

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

83RD SITTING

2.00 PM

Thursday 2 February 2006

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (69)

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 (38)

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

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P.	<i>with responsibility for Foreign Affairs (AOL)</i> - <i>Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs</i>
The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.	- <i>Minister of the Public Service (Absent)</i>
The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport (Absent)</i>
The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.	- <i>Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/ West Demerara)</i>
**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce</i>
The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Absent)</i>
The Hon. Harry Narine Nawbatt, M.P.,	- <i>Minister of Transport and Hydrolics</i>
The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P.	- <i>Minister of Health (Absent)</i>
Mr S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr Cyril C. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.	
Mr Husman Alli, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 7 - Cayuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.	
Mrs Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.	
Mr Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mrs Shirley V. Edwards, J.P. M.P.	
Mr Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.	
Mr Heeralall Mohan, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 2 - Pameroon/Supenaam)</i>
Mr Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Dr Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.	- <i>(Absent)</i>
Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H, J.P.M.P.	- <i>Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water</i>
Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.	- <i>(Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)</i>
Dr Moti Lall, C.C.H., M.P	
Mr Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.	
Mr Neendkumar, M.P.	- <i>(Region No 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)</i>
Mr Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P	- <i>Region No 6 - East Berbice/ Corentyne (Absent)</i>

* *Non-Elected Minister*

** *Elected Member from The United Force*

Members of the Opposition (30)

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

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
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-Pameroon/Supenaam)
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- (Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica)
Mr Basil Williams, M. P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr 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.	- (AOL)
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	- (AOL)
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)
Dr Carl Max Hanoman M.P.	
Mr Joseph Hamilton, M.P.	
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)

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

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- (Region No.9-Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.	- (Absent)
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OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs Lilawatie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

The Clerk reads the **Prayers**

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET 2006 - APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2006

The Assembly resumed the debate on the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for 2006

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we can now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2006. Our first speaker for today is the Honourable Member Mr Ivor Allen. Mr Ivor Allen, you may proceed.

Mr Ivor Allen: Mr Speaker, I wish to join my fellow Pomeronians and on their behalf express our profound gratitude to His Excellency the Present Mr Bharrat Jagdeo for the urgency with which he following on his heels of my party leader Mr RHO Corbin, visited the community and commensurate with us in our time of difficulty, during the recent floods.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to thank the Government for discharging its obligation by providing that which I hope is the first advance of \$50,000 of a relief package due and payable to the people of Pomeron and its environs.

Mr Speaker, before continuing my presentation I wish to make passing reference to two matters which I find disturbing.

First, the Honourable Member Mr Winston Murray, drew attention to the government that the amounts of breach of the provisions of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003, which sets out the procedure for the management of the Budget process. I must confess to be extremely disappointed with the cavalier and contemptuous

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responses, which emanated from Honourable Members Baksh and Nadir.

Notwithstanding these initial responses from the government representatives, Sir, I wish to urge that the observations made by Mr Murray be taken seriously with a view of remedying the situation in the future.

Next, I must express my profound disgust at the discriminatory manner in which coverage is given to this debate by the State media particularly NCN TV. Sir lengthy portions - ten minutes and more - of presentations made by government's representatives are being televised, dispersed with one and two minutes selected snap of presentations made speakers from the opposition. This is a shameless abuse of State resources which is owned by all the people in this country. This is not Channel 9. This is undemocratic, intolerable and unacceptable and NCN should be asked to discontinue this practice which flies in the face of decency.

Now, I do not think that anyone disagrees with the position that agriculture is the mainstay of the Guyana economy. Indeed, I make bold to say that to the extent of agriculture sector's falters or entire economy resides on an unstable foundation. That is why it pains me to have to report to this House that the agriculture sector of our economy performed miserably during 2005.

It has become fashionable to heap the blame on all the failures of the economy on the floods which the nation experienced during January of last year. But Sir, one would recall that the budget presentation for last took place long after the flood waters had receded. Indeed, Sir, the Honourable Minister of Finance, in his presentation before the House two Mondays last, told us that the Government confronted the challenges with due resolve and alacrity on Page 2 Paragraph 1.4. It is, therefore, inexcusable and unacceptable that the government would seek to use the floods in its attempt to explain a way their dismal failure of the country's agriculture sector.

The fact is, 2005 saw unprecedented levels of destruction to this sector, which is a clear result of the gross negligence institutionalised incompetence and inept management; a lack of a co-ordinated approach to solving the problems which beset agriculture.

There have also been indications of corruption in the award of contracts. During the last debate, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture presented this House with a long list of measures which he had planned to introduce this year. The question now is how many of

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these measures were implemented? For example, I wish to ask, the Minister had planned to rehabilitate the drainage pumps at Cozier; to rehabilitate the Dawa pump; to replace the sluices at Westbury and Golden Fleece, given the experiences of January 2005, the floods in several parts of this country the residents of the Region look forward with great expectation to the implementation of these measures, but none of these works were executed to completion. As we have all become painfully aware and the poor long-suffering farmers paid the price for government's failure. Sir, those of us within the Region and in some parts never before that experienced flooding, were inundated as early as mid-December and as a consequence of the destruction caused, the Region has now been declared a disaster area along with Region 5.

This Budget should not be about government's failure only, but there is little else on the table before us. There are so many examples of plans having not been executed that one is forced to conclude that the Guyanese calypsonian Lady Tempest must have had this government in mind when she penned the lyrics *is only talk they talking*. I have noted in this year's Estimates that the government once again proposes to rehabilitate the channels and structures from Westbury to Cozier and from Lima to Good Hope. That is to be found in the Minister's presentation on page 35. They also propose to repair the Iteribisi conservancy embankment and to install the drainage pumps at Cozier. The question uppermost in the minds of the farmers is, will these projects be completed on schedule or will it take the recurrence of another serious flood to get things moving. But quite apart from the proposed works mentioned, the residents point to the need to have Tapacuma D&I structures including pumps and sluices fully rehabilitated and dams built in the Pomeroon to keep the water from the backlands out of the cultivation areas - dams similar to the one I built.

In Region 3 the performance of the government insofar as D&I works are concerned, was no better. What works were undertaken were poorly done. Residents were complaining even as the work was being proceeded with, but to no avail. It was as if the officers who had the responsibility for monitoring these works knew that would not have been held accountable.

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In Leguan and Wakenaam the rehabilitation of structures and channels were only partially completed, thus rendering the works ineffective. Farmers in both communities are crying out for help.

Work was also expected to be undertaken in the Canals No.1 and No.2 Polders, but the response to the recent floods in the Polder by government and Regional Administration demonstrate the callousness of those in authority and offer little hope to the farmers and other residents in the areas.

Sir, I wish to assure this nation that the PNC/R led government will undertake as a first priority, all of the works necessary to relieve their sufferings when the party returns to office later this year. *[Applause]*

Drainage and Irrigation - According to this year's Budget, the sum of \$795 million has been allocated for Drainage and Irrigation Authority. Under the Agricultural Support Services Programme the sum of \$540 million will be available for secondary drainage and irrigation works as well as an additional sum, which will be allocated to the Rural Support Project and the regional administrations. It would therefore appear, Sir that every several hundred millions are committed to D&I works and the government must be commended for this, but very little value is obtained for the vast amounts being spent. Towards the end of last year, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture held a much publicised press conference to announce the completion of all of the scheduled D&I works. I recalled the scenario vividly. Mr Speaker, no doubt you saw it or you can picture the scene. There was the Honourable Minister flanked by the D&I czars and surrounded by representatives by all of the regions with the press in full attendance. Individually they were asked to give their reports and they - everyone - without exception declared all work is done, we are ready for the rains or words to that effect. The public at large did not realise then that the works to which they referred was the spending of the money and not the fixing of the D&I infrastructure. As it turned out, the money had been spent, but the work was not done, so when the rains came in December and January, it was *déjà vue* for the poor and long-suffering farmers.

Sir, there were two news items which were recently aired on a local television station that tells a story and serves to illustrate the level of incompetence. Two weeks ago, a farmer from Canal No 2 area whose farm and homestead were flooded a week prior explained to

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a television reporter that the water receded from his land almost immediately after the main drainage artery was cleared by the regional administration. He further stated that the rain fell heavily during the said weekend, but water did not accumulate on his land, because the trench is now cleaned. I commend the regional administration. It is unfortunate that they did not do the work earlier and it goes to the fact to say that if these works were done prior to the rains, persons would not have been flooded as they were. On Friday last, another reporter showed his clip of what the Stanleytown outfall looked like during the flood three weeks ago. It was all clogged up with weeds, silted up and non-functional. It had obviously not been cleared up for some time. The reporter then showed footage of a recently cleared and functional outfall, which resulted in the Canal No. 2 area being drained of the flood waters. Sir, the residents are now calling on the powers that be to ensure that it is kept that way. We, of the People's National Congress/Reform join them in that call.

They are also seek appropriate compensation for their losses, because they believe quite rightly so, Sir that their suffering was as a result of criminal negligence on the part of the agencies concerned.

Mr Speaker, in my presentation during the debate of last year, I sought to inquire why it is that so many agencies are involved in D&I, but I received no explanation from the Minister. This situation remains unchanged even after government has established the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority as the main agency responsible for D&I works. Sir, I wish to remind the government of the old saying where several persons are in charged no one is responsible.

MMA - I have noted that the Honourable Minister has budgeted once again considerable sums of money on MMA. Sir, the uncertainty as to the source of the flooding in the scheme has once revealed the need for a flow-study as was suggested by the World Bank Report, which was issued following the floods early 2005. The Report which was first published in February last year, recommended that before significant interventions are made to repair D&I systems, such a study was necessary. The Report indicated that by studying the drainage capacity of the primary as well as secondary canals, on the basis of water flows width an depth engineers will be able to pinpoint specific channels which will be most effective in draining the excess water. It was further recommended that the

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study must also encompass tertiary drainage channels within communities, but predictably the government chose to ignore the recommendations of the report. So, after two devastating floods, which occurred within a twelve months period, the MMA remains susceptible to regular flooding due to the inaction of government. Unless the Honourable Minister has a viable option, it is my contention that the completion of Phases II and III is imperative for the preservation of the farm lands and the wider communities in the area.

Mr Speaker, in the wake of the recent flooding of the communities, the residents of Mahaica and Mahaicony have begun to clamour for the completion of these works - these same MMA works.

I wish to assure this Honourable House and the nation that under the PNC/R led government; the entire MMA Scheme will be completed as their first priority.

[Applause]

Black Bush Polder - The once striving agricultural community that comprised Black Bush Polder which over the years, which over the years was a major producer of rice and other crops remained in a bad state of neglect despite the millions of dollars budgeted for D&I works in the Polders. Farmers who operate in the Scheme lost millions of dollars during the 2005 floods and continue to suffer even as we engage in this debate.

This Budget as indicated in the Capital Estimates reference 53 advises that the rehabilitation in the front lands in this area be included for attention in this Budget, but it is the duty of the government to closely monitor the works for which scarce funds are being allocated.

Sir, the residents claim that most of the works undertaken by central government and the regional administration were substandard and despite several reports to the Minister and even to the President, huge sums of money were paid for these works. Indeed, by their estimates less than twenty-five percent of the completed works were of an acceptable standard. As a consequence, when the rains came last December and continued into January this year, the area again flooded. Mr Speaker, for 2006 the governments plans to acquire and install two pumps and rehabilitate the drainage canals and structures in the Polders.

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The Region 6 administration has also budgeted to spend on the rehabilitation and excavation of D&I canals in the Polder.

A PNC/R government will ensure that the contracts for these works are awarded to proven contractors and not by any flight-by-night and notwithstanding their favourable records, our government will put in place systems to ensure that their works are monitored and that the farmers and the nation get value for their money.

Sugar - I hope that the Honourable Minister Rohee is listening. The country's sugar industry is at a crossroad and the Guyana Sugar Corporation should reorganise to gear to meet the challenges brought about by external pressures in the industry. Once again, the government has placed great emphasis on the modernisation of the industry, committing to significant levels of funding for this programme. This is all well and good and the PNC/R finds it disturbing though not surprising that they will choose to ignore the consultant's recommendations as far as the Demerara Estates are concerned.

The implementation of the new EU's regime will not only add pressure to the modernisation programme, in the circumstances, the government might have been well advised to avail itself of the best possible advice available. Sir, the position of the PNC/R on sugar had been well documented.

A PNC/R government will place greater emphasis on diversification of the industry as a key strategy for its survival and continued employment for thousands of employees who depend on the industry for their livelihood.

Rice should occupy a more formidable position in Guyana's productive sector because of its immense growth potential and ever increasing demand for food in the world today. Because of its capacity as an earner for foreign exchange, the rice industry in Guyana is an integral part of our development machinery. Success of the rice industry can lead to the development of a number of service industries like transportation, mechanical maintenance, banking and finance, but instead of being the emerging giant leading our economic surge forward, the rice industry is clearly in a state of near collapse. Mr Speaker, the fall in the rice industry and the fallen production in 2005 by some 14.1 percent to 277,531 metric tonnes was due largely to the floods, but other serious constraints have affected the industry over the years resulting in a gradual contraction since 1999. One major problem is that despite the large sums of money, which this

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government spends on drainage and irrigation only about one-third of the cultivated rice lands in this country have the benefit of proper drainage and irrigation. In that regard Region 2 leads.

There are some major difficulties which farmers have to confront like the high cost of fuel, bad farm access roads, high cost of farm equipment, fertilisers and vital inputs, poor drainage systems and late payment by millers and excessive high cost of transportation. Add to the list is the effects of this year's losses following the flooding inflicted upon the farmers by negligence in many areas.

Mr Speaker, with the severe losses suffered by the nation's rice farmers due to the floods, the PNC/R calls upon the government to waive all land rents, rates and other payments due by farmers to State agencies and we assure the communities that the PNC/R government will work aggressively on all fronts when restore to office to return the industry to viability. *[Applause]*

Livestock subsector - The Ministry has allocated several sums to be spent in the various agri-subsectors for example we see \$18 million for NARI; \$3.7 million for NDDP; \$8.7 million for GSA; \$5 million for extension services; \$3.75 million for the Intermediate Savannah Project; \$5 million for the new GMC, et cetera. Mr Speaker, believe me, I am happy over these Estimates and I suppose the nation and farmers are generally happy that substantial provisions are being made to take the work of agriculture forward, but the question which must be asked are we channelling this limited resources to do the most important things?

Here I would like to point to a number of things which appeared to escape the attention of the Minister. The PNC/R has noted that production in the livestock subsector had declined steadily over the past ten years. According to the Agriculture Digest 2005 poultry meat production during 2005 drop by almost two million kilograms when compared with the previous year; the amount was also significant lower than in 2003. Mr Speaker, the PNC/R has noted the possible threat which the deadly Avian flu could pose to the poultry industry. As far as we know the Ministry of Crops of Livestock has not yet taken the necessary preventative measures to protect the industry against infection.

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Sir, the PNC/R led government would undertake the implementation of an intensive countrywide programme aimed at ensuring that the pre-pandemic measures are adhered to by large and medium producers as well as persons rearing chickens on a smaller scale. Mr Speaker, I am not certain and I now speak of *Dairy Farming and Milk Production*. I am not certain if the National Dairy and Development Programme is still operational. Moblissa which was once a viable dairy production centre is now a ghost community with only a few dairy farmers remaining. The entire State facility including the milk parlours ... the change is that the milk parlours are now gone, the houses have been demolished Ackabiri and Mon Repose units have also been badly neglected. Mr Speaker, I am left to wonder what is being done with the funds allocated to NDDP. Sir, dairy farming is important and the NDDP must be re-organised and made to function to provide results. Mr Speaker, the country's dairy programme cannot be measured in terms of gallons of milk alone, but production should be significantly sufficient to meet the great part of the nation's milk needs and ultimately aimed to the production of cheese. The PNC/R led government will be committed to achieving self-sufficiency in milk. We will provide assistance to dairy farmers along the coastal zone where more than seventy percent of the country's cattle farmers are located. Mr Speaker, in order to give a boost to the industry and stimulate production, our government will provide new incentives to dairy farmers, increased the efficiency, quality and scope of the artificial insemination service, establish AI laboratories, improve pastures, import frozen semen and encourage the establishment of small dairy units.

Beef Production - Here again, and I do not hold the Minister totally responsible, but you cannot delegate responsibility and he is the Minister, but here again the production of beef has significantly declined with the production in 2005 being two million tonnes less than it was in 2004. *[Interruption]*

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, could the Honourable Member Mr Allen be allowed fifteen minutes to continue his presentation?

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed Honourable Member.

Mr Ivor Allen: Sir in the Rupununi where cattle rearing is the No. 1 industry, a number of constraints have contributed to this decline. These include:

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- Rustling which has taken a toll on the industry;
- The indiscriminate slaughter of breedable animals and poor pasture management; and
- the lack of realistic pricing systems which is regarded as a key factor for beef production in the Rupununi.

If this industry is to be salvaged, a national coordinated campaign to revitalise beef production must be undertaken immediately. The objective must be to assist the industry to realise its full potential on the export market. Recent studies have indicated that the beset prospects for the export of Guyana's beef are:

- Trinidad and Tobago;
- Barbados; and
- Curacao.

Local butchers have also reported markets they were able to secure in Antigua, Bermuda and Grenada.

Mr Speaker, whereas CARICOM member States produced some twenty-eight million kilograms of beef annually, region imports from extra regional sources total approximately sixty million kilograms of the annual beef consumption. This accounts for the massive sixty-eight percent of the market share.

Additionally, the State of Arima in Brazil also represents an opportunity for export. Sir, the export market is vital to the sustainability to the beef sector mainly, because the relatively low prices paid locally for livestock produce. So without a viable export trade, there is not hope for the beef industry.

Swine Production - the swine and pork industries also recorded significant reductions. In 2005, the sector produced 387.6 million pounds as against 434 million pounds in 2004 and 450.8 million pounds in 2003. Unfortunately several factors are responsible:

- Low prices;
- Poor quality of feed;
- Poor quality of boars for breeding purposes; and
- A lack of credit facilities and markets.

Eradication of this sector will be among the priority areas for the attention of the PNC/R le government.

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Non-traditional Crops - The quantum of total exports of non-traditional crops in Guyana increased by 24.9 percent during 2004 to 3,843.47 tonnes compared with 2,884.26 metric tonnes in 2005 - a significant decline. These figures were further buttressed by the export of heart palm or heart of palm, which constitutes a significant portion of that total. Mr Speaker, seasonality and situational glut leads to loss of revenue to the producers, whilst scarce situation means high prices to consumers.

To reduce the impact of such a phenomena, the PNC/R wish to facilitate the development of production schedules which alter planting and maturity times as well as varieties with shorter crop maturity durations and tolerance to stress.

Mr Speaker, we will also promote the development of value additions and processing which will help to absorb the excess supplies during the glut periods. The production of some non-traditional crops declined in 2005. These include:

- Coarse grain pulses;
- Oil crops;
- Nuts; and
- tubers.

It must be noted that the production of vegetables and fruits has been forecast (and I refer to the NARI Annual Report) to increase to 100,000 and 118,000 metric tonnes respectively by the end of this year; and 120,000 and 380,000 respectively by the end of year 2010. However, the production of pulses is expected to virtually stagnate at around 125,000 metric tonnes during the same period.

The production of oil crops and coarse grains will decline significantly if the current trends continue. It is imperative that we encourage the production of the export of a fresh lot non-traditional products as well as value added.

To this end, the PNC/R government will provide the necessary incentives to farmers to continue producing as well as expand their production; promote improvements in the marketing system that eliminate exploitation by producers and expand the export processing facilities at Sophia, which must be aimed at boosting exports to promote large scale cultivation of fruits citrus vegetables suitable for export and processing.

The National Agricultural and Research Institute seems to be unable to fulfil its mandate to the nation. The livestock farm activities remained the focal point of the livestock

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programme. Sir, the duck unit continuously registered low levels of egg production and this had a negative impact on duck production, which is now a significant farming activity.

NARI acquired the St Ignatius Livestock Station in Rupununi in 2004, with a herd of beef cattle. Success in expanding the herd has been extremely slow. The rate of rehabilitation of Ebini sheep and cattle breeding units were no better. This unit which has about 350 animals is heavily overstocked and the pasture is badly overgrazed. For the entire 2005, the programme was only able to sell sixty breeding rams. In addition to heavy culling exercises had to be undertaken to reduce the use and stabilise the stock. NARI has also failed to meet its targets in seed production. Surely, something must be done to ensure that farmers can depend on NARI for their inputs.

The Mobile Agri-processing Facility which was donated by the Government of India and of which I spoke of last year, is still not reaching to communities which are major producers and I would only wish on this occasion to call upon the Minister to ensure that the communities that are producers benefit from this facility. Anyhow, the PNC/R government, when we assume office will discontinue any practice that is unfair or discriminatory in terms of the allocation of this unit.

Honey production in this country has been at a low level over the past thirteen years. Only 545kg of honey was produced in 2005. It seems as though the industry has been almost forgotten. The time is opportune for the stepping up of honey production so that the country could become not only self-sufficient, but also an exporter of this important item of food. This industry fared well under the PNC government, but the neglect has crippled the extensive apiculture practices and help to force the steep decline in honey production. Attempts at resuscitating the industry have met with little success because of the apparent lack of interest shown by those responsible for those providing the funds to make service and inputs available. As a consequence of the foregoing, the Guyana Beekeepers Association is going through a dormant stage now unlike the industry. Since last year, the Organisation has been attempting to group beekeepers for a collective attempt of the restoration of the industry. This Association for the history and for the records was founded since 1932 by Professor Dash, the Director of Agriculture. It had glorious days boasting large membership of producers like Naipaul Rajkumar, who once

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had the largest registered apiary with some 200 hives on the West Coast Berbice and our own (and by that I mean *own* meaning Pomeronian) Mr Jacob Craigwell who was the pioneer of beekeeping in the Pomeron. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, could you give the Honourable Member Mr Allen fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation?

