As I move toward Rosignol, I see a computer centre at Weldaad, a basket ball court in Litchfield, home of former Chief-of-Staff Gladwyn McPherson who is the President of the Guyana Basket Ball Association. We do not marginalise. Mr Speaker, let us not forget the beautiful computer centre and modern village office at Hopetown, pavilion at Rosignol, pavilion at D'Edward, pavilion at Blairmont, support computer centre at Ithaca, training centre at No 8, basket ball court at Bath community centre, construction of spectators stand at Calcutta. You can go and visit them, Mr Speaker.

We now cross the river and right next to the Regional Office, stands a multi-purpose youth building for the youths of Berbice. I will be the first to say that this centre is not fully utilised, but as citizens, both sides, we must ensure their success. The opposition and the citizens, have a responsibility that when you see something is not working right, you must communicate and we must work together. Ask the Member of Parliament Joseph Hamilton ... We worked together in Beterverwagting, when the work was not going right, he said to me, Lumumba the work is not going right let us go and fix it. *[Interruption: 'Let us work together in*

Sophia?'] Me and you can go any where man.

Mr Speaker, let us now turn our attention to Fyrish where there is a modern basket ball court and a computer centre. There is also a computer centre in Eversham.

Let us talk about Rose Hall, where there is a computer centre and a beautiful pavilion. We also provide support to Kildonan, Philippi, Liverpool, Letter Kenny and we did not skip villages because of colour ... we did not discriminate. Our projects are transparent. The computer centres at St Francis Xavier, Port Mourant, Albion and the beautiful pavilion at Crabwood Creek, these are just a few.

Let me now go to Region 10 - Let me say that one of our key engineers, and he is still the key engineer in this project, the Honourable Mr Kadir, Member of Parliament, we do not discriminate. *[Interruption: 'Partnership. ']* He is afraid to tell you, he has to hide it. Mr Speaker, Region 10 should be an example of what Guyana should be. We could not get the project going for a number of months, then God sent (not the PNC/R) Mortimer Mingo and the two of us worked as Guyanese and within six months we had a skills centre working, a chicken farm, a modern basketball court at Amelia's Ward, a community centre at Kumaka, joinery works at Three Friends, a pavilion at No. 58 and a pavilion at No. 47.

Let us quickly go to Region 7, where there is a beautiful, modern and powerful centre and I acknowledge that it is not fully utilised. I am saying that when something is not working right, I am saying so, but the Member of Parliament Miss David has never one day walked across and told the young people that she wanted to help. So you are useless. A computer centre and joinery shop were the requests of the youths. The Regional Chairman had done an excellent job, but there is need for more support. In Bartica, there is an area in Region 7 with dozens of boats and engines donated by the President's Youth Choice Programme that are still operational and serving the community. At Waramadong, the chainsaw and generator given to the community is a help to provide

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furniture for all the schools in the community. They are doing business.

Finally, in Region 8 the small pavilion at Campbell Town, Ithabac and ten others ... I am not like Minister Nokta; I cannot pronounce these names properly, so I am going to say ten others. I would not venture into calling names as pronunciation can cause problems.

Mr Speaker, this is the history of the President's Youth Choice Initiative. I dare the PNC to illustrate any project of such magnitude done in their time and the success for the people. I dare them to come before this Parliament ... and I am not asking you to deal with the glass factory. I am just saying come to this House and lay down all your accomplishments.

Again, I think this has been a good Budget Debate. I think the Minister did well and again, I want to compliment the opposition ... I am not going to get into personalities. I think that every year, it seems that we are getting closer and closer. Like I said earlier, I hope that the day will come that we can see the opposition with a counter budget proposal that we can sit down and discuss across the table, so that when we reach here to discuss it or to negotiate or to talk for the next three or four days, we can have a common position. I think that that is the day, the Guyanese people will think and believe that there is a future in this country. I thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

That brings us to the end of our business for today.

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

Adjourned accordingly at 23:16h