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr Ivor Allen: Mr Speaker, the new PNC/R government will launch a programme to assist the country's beekeepers and potential beekeepers. We will establish new hives and expand existing ones; assist in funding beekeeping equipment and a stock of pure bred Italian queens in order to rejuvenate the hives. We will also reopen the State-owned apiary at Wauna River which has tremendous bee-pasturage in the North West District.

Coconut - Little or no emphasis was placed on the development and expansion of the coconut industry. In this country coconut farmers and producers and Pomeronians particularly must be extremely grateful to Mr Alphonso and the Pomeron oil mill for their sustained efforts for keeping the coconut industry alive. We can only wish them well in their endeavours.

To Mr Alphonso and all copra and coconut producers in this country, I say that the PNC/R government will embark on a plan to inject new life in the coconut industry aimed at making Guyana self-sufficient in edible oil. We will also facilitate the expansion of the industry to spur the export of the products associated with this crop. Mr Speaker, much emphasis will also be placed on the extension aspect of the coconut rehabilitation programme with special attention to seed production. Demonstration process will also be established in major coconut growing areas with emphasis again being placed on husbandry.

Wildlife Trade - Since the PPP/C government took office the Wildlife Division has become a political football, a place riddled with corruption and a hot bed for many scandals involving in some instances very senior government functionaries. Mr Speaker, under this administration a number of overseas markets in Japan, UK and Taiwan were taken away because of corruption in the Wildlife Division. Responsibility of the unit was

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removed from its rightful place from the Ministry of Agriculture and tossed around from location to location apparently for no reason other than to facilitate corrupt dealings. Sir, it was first placed under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency and is presently the responsibility of the Office of the President. Sir the unit – I have four heads so far –

Dr Karen Pilgrim, who headed this unit when the government took office, was replaced with Mr Bal Persaud for no reason, other than the fact that she insisted on having the business of unit conducted in a professional manner and in accordance with the laws. Following some reports about crop going down, Mr Persaud was replaced by Mr Khellawan. Mr Persaud has since accused and continues to accuse various senior government functionaries of gross improprieties. Mr Khellawan himself has now been replaced after accusing some of the same government officials of impropriety.

Predictably none of the functionaries fingered by the last heads of the unit have been sanctioned in any way. I am certain that the present head of the unit Miss Alona Sankar is holding her breadth. Last year, the unit was removed from the State-owned building in Quamina Street and is now housed in a private building in Subryanville, which is reportedly owned by a senior functionary of the division. Sir, if this is true this arrangement smacks at impropriety.

Mr Speaker, some seven legitimate wildlife exporters including Mr Shaw of South American United Inc. have had their licences revoked for apparently no legitimate reason.

I assure this House that the PNC/R government will ensure that Guyana reclaims the markets they have lost and will halt the corrupt carryings-on [*Applause*] and restore the division as a revenue earner for this nation and not a gold mine for a chosen few.

Forestry - The forestry sector must play a vital role in the country's economy. The six percent in productivity increase last year is a commendable effort in the right direction, but can be considered meagre in terms of the whole when one considers that eighty percent of Guyana's total landscape is forest. This will only be possible with increase in production particularly for exporters markets. In order to achieve increased production, the Guyana Forestry Commission must be re-organised to properly monitor the industry and will have to put systems in place that will allow for the maintenance of high level

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quality control in the industry. Good performance on the export market requires that the local industry offer a high quality product on a sustainable basis. Mr Speaker, we can no longer allow the plunder of our forestry resources. We have to manage them for the benefit of future generations of Guyanese.

The Guyana Forestry Commission needs to ensure that the felling of trees is done in accordance of the Forestry Regulations. An inventory of our forest should also be undertaken and special attention must also be given to the construction of roads in the forestry areas. Mr Speaker, the Guyana Forestry Commission need to embark on a programme to revitalise the charcoal industry with a long-term aim of making it a viable alternative source of energy. Guyana has excellent prospects for the exportation of charcoal in view of the vast resources. Two experts from the Food and Agricultural Organisation working under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme recently conducted a survey of the Guyana Forestry Commission, they have found that brick kilns can be use to convert wood-waste generated by sawmills into charcoal, which has a high demand particularly in France.

Mr Speaker, the new PNC/R government will implement all of the aforementioned steps and other measures deem necessary to ensure the orderly development and expansion of the forestry sector so that its production and viability could be significantly enhanced.

Mr Speaker, in the wake of the 2005 floods that ravaged the coast of Guyana, we must all take a serious look at the agriculture sector. With advent of global warming and rising sea levels, we might be unable to protect our traditional agriculture regions from persistent flooding. The PNC/R believes that great attention must be paid to the agricultural potentials of Region 10, where thousands of acres of lands are available in the intermediate savannahs. We feel that every effort should be made to continue to protect the traditional regions, but there is great potential in the hinterland areas. A study carried out in 2005 by Trinidad and Tobago Agriculture Development Consultant VOLCAT and Associates revealed that since the flood of last year, Region 10 farmers have improved their productivity. The evidence shows that there is now significantly increased volume of farm produce emanating from Region 10 available on sale at McKenzie and Wismar markets. This augers well for the future and I commend the Ministry of Agriculture for their input.

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Mr Speaker, the new PNC/R government will invest in the development of agricultural infrastructure in those regions that are less vulnerable to flooding and have the potential to increase their agricultural production. We will make more lands available to farmers on the INSAP Programme, which for some reason unknown is being stagnated. The areas will eventually become the country's agricultural frontier.

Mr Speaker, with the thousands of unqualified and under-qualified youths leaving school each year, complements of a confused education policy, the country is faced with a huge problem of employment. This situation must no longer be accepted as a regrettable but inevitable feature of modern day life in Guyana. The economic future of our country will very largely stand or fall by its capacity to provide full employment for the ever-increasing population. Sir, the expansion and modernisation of agriculture will help us to significantly alleviate this problem.

A PNC/R government will embark on programmes and projects to assist and encourage the nation's youths to become involved in agriculture.

In conclusion, I wish to say that when the PNC/R is returned to office later this year, it will spare no effort in revitalising the agriculture sector. The measures alluded to during my presentation are but brief glimpses of the programmes which our party will initiate to commence the recovery of this sector, which we remain convinced must be the launching pad for a vibrant Guyana economy.

Sir, our people will be motivated to accept to challenges to settle in the hinterland as did the Americans who were told go west.

A PNC/R led government will make this dream a reality. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock

Hon Satyadeow Sawh: Mr Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues on this side of the House in congratulating our friend, Honourable Minister Saisnarine Kowlessar, his staff and his team at the Ministry of Finance for crafting this year's Budget realistic, well crafted and thought out and something that will be used as a guide to move us forward

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this year as we continue to seek to bring benefits to the people of this country something that is the hallmark of the People's Progressive Party Civic Government.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to commend my friend the Honourable Member Mr Ivor Allen and all the others who have spoken for their contributions to the debate do far.

I do recall many of the points the Honourable Member made here approximately a year ago in this Parliament. Notwithstanding I commend him for the suggestions he has made, some of them are not without merit, but I regret that I have to burst his bubble. There will be no new PNC/R government come August. *[Applause]* The people of this country understand the realities and what life was and what life is and come August, they will ask the same question they did; are we better off today then we were under the previous administration? Their conscience will answer and say, yes, yes and a thousand times yes. Mr Speaker, despite various challenges caused by the January 2005 flood, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock continues to demonstrate progress, particularly in the year under review 2005.

Quick adjustments were made in response to the impact and aftermath of the national disaster - the flood - in January and February of 2005, and a strategic response was mounted in the areas of animal welfare, health and food safety. Recommendations were made and actions taken to protect consumers for potential zoonotic diseases. The principal focus was to save as many livestock as possible and to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases to residents in the affected areas.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt and I will be the first to concede that our agriculture in 2005 could have done better. In making this assertion, one has to analyse and search for the reasons why this dynamic sector, the backbone of our economy, as we say, the provider of thousands of jobs to poor rural communities in this country have taken a step back.

Let us start by being realistic and honest in our opinion. I wish to refer to a statement from the World Meteorological Organisation, a specialised agency of the United Nations and in so doing to show that not only in our country, here in Guyana or here in the Region, but in the entire world, as so many of my colleagues particularly Minister Collymore went to pains to point out. We are living in a new world reality where there is global warming and climate change taking place and our country is no different in

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terms of the consequences we have to face. Permit me if you will, Sir, to bring the following statistics to your attention:

- Long term drought continued in parts of the greater horn of Africa including Southern Somalia, Eastern Kenya and South Eastern Ethiopia.
- Sporadic rainfall during the 2004/2005 rainy seasons caused serious shortfalls in the serial harvest in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Angola and Mozambique. At least five million people in Malawi were threatened with hunger arising from the worst drought in a decade.
- Multi-month drought conditions also affected much of Western Europe during July, August and September.
- During the period October 2004 to June 2005 rainfall was less than half the normal in areas of the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal.
- The period January 2005 was exceptionally dry for much of Australia.
- Across the United States moderate to severe drought persisted throughout parts of the Pacific North West eastward into the northward rocky mountains.
- In Brazil, the southern most state of Rio Grande de Sol which is one of Brazil's most prolific agricultural states was the worst affected.
- The State of Amazonas experienced the worst drought in nearly sixty years resulting in record low water levels in the Amazon River.
- Heavy precipitation and flooding in other regions.
- The South/West Monsoons during June/September brought unprecedented heavy rains and widespread flooding in Southern India affecting more than twenty million and resulting in more than 1800 deaths.
- Heavy rains in October caused disastrous flooding in Northern Bangladesh, in Vietnam.
- First week in June consecutive heavy rainstorms in parts of Southern China killed at least 170 people.
- Persistent heavy rains during the period May/August led to the destructive flooding in Eastern Europe particularly in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

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- Torrential rainfall in mid August flooded sections of Switzerland, Austria, Southern Germany and Czech Republic.
- Then it says, heavy flooding from rain also created huge economic losses across Canada. In June three major rain events in Southern Alberta produced the costliest natural disaster in the province's history. Across Canada 2005 was the wettest year on record.
- Heavy rains in January and February caused massive flooding in Guyana's Capital Georgetown and surrounding areas affecting more than 290,000 people.
- In February, at least two weeks of heavy rainfall in Columbia and Venezuela caused river flooding and landslides that resulted in the deaths of at least eighty people.

The point is, it was a phenomenon that gripped almost the entire world. The weather patterns are changing. Guyana lives below the sea level, the drainage system that we have we have inherited from our colonial past is not ready and is not able to discharge the amount of water - this new deluge of water that has descended upon us. We cannot discharge this with the infrastructure that we have and this is why we have now begun the process of moving forward and putting mechanisms in place.

Sir, amidst all of these setbacks in the sector, some subsectors were able to surmount these hurdles and demonstrate satisfactory performances.

It is interesting to note that we are not unique as a nation to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector and this is easily demonstrated when considering the regional transformation programme for agriculture which of course is spearheaded by our own President Bharrat Jagdeo's initiative, which is popularly known as the Jagdeo's Initiative. This Initiative recognises the need for a new and different approach to agriculture which must be looked at within the realities of globalisation and the changes in our world food change.

In the first phase of this Initiative, key binding constraints that faced agriculture in the Caribbean were identified and some of these included:

- Weak non-integrated information and intelligence;
- The need to participate in growth market segments;

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- limited financing and inadequate new investments;
- Outdated and inefficient agricultural health and food safety systems;
- Inadequate research and development;
- Fragmented and un-organised private sector;
- Inefficient land and water distribution and management systems; and
- Deficient and un-coordinated risk management measures including:
 - praedial larceny;
 - inadequate transport system; and
 - lack of trained human resources.

As we examined those challenges facing our nation, we recognised that indeed we are facing situations that are similar by the experiences among ourselves, but what will distinguish us, however, is the manner in which we approach these obstacles. Sir, we can either choose to allow these hurdles to prevent us from realising our dreams or we can choose a united approach or we can choose a united approach which will enable us to rise above challenges and to realise our full potentials.

Mr Speaker, permit me if you will, addressing a political rally on 24 August 1964, our late great President Dr Jagan said:

If like other poor countries we are to break the vicious cycle of poverty, we have to try and ascertain its root causes and to rely more heavily on our internal resources - material and human. The job is difficult, but it is not beyond our capabilities given goodwill, cooperation and hard work on all sides.

Sir, this is the spirit that we have to weave into our psyche as we face the challenges that this new millennium brings upon us.

If we were to now look at some of the aspects pertaining to agriculture in our Budget, allow me to quote from the Budget Speech of the Honourable Minister on Page 7:

Sugar production fell by 24.4 percent to 246,050 tonnes. The flooding earlier in the year and the longer time taken for the flood water to drain from the land severely affected the first crop and delayed preparations for the second crop.

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This is a fact not very many people can dispute. However, emphasis continues to be placed on modernisation thereby increasing our production and ensuring that our manufacturing sector sets a high standard in terms of quality products for the local, regional and international. The contract for the construction of the sugar factory and co-generation plant at Skeldon in Region was signed in June 2004 between the Guyana Sugar Corporation and a Chinese contractor, China National Technology Import and Export and of course work commenced in that same year and is proceeding.

Mr Speaker, through establishment and implementation of a factory improvement plan, sugar is expected to increase to 473,700 tonnes by 2015. The Industry Strategic Development Plan outlines efforts to move into the production of value-added branded products.

In the area of product diversification, GUYSUCO will examine the feasibility of linking a refinery to the new factory at Skeldon. Also, the company will increase production of organic sugar and Demerara Gold package sugar and will develop niche markets for these products. GUYSUCO has also been given approval for a co-generation project that could see thirty megawatts of power be generated from bagasse. So, we are moving ahead in regards to our sugar facilities, because we believe that there is a role for sugar in this country. We have to re-organise and restructure it to face the challenges of the new world's reality and what has happened in the European Union, but unlike others we believe by increasing our productive capacity and employing the benefits of science and technology into that mode of production, we can still continue to hold our own in sugar. Sir, if I may refer to rice, again the Honourable Minister in his Budget Speech on Page 7 said:

Rice output fell by 14.1 percent to 277,531 largely on account of the inundation of rice lands. Again, there is hardly anyone who can dispute what has happened to our rice lands, our rice farmers and their families, because of the flooding experience by the disaster that we have faced.

Sir, the European Union made a commitment under the COTONOU Agreement to support the development of competitiveness and sustainability of the rice sectors of the Caribbean by providing €24 million as grant support. Guyana being a major producer and exporter of rice stands to benefit from approximately €11.7 million which will go

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towards the provision of technical assistance support, capacity building through expertise and training of rice industry operators, improvement of water management and a financial facility that is expected to contribute to the amelioration of the present lack of funding to the rice sector.

In 2004, the Guyana Rice Project Management Unit was established by the Ministry of Agriculture to implement the support programme in Guyana. So far the start-up phase has been completed and a number of **deliberal** rules have been completed. These are a means of the commencement of the activities to be executed. The activities for this year under this project include the financial facility, provision of critical investment and working capital for industry operators, intensive training and seminars on water management.

Yes, for the benefit of the Honourable Member Mr Ivor Allen, the Dawa pump is to be rehabilitated and sluices at Golden Fleece and Westbury are to be repaired and those are provided for in the programme for this year. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, if we can let us move on to the Forestry Sector. Again in the Honourable Minister's Budget Presentation, he indicated and I quote:

Significant investments in forestry were partly responsible for the substantial growth of six percent that was recorded last year in that subsector.

In beginning the discourse on forestry, I wish to bring to our memories the presentation made yesterday by the Honourable Member Mr Deryck Bernard, who in his presentation started off by asserting that no new direct foreign investments seem to be coming to Guyana. Well, the Honourable Member is far off course to be polite. The Guyana Forestry Commission along with the Guyana Office for Investment facilitated twenty-one projects in the forestry sector; fourteen are new projects and seven are expansion projects; thirteen projects are operating and eight projects are in the pipeline pre-production phase. The total investment is G \$9,710,000,000. Foreign direct investment – five of the projects are foreign-owned sawmills. They are:

- Jiling, China,
- Canada owned Barama Buck Hall
- Malaysia, South Korean, rich resources Malaysia

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- Demerara Timbers Limited, Malaysia; and
- Sunshine Timbers from China.

So much for no new foreign direct investment. One project, **Durable** Superior Shingles is a joint venture that has expanded exports to the Caribbean and the United States. There were also fifteen local investments totalling G \$1,300,000,000 and nine of these local projects are operating. They are:

- Log Ripper Company;
- Rommel and Tyran Company, Region 3;
- Sukhpaul International, Region 4;
- Bulkhan Timbers, Region 4;
- Hathco, Region 4;
- Fine Woods Marketing, Region 4;
- L Mart, Region 3;
- Variety Woods, Region 10;
- Carib Products International, Region 10.

Mr Speaker, in addition to that, several new States forest permissions were allocated to small and medium scale operators. Two new Timber Sales Agreements for the sustainable utilisation of timber were issued. Several initiatives aimed at ensuring that this forward growth continued on a sustainable basis were either continued or implemented in 2005.

Submission of several projects to donor agencies including the FAO, UNDP, et cetera, took place. One of these is training in participatory forestry management for staff of the GFC. These projects will ensure that Guyana's Forest Sector employees, the professional and technical staff are exposed to environmental best practices in forestry operations thus allowing companies to move closer towards achieving forest certification. The PFM training was targeted mainly towards the community forest organisations and country-wide about twenty of these community forest organisations have been established, and these have already resulted in the improvement of the livelihood of the residents of the various communities through access to prime State forest lands by members of the community and establishment of community funds to carry out prioritised projects in the various communities. This is happening today under this PPP/C Government. The

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ordinary people are being empowered to utilise the resources of the State for their own economic and social well being. *[Applause]*

The Forest Products Marketing Council is another initiative that was launched in 2005. The Government of Guyana believes together with the GFC and the Private Sector that we will have to start up activities with by providing some initial funds with the expectation that donors will then be encouraged to fund the Council in 2006.

Mr Speaker, the final audit for the Barama Company Limited Certification Process was completed in 2005. Initial feedback has indicated that the Company will be awarded its Forest Stewardship Council Certificate in 2006. This will boost Guyana's status as an exporter of quality forest produce from sustainable managed forest since the potential certified area will be approximately 570,000 hectares. This will make Barama Company the single largest block of tropical nature forest to be certified in the entire world.

[Interruption: 'Who bring Barama?'] Who keep them?

Mr Speaker, our initiative in promoting our lesser known species will also continue this year. This will also be a tangible reflection of the government's position that access to a renewable natural resources must be done in compliance with the necessary environmental standards and guidelines and for 2006, an increase in production and contribution to the GDP is expected to continue.

Mr Speaker, if we will, let us turn for a moment to organic agriculture. We heard from our friend Mr Ricky Khan speaking last night on issues affecting Region 1. He said among other things that no plan was in place for agriculture, no assistance to farmers for cocoa growers, ginger growers and the nursery was not functioning, et cetera. In 2005, twenty-five farmers had their farms inspected for certification. Certification was done for the first time by the Soil Association Certification Limited of the United Kingdom.

The NARI Facility at Hosororo in Region continues to provide cocoa seedlings to farmers free of cost. Last night the Honourable Member said that nothing was being done at the nursery. *[Interruption: 'What is the production?']* I will tell you what the production is. In excess of 10,000 seedlings were distributed to farmers. The cocoa farmers also received technical advice and training during 2005. This allowed them to obtain the organic certification that we spoke about. Mr Speaker, there are thirty-seven farmers in the cocoa growers association. This year 2,000 pounds or approximately one

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tonne of cocoa beans will be shipped to the Prince of Wales Trust in the United Kingdom to be made into chocolate.

A proposal of organically processed ginger is being perused. AMCAR, which the Honourable said was not getting any help, is about to send organically processed ginger bars to the Prince of Wales Trust in the UK for trials. Hopefully sooner than later candies with ginger fillings coming from the North West Region of Guyana will adorn the tables and supermarkets of the world. So there are many people who are talking about things that sometimes they really do not know. I know my friend the Honourable Member Mr Ricky Khan resides in Region 1, but most of the time he is out of the region and therefore he can be forgiven. Just for his and other members' information from the other side, this is how a cocoa plant looks like. This is not a papaw, this is how it looks.

Pineapple germ plasma - Pineapple production at Mainstay was maintained.

Demonstrations were extended to the other lake communities Tapacuma and Capoey. Demonstration plots have been established to compare the effects of slash and burn as against slash and mulch in those communities. The organic programme working with AMCAR and NARI in Region 2 continues. The production facilities are there and pineapple chunks grown organically and bottled beautifully are finding their way on the shelves at supermarkets in Europe, because of the work NARI is doing in that area.

We all know that the work of the National Agriculture Research Institute like so many other institutions was severely constrained by the floods of January 2005. Repairs were also done to the boardroom and offices of the lower flat of that main building. A new bio-facility was constructed on the upper flat of the main building. The facility will become operational this year.

There are two facilities that are yet to be rehabilitated. These are the Horticulture and Micro-biology laboratories.

Sir, NARI continued to be guided by its medium term strategic development agenda which was implemented in 2003. In 2005, there were about forty researcher development projects identified. There has been about eighty percent completion of these projects. Projected researched activities for 2006 include the establishment of genetic plant facility and purchase of laboratory equipment to enhance plant production and increased agricultural production.

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Sir, farmers from every region receive training in both crops and animal husbandry practices. In St Ignatius, Region 9, the nursery facility was fully operational in 2005, apart from maintaining breeding stock, cattle, sheep, goat, et cetera. In seedling production, a five acre pasture and a cashew orchard were established. The improved pasture will assist in providing breeding stock especially rams to the farming communities. Demonstration plots were established at Kumu Village for cassava production to highlight improved technologies. Similarly new crops types including carrots and onions were introduced in farmers' fields. A cashew project has been finalised with EMBRAPA and is to be implemented this year in conjunction with NARI, St Ignatius. This project will introduce improved varieties of cashew to the Rupununi and promote plantation type cashew production. I am sorry that our friend the Honourable Member Mr Dev is not here, because last night in his presentation, one of the trusts of his argument was that Guyana needed to foster closer relations with its neighbour in Brazil. This is something that Guyana has already been doing with not only Brazil, but with other countries in our hemisphere including Cuba where our President is today. So, we intend to strengthen these bilateral co-operations as we move forward in our quest for self-sufficiency and economic advancement. *[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, Honourable Member

Hon Satyadeow Sawh: Thank you Mr Speaker and the Honourable Member Mr Belgrave.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Allen, in his presentation alluded to the fact the mobile facility at NARI was not reaching out. I do recall in last year's budget presentation, the Honourable Member alluded or suggested that that demonstration vehicle was under my direct control - quite erroneously. The fact is, the mobile agro processing demonstration unit monitored by NARI made several trips to the food production and processing areas of Guyana. Among the areas included are:

- Canal No. 1 Polder;

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- The Everest Ground, where we had the Guyana Night celebrations;
- Region 5, West Coast Berbice; and
- Linden, Region 10.

The vehicle could not go to Essequibo for a big finale at the Essequibo Night simply because it could not fit on any of the ferries that we have. This year I am negotiating with the owner of a private barge so that the people of Essequibo also can see what happening - wrong word - I should use *motor-vessel* not *barge* in this Honourable House. The same will happen to Region 6 in Berbice. So to say that the mobile unit is not serving a purpose is quite incorrect. [*Interruption: 'What about the wildlife unit?'*] Unfortunately, that does not fall within my purview.

Mr Speaker, the mushroom unit at NARI in close collaboration with the University of Guyana conducted a training programme on mushroom cultivation at the Berbice Campus. The pink mealy bug, the papaya mealy buy, the fruit fly, tuberculosis, rabies, foot and mouth disease, bird flu are among the pests and diseases that were prevented and controlled by our Ministry and its personnel.

Again, the Honourable Member Mr Allen alluded to the fact that precious little was being done in the Avian Influenza. He said that the Ministry has done nothing. For his benefit and that of this Honourable House, a National Influenza Pandemic Committee was launched through the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare and implement an agricultural action plan to keep the nation free of the Avian Influenza Viruses. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health worked together on this plan. An Avian Agriculture Response was drafted ... [*Interruption: 'You never did anything.'*] That is not so ... and is programmed to run for seven months in the first instance. The Ministry established an Avian Pandemic Committee which is subordinate to the National Influenza Pandemic Committee. So, to say that the Ministry is doing nothing or has nothing in place to fight this bird flu endemic is truly not accurate.

Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals control made achievements during this year including implementation of pesticides regulations, commencement of licensing of pesticides vendors, receipt of application for registration pesticides et cetera. More farmers conform to the requirement for trade through the many quarantine activities that were launched. The overall volume of exports of non traditional agricultural produce and

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products rose by 158 tonnes in 2005, when compared with figures for 2004. In 2005, the overall export was 4,719 tonnes, while for 2004, it was 4,561 tonnes and the value for the exports increased by G \$300 million or thirty percent, when in 2005 and 2004 values were compared. Of the 4,719 tonnes exported in 2005, 2,639 tonnes were exported regionally as compared to 2,512 tonnes for 2004. During 2006, rehabilitation of the central packaging facility will ensure that regional and international packaging standards are met. Mr Speaker, this is an ongoing requirement. Every year as our resources grow and the volume expands, we have to expand our central packaging facility. So for my colleague the Honourable Member Mr Allen to say, when this new PNC/R government come into office, we will set up a proper packaging facility is utter rubbish. It does not make sense. There is a central packaging facility that is inspected and approved by the regional authorities and allow Guyana to do this. *[Interruption: 'What about Roop Group?']* You can go with Roop Group if you like; they have a good facility, but remember they have to come under the law. That is what we told Roop Group and that is what they had to do. You interpret it to whatever you like.

During 2005, fishing was affected by increased fuel cost. Again, I do not think that too many of us can dispute the fact that the rising cost of fuel impacted negatively upon our fishing fleet over that year. This, however, has not deterred our development plans in this regard which includes the review of the fisheries management and development plan and consultation with the CARICOM Fisheries Regime and Policy.

Sir, another closed season by the shrimp fishery was realised during 1 September to 15 October of 2005, thus aiding in the conservation of resources. We also have something like this at Shell Beach in Region 1, because we care and we want to ensure that whether it is fishery or forestry, we respect the environment and we exploit those resources with an intention and with a knowledge that we must leave something there for us, for our children and for generations to come. This is why we are so conscious and we are trying to lessen the dependence on our oceanic resources and encouraging our farmers to move into new areas like aquaculture, which I will touch on in a few moments.

I am also pleased to report to this Honourable House that yet again for the fifth consecutive year Guyana was certified by the United States Authorities for complying

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with the turtle excluder device on our vessels and this allowed us to continue to export to the lucrative United States markets.

I spoke about aquaculture a few moments ago. During 2005, three training courses were held targeting farmers and extension personnel; twenty-six persons were trained in basic aquaculture, Tilapia seed production on aquaculture including rice/fish farming. The second trial of the FAO rice/fish project commenced. This is an important project that I wished to spend a few moments on, because we believe that in empowering people particularly those in poor rural communities, we have to move away from the traditional crops that have sustained us over all these years and dig and find new areas to diversify. This *rice/fish project* holds great hope particularly for our rice farmers and fishermen who are experiencing difficult times. Thirteen rice/fish plots have been constructed and 180 farmers have been exposed to rice/fish culture and integrated pest management using the farmer field school methodology.

This is expected to double as time goes on as more familiarity with equipment comes on board. There is also an action plan for monitoring control of the fisheries sector and resuscitation of the observer programme.

We will continue to expand our caged aquaculture programme this year. This is the rearing of fish in cages. Presently, along with assistance from IPED, cage fishing is taking place in Region 9 in the Takatu River and in Regions 2 and 6. I also believe and we on this side of the House believe that this new form of aquaculture holds great potential for our communities particularly our riverain communities.

Livestock - The Honourable Member spoke about poultry. Of course, the flood in January and the shortage of poultry ration at the close of the year impacted negatively on the industry. However, there was no severe shortage of poultry meat during the year. Guyana is still self-sufficient in poultry production. I want to touch again on a point that the Honourable Member Mr Dev made last night in his presentation when he alluded to ... [Pause]... Yes, he touched on poultry production and showed that the 100 percent tariff would block the imports coming in from the United States, but he also said that there was not government's intervention and no strategy for export. This is far from the truth. The DIDCO Company, which maybe is the biggest poultry producing company is this country, along with the Guyana Poultry Association and my Ministry are working

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assiduously to penetrate the markets in the region with some success, but the barriers are there and we have to work harder and the level of COTED, CARICOM and bilaterally to remove these barriers, but we believe in the competition Mr Dev alluded to. We are not afraid of that. We believe that we have a superior product. We believe we can compete effectively in the national and international marketplace, but that playing field has to be levelled. Therefore, it is not quite correct as he tried to lead us into believing last night that while we have done well in terms of the tariff, we have just left it there without looking at the other end of market penetration. We are doing that and I am confident sooner than later, we will crack the door and our products will take a place of pride in the Caribbean marketplace. *[Applause]*

My Honourable friend Mr Allen spoke about the swine industry. He said that it is on the decline. Sir, the swine industry was the focus of discussions of a national swine farmers' forum on 30 November 2005. I had the privilege to declare the event opened and the President of the Caribbean Pork Producers Association also made a presentation. A programme is now being worked out where we will again put emphasis on our swine industry, which we believe has potentials for us here.

NARI's focus on the livestock programme in 2005 was on ducks, sheep and forage. The acquisition of a parent flock of pecking ducks in 2003 and the subsequent replacement of the layer flock has resulted in the emergence of the duck unit. The sheep production unit sold approximately 120 quality breeding ewes to selected farmers. How many did you say?

Mr Ivor Allen: Sixty rams

Hon Satyadeow Sawh: Well, 120 ewes to selected farmers. In addition, my records say, the unit sold 70 breeding rams to the farming community.

Mr Speaker, Guyana remains country that is free of foot and mouth disease without vaccination. We are working towards securing more markets for our beef. Again, the Honourable Member Mr Allen alluded to this. It is not that we are not trying to penetrate these markets, but we have to have mechanisms in place - standards - CROSQ - the standards of the Region are in place and we have to ensure things like our packaging, our abattoirs are in place to meet basic standards and we intend to add more value. For

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example in our dairy industry, the **Mew Goodies Dairy Plant** produces dairy products here in Guyana that are of the highest quality ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon Satyadeow Sawh: Thank you again, Mr Speaker and thank you Mr Belgrave.

Under the auspices of the ABC the Brazilian Agriculture Research Corporation EMBRAPA attached to the Ministry of Agriculture, co-operation in science and technology by means of the realisation of joint products in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, two products have been identified for funding by the ABC. These entail soya bean and cashew nuts production; the former in the intermediate savannahs and the later in the Rupununi. These products are to commence in March 2006.

Agro Forestry Research Trial in the intermediate savannahs - the new frontier. A study was undertaken to increase the yield of maize, cow pea and pasture performance on the infertile soils of the intermediate savannahs by replacing chemical inputs with tree mulch. *Germ plasma maintenance* - The crop germ plasma plot was also maintained during this reporting year.

Livestock Programme - The small ruminant programme particularly the sheep programme instituted a multiple serial breeding system mainly to an effort to increase the flock size.

The intermediate savannahs through NARI facilitated two investors for this year. Goat farming as well as for soya bean and date palm cultivation establishing green houses and introduction of new crop type. As I said, of course with the Brazilian Agency for Co-operation, a project to promote large scale production of soya bean was finalised.

Agricultural Diversification - A new project is to be implemented in conjunction with the IDB. The venture proposes to promote coordination with the private sector in Guyana especially in non-traditional sectors; the proposed funding is \$7.5 million.

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Post Harvest Agro Processing - The honey industry - the Ministry is actively pursuing the upscaling of this industry. In 2005, work was done to this effect and resulted in the preparation of a concept paper in which we are seeking assistance from FAO.

Peanut Production - Development of peanut production was enhanced through the establishment of seven small-scale cottage industries across the major peanut producing villages of Region 9 with an aim to supply both peanut butter and cassava bread in the region.

Coconut and all of these issues, the Honourable Member Mr Allen touched on. He spoke about the coconut industry. Coconut has been identified as one of the major ... with regard to the coconut industry the government has and is continuing to assist in its development of this industry. It is to be noted that there was a time when the price of copra in the Pomeroun area was so low that this very government had to intervene with a subsidy of \$3 million to help the poor farmers in the Pomeroun. [Applause] As such they were able to produce copra and a fair price and this led to the establishment of the Pomeroun Oil Mill. We also congratulate Mr Alphonso for setting up the mill, because it has now provided employment and a ready market for copra, which is now being bought for \$25 per pound right across the country. In fact, the Pomeroun Oil Mills has exported 1,000 tonnes of coconut oil mainly to the Caribbean Region primarily coming from Region. This oil is very well received. The oil mill also has 250 acres of plantation which compliments its supply. There are plans to expand into other coconut based products such as desiccated and dried coconuts and others. Also this compares favourable with coconut oil which has already exported in large quantities to the value of US\$599,000 since 2001.

The *Agricultural Services Support Programme* was commissioned in 2005 and the primary objective is to raise rural incomes by increasing the efficiency of agricultural production.

Mr Speaker, we cannot really end our debate and our discussions without touching on the flood maybe where we started. The Honourable Member Mr Murray in his erudite presentation on the opening day made a statement suggesting that this Government has no vision in relation to dealing with the floods. I started at the beginning of my presentation to show how the floods that we and other countries are experiencing have a

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lot to do with the change of the entire world climatic conditions and therefore, a lot of that is outside of our hands, but after having gone through those experiences, we are now prepared better than we were before to face the realities. We established the taskforce that was able to execute a whole heap of work and if you look at the newspapers you would have seen all of the works that the Drainage and Irrigation Department has taken part of including those that the Honourable Member Mr Allen was asking for in his region. But we are already committed to dredging of the Mahaica, Mahaicony, Abary and Pomeroun river mouths. We have already begun the process of acquiring fifteen hydraulic excavators which will be used in the Regions year round the clock ...

[Interruption: 'You said that last year.'] We could not have said that last year, because it is a new initiative ...so that we do not have to wait when the rain falls, but we will be going and doing excavation work. It will be managed by the Regional Administration together with a committee of the people to ensure accountability. We will be acquiring further mobile pumps. Mr Speaker, even as we speak, the MMA Senior General Manager is in Italy overseeing the loading of equipment under the Italian soft loan to come to this country to help us in the excavation works. We will continue the empoldering of areas especially in the Mahaica/Mahaicony areas.

Mr Speaker, all of us in this House and I know sincerely we do, empathise with what has happened to our farmers, ordinary people and their families, who are enduring severe hardships and trials at this point in time. The People's Progressive Party/Civic government wishes to put on record that we stand with the farming community and indeed all of those who have been affected one way or the other. We want to let them know that during the good times and not so good times, we are there and we will be there to assist them as we walk forward. Mr Speaker, this has not been easy for us, but we are committed to put all the resources at our hand to ensure that our farmers get out of this situation and get out of it quickly so that we can continue in the process of developing of our country to which all of us are so much committed.

In concluding Sir, I think I would like to end in the very way I started and that is to quote our legendary leader, our late President Dr Cheddi Jagan, when he was sworn in. In his swearing speech on 9 October 1992, he says:

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Now, all of us together, whatever our party political affiliation, whatever our race or ethnicity, whatever our creed we must put our shoulders to the wheel. It is time to embrace each other and work arm in arm to rebuild our beloved Guyana. We must move forward together and make into reality our Motto of One People, One Nation and One Destiny. I thank you, Mr Speaker. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr Basil Williams

Mr Basil Williams. If it pleases you Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture ended on that note, which suggests that he appears to be serious about the partnership element in the Budget theme for 2006.

Our position has always been very clear that we are prepared to enter into alliances/partnerships with persons who really convey a serious intent to tangle, but we will see in time how the partnership is defined in this theme for this year's Budget. I must tell you that I saw the Honourable Member Mr Clement Rohee was severely annoyed, when some truths were being put out by an honourable member on this side and he was suggesting that he should keep in the mode of my Honourable Colleague Mrs Deborah Backer. I have the feeling that the Honourable Member is going to attack me today ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Not while I am here Honourable Member. *[Laughter]*

Mr Basil Williams: Thank you for your assurance, Mr Speaker. What I wish to say is that it is good that you are now putting out this whole question of partnership. What I wish to enjoin that it is even more important when you have a partner that you are prepared to take constructive criticisms from that partner. That would redound to the benefit of the partnership, because I have some criticisms that I hope you will take on board so that whenever you concretise the partnership that the ship will be running smoothly.

Mr Speaker, the 2006 ... *[Interruption: 'Basil, do not tell that man anything.']* ... he always had that proclivity, he is threatening me; we are coming to threats just now. I

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think you could hand it down to your colleague another two paces down, the Honourable Minister of Education, but we are going to deal with that shortly.

This 2006 Budget lacks the vision that can take Guyana to a destination of prosperity. It follows the pattern of past budgets and is cast in similar mould. It is therefore doom to failure as its predecessors, being based largely on infrastructure spending. The latter has been characterised by incompetence and corruption in the award of projects and also in their design and execution. Although this Budget could be touted as a poverty alleviation budget, it is more of an election budget when you get into the **inter sechies**.

Mr Speaker, a government cannot tax and spend its way out of poverty, it must continuously devise policies to grow the economy on a continuous basis. Increases in direct foreign investment can only come through diversification of our economy as has been said by the Honourable Minister of Finance. We have to get away from sugar, rice and the like as primary products and emphasize value added. We must make better use of the resources we have to wit land, forest and our mineral wealth, and foreign direct investment must be directed to these areas.

Mr Speaker, the biggest foreign direct investment came before 1992 in Guyana in the form of OMAI gold mines and also Barama, which somebody said that they are keeping. The PPP/C government benefited from growth rates from 1992 to 1997, because of inheriting these large forms of foreign direct investment in Guyana.

However, this economy has never grown higher than three percent and indeed only once in 1999. We ought not to be talking about growth which is an incremental concept, but of recovery. Between 2001 and 2005, the economy grew by 0.2 percent for example in 2004 the economy produced around 340,000 to 350,000 tonnes of rice, but in 2005, it produced only 275,000 tonnes of rice. In 2006, the government is projecting growth of 4.3 percent growth for the economy and the production of rice is projected only to be 290,000 tonnes. The question is where is the growth? Mr Speaker, when the production of rice for 2005 and 2006 does not exceed the production in 2004, where is the growth? It means that Guyana is either standing still or making time. This government always speaks of a vision of growth of the economy of the country, but not a word of how we will achieve it? In fact, the government continues to send mixed signals. Some of my friends are perplexed. I could recall doing economics at the University, but they do not

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know the diversity that I have, so continue to be confused. Nobody prepares anything for me. The government claims that they have embarked on the diversification of the economy, yet when rice, sugar and bauxite not performed, the economy suddenly plummeted in 2005. The question is therefore where is this diversification that is supposed to step in and take up the slack?

Another instance of a mixed signal in here is the government's stated position on the private sector. They kept saying that the private sector would be the engine of growth and would play a greater role in creating wealth, yet the government is spending about sixty percent of GDP. In 2005, the GDP was around \$92 billion, the government created revenue in this regard by taxing the corporate sector and the ordinary worker. For example in 2004, government collection \$8.9 billion in companies' taxes which was equivalent to thirty-six percent of all taxes collected by the Inland Revenue Department. The economy had grown 1.6 percent in that year. In 2005, the government collected \$10 billion from companies equivalent to thirty-seven percent of all taxes collected by the Inland Revenue Department. In this year, the economy declined by three percent. From the foregoing one can easily conclude that the government is merely paying lip service to the touted role of the private sector. For example, the biggest single investment in Guyana is sugar about US \$200 million and the investor is the government itself, not the private sector. In this context, the Honourable Minister's assertion that the economy declined by three percent in 2005 ought to be amended to bring it closer to the projection of the 5.4 percent decline project by ECLAC. The Honourable Minister has stated that rice, sugar and mining are more weighted in the GDP that is these are the pillars of our economy, but they declined dramatically in 2005. Sugar was around twenty-four percent to twenty-nine percent, rice nineteen percent and mining by 17.7 percent, these double-digits decline ought to have made the figure higher than three percent. Listen to the analysis why you have not done so, but the government is positing the later figure in order to enable it fix a more positive growth rate in an election year without arousing suspicion and serious analytical review. You are still perplexed - **early Economics - Econs101**, it is not 201 yet.

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Wages and Salaries - The government has departed from its flawed policy of keeping salaries and wages increases tied to the rate of inflation to the detriment of the workers yet again.

The government's recent imposition of a seven percent increase of wages and salaries to public servants that is, teachers, nurses, police, soldiers and civil servants did not coincide with the rate of inflation which was 8.3 percent in 2005. This meant that from the outset the workers suffered a loss of 1.3 percent in real income. Moreover, these workers would have borne the brunt of flood related increases for flood items; run down their savings or borrow to spend on replacing crucial losses due to the flood and also we had the much touted oil price related increases. What did they receive from the Government? A miserly \$10,000! That is what they receive. In addition, this wage/salary increase as usual, was paid in December and not in January which is further prejudiced to the worker, because that would have enabled them if it was paid in January to have money to grapple with the increases during the year. So this *expose facto* payment also continues to undermine and cripple the standard of living of the workers in this country.

Further, this seven percent increase was liable to the tax of $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent, which would have made the actual award equivalent to 4.7 percent, when the inflation rate was 8.3 percent that is the rate of increase which was supposed to be under the government's policy equivalent to the rate of inflation. It means now that that rate which was awarded for increase in wages and salaries was less by half than the rate of inflation. In other words, the rate of inflation doubled the rate of increase to the workers. Therefore, so much for that contention of the Honourable Minister of Finance at page 3 of his Budget Speech that the government had actually paid out the highest increase for the decade. Are you hearing laugh? The PPP/C government has contended that because of the challenges of the flood and increased oil prices; it could not pay a higher percentage increase in wages and salaries for public servants. But if recourse, is add to Appendix 3 of the Budget Speech or Appendix B to page 442 of Volume 1 of the Estimates under the Item Personal Emolument, one would find that the government had more than enough money to pay the 1.3 percent, because they were returning \$363 million. They do this every year. Instead of paying the workers of this country and increased salary, you keep

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spending half of the amount budgeted and send back the rest. That is what you keep doing rather than pay the workers something to increase their lots in this country. For example this balance could have been paid as a one-off incentive to nurses, teachers, police and the civil servants as in the case of the army. You want to curry favour the army; the same thing you did for the army, you could have done for the nurses; you sent back all the money - \$363 million you had to spend on the workers and you refused to spend it .

The government further claims that they spent an additional \$2.8 billion more on flood related expenses and could not pay the workers any incentives, yet this government collected an additional \$4.5 billion in revenue in 2005, that is a net figure of \$1.6 billion of which a small sum could have been put aside to pay the workers the 1.3 percent that would make the increase equivalent to the rate of inflation and the remainder to pay the workers a one-off incentive. That is what this government is doing to the working people of this country. It is a deliberate policy. Therefore, the question is why does the government prefers to return these large sums of money rather that using them to pay increases and incentives to workers which would enable them to live a decent life.

Contracted Employees - In last year's budget debate, I had raised this issue of contracted workers and their employment by this government to create a parallel public service to undermine the traditional public service, the Public Service Commission and the Guyana Public Service Union. I had revealed that the personal emoluments of contracted workers for certain ministries including those of the Office of the President fell in the category of super-salaries as against the petty sums that were given to the traditional public servants.

The Honourable Minister Bisnauth in response had informed this Honourable House that the contracted workers were a phenomenon occasioned by the absence of the non-constitution of the Public Service Commission. A new Commission having been constituted the Minister opined the government would phase out these workers. In this context, I enjoined Honourable Members of this Honourable House to examine with me this question of the contracted worker in this year's Budget. If recourse is had to Table 9 Page 20 Volume 1 of the Estimates for 2006, what is revealed is this -

- (i) In 2005, government paid contracted workers \$1.7 billion;

(ii) In 2006, government projects to pay \$1.9 billion instead of \$1.7 billion. In other words, instead of phasing out contracted workers, government has increased expenditure on the wages and salaries of these workers. Moreover, a look at the situation in the Public Service Ministry shows -

(i) In 2005, there were ten contracted employees who were paid \$18 million out of a budget of \$40 million. That is forty-five percent of the budget the contracted employees earn.

(ii) What do we have for 2006? Let us hear about the phasing out in 2006. In 2006, it is projected to have twelve contracted employees who will be paid \$12 million of a budget of \$46.6 million, equivalent to forty-six percent.

In other words, instead of phasing out the contracted employees, the government has increased the numbers of the contracted employees and increased the expenditure on them instead of eliminating them altogether. Similarly in the case of the Ministry of Labour, in 2005 there were eighteen contracted workers paid \$32.6 million out of \$54.7 that is sixty percent. In 2006 what is projected? Was there any phasing out in the Ministry of Labour? No, the same number of contracted employees is retained and their salaries, but their wages and earnings have been increased from \$32.6 million to \$34.9 million; that is almost \$35 million out of a budget of \$59.4 million, an increase of fifty-nine percent. So, the Public Service Commission that was spoken about by the Honourable Member was constituted in or around late 2004. It is now 2006 and not a contracted worker has been phased out. In fact, they have been increased. So maybe the Honourable Minister could shed some light on this.

Mr Speaker, you are familiar with it too, as we say in law *receptor loquitur* - the thing speaks for itself. Mr Speaker, without let or hindrance a PNC/R government (the AG is from the Corentyne, I am from the city) ... You decide which version you want to take ... *[Laughter]*. Mr Speaker, without let or hindrance a PNC/R government will disband this parallel public service comprised of contracted workers and restore the Public Service Commission to its rightful place.

Of more concerned to the workers is this bandied income tax threshold increase. The Honourable Minister spoke to increasing the personal income tax allowance at Page 62 of his Budget Speech. The increase was from \$240,000 to \$300,000 or \$20,000 to \$25,000.

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Mr Speaker, the time for such an increase has long passed. An IMF study done in 2002 had projected that the Government should increase the income tax threshold to \$300,000 in 2004. It is therefore a case of too little too late. This new allowance of \$25,000 per month is almost equal to the minimum wage of 2005, which was around \$24, 828. With the minimum wage increase in 2006, it would be above the threshold and thus would be subject to tax. So, where is increase in this allowance that they are talking about? Where is it? Mr Speaker, this government collection \$4.4 billion during 2005 and cannot justify tax in the minimum wage that is just US \$100. This Government has once again introduced a retrogressive tax in the form of a flat tax of 33⅓ percent. It means that small wage earners will be impacted harder than the highest paid and middle income earner. This Government which claims to be one of the people and for the people comes to this Honourable House and proposes a tax which removes equity in the system. This is the Government; you remove the equity in the system. The most progressive income tax regime in CARICOM was introduced and implemented by the PNC/R government in this country. *[Applause]* The threshold was \$48,000 or one-third of gross salary whichever was higher and then there were the progressive rates of twenty, thirty and forty percent. In 1993, the PPP/C regime destroyed that tax regime and introduced a retrogressive flat tax. After years of lobbying by the Guyana Trades Union Congress and other stake holders in and around 1997, the Government re-introduced an element of progressivity by applying twenty percent and 33⅓ percent rates. But what is absent and is a concomitant of a flat tax are incentives to low income earners such as mortgages and child allowances. Mr Speaker, a PNC/R government will replace the tax regime with a progressive tax regime tax system. *[Interruption: 'We look forward to that.']* Mr Belgrave, you want me to talk about you, but you are not relevant. I am going to be talking about labour, but you will not be mentioned in this discourse. For the whole week an Honourable Member has been running me down. I wish I could call his name.

Again, there has been no specific mention of labour in the Budget Speech. I do not know what does this mean. Isn't this a great indicator of the type of attitude that this government holds for labour - not even a word about labour in this Budget Presentation. But this omission cannot hide the fact of this Government's malevolent attitude towards the workers of Guyana and their trade unions.

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In 2005, as in the past, the Government's hostility towards trade unions and their members - the workers - continues as a matter of deliberate policy to keep large sections of workers on the bread lines and to confirm them in their poverty.

Trade Union recognition - The PPP/C government hopes to achieve its *coup de grace* in its quest for ultimate absolute control of the trade union movement in the passage of the draconian anti-democratic trade union (Amendment) Act of 2006.

Mr Speaker, in my last year's budget intervention, I had the occasion to apprise this Honourable House about the dysfunctional state of the Trade Union Recognition and Certification regime; its lack of autonomy due to its main functionaries being closely related to and/or members of the PPP/C Government. The fact is that since the passage of Trade Union Recognition and Certification Act of 1997, the Government has been and manipulating the Board to secure more bargaining units for unions friendly to it at the expense of non-PPP/C friendly unions. The main purpose of the Trade Union Recognition and Certification Act of 1997 was to provide an environment for the orderly and peaceful determination of the question - which union will represent which workers at which workplace? Since such a determination hitherto was attended by rancour, divisiveness, a consultative approach involving all the major stakeholders eventuated. In the case of trade unions, a school of thought prevailed that to avoid conflict of interest, individual unions ought not to be consulted since they themselves might have an interest in increasing their stake in a particular bargaining unit or use such interest to horse-trade in respect of another bargaining unit. The Guyana Trades Union Congress, a long standing and established umbrella organisation, whose membership include large and small trade unions and embodied the aspirations of the late Hubert National Critchlow for a united trade union movement was agreed upon for that role. It is apposite that the role of the Guyana Trade Union Congress in the process would have been accepted by the Government of this PPP/C which introduced the legislation in 1997. The question therefore is why are they back-sliding? Why is the Government proposing to turn this Act on its head? Why is the Government now saying that it would only consult and umbrella organisation of employers, but not trade unions? Mr Speaker, it is only a tortured mind that could conceive salvation in consulting a desperate number of unions which exist outside of the committee of this umbrella.

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Mr Speaker, the proposal in Clause 2 of the Trade Union Recognition (Amendment) Bill to remove the Trade Union Congress as the association of trades unions to be consulted and replace them by a five largest trade unions is a recipe for disaster. In the first instance it discriminates against and marginalises small trade unions. Second, it connives in a process to enable large unions to prey upon the bargaining unit of small unions and thereby crippling them. This is a partnership that I am enjoining you to take on board my suggestions. I am just raising it up for you. I expect you to run with them. The rotation of officers of the management of the Guyana Trades Union Congress a few years ago has resulted in a less pliable Guyana Trades Union Congress to the chagrin of the PPP/C Government. This new management of the TUC have been demanding uprightiness in the recognition process an independent chairman of the Trade Union Recognition and Certification Board and end to insider trading and an independent staff including the Secretary of the Board, who (by the way) is a contracted employee.

Mr Speaker, the Minister can consult as is proposed each of the five largest unions, yet only on the advice of one? Which one would that be, surely not the GTU. This whole proposed change must wholly be seen as the farce, a design, a trick and a slight of hand upon the trade union movement of this country. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: On that note Honourable Member, maybe we can take the suspension for now.

Mr Basil Williams: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

16:16H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

17:26H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you need an extension of time to continue.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I move that Mr Williams be given fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

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Mr Basil Williams: Sir, we are on this question of the Trade Union when we took the break. I was about to say as I say now that the Government must take its murky hand out of the recognition process and stop attempting to divide the trade union movement, and that they must resume the payment of traditional annual subvention to the Guyana Trades Union Congress.

Mr Speaker, a PNC/R government would restore justice and fair-play and foster unity in keeping with the struggles of Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow.

The PPP/C government were they to effect passage of the said Bill, would be in breach of the spirit and intent of Articles 13 and 149 C of the Constitution. Article 13 speaks to the inclusionary and participatory democracy. It provides thus that the principle objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for participation of citizens and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State with particular emphasis in those areas that directly affect their well-being.

Article 149 C speaks specifically to trade unions. It provides that no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of participating through cooperatives, trade unions, civic or socio economic organisations of a national character in the management and decision making processes of the State.

Mr Speaker, the Government is clearly derogating from these provisions and instead of being inclusive are bent on excluding the Guyana Trades Union Congress from its rightful place in the trade union recognition process. Sir, in this particular case, it is inconceivable that such a proposal to eliminate a major player from the process could be contemplated without even any attempt being made to consult them. As lawyers we know, that the TUC would have what we call the legitimate expectation of being consulted. They could not get pass us in the court of law, because they have a major interest in the process. Even from the letter of the Honourable Member, the Minister of Labour, he was in no position to say (this letter is in Sunday's Stabroek News of 29 January 2006) that the Guyana Trades Union Congress received the proposed Bill that was allegedly sent to them. He clearly said that the Employers' Association acknowledged receipt of the Bill sent to them, but he was in no position to say in relation to the Guyana Trades Union Congress. And so we cannot speculate. It is clear that the

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Trade union Congress is saying that they never receive any correspondence, communication or else in relation to this matter and that is why I am saying that it is a total breach of Articles 13 and 149 not to have consulted them before proposing what would in effect be an unlawful proposal.

I now turn to the Guyana Teachers' Union and the Guyana Public Service Union. Mr Speaker, the Government continues to observe the ILO Conventions regarding the right to collective bargaining in the breach. In its engagement with the GPSU and GTU, it has for the fifth straight year derailed the collective bargaining procedure and imposed an unrealistic seven percent increase for public servants and teachers in wages and salaries. It is not unreasonable if the leadership of these unions felt that the government's continued intransigence was not only *bareface* or *eyepass*, but that it was a test of their *locus standi*, a test of their standing in the eyes of their members and of the people of this country. What are these unions to do? Are they to fold their hands like timorous souls or are they to strike out like bold spirits and assert their constitutional rights they possess as unions? Yes, Mr Speaker, the unions have constitutional rights.

Mr Speaker, the GTU announced that its members would take industrial action in the form of a day of stress. In the manner of bird's wife, the Minister of Education appeared on television and appeared to be castigating, threatening or otherwise intimidating the teachers and attempting to hinder them in their constitutional right to strike. Mr Speaker, Article 147(1) of the Constitution provides that a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his/her freedom to associate with other persons and to belong to trade unions for the protection of his/her interest or to demonstrate peacefully. Moreover, Article 147 (2) of the Constitution provides that no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his/her freedom to strike.

Mr Speaker, threats, abuse and intimidation are clearly in breach of these provisions. The Minister and his boss were both out of order to attack the GTU and earlier the GPSU. Today, head teachers of schools in this nation received a verbal communication from the Ministry of Education requesting the head to submit a list of the absent teachers from yesterday and that they must do so within an hour. This is against the background that the normal procedure in respect of absenteeism is that such submissions are made monthly at the end of every month. And so even after the successful day of stress, even

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after recognising that the teachers of this land is saying to them that enough is enough. They are still coming again with this type of tactics and it is not a good augury in the context of the freedoms that our Constitution - freedoms that have been hard earned over these last hundred years - freedoms that we recognised and honoured couple months ago when we unanimously made Hubert National Critchlow a national hero.

Mr Speaker, this question of independence I wish to treat with, is the independence of the Guyana Elections Commission. In the past elections were assumed not to be free and fair, because the Minister of Home Affairs was responsible for national registration in the run up to national elections. As a result constitutional and legislative changes were made with the stated intention of guaranteeing the independence and autonomy of the Guyana Elections Commission. Article 62 of the Constitution provides that the elections shall be independently supervised by the Elections Commission in accordance with the provisions of Article 162.

Article 162 provides that the Elections Commission *inter alia* that is among other things shall exercise general direction and supervision over the registration of electors and the administrative conduct of all elections of members to the National Assembly. In effect, these provisions were intended to consolidate the entire electoral process in the Elections Commission removing the registration process from the Minister of Home Affairs.

Article 226 (1) of the Constitution consolidates that independence by providing that in the exercise of its functions under the Constitution a Commission shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.

However, the independence of the Elections Commission was undermined with the recent where the recent amendment of the Constitution by Article 222A which provides that in order to ensure the independence of the entities listed in the Third Schedule to the Constitution:

- (a) the expenditure of each of the entities shall be financed as a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, et cetera.

Mr Speaker, the Guyana Elections Commission is not one of the entities listed in that Schedule which includes the Judiciary and the Rights Commissions. The question was whether the omission of Elections Commission was an oversight, an anomaly or was a deliberate. This question was answered by the provisions of the Fiscal Management and

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Accountability Act of 2003 wherein Section 2 of that Act created a budget agency that is, a public entity for which one or more appropriations are made and which is named in the schedule to that Act. In that Schedule, the Guyana Elections Commission is listed as a budget agency. Section 10 of that Act determines that the head of a budget agency ought to be the Permanent Secretary or an appropriate official designated by the Finance Secretary under that Act. In the case of the Elections Commission, the Head of the Presidential Secretariat is now the head of the budget agency that is Elections Commission. By virtue of the provisions of Section 11 of that Act, the head of the budget agency is responsible for the management of the affairs of that agency and its resources among other things. The effect of these statutory provisions and of Article 222 A of the Constitution is that the Government through the Head of the Presidential Secretariat can now determine whether how and when financial resources are made available to the Elections Commission, that is the government can manipulate the activities of GECOM and so control what it does thereby eroding its independence or its autonomy. Mr Speaker, this state of affairs is an aberration and is in discord with the true intention of the framers of our Constitution to have a truly independent Elections Commission. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: You time is up, Honourable Member.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I beg that the Hon Basil Williams be allowed ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member

Mr Basil Williams: I am much grateful to you, Mr Speaker. A PNC/R government would amend the Third Schedule to the Constitution and thereby insert that Guyana Elections Commission within that Schedule and therefore restoring the intent of the framers of the Constitution that is, it should be an independent entity which does not have to go cap in hand to anyone, worst of all the Head of the Presidential Secretariat to ask for financial resources.

In addition, it would amend the Fiscal Act and it ought to repeal it. Our position is that it ought to be repealed, but we would amend that also by deleting the Guyana Elections Commission from its Schedule of budget agency. The Honourable Member Mr Hamilton

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will be dealing with the intricacies of the elections. So, I just want to give the legal wishes.

Mr Speaker, the self-same Fiscal Management and Accountability Act of 2003, the Honourable Member Mr Winston Murray alluded to and specifically to the obligations of the Minister in relation to accountability for fiscal management and performance and the Honourable Member in his normal erudite and clear style succinctly outlined what those obligations were and they remained so, that is there is a mandatory requirement on the part of the Minister of Finance to comply with those sections of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act. It is imperative that they do so. So that we are disturbed when we hear responsive people who are supposed to be responsible attempting to give what they called spin at different take on what really is something that has no conjecturing involved. If governments continue to set their faces against legislation passed by this Honourable House, it is a recipe for anarchy and it does not matter what language is used to attempt to get around it, it is an insult to the people of this nation and it must be complied with, because we are not sending a proper signal not only to the people of this country, but to people that we depend on for assistance and for aid.

Mr Speaker, in the light of the foregoing and in the light of what I earlier intimated, the type of partnership is referred to in the theme for this Budget does not mean that if we were to be a partner that we would be constrained or we ought not to show the difficulties and the problems that surround and confront us at the risk of offending the partner in the partnership. A partner in any partnership must be opened to constructive criticisms and so we have no problem with a partnership, but it must be a viable partnership, it must not be one-sided, because if it is a legal partnership - because the Honourable Member Mr Rohee was talking about cut back - but if it seriously meant to create legal intentions or to clearly honour your obligations under such a partnership, then you must be prepared to listen to criticisms and try and take them on board, but it does not mean that because you might be divided on an issue that should be the end of the partnership. So eliciting partnership is pretty good especially at this juncture in our history and it is welcomed and let us hope that it is a very serious intimation that will be taken on board. Thank you, Mr Speaker. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

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The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Hon Doodnauth Singh: May it please you, Mr Speaker. I wish to assure The Honourable Member Mr Allen and my learned friend Mr Basil Williams that the observations that were made by the Honourable Member Mr Murray have been seriously considered and whatever perceived inadequacies, there may be in the Budget, those will be remedied. *[Applause]*

In accordance with Article 112 of the Constitution, the Attorney General shall be the principal legal adviser to the government to carry out the functions of Attorney General; the Chambers have an establishment, which requires the appointment of officers to hold the positions of Solicitor General, Deputy Solicitor General and Senior Legal Advisers. Of the thirty-six professional positions, there is a number of vacancies. Regrettably, the Chambers has been unable to attract officers for appointment to the position of Solicitor General, Deputy Solicitor General and several other legal positions. However, the Chamber is reasonably staffed by State Counsels, graduates of the University of Guyana and the Hugh Wooding Law School. As a result the Chambers have been able to advise the several ministries and on occasions several of the corporations as well as the Guyana Revenue Authority and in addition to tendering advice have been able to represent the several ministries as well as corporations and the Revenue Authority in the High Court on a number of occasions.

In relation to the enactment of legislations and the drafting of legislation and orders, the Chambers have been severely handicapped in that the staffing requirement of thirteen members, half of those are vacant. Despite this handicap, however, together with assistance offered by the Commonwealth Secretariat who has provided assistance, the legislative arm of the Chambers has been able to cope with the demands and I wish to place on public record the exceptional service which has been provide over the years to the Chambers by the drafting facility. We are hopeful that in the very near future the facility will be strengthened by the recruitment of personnel from overseas. In addition to providing the services of litigation officers and advice, the officers of the Chambers continue to attend overseas training courses and have the benefit of training offered both in the United Kingdom and in India. The officers have also been able to benefit from

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attending several seminars overseas on intellectual property and several other areas beneficial to the government of Guyana.

Modernisation of the Deeds Registry with the assistance of finance from the International Agencies has been of tremendous assistance. The Deeds Registry has been totally refurbished and twenty-five computers are presently in the precincts and the necessary programmes have been put in place and it is expected that within a short time, the entire Registry will be computerised and the staff will be able to access computer facilities. We are very grateful to the international community for the assistance that has been forthcoming.

I have spoken of the inadequacy staffing arrangements at the Chambers of the Attorney General. I wish in the same vein to point out the inadequacy in the Director of Public Prosecutions. There is a staffing requirement of seventeen persons; half of those are vacant and we are all aware of the fact that since the elevation to the Judiciary, of the former Director of Public Prosecutions, there is an acting Director. There was advertised recently the position to fill that vacancy and vacancies that will flow thereafter. I am aware of several persons who have applied and I am hopeful that in the very near future, there will be an appointment to that position which is of tremendous constitutional importance.

I am saddened by the fact that inquests have not been held for several years and I have been assured that instructions have been given to the Magistracy to ensure that within a short period of time steps will be taken to have inquests held as expeditiously as is possible. Insofar as the responsibility of the Minister of Legal Affairs requires attention to the higher Judiciary and to the Magistracy, as well a steps to be taken to ensure that litigation is expedited and that the judicial pronouncements are reasonably delivered. Towards this end, regrettably despite the fact that it is a constitutional requirement, the legislative mechanism has not identified the period of time within judgements ought to be pronounced. I was hoping that the Judiciary would have assisted the Chambers in identifying a period of time that would have been required. Regrettably that has not occurred, but I can assure this House that steps will be taken by the Chambers to ensure that the legislation is enacted and that the Judiciary is required and mandated within a limited time to pronounce judgements. *[Applause]*

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There has been as well as inadequate staffing in the Appellate Judiciary, the Supreme Court as well as the magisterial level. It has been said that the inadequate remuneration is one of the factors which has resulted in these positions not being attractive to members of the bar like my learned friends Mr Williams, Mr Murray and others. However, despite this inadequacy, steps have been taken to reduce the tremendous backlog of cases in the High Court as well as to provide alternative dispute resolution mechanism to assist in the adjudication process and it is expected that within a short time a commercial court will be in operation.

Guyana has established the Caribbean Court of Justice as the final appellate body. For the resolution of first instance disputes that may arise from the Treaty of Chaguaramas as well as Appellate Jurisdiction. Towards this end steps will be taken in the near future to provide facilities which will be required whenever the Caribbean Court of Justice would be sitting in Georgetown. Despite the complaints which continued to plagued the Chambers and the Ministry, it could properly be said that the services which has been provided in 2005 has been of a reasonably adequate and of a high quality.

There was a Committee which has been established to look at the criminal jurisprudence. That Committee has made certain recommendations, but in view of the fact that there is a programme for the identifying of the inadequacy in the judiciary and the total justice systems, consultants who has been provided by the international community have recently visited Guyana and has looked at the entire judicial and policing system. A draft was prepared and consultation has taken place among the consultants, the Minister of Home Affairs, the Chief Justice and myself. They have looked at the Prisons, the Police, the Prosecution, the Magistracy and the higher Judiciary and it is expected that within a very short time a report will be prepared out of which an enhanced judicial system and law enforcement system will be established. I am grateful and conscious of the suggestions that were made by the Honourable Member Backer especially with respect to the abolition of the preliminary inquiry. There are many suggestions which have been made and whether the systems which are in place in the United Kingdom and the Caribbean; I know that the Members of the Defence Bar especially those on the defence side are not too anxious to have the preliminary inquiry abolished. I have my own particular views on that matter since I have practised in the Caribbean and have

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benefited from some aspects from it. However, the submission of the consultants and the various discussions that will take place will determine the method and the way forward. I wish to affirm to this National Assembly and the people of Guyana as a whole that the Chambers and the Ministry will seek to ensure that the advice and representation which is required of the Chambers continue to be of a high standard and to be adequate. The Legislative Programme will be expedited and I am aware that Ministers each have their own agenda, but whatever is that agenda I can assure Members of the National Assembly that the Chambers will assist in ensuring that the Ministries are adequately services and that the legislative programme of the National Assembly will be adequately provided. I give the commitment of my Chambers and Ministry to ensure that the constitutional mandate is complied with. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mr McAllister

Mr James K McAllister: Mr Speaker, I wish to express my appreciation to the Minister of Finance for his efforts in the preparation of the 2006 Budget and indeed all the Budgets he has prepared so far.

As the Minister of Finance, he has come to the end of his tenure, this being the largest Budget and also the last Budget for his colleagues on that side of the House. Therefore, I on behalf of the People of Guyana would wish to thank him and his colleagues on that side for his efforts albeit woefully inadequate.

Mr Speaker, in his presentation, the Honourable Minister of Finance stated:

Securing and expanding our economic infrastructure base are crucial to attracting private investment, diversifying the economy, sustaining growth and improving the quality of life of our people.

The PNC/R agrees with these sentiments, however, we are aware as stated in the World Bank's document *A Time to Choose Caribbean Development in the 21st Century* Guyana is ranked last in the Caribbean as an alternate location for investment. Poor roads, exorbitant and inadequate electricity, poor quality of life were all cited as the reasons for Guyana's low rating.

The PNC/R is therefore interested in securing and expanding the infrastructure so as to create an environment conducive for investment. We are committed to transform our

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economy so that young people can once again have hope where unemployment and under-employment will become things of the past; where health and education delivery will be enhanced; a vibrant economy will hold many opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Our young people will no longer have to eek out a living, but rather will be able to focus on the creation of wealth for themselves and for Guyana. This is the vision of the PNC/R. *[Applause]* Owning a home and a care must no longer be a pipe dream for young families and in this context the People's National Congress/Reform recognised the importance of infrastructure and infrastructure development. This is why and for this reason, the PNC/R in 1996, ten years ago, in its Guyana 21 Programme proposed a series of projects and for the purpose of the records, I just want to mention some of the projects proposed by the PNC/R:

- (i) A high span bridge across the Berbice River and develop and set up a commercial areas and this was proposed since 1996.
- (ii) New four-lane highway connected Georgetown to Soesdyke/Linden Highway;
- (iii) A high span bridge across the Demerara River at Soesdyke;
- (iv) highway from Soesdyke to Wales on the West Bank Demerara and this is right off my ally. This is going to benefit the people of Region 3. Highway from Parika to Monkey Jump;
- (v) A new international airport;
- (vi) A bridge across the Essequibo River at Monkey Jump; and there is a whole list of other projects that we had proposed.

At that point the Members on the other side and I did say that last year and I will it again asked us where are you going to get the money from? Then we told them the private sector, private investment and they laughed and we have lived today to see them turning to the private sector to secure the funding to build the Berbice Bridge. I say to you now, if since in 1996, you had understood, you had accepted the good people of Berbice would have had a bridge today.

Mr Speaker, the pain associated with the process of securing funds for the Berbice Bridge although they turn to what we proposed, as the government laboured to put together the project is a clear indication that the wide range of projects as outlined in the PNC/R's

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Guyana 21 is beyond the reach of the People's Progressive Party/Civic's Government. And so it is not a case where anyone can say, well therefore you have said it and therefore we will do, because the way in which you have been struggling with the Berbice bridge, you cannot undertake those many, many massive projects that we have promised the people of Guyana that we will do. Therefore, it is just one thing that must now happen. It is now for you to pack up and to go. The time has come where we can take the efforts or to make the efforts to really transform the economy; to really look at the aspect of infrastructure development and to ensure that we go along with modern trends. I mean, the Honourable Minister of Finance did say that his Budget was about modernisation, well it is true also that the modern trend is where government and the public sector is gradually removing from infrastructure and infrastructure development and the private sector is quickly and more and more becoming involved. That is the direction that we want to go and that is direction we believe that the People's Progressive Party/Civic's Government do not have the capacity to take us.

Mr Speaker, it is true that the Honourable Minister of Finance spoke about \$4.5 billion to improve highways and roads; \$755 million to commence rehabilitation of New Amsterdam of New Amsterdam to Moleson Creek Highway; \$345 million to complete the four-lane highway; \$2.4 billion to rehabilitate community roads. These were all said and I am quite sure that the new Minister of Public Works, the Honourable Member Mr Nawbatt will tell us [*Interruption: 'I thought you were making an announcement of yourself.'*]... that announcement will come later ... will tell us about all the rehabilitation projects funded with donor money listed in this Budget. However, like I said last year, I will say it this year, this government's infrastructure projects is all about rehabilitate, rehabilitate, repair, repair what the PNC/R built.

This Budget therefore fails to achieve its stated mandate of expanding our economic infrastructure and even the attempt to secure the infrastructure is failing. A case in point is the four-lane highway. A few months ago, I led a team from the Parliamentary Economic Services Committee on a visit to the four-lane highway. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the technical advisor to the Minister Mr Walter Willis, the contractor's representative and the Engineer's representative for their professional conduct while we were there on that project. On that occasion, I said publicly that I was

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satisfied with the answers given, however, I did warn that time will determine the truth. Mr Speaker, a few days ago, I had an interaction with the Senior Engineer about the four-lane highway. His response was a national disgrace. Sections of this road that were said to be completed have already developed pot holes; the project is not yet over, but sections of the road said to be completed have already developed potholes and other surface defects associated with poor quality material and workmanship are being shown at various parts of the roads. This is an indication of the quality of work that is being given to the Guyanese people. The Honourable Minister of Public Works will tell us all has been done to correct these deficiencies, however, the defects of which I speak should not have occurred at this stage of the project and that is a fact. So, to come here in this Honourable House to say about what work is being done to correct these deficiencies, my response to the Honourable Minister even before he says what he is going to say that it should not have happened at this stage of the project. Mr Speaker, this sorry affair epitomises the status of the government's infrastructure projects. This is the government's flagship, the four-lane highway has been touted as a major project, it has been held there to demonstrate that the government is going places with infrastructure development and when we look here and we look at the work that is being presented, we understand that it is a poor quality project, poor quality work and the road is already beginning to deteriorate. This is a shame. We will hear a lot of infrastructure and the money being spent on infrastructure, but I am going to summit all up to say that all that is here in the Budget of 2006 does not go to the core of the issue of expanding the economic infrastructure and securing the economic infrastructure. All we are having is the government on another occasion coming to tell the Guyanese people that they will be spending money and this government is good at spending money, but we never ever receive the quality of work; we never ever receive projects that are sustainable; we never have a situation where the Guyanese people can look at a road built by this government and be confident that it is going to last for ten or fifteen years. *[Interruption: 'Tide carried away the Demerara Harbour Bridge.']* The Demerara Harbour Bridge was built by the People's National Congress under Linden Forbes Burnham. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, in his presentation attempted to refute statements made by the Honourable Member Mr Murray, where he said that Mr

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Murray claimed that the Government lacked vision as related to the floods. He tried to convince this Honourable House that he and the Government has a vision about the flood, but you must hear about the flood, because we will come back and show you how the flood is connected to this whole issue of expanding and securing the economic infrastructure and creating a climate conducive for investment.

Mr Speaker, let us therefore talk about this vision as it relates to the flood. On a previous occasion when we debated the flood motion in this Honourable House, I referred to the Mott McDonald Report, whereby in June of 2004, the Government received a report detailing a number of things that should have been done on the East Demerara Water Conservancy, the Boeraserie Conservancy and the facts will show that the Government did not do what they were told to do. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture stood here this afternoon and he went all around the globe; he went from Europe to Chile; he went to North America; he went to Africa telling us about climatic change and all the things that are happening all over the world, but the Government and the Honourable Minister is not telling us that consultants and experts came here and they told us what we must do in Guyana to deal with the same problem that he is referring to. So, when the Honourable Minister try to stand here before this Honourable House, to try to excuse the incompetence and the inadequacies associated with the floods of 2004 and the floods of 2005, I am saying here that he is trying to pull wool over the eyes of the Guyanese people, because we have a situation, as I said before, the Government had the information in their hands what was supposed to be done. So, we had the flood in 2004 and the Government said that it was not their fault. They said, it was an act of God and after that flood in all fairness to the Government a number of things were done; a number of studies were commissioned. Again, they had a study done by Mott Mc Donald entitled *The Conservancy Flood Management Modelling* a very important study and we will look at some of the recommendations. If I am to read from the conclusion and recommendations, by way of explanation I should say that in conducting this study, the Consultant Dr Robin Wardlaw conducted a number of models and simulations on the East Demerara Water Conservancy and the Boeraserie Conservancy. Here is what he said, the model indicates that there is a number of combinations of gate openings that will permit the East Demerara Conservancy to accommodate floods of up to one-thousand

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year return period following the rehabilitation of the Kofi and the Kuna sluices and other outlets. These are not sufficient though to permit the conservancy to accommodate a ten-thousand year return flood. He went on to say that the more detailed dimensional modelling will help to confirm that the waterway leading to these outlets have sufficient capacity. This is a case where the consultant came and he addressed a thousand-year return period, a ten-thousand year return period. He said, okay, we cannot handle the ten-thousand year return period and this is a big flood. It has to be the mother of all floods; it comes once every ten thousand years. He said that we cannot handle that, but he said that we can handle the one-thousand year return based on what is there and based on certain recommendations about rehabilitation and maintenance. And so when the Minister comes here this afternoon to tell us about what is happening in Canada and what is happening in Egypt and what is happening all around the globe, it has not bearing to the reality in Guyana, because the reality is the Government failed to do what they were supposed to do, because of incompetence and inefficiencies. This is a fact.

Then we want to come to the other issue. In order to cater for the ten-thousand year flood, here is what the consultant recommended. He stronger recommended that an additional outlet structure should be provided on the East Demerara Water Conservancy. It has been shown that a further gated-width of thirty meters would operate in conjunction with the existing gates to accommodate the ten-thousand year flood. Recently, it was reported in the newspapers that the Government's appointed taskforce said that they could not proceed with the new outlet, because of the state of the dam and they could not go through the northern dams, because the dams were too weak. People who are not aware to the background of this matter will say, okay we cannot blame the Government, because they would have done it if the dam was not too weak.

Let us go to another report. This one here is the reporting factors which led to the breach to the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam. It is dated March 2002 and it is saying here, the team was informed in an interview with the Chief Executive Officer of the National Drainage and Irrigation Board that the reason for undertaking the construction were as follows:

Reduce the need to release water through the Maduni relief and the fact that the free board of the crest of the dam was drastically reduced due to settlement over the years.

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Based on the above and approach was made to IDB for financing remedial works to the dam. Here is what is important, the IDB then commissioned consultant engineer Mr Anand ET Dhari to undertake the study on the East Demerara Water Conservancy and that report was presented in April 1998 did not include an option for raising the dam. The report of the consultant did not include an option for raising the dam. The report says here, it is therefore strange that the IDB proceeded to finance a project that its own consultant did not recommend. Obviously the Government bent the arms of the IDB to proceed with this project, because it was a project for the boys and we cannot have a situation where this project cannot go through. I have never said it and I am saying it for the first time and I am placing it on the records. It is clear and here is what the consultant said, it is clear that little investigation and thought was put into the design of the works and the preparation of the tender documents. This is just an indication of what went in to that infamous project that was undertaken by BK International that resulted in a breach in the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam and has weakened. So now we have reached the stage where we have climatic change and where consultants are coming to us to say that you need to put in an additional outlet. We are being told that we cannot do that, because the dam is weak. Who made the dam weak? The Government's incompetence and inefficiencies! So once again, the Government cannot claim that they can slip out of this one to say that we did not do it because the dam was weak. You made the dam weak and therefore you are responsible.

The Consultant, Dr Wardlaw also said that the East Demerara Water Conservancy cannot be operated in any sort of real time or respond more to rainfall. He said that the storms that produce serious damage and flooding cannot be forecast. In keeping with this, the Government's own taskforce and Dr Robin Wardlaw himself approved a gate-opening schedule for the East Demerara Water Conservancy. Dr Wardlaw ran models on this gate opening schedule and determined that the Conservancy would have been able to handle water or a storm at a certain level. If I am just to say very briefly that in terms of the schedule we were told at 56GD, all gates should be closed; at 56.5 Land of Canaan should be opened; at 56.75 Land of Canaan, Maduni, Kuna and Kofi should be opened and when we come right down to 58, that is when the Lama No.1 would be opened and at 58.25 Lama No. 2 should be opened. This was approved by the Government's own

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taskforce. It was also approved by the Consultant from Mott McDonald Dr Robin Wardlaw.

Mr Speaker, Dr Wardlaw did not stop there, he went on to say that there is even other options that if you want to avoid altogether opening the Lama sluice, therefore you need to open Land of Canaan at an earlier time. He also ran a model for that to establish that if you open Land of Canaan at an earlier time, well then you will not have to open the Lama. The fact of the matter is that this Government consciously made a decision not to follow these recommendations. They did not open Land of Canaan at 56 and that is the level they would have known and they would have avoided opening the Lama to flood out the Mahaica Creek. They took a decision to go in this direction, but not only did they not open at 56, this Government held the water in the Conservancy unto to 58. What utter madness and then when the rains started to fall, they are running helter skelter trying to release it, when we were told upfront that before the rainy season, you have to bring the water down to 56. Now that we have been forced to release water through the Lama; now that we have been forced to release water through the Maduni and we have destroyed the lives of the people in the Mahaica, who is to be blamed? Who is responsible? Is the Government going to say once again it is an act of God and that it is climatic change? We have enough information here to establish that this Government had the information at its disposal; this Government made the wrong decisions; they chosen options that required releasing water into the Mahaica and when they released water into the Mahaica to flood the people, they did not have the strength of character to say to the people that we took this decision and we were wrong. *[Interruption: 'What about when you released water into the Pomeroun?']* I never worked there and I was never in charge. *[Laughter]* But soon, Honourable Member Mr Rohee, we on this side of the House, come the next rainy season will be in charge and we will be coming to tell you about how we deal with it. *[Applause]* For instance, we will not be coming to tell you that we are running to correct the thing when the disaster is already upon us. We would not be coming on 28 December for \$491 million to buy excavators, when we knew since one year ago that we need to prepare for the floods. We would not be coming in the middle of the flood to say that we have to source \$4 million to dredge the mouths of the Pomeroun, the Mahaica, the Abary and the Mahaicony Rivers. We would have done it

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long ago, but this is where this Government takes the Guyanese people for granted.

[Interruption: 'Where will you get the money from?'] That is the problem. That is what we do not understand here. It is the chicken and egg game. If you have a Government that cannot stimulate the economy; that cannot make the economy grow; that cannot bring money into the Treasury; that same Government is coming to tell us that people must die and people must suffer because they do not have the money and they do not have the competence to conduct their affairs in a proper manner to transform the economy. Come on! Are you telling me, where are you going to get the money from? It is your job to get the money. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

Mr E Lance Carberry: Mr Speaker, I ask that Honourable Member Mr McAllister be allowed fifteen minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr James K McAllister: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the extension. The fact here is that when we talk about no money, we know about cases where people are walking with cheque books in their back pockets sharing out money in the most un-planned and most un-coordinated fashion - taxpayers' money. And when we come to the crises then we learnt that we do not have excavators; we learnt that the Government did not dredge the mouth of the rivers and people in the Mahaica and the Mahaicony are suffering. *[Interruption: 'We helped them.' "You helped them and then you flood them out and then you killed them with leptospirosis and all sorts of things".* This is the situation. I say here, the flood of 2005 is an indictment on this Government, and what is worse (and I say this for the Guyanese people to hear) not one person was fired. Last year thirty-four people died because of incompetence; this year how many people died because of incompetence? And the people there in the Mahaica Creek, the people at Joe Hook and those places suffering, not one person was made to account; not one person had to accept the responsibility. What is this? This is an uncaring Government, because people will suffer, people will die and then the Government just move on its merry way. This flood is an indictment. I believe and I feel strongly this Government must not come

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and say that this thing is about climatic change and an act of God, because the information is here. So I have dealt with that.

Mr Speaker, I now want to turn to Region 3 of which I have some responsibility. The Honourable Member Miss Bibi Shadick spoke about roads in Wakenaam, but little that Miss Shadick knows, just two days before she stood here speaking, the people from Wakenaam called me to have a look at the situation. Here is it, she is telling me that the Government is doing roads all over the Island and there is no road being done in Maria Johanna, because Maria Johanna is an area that supports the PNC/R. The people form themselves to petition the President and so when the Honourable Minister comes to tell us that they are going to do the roads after the rainy season, I am going to say, it is only because the people threatened to expose the discrimination in the election year that the thing is now being done. *[Applause]* That is what is happening. Then she spoke about Phoenix, Leguan. Now, in Phoenix, you must know, I know that you are looking at the television and you are looking at Nation Watch, how many times I went to Phoenix when those people were flooded out on numerous occasions and the Government refused to do anything. The Honourable Member Mr Anthony Xavier, went in a speed boat in the middle of the river and did not had the courtesy to go to the land to talk to those people about their sufferings. The thing got so bad that I invited the leader of my party. I said, chief, you have to come here, this thing is getting bad and it is after Mr Corbin turned up there and it was on the news that he went to the place, then the work started. Is it supposed to happen like this? And so when the Minister stands to tell us about all the good things that have been happening, you must understand the bad grounds to the situation. In my first speech in this Parliament, I spoke among other things these two matters. Drainage in the Village of Farm - and on that occasion, I said that it is ironic that the people at Farm cannot farm, because the Government is doing nothing about the drainage at the back of the village - the middle walk, the dams, all are being over-topped. When the water is being released to irrigate rice lands in all the villages all the farmlands in Farm flooded out. I raised it five years ago in this Parliament. The Honourable Member Mr Clinton Collymore he knows what I am talking about, because he was there in 2000. You cannot remember! You promised the people at Farm in 2000 that he will

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look at the problem. Six years have gone and he is trying to fix it. Well, hear boss, you do not have to fix it anymore, because we will fix it after August 2006. *[Applause]* And so when we go on and speak about sea defences - I want to say this, sea defences is a serious problem. There are sections of our sea defence where the reinforcement is totally corroded. Honourable Minister, you were there at Leonora and Stewartville when the water threw that wall like biscuit. There is no reinforcement and that is just about one section, but right throughout we are going to have that kind of problem.

Not too long ago, an IMF delegation went to Congress Place and we raised this issue with them about sea defences and you what they said to us? They said that Guyana is getting more than a fair share of aid and really and truly in sea defences, Guyana will have to raise her money internally to deal with that, because instead of Guyana getting more aid in the future, the aid is likely to be reduced. And so we have a serious problem here, because in Stanleytown and La Retraite, we do have sea defence problems. At Lady Stein and Oreignstein and again at Farm, there is also the same problem - sea defence. What is the Government doing? The Government will tell us that they are not getting loans, but why don't they tell us about the efforts they are making to stimulate the economy, the efforts they are making to attract investment, the efforts they are making to ensure that we have a home-grown effort to look at these things. The Government is not telling us that. *[Interruption: 'Tell us about your problem. What is your problem?']* Okay, I will tell you what is my problem? The Honourable Member wants me to talk about my problem so I will talk about it.

It is a serious problem that I have and that is sugar - the sugar industry and the welfare of the sugar workers on the West Demerara. That is my problem. You want to hear about my problem, that is my problem, because when I looked into this Budget, I saw nothing about creating any cushion, any safety net for workers in West Demerara. We already know and if the Minister wants to be honest, he will say to us that they have already started to cut back on labour. *[Interruption: 'Tell us about Plastic City.']* You want to know about Plastic City. Plastic City is another area neglected by this Government, where the Honourable Member Mr Baksh put down a stand pipe and ask the people to pay water rates and the people had to sub money to pay for water from the stand pipe. I never hear about that in my life. You want to hear about Plastic City? The thing about

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the situation there is that the Government had bundled the issue with sugar, the Government has failed to prepare for the eventuality as it relates to sugar. We now have a situation where the Government has failed, even in this Budget, to come to tell us about what it is doing for the workers in the sugar industry in West Demerara. And I find this to be very, very worrying. It is very sad and I think that the Government once again has failed the workers in the sugar industry, they have failed the workers at Uitvlugt and they have failed the workers at Wales. You have, because where is your programme as it relates to dealing with what is facing them frontally?

So Mr Speaker, as I looked at the Budget, I see it as a Budget with no hope. It is a Budget that can only look at poverty and to see the extent to which they can reduce poverty. This is not a Budget of a Government with a big vision and a big heart that will say that we are going to create wealth to improve the quality of the lives of the Guyanese people and that is why, I and the party of which I am a part cannot support this Budget.

Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon Harry Narine Nawbatt: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to commend the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Staff of the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance for once again producing a Budget, the intention of which is to improve the lives of the Guyanese people. *[Interruption: 'You spoke on SIMAP before.']* SIMAP never had a Commission on Inquiry. Commendations are also appropriate for the presentation of this Budget during the first month of 2006. Guyanese can now look forward to being presented with future budgets before the commencement of the financial years to which they relate. This, I understand, is the task that the Director of Budget, Dr Ashni Singh, has set himself.

The PPP/C Government has for the past thirteen years it has been in office demonstrated its capacity for presenting budgets which have resulted in benefits to all sections of the Guyanese population. This Budget is not different. Despite the difficulties of the past, both natural as in the floods of 2005 as well as those caused by politicians whom the people have always rejected, but in continuous free and fair elections since 1992, the Government has kept fate with the Guyanese people and has succeeded in retaining their

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confidence by being in close contact and in partnership with them in the villages, in towns, in mud, in flood waters and in sunshine.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members from the other side and a few others outside had dreams of being on this side of the House when they spoke. I wish to assure them that those dreams can be realised, but only if they apply for membership of the PPP/C or join the civic component of the PPP. That is the only way of sitting on this side of the House for a long, long time to come.

Mr Speaker, I wish to present to you and this House a report on the achievements of the Ministry of Transport and Hydraulics for the year 2005 and the expectations of the Ministry for the amount of \$8.6 billion allocated for 2006. I wish to also commend Minister Xavier for the achievements of the Ministry during the years 1996 to 2005 [*Applause*] and to congratulate the staff for a job well done, as well as to encourage them to be prepared for much more hard work during this and future years.

The Ministry embraces a number of activities including marine and air transport; sea and river defences and infrastructural works on roads, bridges culverts and buildings.

With respect to the Demerara Harbour Bridge, I wish to report that it once again achieved a trouble-free year for 2005. They were approximately 4,000 trips each way per day by cars, minibuses trucks, et cetera, which amounts to roughly 24,000 persons per day travelling across the bridge. Under the capital works programme, three large pontoons were constructed at a cost of \$90 million of which \$45 million came from Central Government and the remainder from Demerara Harbour Bridge toll revenue. In addition, a number of activities were successfully completed and a total cost of approximately \$23 million again funded from revenues of the Demerara Harbour Bridge toll. The Demerara Bridge intends to replace four large pontoons and a total cost of \$80 million from Central Government as well as the maintenance of the entire structure from toll revenue in the sum of \$150 million. Annual maintenance of the retractor and acceptor spans, the hydraulic system and controls will be done by **HYCOSE** Engineering in March of 2006. This is three-year contract which will end this year. Toll revenue for the year is anticipated at \$192 million and the expectation is that 2006 would also be free of problems as well as reduced the waiting time to cross.

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In the Works Services Group for 2005, contracts were awarded for 4,000 kilometres of the 5,000 kilometres public road network for improvement including the installation of traffic signs, painting of road markings, construction of pedestrian foot-walks , installation of reflectors and street lighting in some areas. *[Interruption: 'And traffic lights!']* This is not under this section, so you should wait. For the routine road maintenance programme \$170 million was allocated and spent in 2005 on the 400 kilometres of public roads on the Essequibo Coast, Linden/Soesdyke, East Bank Demerara, Corentyne Road, East Coast Demerara, West Coast Demerara, West Bank Demerara. The contract involves the repairs to potholes, sealing of cracks, weeding and cleaning of road side drains, removal of derelict vehicles and the maintenance of the verges and parapets.

The Work Services Group also completed two major projects as part of the Government's programme of investment in the modernisation of infrastructure.

A Bridges Rehabilitation Programme which involves the re-construction of eighty-two bridges and culverts from Timehri to Rosignol was completed and commissioned in 2005 at the cost of US\$27.3 million and included the construction of two modern pre-cast concrete bridges across the Mahaica and Mahaicony Rivers. These are new projects by the PPP/C Government.

Secondly, the rehabilitation and widening of sixty-seven kilometres of road from Mahaica to Rosignol was completed in August 2005 at a cost of \$23.1 million and included the re-construction of road from Rosignol to Ithaca and the construction of a new road along the railway embankment from the West end of the new Mahaicony bridge to Drill turn. Street lighting was installed at major intersections along the East Bank public road and within the Village of Grove thirty-six lights were installed at a cost of \$11.841 million. As part of the re-construction of the road from Mahaica to Rosignol, 618 lights were installed within the heavily populated villages at a cost of US\$1.24 million or around G\$250 million.

For 2006, a contract was signed on 25 January 2006 for street lighting from Better Hope to Enmore at a contract sum of \$241 million and work is expected to be completed in twenty-eight weeks. Estimates are prepared for other areas including Providence to

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Timehri; Enmore to Mahaica; Better Hope to Georgetown and the railway embankment from Sheriff Street to Turkeyen.

The focus of the Work Services Group for 2006 will be on the commencement of construction of the New Amsterdam to Moleson Creek Road. This is a two-year programme for the re-construction of the eighty-seven kilometre roadway from New Amsterdam Ferry to Moleson Creek Ferry, including reconstruction of eighty culverts and bridges. The Work Services Group will also provide technical support for the construction of the Berbice River Bridge and seven kilometres of approach roads. The Ministry will also implement a weight-control programme to protect the Government's substantial investments in road infrastructure. The traffic and safety programme will intensify with the installation of street lighting, road markings and signage, pedestrian crossings and other engineering measures designed to enhance the safety of commuters. The programme in this year will be concentrated mainly on the East Coast Demerara, West Coast Demerara and the Essequibo Coast. The Installation of traffic Lights between the Demerara Harbour Bridge and Turkeyen has already been referred to by the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs so I will just leave it at that, but you will see it.

[Interruption: 'When will the project start?' "You will know"].

The Ministry will also be commencing feasibility studies for a new Demerara River Bridge and further improvements to the Black Bush Polder road.

Mr Speaker, four stellings and the goods wharf at Water Street were successfully repaired by the Transport and Harbours Department during 2005 at a cost of \$40 million. Six vessels were docked and repaired during 2005 at a cost of \$122 million as well as the acquisition of spares costing \$68 million. In addition to \$100 million incurred on docking and repairs to the dredge **Stevens**, and the fabrication of beacons to enhance the safety of navigation on a twenty-four hour basis.

Mr Speaker, engineers and maintenance crews must be commended for a job well-done in keeping these aging vessels afloat. Since I am speaking on the Transport and Harbours Ferry, I heard the Honourable Member Mr Ricky Khan mention last night that the MV Pomeroun was operating on the North West District. Apparently he does not know. Well for his information, the MV Pomeroun was scrapped in 1987. *[Interruption: "You were sleeping." "No, I was not sleeping, I was wide awake"]*. In addition to that, if you are

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talking about ferries, the PPP government - I have a record here - built three vessels in four years between 1959 and 1962 and the PNC government built four within fifteen years. Additionally, I have a report from the Transport and Harbours Department Management which said, and this was also mentioned, that passengers and wildlife are placed together on the MV Kimbia. I have a letter which says that there are two separate and distinct areas for the shipment of wildlife and passengers and the alleged hazard to passengers is exaggerated.

During 2005, rising fuel prices significantly affected the revenue base of the Transport and Harbours Department and as a result the Department granted a twenty-five percent increase in fares and freight rates from September after a period of seven years.

The Transport and Harbours Department has been allocated \$355 million for capital works in 2006. The services offered by this Department are expected to be significantly improved as a result of previous and continuous maintenance of the ferries, the establishment of committees of management in Berbice and Essequibo and an Advisory Board as well as more prudent financial management. Discussion on the acquisition of two new ferries and possibly another coastal vessel from the Government of China are ongoing and it is expected that within three years the T&HD fleet will be enhanced.

[Interruption: 'We will be in government then, so it will be enhanced.'] "Dream on!"

During 2006, it is proposed to have the MV Kimbia, the MV Baramani, the Lady North Cote and the MV Allan Young docked and repaired. The Parika Stelling is to be rehabilitated at a cost of \$126 million and a new Stelling at Supenaam is to be built at a cost of \$574 million under the Community Services Enhancement Project. This is modernisation in partnership with the people. It is anticipated that the combination of these activities would contribute to an improvement to the quality of the ferry services for the thousands who use them.

The Maritime Administration, the Regulatory Body anticipates revenue of \$615 M in 2006 and a number of areas are targeted:

- Working with the Frequency Management Unit to establish procedures for the improvement in maritime communication in Guyana and on Guyanese ships.

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- Working towards the establishment of the coastal station for the dissemination and reception of maritime safety information. They also intend to carry out repairs and painting to the Georgetown Lighthouse and the Berbice Pilot Station.
- Continuous dredging of the ships channel would be pursued and this would be enhanced with the acquisition of a differential global positioning system. Those activities would also enhance the department.

Turning to the Air Transport Reform Programme Unit, this has continued its mandate to execute the requirements of the IDB Transport Loan and the following projects which were started in 2004 were completed in 2005:

- Contract for the procurement of computers and accounting software for Cheddi Jagan International Airport;
- The concrete and earth works to the perimeter road and Apron III for the CJIA;
- Design for the new Hydrometeorological Building and the Apron of CJIA were also completed;
- Two aerodromes at Annai in Region 9 and Kaituma in Region 1 were rehabilitated and upgraded at cost of \$7.7 million and \$19.9 million respectively;
- The strengthening of the airport security was done under the multilateral investment fund; the cost of which is US \$715,000; US\$500 000 of which came from the IDB grant and US\$215 000 from the Government of Guyana. The general objective of this project is to enhance and reinforce airport security by updating and modifying the airport security regulations and procedure of Guyana and the training of all pertinent staff of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority, Ministry of Home Affairs, Cheddi Jagan International Airport, the Ogle Airport, management and other related government agencies on airport security procedures. The duration of this project is twenty-four months from September 2004 to September 2006. The project was not completed in 2005 due to a number of factors including adverse weather conditions and difficulties in procuring equipment due to hurricanes Katrina and Wilma in the USA.

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Among the activities scheduled for completion in 2006 are:

- Completion of the arrivals' terminal at a cost of \$344 million;
- Completion of the taxi-way lighting 350 million; and
- Completion of Orinduik airstrip at \$27 million; as well as the
- Completion of the investment of the Multilateral Investment Fund; the airport security scheme.

For the Cheddi Jagan International Airport Corporation achievements during 2005 included the implementation of a new security card system that will be used to better monitor access to restricted areas at the airport. Purchase of radios to enhance communication; replacement of the automatic changeover switch for generator and in June 2005 the Corporation had its aerodrome certification renewed for another year. The current project includes:

- Purchasing and installation of three new central air suction systems. This will assist the air traffic controllers and pilots with wind direction and speed.
- Procurement of two pairs of runway and identifier lights which will better aid pilots in identifying the beginnings of the runway.
- Upgrading of the taxi-way lighting system;
- Upgrading of the departure and executive lounge.

For 2006, the CJIA has an allocation of \$25 million for a new conveyor belt and anticipated revenue is \$536 million to be obtained through airport security fees, landing for aircrafts and rental of duty free shops.

Guyana Civil Aviation Authority in 2005, implemented measures to improve safety oversight services towards satisfying the FAA International Safety requirements; Implementation of IKO standards and other regulations relative to safety, aviation security and air traffic services. The National Civil Aviation approved the National Civil Aviation Programme in February, which required aviation stakeholders to develop their own security programmes for approval. Civil Aviation Authority is allocated for 2006 a capital expenditure of \$22 million for lightning protection and revenue is expected at \$241 million for 2006. The Lightning Protection Project is expected to be completed in October 2006.

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In 2006, it is also expected to train Air Traffic Controllers to supervisory levels in-house. CJIA also plans to establish a twenty-four hour supervision for aircraft traffic control by July 2006 and to establish a computer network at Timehri to link the Georgetown and Timehri networks; \$6 million to be met from revenue is anticipated for this.

With respect to Sea Defences the Project Execution Unit under the Eighth EDF Programme commenced the process for the construction of four kilometres of rip-rap sea defences in Region 2, Kalidonian to Capoey which is 1.8 kilometres and in Region 3 Tuschen, Met-en-Meerzorg and Hague is 2.2 kilometres. The cost of this project is \$36 billion. The commencement order was issued on 29 October for a contract period of twenty-three months.

There is also a contract for the supply and construction materials including boulders, filter fabric and gabion baskets for emergency works at a cost of \$179 million which was signed on 24 October 2005.

The actual expenditure for the greenheart revetment, the earthen embankment, the rock-slope protection, sealing cavities and weeding and cleaning of the sea dam in 2005 was \$995 million. The projection for 2006 against an estimated expenditure of \$2.34 billion includes work to be concentrated on the completion of the CDB funded sea defence at Profitt Belladrum to be completed during 2006 at a cost of G\$1.029 billion.

Mr Speaker, I heard Mr McAllister's speech for the third time tonight and somebody was telling me that he was making the third speech for me. If you hear this again it does not matter. The residents from Belladrum to Profit are expected to benefit from these.

Physical works on the Eighth EDF sea defences in Regions 2 and 3 would commence. Critical and vulnerable areas in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 under Emergency Works Programme would be addressed to the cost of \$650 million. Projects at eight locations would be continued at a cost of \$62 million. Work will also begin at Phoenix, Belfield, Enterprise to Canefield in Leguan and Glasgow on the East Bank Berbice for \$414 million; \$46 million has been allocated for un-programmed emergencies. The Ministry's Force Account Unit completed works on-declared public works in Georgetown including Vlissengen Road, Irving Street, Carifesta Avenue and other declared public roads as well as patching of pot holes and overlaying of hot-mix of certain streets after the floods of January 2005. Works in excess of \$80 million have been completed. In addition the unit

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is now working on the roads in Wakenaam, the value of which is \$128 million. As at 31 December 2005, thirty-five percent of these works have been completed, the inclement weather resulted in these works being suspended.

Under the Miscellaneous and Urban Works Programme for which \$1.6 million was allocated in 2005 from local funds forty-one roads have been completed, while others are in progress. Among those in progress at various stages of completed are:

- The Mara Road;
- The Black Polder Road;
- The De Hoop Branch Road;
- Roads in New Amsterdam - lots 1 and 2;
- The approach road to Parika; and
- The Roads in Corriverton and Rose Hall in the Corentyne.

Once again, the adverse weather conditions have resulted in these roads being delayed. Of the \$1.9 billion allocated under Miscellaneous Roads Urban Roads to be done by Force Account \$1.395 billion is intended for miscellaneous roads and \$505 million for urban roads: \$1.09 billion will be spent on roll-over projects for 2005 and the remainder for new projects in 2006. These works will encompass roads throughout the country where hundreds of thousands of residents would benefit.

The Ministry's Force Account will continue to carry out works as a quick-response body in order to maintain roads under the Ministry's control in good control. Maintenance of our road network is a conscious policy of the administration, more so in light of the World Cup Cricket 2007.

The Government of Guyana also has a programme for assisting in the maintenance of roads under the control of the Mayor and City Council of New Amsterdam and Georgetown.

For the Kurupukari/Lethem Road, the Meckdeci Machinery and Construction Inc. had continued to maintain the this road beginning fifteen miles north of the Kurupukari Crossing through a maintenance contract funded from tolls collected by MMC. The major rehabilitation of this Kurupukari/Lethem Road through a contractual arrangement between GGMC and MMC will continue in 2006 at a cost of \$40 million. Severe damage was done to a number of areas along the road as a result of heavy rainfall

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resulting in the need for major rehabilitation which would not be covered from toll revenue.

Under the initiative for Regional Infrastructure in South America, the projects involving Guyana in the implementation agenda include the Guyana/Brazil Road. Funding has been requested for feasibility studies for the improvement of the existing road links; a response is being awaited.

With respect to the Takatu Bridge, on the border between Guyana and Brazil, construction by the Brazilian company was suspended and is expected to resume shortly. The Guyana/Venezuela Road financing the feasibility studies has been provided by the Andean Financial Corporation of Venezuela to the amount of US\$800,000. It is expected that the Terms of Reference will be approved shortly and allow for the studies to commence by the second quarter of 2006.

Work on the Guyana International Conference funded by the People's Republic of China to the value of approximately US\$6.5 million commenced in September 2004 and was substantially completed in December 2005. The commissioning is expected shortly.

[Interruption: 'That was Ricky Lowe.'] Ricky Lowe was not involved in this project.

[Laughter] He was not.

Government of India has provided US \$6.5 million grant and US\$19 million line of credit for the construction of the Providence Cricket Stadium. Government of Guyana has funded the car park, access roads, drains, field and pitch, the fencing, telecommunication, furniture, fixtures and fittings.

Mr Speaker, as a result of the programmes presented, not only for the Ministry of Transport and Hydraulics, but for other Ministries discussed and those to follow, I commend the 2006 Budget as presented to the Government to this National Assembly in the interest of development for the people of this country. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Mrs Shirley Melville

Mrs Shirley J Melville: Mr Speaker and Honourable Members of the National Assembly, I rise to make my contribution to the Budget Debate 2006 - *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP.*

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Mr Speaker, once again we meet to debate the Budget on behalf of our nation. How are the various allocations going to enhance the lives of the Guyanese society?

Mr Speaker, should we note the many comments from the man in the street, the empty benches in the public gallery and the analyses of the many professionals about this Budget, surely a clear message is being sent that the Budget before this Honourable House does not arouse the interest and bring hope to the Guyanese people. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, Rupununi, Region 9 has continued to charter its course of development. In fact, our Motto is *Development, Development and more Development*. Despite the many setbacks in the social and economic sectors, our people should be commended for their unwavering efforts. As I have said in this Honourable House in the past, the people of Region 9 do not expect the Government to address all their needs and therefore alternative ways are sought.

Mr Speaker, for the past five years we have heard of the many roads, schools, health centres, bridges, electricity and water wells and were provided in the various hinterland regions. Congrats to the Guyana Government for performing their duties to the people. However, this should not be seen as if the Government of Guyana is doing a favour of the people of the hinterland. *[Applause]* It is the mandate of the government of the day to provide such infrastructure and services to the people. What should be of utter importance is the quality of work done; did we get value for money and were the workers paid?

Mr Speaker, with regard to roads five years, we have been hearing of the many roads that were built in Region 9. For example, Lethem and Karasabai Roads, Lethem is the administrative centre of the Rupununi and the roads are in a deplorable state. The road to Karasabai is still incomplete and the people of North Pakaraimas are still awaiting their payment for working on the roads. Mr Speaker, we welcome the gesture of the government, however, the government should listen to the people so that year after year monies are not utilised on the same projects.

Another section of the road of great concern is Annai to Lethem. We must acknowledge the bus service of Mr Chris Correia and his determination in providing such a service despite the many hardships of the project. Mr Speaker, if the road between Annai and Lethem is not dealt with shortly, we would have the same scenario of last year. Lethem

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would be cut off from Georgetown during the rainy season. Unlike what our Honourable Member Minister Baksh was saying Annai to Lethem has never been properly dealt with. Before I move off from roads, bridges and buildings, there is no mention in the Budget with regard to the complex to house the immigration, health, customs and other services at the international crossing where the Takatu Bridge is being built. There is no mention of this. Three years ago we did hear something about the complex to be catered for, but we have not heard anything in the Budget this year. Mr Speaker, on the other side of the river a newly two storey Customs House has just been erected. The entire immigration area has been renovated and paved; there is the health authority; there is the agriculture authority on the other side. If we are talking about the bridge and the road to Georgetown, we need to get out and act together on this side of the river. *[Applause]* Therefore, I emphasize the need for better quality work on the roads, bridges and buildings.

Health - The state of the art Lethem Public Hospital is being constructed in order that people would benefit fully, systems need to be put in place to ensure that adequate drugs are available at all times. The shortage of drugs continues to be an issue for the Lethem Hospital as well as the health centres. I suggest that more training programmes are made available in this area. Malaria has continued within the area. The virus has been prevalent despite the efforts to bring it under control. Honourable Minister Rodrigues mentioned about the distribution of mosquito nets, our women groups have done an excellent job to complement this effort in particular South Central Indigenous People's Development Association (SIDA) has an ongoing programme in the manufacturing of hammocks and bed nets. Mr Speaker, this is an ideal example of a social enterprise. I do support the call for a programme for the eradication of malaria as it continues to be an issue within the hinterlands of Guyana. Brazil continues to assist our people in the health sector and we have heard from persons in Regions 7 and 8 that persons do seek medical attention from Brazil as well. Region 9 welcomes the two doctors and the committed work of remote area medical.

Education - Schools have been constructed and like other regions shortage of textbooks and trained teachers continue to be an issue. However, we welcome the distant education

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programmes and look for to the future when fulltime trained teachers will be present always.

Our volunteers from Peace Corp, Project Trust World Teach and VSO continue to do an excellent job within the region. However, we need to do our part; secured and comfortable accommodation continues to be an issue.

The Food Feeding Programme of cassava bread and peanut butter is ongoing and this programme is being extended to more villages. This is an ideal example of the empowering of the people as school children are given nutritious snacks and parents are earning at the same time.

Mr Speaker, in Yupukari, a project Rupununi Learners is being coordinated by Mr Alice Taylor and the Villagers. It is being very successful; more than 7,000 books have been donated to the village and are displayed in the classrooms. A truly friendly environment has been created and the literacy level is on the rise.

Mr Speaker, Region 9 is the leading region in information technology. Apart from computers being donated to the schools by organisations such as Peace Corp, GT&T, Vanessa Company, remote area medicals and friends, there are ten satellite dishes sprinkled across our region. It is a joy to see our young people have access to the internet. We are also able to communicate across the region via the internet.

This brings me to a very important point that the staff of the Parliament does not have access to the internet on weekends. This situation needs immediate attention as from time to time staff needs to work on weekends for example myself via the internet.

Mr Speaker, we have heard about the President Youth Initiative many projects. It would be most appropriate if some attention would be directed to dorms within Region and we did hear that our Honourable Minister Carolyn Rodrigues spoke about putting in some more dorms and hostels in other regions. Dozens of youth live in dorms. There is a great need for indoor as well as outdoor games. Hon Lumumba, please note that in Region 9, not all youth groups were allowed to choose their projects.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister Rodrigues spoke about the marked improvement in education. I agree with this statement. However, hinterland scholarships were given in these areas. *[Applause]*

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Electricity, housing and water - Mr Speaker, without cheap reliable electricity, the rate of progress is to be barely effective. Can the Honourable Member state what is the status of the Moca Moca hydro? Since 2001, electricity was posited for Tabatinga, to date this project is incomplete. Since 2001, infrastructure work was budgeted for Tabatinga and Culvert City. Mr Speaker, just across the Takatu River there are housing schemes emerging. Maybe the Honourable Baksh should pay a visit. The infrastructure work that was done before a single building was constructed; the roads to line out, water and energy were installed. Mr Speaker, this is the way to go so that persons would be encouraged to build. The water situation has been improved. However, there is a lot of room for improvement. Many persons still rely on their own water source as we do not have twenty-four hours water supply in Lethem. Mr Speaker, there are no street lights and at some point we need to come up with a solution, because as a result of no street lights there is definitely an increase in crime.

Mr Speaker, I will now focus on some burning issues and they have nothing to do with the Amerindian Bill, but which are fundamental to the empowerment of our people. Members of the government outlined what has been given to the Amerindian people such as:

- The training programmes of Toshaos and Village Council;
- A new building for the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs;
- The revision of the Amerindian Act;
- Distribution of mosquito nets;
- Improvements in education;
- Distribution of uniforms; and
- Improved health care, just to name a few.

Of course, Minister Nokta has to add his list as well when his time comes. However, the bottom line is that the Indigenous people like many other Guyanese would like to know how would they put food on the table, buying books and stationery, pay examinations fees, buy footwear and other necessities for their families, buy agriculture tools, acquire a motor transportation for their farm produce and much more. There is little emphasis on income generating activities and sustainability. For example when generators will be given to villages Karasabai, Sand Creek and Aishalton? Have we asked ourselves how

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fuel, lubricants and spares are going to be kept in supply? Have we thought it through before making such an investment? Would it be more economical to buy solar panels instead of generators?

Mr Speaker, we welcome the above, but we would like to earn our own money and be given a hand-up instead of a handout. The background and knowledge of the people is agriculture, yet little emphasis has been placed in this sector over the past five years. Farmers would welcome extension officers.

Mr Speaker, in the PRSP Report under Annexe on Page 19, what do we have? Planned Action 2004 - continue to expand extension services to farmers. Achievement Outcome 2004 - Extension services were provided to farmers in Regions 1, 8 and 9. Further to that, this is a myth; we have never had extension officers for the past decade. On 16 August 2005, I received a letter from Mt Luncheon which stated:

Dear Mrs Melville,

On behalf of the Policy Coordination and Policy Management Unit, Office of the President, I would like to thank you for your attendant at and participation in the review of the Poverty, Reduction, Strategy Progress Report for Members of Parliament held on 9 August 2005 in the Parliament Chamber, Public Building.

With respect to the questions and clarifications that were raised at the meeting, please find enclosed a consolidated response from the PCE and PMU.

Sincerely Yours,

(Signed) Roger Luncheon

Along with that, there is a section which my people in the Rupununi are very sore about – regional issues and problems are not adequately dealt with. Figures and projects do not support assertions. Minister Nokta gave information to prove otherwise response ignored.

Mr Speaker, I have been sent by my people of Region 9 to tell the Minister of Agriculture and other Ministers who are responsible for agriculture that agriculture is the backbone of our region and we have not had extension officers for decades. Extension officers are the key players to complement the efforts of the farmers and to aid our people out of poverty.

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For example, in one village a project of rearing of small livestock was undertaken when funds were received from the President Youth Initiative Award in the latter part of 2005. Many of the livestock died because of the wrong salt and it is not DEC salt that was administered to them. Mr Speaker, you do understand how important extension officers are to the framers of not only Region 9, but we did hear it from Region 1, Region 8 and you are going to hear it from Region 7 as well

Marketing of cash crops has been and continues to be a problem. We welcome the good news about the certificates for the export of peanuts. We will now have to convince our farmers once again to plant peanuts on a commercial basis. Once again, were the extension officers available out there in the fields with continuous communication, we would not have had such a reduction in the production of the peanuts plants.

Mr Speaker, agriculture is one of our means of getting us out of the poverty bracket. However, the programmes of the government need to complement the efforts of the farmers and assist in areas such as marketing. NARI continues its good work at the St Ignatius nursery. However, there is only so much that can be done with the limited resources. Mr Speaker, I suggest that at least two motorbikes be available for our outreach programmes.

On another point, one of the projects within the Budget for the region is the rehabilitation of the abattoir. Mr Speaker, there is no twenty-four electricity, therefore how are we going to rehabilitation storage facilities. It simply does not make sense unless of course Mr Nokta has some good news about fixing the Moco Moco Hydro.

To complement our agriculture drive in Region 9, we are looking at tourism. Mr Speaker, tourism is the largest industry in the world. This could be checked on the internet on the World Travel and Tourism Council. The Rupununi as a region and along with the assistance of the Guyana Tourist authority, we have managed to become more organised in this sector. In 2005, Conservation International in collaboration with Guyana Tourism Authority hosted a workshop where the Rupununi Community Tourism Association was formed. Regional representatives were in attendance from as far as Masakanari and our Honourable Minister Nadir was present also. The Rupununi Community Tourism Association also is having a representative on the Guyana Tourism Authority. From the North of Rupununi, Iwokrama, Surama, Anaputa, Opteri, Yupukari,

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St Ignatius, Nappi, Moco Moco, Shulinab, Rupenau, Sheriri, Amasikinari have started tourism activities along with our pioneers Dadanawah, Karasabai, Rock View and Manari. Presently, on-hands training is being done at the Rock View Resort and later in the month of February, a village will be earning as much as \$1.2 million for hosting nine visitors for five days.

Mr Speaker, in the Rupununi, we have also made a lot of links with international institutions like the [Jane Goodal Institute](#). There is a Roots and Shoots Programme in the Rupununi probably the first in Guyana and in 2007, Miss [Jane Goodal](#) should be visiting our dear Guyana.

Mr Speaker, knowledge is everything according to Hon Dr Jeffrey and that is why we have started in the area of education. Thanks to Institutions like Iwokrama , Conservation International and Bena Hill Institute. We have many conservation and wildlife clubs from North to Deep South Rupununi. Some are geared with TVs, DVDs and generators so the message of conservation could filter out to the young and the old. Mr Speaker, in the Rupununi and other hinterland areas, we have the conditions to meet the need of this speciality tourism. This includes recreation and sports, nature travel, cultural and heritage travel and adventure travel. Since the 1990s our government has been stressing the need for emphasis to be placed on eco-tourism.

Let us empower our indigenous brothers and sisters so that more handicraft of superb quality could be obtained. Recently balata craft has been sold to the US and Europe by the artisans of Nappi Village. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are going directly to the people bimonthly.

The Adventure Travel Society offers a definition of eco-tourism. Mr Speaker, I think it is appropriate that we share it with the Honourable House. *Environmentally responsible travel to experience the natural areas and culture of regions, while promoting conservation and economically contributing to the community.* Mr Speaker, this is what could assist our indigenous brothers and sisters as they fully qualify to be involved in eco-tourism. However, the reason for going into details on eco-tourism is because I was deeply disappointed when the Hon Minister Nadir mentioned only e-commerce legislation. Mr Speaker, I ask of this Honourable House to consider the wildlife legislation. We are fully aware of the need to strengthen our wildlife legislation. Mr

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Speaker, we have an ideal opportunity to create wealth by yearning Guyanese; do not let us lose it. Eco-tourist will want to visit special unique and pristine places of interest; intact eco systems with native animals, plants, trees and marine species, cultural and archaeological sights that offer opportunities to witness existing and past cultural aspect, sights with recreational resources and opportunities.

Mr Speaker, how could we speak about eco-tourism and we are not reviewing our wildlife legislation. If we continue to release more wildlife licences without knowing what it is we have, we are certainly heading in the wrong direction. Mr Speaker, I suggest that surveys of animals, birds and primates be conducted before further wildlife licences are issued. As I speak, I hope it is not too late. As we already have approximately fifty-six exporters of wildlife according to a list of exporters of 2005, which I have here with me.

In closing, Mr Speaker, Region 9 is an example of partnership. Our leaders of Region 9 have begun sharing their knowledge and experiences with other Guyanese brothers and sisters in other regions. Before long a booklet entitled *Working Successfully at the Grass Roots Level* would be released. This booklet would enable the dissemination of information to other regions. Mr Speaker, we are very much interested in helping ourselves, therefore we hope that with the efforts of our people, consultation by the government in a meaningful way together we can alleviate poverty and continue our good working and matured relationships. May God bless our beautiful country? I thank you Mr Speaker. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

We can suspend for a few minutes at this time.

19:50H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

20:15H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour , Human Services and Social Security

Hon Rev Dr Ramnauth DA Bisnauth : Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the National Assembly, I rise to support the motion so ably moved by my colleague the Hon Saisnarine Kowlessar that this national assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2006 of sums amounting to \$102.9 billion.

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I wish to refer to the comments made by Mr Williams and one comment made by the Honourable Member Mrs Melville during their presentations

However, I wish to indicate that my support is not pro forma, it is wholehearted and honest; my congratulations of the Honourable Minister's efforts as well as those of the staff are genuine, convinced as I am, that given the exogenous, indigenous and historical constraints that beset our embattled HIPC country, Budget 2006 is a workmanlike, realistic blue-print. That Guyana is one of eighteen countries that falls within this category; described derisively by the Hon Deryck Bernard as *basket cases* cannot be a matter of pride and congratulations on the part of Government as the Honourable Member seems to suggest. If I did not know the Honourable Member, I would have been tempted to say, that the very suggestion itself could only have emanated from someone who is mentally a *basket case*.

The Budget has been described as holding out goodies presumably for the electorate in an Election Year, but the Minister has scotched that notion and it is significant that the author did not repeat it in his presentation last evening. The Minister said on Page 4:

This Budget does not make grand promises which people might expect in an Election season.

The speakers on the opposition benches have indicated omissions in the Budget Presentation as they see it and have suggested alternative ways that might have been employed to reverse the perceived negative trends in the nation's economy and consequently on the nation's growth and development. Again they have called for a frame-work in which the details in the Budget might be held together. This Mr Speaker, is the responsibility of an opposition that must present itself as a viable alternative to the incumbent government and particularly so in an election year. There cannot be any quarrel here. I accept the Hon Minister's judgement that the 2006 Budget is the best possible configuration in our existential situation. To my unpractised eyes, in those matters, it seems to me more realistic that utopian; if not balanced as some would like, then properly skewed when it comes to the allocation of anticipated financial resources to the several Ministries in order that those bodies may continue to push projects and programmes in keeping with the government's ideology of development articulated in a

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number of documents, not least of all the PPP/C 2001 Election Manifesto and most recently distilled in the 2006 Budget under the Theme: *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*. I know every body would not agree with this Governmental ideology.

Naturally, I would have liked a larger vote for Programme 483 of my Ministry's work, but the modest increase in the 2005 Budget will assist us and our partners, like the Caribbean Office of the ILO and the Ministry of Health with some re-prioritisation of the objectives that we had set ourselves for 2006, to meet the challenges that we shall face this fiscal year. In this regard, we achieved all of the major targets set for 2005. We are confident of doing so in 2006 and are already re-organising to meet these challenges. At the same time, we welcome the substantial increase that has been given to the Social Security component of the Ministry. The Honourable Minister Bibi Safora Shadick spoke to this in her presentation on Monday.

Mr Speaker, I accept the position articulated by speakers on the government side of the House that Budget 2006 is a one year plan within the context of an overarching blue-print that reaches back in time and envisages a projection beyond 2006.

The Minister affirmed that a comprehensive plan for national development was presented in 2001 and that, to quote him, *we have consistently delivered over the years. We delivered in 2005 and we will continue to deliver in 2006 and beyond.*

Mr Speaker, I understand *Transformation* as *change* and *Modernization* as *change* that is compatible with the present stage or knowledge and achievement, that we must affirm, that seeks to comprehend the legacy of the past, carefully separating the blessings from those things that could not be described as such, that is sensitive to the needs of the future, that change is increasingly aware of its global context. If we assimilate development to modernization, then, I believe that development is modernization minus dependency. Nobody would doubt that we have not achieved that state. On this side of the House, we believe that we are on our way. We believe like the Hon Ravi Dev, that we must exit the Breton Wood's arrangements for the development of the world's poor countries. How many of us have not inveighed at many international fora against IFAs. We can only wait with impatience as we anticipate that exit. We know of Cheddi Jagan's

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views on those financial agencies, and we can understand why Forbes Burnham (it is alleged) construed the acronym IMF in a particular way.

I have heard of a Government being accused of responding to the Washington Consensus. I am surprised that some people who accused us of that, are now themselves seeking to be friends of the Consensus.

In more practicable terms, I understand a modern society, as one that makes it possible for people to enjoy a good quality of life:

- that is compassionate to the less fortunate and economically feasible for all;
- that promotes personal liberty, basic well being, including health, racial and ethnic equality and the opportunity for a rewarding life for all.

It is a society that recognizes and caters for human weaknesses, differences in ability and motivation and the formidable obstacles facing any process that challenges the status quo. It is a society that is prepared to shed yesterday's conventional wisdom about important things like inflation, the deficit, taxes and immigration and recognises the immense value of education (yes, I would emphasize technical and vocational education and training and Information Communication Technology) and these are expected to be provided by the Board of Industrial Training that falls to my responsibility; a society that promotes accountability, environmental responsibility and responsible political action, on the part of all of us.

This may seem a tall order, but we believe that these things are possible. Indeed, the Budget suggests that with buoyancy in the bauxite, forestry and manufacturing, in tourism, as well as in other sectors that that development is not so elusive as the Hon Ravi Dev suggested

And nothing has impressed me more in recent times (and I surprise myself over this) that these things are achievable than the contributions that one has heard from both sides of this debate. True, some people, probably all of us, perceived the Guyanese reality from the prism of our political partisanship and understandably so. I have no problem with that, except when it induces a deafness that is more universal than the Honourable Member Mr Alexander would like to admit and when those particular parallaxes lead to a consciously dishonest way of citing printed material and even government reports. Mr

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Speaker, speaking about debate, I almost lost one to my youngest daughter. I mention this, because she is nineteen and it seems to me that she belongs to that generation about which we are talking, when we talk about development. I feel that I almost lost that debate. Indeed, I am not so sure that I won it.

She asked me, what is the point of a Budget Debate and indeed, in fact, if the word *debate* is not a misnomer when applied to the process. She reminded me that I have listened to the Budget Debates in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados and yes in Guyana. She asked me if I know of a single case in which a budgetary allocation has been amended, because of any new light and accurate light on data and figures that might have emerged in the process of the debate. I thought about it and in the end I had to answer, no.

She asked me if in all the years I have noticed any radical difference, other than in size of numbers and shifts in heads in budget presentations, say between the JLP and the PNP in Jamaica; the PNM and the National Alliance for Reconstruction in Trinidad and Tobago and the DLP and the BLP in Barbados, between the PNC/R and the PPP/C in Guyana, whether the presenters of the budget were Socialists, Democrats, Labour oriented or out-and-out capitalists. She declared smugly that the differences are there, but they are insignificant; since countries like ours, that is to say poor countries, developing countries, have little room for policy manoeuvres given the international financial climate and the realities of our being cash-strapped. And she said to me that is why the quarrel tends to revolve around corruption and financial management. That the quarrels (which we wrongly call debates) are more political than economical. Of course I could not agree with her totally.

I tell you Mr Speaker, I wiggled myself out of that by asserting that in Budget Debates, debate has, over the years, acquired a special meaning, that it is a process whereby the government gives an account of its stewardship in the use of such financial resources available to the country, from whatever legitimate sources, in keeping with some ideology of development, and whereby the opposition examines, analyses and by piercing and insightful observations, seeks to test the credibility of that stewardship account. Her parting shot was: Who are you kidding? It is little more than a cussing out, a thrust and

counter thrust of verbal sabres in accusation, rebuttal, excuses and justification. But I was reminded of her, by two observations made by the Hon. Vincent Alexander:

- (i) That this process is mainly ritualistic, (I used to think like that some time ago, but never did say it) although I do not accept the notion that that ritualism is related to the nation being in a state analogous to that of a comatose patient whose condition is stable. Is it because the structure of the debate itself makes it primarily ritualistic? Can it be changed? Can it be made less harassing?
- (ii) That what goes on here in this august Assembly is theatre (so said the Hon Vincent Alexander) of which the cricket stadium is probably a fitting symbol. Actually in Athens theatre was associated with the amphitheatre not the stadium. I think of theatre in a positive sense - good ART mimics LIFE and sometimes LIFE mimics ART.

But I find the analogy of the theatre fascinating. Who are the dramatis personae? Surely, not only members on the government side that we seem to imply. Who are the Greek chorus? Hecklers? With some stylization that chorus would have achieved Shakespearean excellence at several points in the Hon Shaik Baksh's presentation. Who are the jesters who take us to great heights of hilarity? Speakers on both sides? Who is the audience, folks including children in the gallery? Or does Television give us a wider audience, the electorate possibly? Then theatre becomes the pollster although all of us deny that it is political by referring to low political blow, when somebody is seen just as something is political. I read the answers to a question posed by a newspaper on the relevance of an interested debate (not that I always give newspaper columns and editorials, the status of primary source in every research as some people are tempted to do) Out of about twelve to fifteen persons asked, only three responses gave me cause to cheer:

- (i) A man said that the budget is lopsided: and even that is a response.
- (ii) A young woman applauded the vote and the role of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs.

- (iii) The other expressed little knowledge for and less interest in the debate. Several said that they have to make a living and that budget or no budget, and interest in it is only distraction from the process of making that living.

What a disappointment it would be Mr Speaker, if when the Hon Deryck Bernard's motion on equitable access to the media is passed (and I hope it does) and in spite of interested politicians on both sides of the House on their being covered by television, that at prime time, people prefer to look at *Oprah* and *I Love Raymond* than at another political speech or presentation by whomsoever. Frankly, I do not know about these programmes, I do not believe in self-preservation.

Mr Speaker, I was told a story, when I was Minister of Education. I shall repeat it. It is a parable told by Soren Kierkegaard, an existentialist philosopher and theologian. He said that once upon a time, a circus camp in a field outside a small town, fire broke out at midnight in that camp. The manager sent someone to the city square to mobilise people to come to put out the fire. The man jumped, he appeared three times in the air and people laughed because they thought that that was an interesting way to get people to come to the Big Top [*Laughter*]. Mr Speaker, the importance of this section of who we are on both sides of the House - all three sides of the House - is extremely important to me, to boost moral of this particular parable at this time.

I was intrigued by the Hon. Winston Murray's inductive approach to an analysis of the flood crisis and by the Hon Stanley Ming's contrasting inductive approach. The despair occasioned in me by the one, along with Minister Collymore's *melting ice caps* was vitiated by the Honourable Member Mr Ming's unintended optimism that the problems are curable if we attended to sluices and outfalls in a timely manner. We may certainly not, in the foreseeable future, have to relocate to Paramakatoi

If I know Caribbean history well and that history probably is more sugar than any thing, over the years when the crop was in a healthy state of affair and the returns were good, (note the sort of changes in the industry}, when crime scenes freeze that industry, that was the time people talked about changes, but as soon as things return to normalcy, inertia returned. I would hope that that would not be the same in relation to the crisis of flooding which we faced, the Hon Winston Murray, I have a feeling that we may go the same way as sugar.

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Mr Speaker, I would have wished to say to the Hon Jerome Khan, that the future is experienced as hope and anguish. Any government's responsibility would consist of reducing the angst and enhancing hope, whether in race relations of Guyana's economic growth or budgetary allocation, taxes, thresholds, et cetera.

As to the past, its significance can be changed, I would suggest, if the facts cannot be changed by our letting the past remain in the past by a process that understands that past in its historical developmental context and if we are charitable to the main actors, in the past, just as we would want future generations to be charitable to us when we foul-up. And believe you me, the rest of us will foul-up.

The constant negative recall and the reference to it by some and defence and rationalization by others, only produce rancour and suspicion and undermine our efforts to build trust that is so important for modernization. It is true that those who forget the past are doomed to repeat its mistakes, but it is equally true, that those who cannot forget the past are doomed to be irrelevant in the present.

Mr Speaker, in reviewing our project of transforming Labour, I wish to indicate that in our 2001 Manifesto, we promised several things which we were able to do and two things which we could not do and these two things are irrelevant to the statement made by Hon Basil Williams.

We said that employment is a thing, where we are committed to:

- Employing more and better qualified labour officers;
- Establishing several committees, including a Tripartite Committee to advise the Minister on Labour matters;
- A National Advisory Council on Occupational Health and Safety
- An oversight Labour Market Information Systems Committee.

Enacted legislation dealing with:

- The prevention of discrimination in employment;
- Severance Pay;
- Occupational Health and Safety;
- Trade Union Recognition;
- Minimum Wages;
- Holidays with Pay;

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- Child Labour; and
- Maintain a stable and democratic industrial climate.

We say that our commitments were:

- To establish an Occupational Health and Safety Authority and we did that.
- To strengthen the workplace safety committees and we did that
- To continue to collaborate with our Caribbean and other partners to develop a modern Labour Market Information and Recruitment and Placement systems and we have done that.

Two things we were not able to do, interesting enough:

- To pass the Industrial Tribunal Bill, which has been discussed by our - Social Partners and which has moved us;
- To develop an independent mediation and conciliation service;

Our Social Partners both the GTUC and CAGI advised that we put this matter on hold since the experience of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica indicated that matters regarding Industrial Relations are held up for an intolerable long periods in those places that really have an independent mediation.

As we have indicated in previous Budget presentations, we stated our mandate as follows:

- To contribute to the economic and social development of Guyana by preparing and executing appropriate policies and programmes that will maintain a stable industrial relations climate throughout the country;
- To develop a social compact aimed at increasing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in the production and service sectors and to provide a range of services to employers, trade unions and workers in order to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and social justice between labour and management.

Mr Speaker, in fulfilment of that mandate, among other things we did the following and I wish to indicate without troubling the statistics. Indeed, I remember when I came first into Labour, I provided these statistics and my honourable friend Mr James Mc Allister said that in any case.

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- Reviewed the function in conjunction with the tripartite committee, rates and wages, hours of work and other conditions of services of various categories of employees;
- Reviewed and drafted amendments and new legislations and recommended these to Cabinet;
- Investigated complaints made by workers;
- Inspected workplaces to ensure compliance with the Labour Laws;
- Advised and conducted seminars to educate employers and employees on the Industrial Labour Laws and Industrial Relations Practices and Procedures;
- Conciliated services in disputes between employers and trade unions;
- Set up and service arbitration tribunals;
- Conducted membership surveys and polls to determine trade union recognition;
- vetted and signed Collective Labour Agreements;
- Liaised with International and Regional Organisations;
- Prepared and submitted of ILO Instruments of Parliament;
- Prepared and submitted to ILO, Annual Reports on applications of Conventions;
- Completed and submitted ILO questionnaires on proposed conventions;

and I can go on

- Promoted social dialogue/social partnership; and
- facilitated the promotion of programmes to enhance production and productivity.

In 2006, we will be doing much of the same, with EDUCARE, we will by placing a closer attention to Child Labour with a view to first of all curtailing it and eventually eradicating it.

I now wish to touch on strikes. In relation to strikes and work stoppages, I wish to indicate that there were 165 such cases in 2005, sixty less than in former years.

There was none in the public sector.

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In fact 117, of these 165 cases were of one-day duration only; there were only 2 of 8 days period and 2 over 8 days.

Mr Speaker, I do not have to give you a break-down as to the sectors, but the Honourable Member Mr Basil Williams was correct, most of these strikes really happened in the agriculture sector and that is to say in the sugar belt. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member

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

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member.

Hon Rev Dr Ramnauth DA Bisnauth: In the area of Occupational Safety and Health we have had a policy paper prepared in relation to HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, has long recognized the HIV/AIDS is much more than a Health issue. It is also a human resource and workplace issue and therefore one that has serious implications for national development. It is important to note Mr Speaker, that the age-group that is more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS ranging between fifteen and forty-five years.

Mr Speaker, I remember you saying at a particular forum as Chairman, thank God you and I are out of that category, we are not sexually active, where upon the Chairman said, speak for yourself. It is against this background that the Ministry in collaboration with several donor agencies, having earmarked on a number of interventions, aimed at educating and sensitizing workers, building capacity of senior, professional peer educators and training of trainers, and strengthening inter-agency collaboration in HIV/AIDS workplace programmes. Through funding from the Guyana HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project, the Ministry has also secured the services of a Focal Point Person to coordinate its HIV/AIDS initiatives. Generally speaking, we are doing well in the area of Occupational Safety and Health.

Mr Speaker, I just one point out four entities in addition to the other things that we are doing:

- The expansion of Labour and Occupational Safety and Health inspection into non-traditional and hinterland based business and industries;

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- The promotion of greater co-operation and consultation between management and Labour;
- Strengthening management and accountability in Cooperative Societies;
- Expand the Tripartite Committee in keeping with the recommendation of the OAS meeting of Labour Ministers in Mexico to make that body Quadripartite to cater for workers in the non-formal sector.

These and other ways, we plan to participate in the efforts to transform Guyana through Modernisation and Partnership.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat, out of necessity, I would have to give some sort of recognition of the point raised by the Honourable Member Mr Basil Williams. This is creeping outside, as I suspect.

Firstly, the issue of inflation rate being higher than the seven percent wage increase for Public sector workers and that that constitutes a departure from the PPP/C's Government's policy position that increases in wages for public sector workers who would match inflation.

I was advised by the Honourable Minister of Finance (since I do not have an eye or a mind for these things) that while we might have done so, that government has done its best in the circumstances. Probably some people see it as one of jingles:

- that employment cost is only one call on the cost of delivery of Government Services; but that other calls include the cost of material and other inputs whose prices have increased significantly with high oil prices being the main contributor to that increase;
- that higher amounts have been earmarked for GPL and GWI in order to keep tariffs down:
 - to pay off the liabilities to the Transport and Harbour Department;
 - to make higher transfers to Linden for community power supply; and
 - to provide for ancillary services at Kwakwani after privatization,

Secondly; on the issue of contract workers ... According to the Hansard of Thursday, 10 March 2005, my response to the question on contracted labour, was only in relation to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, I could not have, as the

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Honourable Member seemed to suggest advanced the argument (to quote him) *that this universal practice in 2005 was due exclusively to the non-appointment of the Public Service Commission.*

Some works, of course ... (search the Hansard of 10 March 2005 at Page56 and you will see our explanation for this phenomenon).

We absorbed formally contracted employees of two subvention agencies, the Guyana Women's Leadership Institute and the National Documentation and Research Centre for Gender and Development. To these numbers, we have to add officers engaged to the staff of the Trafficking in Persons Office and there are some Labour Officers and some officers who work with the Empowerment Unit as explained by the Honourable Member Mr Odinga Lumumba. None, I repeat, none, earns a super salary. Except for the Presidential Adviser to the President, all of the contracted workers are paid within the GS Scales of 2 to 14. Let me add that the Ministry does not employ, the PSM does and as I understand it with the approval of the PSC. The PSC therefore, is involved in the employment of contract workers

Thirdly, on the issue of the Trade Union Recognition and Certification Board (Amendment) Bill, the correct designation is *Bill* and not *Act*.

Mr Speaker, I am really hesitant to address this issue at this time, since my Bill is pending before Parliament. For the time being, I can truly say that the principle of consultation has not been breached. In spite of the enactment of the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1988, which removed the need for consultation after the Lord Chancellor's declaration when the Labour (Amendment) Act of 1984 was challenged that the Minister of Labour caused Parliament to be in breach of the Constitution, in spite of there is no necessity for consultation, but we have valued consultation as necessary and proper to maintain equilibrium in industrial relations in this country, in the spirit of tripartism. No malice is intended in the Bill. It is our desire to make the TURB more efficient in its work and to obviate a state of affairs which exists when work of the court is stymied as the Honourable Member charged last year, because of government's representation on the Board. There is no government representative on the Board, as I said last year:

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What is interesting to note, Mr Speaker, (I am quoting from the Hansard) is that there is no government representative on the TURB. In 1990, the PNC/R government tabled a TURB Bill in Parliament. The suspension of Parliament put paid to that move. The Board proposed by that government envisaged a membership of two government representatives, two worker representatives, two employer representatives, with the Chairman to be appointed by the Minister of Labour, thus, effectively, giving the government three members on the Board. The TUC then, did not object to that composition. It was a curious objection to the first Chamber. The Honourable Cyril Belgrave was initially agreed by the employer representative on the grounds that this election gave the Trade Union Movement three representatives on the board; and only earlier as the workers' representative on the grounds that he was a Member of Parliament. Mr Speaker, I can say a few things about the TUC, but I do not wish to do so, because I wish to leave the door open for any kind of agreement that I believe could be achieved. I believe that -

- the International Labour Organisation Convention 87 of 1998 along with the Guyana Constitution guarantee every citizen the right of association; and
- the right of freedom of bargaining.

But when a union violates these guarantees ... The government has no intention to meddle in the affairs of the union. It is not our interest to alienate the union, it would not benefit us and it would be wrong for us to try to co-opt any union, but when the work of a Board is frustrated, it seems to me that the Government has to try to remove the blockage or that frustration. We do not intend to frustrate the business of unions, but we are all so interested in the rights of workers and the rights of unions, including the TUC and those workers are not necessarily the same. The TUC has expectation, I agree, but so do workers. Mr Speaker, in spite of this fact, I suspect in this issue there is now more in the pestle than the mortar, but I expect there is resolution to this problem. Let me say in passing as far as the TUC impasse with the Ministry is concerned; as a matter of fact, I know for a fact, a high powered meeting has been proposed for either this week-end or for Monday.

Mr Speaker, I now very quickly turn to a quick response to Hon Shirley Melville, to say that in 2004, I am advised that three craft, hospitality training programmes were

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conducted at Aishalton, Lethem and Karasabai. Markets have been created for farmers and craft producers at Rupununi and other places. The GOG has assisted with transportation and sales have been good. In fact residents are unable to produce for all of the events, that is for the rodeo, Rupununi Expo and GUYEXPO. Peanuts produced locally are all sold, the introduction of the school feeding pilot programmes in these three areas that is to say, Karaudan, Aranaputa and some where else where residents are now selling their peanuts to these projects, that peanut butter produced locally is holding its own in Region 9.

Mr Speaker, having made these observations, I wish to bring my presentation to an end and commending to all of us the Budget brought to this House by the Honourable Minister of Finance. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member
The Honourable Member, Miss Sandra Adams

Miss Sandra M Adams: Mr Speaker, I begin my speech with a quote from the Bible, King James Version: 2nd Samuel, Chapter 23: Verse 3:

The God of Israel said the rock of Israel speaks to me, he that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

Mr Speaker, I wish to say that I stand tall and strong to represent Region 10, the Region according to this Budget that has to depend on least to exist. Region 10 has been left out of several sections of this Budget. But the theme says, *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION PARTNERSHIP*. This is not realistic for a Region in a State as Region 10.

Mr Speaker, let me take this Honourable House through a few phases in a sector by sector description. My colleague dealt with the Bauxite Industry, but I wish to add, even though the Company now has approximately fifty percent of the previous work-force, that fifty percent is still not from the previous work-force, they have only employed twenty five percent of those workers, leaving seventy five percent out of a job, an estimate of about 900 homes without an income. That will be added to the thousands already unemployed in Linden

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Mr Speaker, while going through the Budget, I happen to reach up first with bridges and roads, and as a person who traverses the highway almost daily, I wish to quote from Page 16 Paragraph 3.28. It says:

Approximately \$1.6 million was spent on bridges, the bulk of which was used to complete the Main Bridges Programme ...

I am skipping two lines and I am going to -

... along New Amsterdam to Molson Creek Road, Essequibo Coast Main Road and the Linden Soesdyke Highway.

Right through this Budget Debate Speech, I have been hearing about the Linden/Soesdyke Highway repairs, but I have been traversing the highway almost daily and what was done, other than painting the rails of the bridges in red ... I would wish the Minister to tell me. And as I am on roads and as I speak, the residents of Linden in particular Kara Kara, Rainbow City and Retrieve have blocked the streets for the roads to be done. Minister Nokta, take note

Health - Mr Speaker, Honourable Member Mr Kadir spoke about the X-ray machine at the Linden Hospital Complex, but let me emphasize, the X-ray machine was out of operation since May 2005. While we are talking about a state-of-the-art hospital, people have to travel to Georgetown every day to the Georgetown Public Hospital Complex for X-rays, heart rate tests and other emergencies. But, Mr Speaker, if this Government is serious about the welfare of all people of this country, they would look seriously at the conditions in which people in situations have to be dealt with and within.

Mr Speaker, I am speaking from a personal experience, just a few weeks ago, being hospitalised at the Linden Hospital Complex, a woman passed away on the 12 January 2006, due to some painful situation:

- (i) She went in to hospital with her diabetes very high, she was given a special diet, but whether you have diabetes, pressure, your leg is broken, your arm is broken, you are pregnant, every-one gets the same diet.
- (ii) She had shortness of breath and was supposed to travel to the Georgetown Public Hospital via the ambulance for an X-ray and a heart-rate test and was told that the ambulance would only bring her if she was on transfer, otherwise she would have to find her own money to travel. She could not

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afford it, because she worked as a security guard. The doctor was upset, but could not do anything about it and subsequently she died.

Additionally, the Wismar Hospital that was built while the PNC was in government is now a mere shell and only serves as a clinic. Just for information, that hospital once had a theatre, a lavatory, dentistry, a pharmacy and other necessary medical facilities, which made it fully operational. The region has now submitted to the Ministry of Finance, a budget of \$11,654,000 to buy a number of medical equipment to up-grade the healthcare system in the region and was only given \$7.5 million, which means that some of these things have to be left out. Where is the care for the people in Linden?

I turn to Pages 40 and 41:

We have also taken other actions to boost the health sector, including the recruitment of foreign doctors in general and specialist fields; the large scale recruitment ...

I will now go to Paragraph 4:38

The Health Sector Programme will benefit from an allocation of \$455 million, which will be used to commence construction of the Linden Hospital; and upgrade electricity, water, sewage system ...

and the list goes on.

Mr Speaker, the Linden Hospital Complex does not have even one specialist by certification. I hope that those who will be coming this year, under this programme, Linden will benefit, if not, when the PNC/R takes office after this election, we will ensure that the people of Linden have proper healthcare [*Applause*] even before then, I will probable have to invite my leader to Linden, so that the state-of-the-art hospital could start, because only when the leader visits then things happen.

Water - On Page 21 Paragraph 3.40, it says:

approximately \$800 million was expended on the rehabilitation of water treatment plant in Wisroc and West Watooka.

Even though the Government claimed the expenditure on water was so great, we now have more water shortages in these very areas and more people were disconnected from their water supply even though Linden has many sources of water. Water still has not

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reached all the homes of the people that the Government had promised last year. Shame on the Government!

Let us move on to a very touchy subject and I am sorry that the Honourable Member Mr Lumumba is not in here. Mr Speaker, the President handed over a recreation centre at Kumaka, while at his Cabinet Outreach programme as one of the President's Youth Choice Initiative Project, but disappointingly that building belongs to the Jones's family in Kumaka, for they hold the keys and the Computer, but I have learnt to-day that the Honourable Member Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury took away the Computer from them and the youths have to say why and what they want to use the building for that was donated to them. If you were not a PPP/C member or your mother is not a PPP/C member you are doomed to use that building. As an example of this is the Pearsons family in Kumaka.

Police - Mr Speaker, the main Police Station in Linden has to beg favours ... (where is the Minister of Home Affairs?) ... to get documents photocopied, which mean that there is need for a photo copier. It is as simple as that. I helped them to photo copy stuff for the Police Station.

They need boats and engines that would surely be a replacement for what they had in the PNC/R's time. They had boats, engines and they had all the necessary tools to do their jobs. They also need more vehicles, so that Wismar would be equipped to move when called upon, in cases of emergency, not forgetting the break out from the Wismar lock-up twice. There is no vehicle, one policeman in one case and one female officer in another case to man an out-post in a largely populated area. I refuse to fret about these things, because I am confident that the PNC/R when they take government will put things in place.

Education - Mr Speaker I wish to deal mainly... (They are disappearing from me suddenly) ... with the riverain communities in Kwakwani. This does not mean that all is well at Linden, but nevertheless, let me state what is happening in the Berbice River primarily.

The Kwakwani Primary School was short of four teachers in September. The parents protested in Linden and at the Ministry of Education in Georgetown. The Department of

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Education in Linden, appointed two teachers since then one has left, leaving them of three teachers still short to date.

St Lodge Primary School, Berbice River with approximately with sixty students (take note Mr Nokta) housed grades V to X and has only one teacher.

Marudi Nursery School has twenty students and also house grades I to IV of the St Lodge Primary department, with approximately sixty students. The nursery department has two teachers for twenty students; the primary department has two teachers for sixty students, In the past, one of the nursery teachers taught the primary, but the department ordered the teacher to go back to the nursery department and the one teacher has to cope with the four classes. When the teacher is on sick-leave from the Marudi primary school, the teacher from St Lodge is expected to travel to Marudi, set work and travel back to St Lodge to teach.

The student hostel in Kwakwani is still unutilised due to lack of furnishing and that hostel was declared opened by Minister Nokta in 2000. Minister Nokta, you are aware that you have promised the people in Kwakwani that the hostel would become operational within one year that should have been in 2001. The teachers in the riverain areas of Region 10 are exempted from the remote area incentive offered to teachers in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9. What happen to the teachers in region 10? Mr Speaker, the region in its Capital Budget proposes and asks the Ministry of Finance under several sectors for \$180,353,500 and was only given \$128,815,000 under the Capital Budget.

I wish to give you a little break-down of what dilemma the Regional Chairman and the Council of Region 10 is about to face. Mr Speaker, the Regional Chairman and its Council were given \$5,000 additional funds for this year. Its Budget for 2004 was \$5,494,000; its Budget for 2005 was \$5,005,000; its Budget for 2006 is \$5,505,000, so we only have an increase of \$5,000.

This has now put the Chairman and his Council at a disadvantage, starting with the payment of the Toshaos and Captains in the Berbice and Demerara Rivers. Stipends for Captains and Toshaos have increased by \$3,000, giving the Chairman's Budget an additional \$27,000 per month to pay Captain, giving him \$324,000 per year out of his Budget. Already he has a negative net of \$319,000 for this year, be it is only \$5,000 they give him and they increase the Toshaos' money. The RDC's work is hampered from the

outset; ideally visits should be done every month to the riverain communities and the interior locations. Do not forget that Kurupukari belongs to Region 10. You cannot visit with the kind of money you are giving. You will have to be taking out of that money, RDC travelling, Lunch has to be taken out from that money. Mr Nokta I needed to review the Budget from the outset, because it is totally impossible for them to operate with this kind of money.

Under *Drainage and Irrigation*, the Region asked for \$16,800,000. No money was given under the Regional Budget, because (and I am turning to the Honourable Member Philomena Sahoye-Shury, she knows what I am coming with) Cheryl Drepaul got all the work and she boasted about it - Ravi Narine D and I.

Mr Speaker, I wish to draw this House's attention to a conflict that is being created through that same operation. This morning in the Retrieve Area ... Mrs Drepaul lives in Wismar, she took her team over to Retrieve and the people came out with cutlasses, forks, spades, knives and said that they will not allow her and her team into their area. Now that is causing some chaos, because if the Region is being given money under D and I, it would be properly channelled to the CDC's group to do work in their communities, but because of the *ad hoc* and the discrepancies, discrimination all sorts of things that are happening, it is going to cause people to kill one another just for a few dollars. We need to take note of that matter.

Mr Speaker, under Land and Water Transport, the region asked for \$12 million and this was primarily to do three things:

- (i) To construct a fifty-foot river launch for the Berbice River and I repeat, for the Berbice River;
- (ii) To purchase a four by four mini bus for the medical people within the region; and
- (iii) To purchase a double cabin utility vehicle for the region's administration

No money was given to these several areas, because apparently nobody in the region should drive a vehicle anymore and the people in the Berbice River should not be given priority to move. Minister Nokta and others know that the people in the Berbice River, have been calling for a launch year upon year, now that the Region has decided to put it fully into the Budget, it has been ignored. I would wish a positive response for that. The

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Regional Chairman's vehicle is four years old, it is encountering problems with overheating and sorts of things, and the Region's vehicle that they are using is four years old, because they were bought together and they were reconditioned vehicles, not new vehicles and they cannot be given money to purchase a new vehicle. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Cool down Members; please give the Honourable Member a chance to do here presentation.

Miss Sandra M Adams: Mr Speaker, I think that the Government is depending on LEAP or LEAF to give the Region what they are calling for, but that is not the purpose of LEAP or LEAF. And to make a correction, the vehicles are far older than four years, you will remember the grey one, since 1992 and then there was one since 1996; Minister Nokta knows.

The Region asked the administration and the Ministry of Finance for \$4, 035,000 and they were given \$1.5 million to purchase furniture and equipment for offices throughout the region. Where do you expect these people to get the monies from - LEAP or LEAF? If the Government could redirect some of the funds, we would be happy in the region. Education asked for \$20,136,000, to purchase furniture and equipment for their educational programmes for their riverain homes and for the schools. I wish to ask Minister Jeffrey, but he is not here, if he expects them to cut the cloth to suite his size, because the Ministry only give them \$6,000,000. So they have to cut to suite his size apparently.

Mr Speaker, the Government is making a boast of seventy-five percent increases in old age pension, taking it to \$3,500 per month; the public assistance is \$2,300 per month. Let me give this Honourable House a break-down of how the money will only last one senior citizen a day. The senior citizen who has to come to Georgetown for an X-Ray, because the X-Ray machine in Linden is not working, she will have to pay \$1,400 return passage, then \$120 to and from the park to the hospital and back, then she has spend at \$500 to get something to eat, because she would not get anything cheaper. If she is living in Wisroc she will have to spend \$160 return passage, she cannot go to Eureka Lab, because a test there is \$5,000 that is too expensive for her. If she purchases some food stuff, she can only buy rice, in Linden it is \$400 per gallon; she can only buy one pound of chicken

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at \$260 per pound; \$100 eddo leaves, because that is all she can afford and \$60 cubes and that is it for the money for the month, no milk, no liver and I cannot go on.

Mr Speaker, if I attempt to go through those who receive public assistance, I would not even get the eddo leaves.

The Minister of Works spoke to roads and street lights. All that he spoke on, none of them are for Linden. If the Honourable Member who will be coming after me, can tell this Honourable House that soon we will be getting some lights on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway and street lights in Linden ... [*Interruption: 'The PNC left it like that.'*] ... then you are saying to me, Honourable Member Mr Kumar that you discriminate, because if the PNC left it like that, you are leaving it like that to - that is what you are saying to me. We will be happy to know, what this Government has in store in terms of light for Linden.

Mr Speaker in closing, the Linden Town Week Committee would like to see the roads welcoming to all, who would wish to travel to Linden and all those over-seas based Guyanese who are coming home for those ten days activities. These activities are planned to help Linden to see resuscitation in the hopeless times for Linden under this Government. A few drainage works cannot compensate for a permanent job. The youths are asking for jobs and I say no more, when it comes to the youths, crying out for jobs – permanent jobs.

I cannot and will not close without speaking about NCN Linden. Mr Speaker, this Government is shameless when it comes to the media coverage and I dare say that the people of Linden are hoping to see their representative fully on that same NCN on this Budget Debate. I do not know who will sort it out, all we see is Robert Persaud and others. We see what they want us to see. Even the people are working under adverse conditions with pressure from NCN Georgetown as to what they can show and what they cannot show.

Channel No. 8 belongs to the people of Linden, it was given as a gift from Green Construction Company and it should be given back to the people of Linden. [*Applause*] Nevertheless under the PNC/R Government, it will be given back to the people of Linden and I am sure about that. I close by saying that the people of Region 10 take it as an

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insult, the way they are treated in this Budget and are looking forward to the day, when the PNC/R takes Government. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

The Hon Member, Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to ask you Sir, that the Honourable Member withdraw her statement of me taking away Computer from Kumaka, I know nothing about it and I am asking for an apology *[Pause]*

The Speaker: The Honourable Member has declined to rise to apologise and I cannot force her Honourable Member.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Today, I rise to give my support to the 23 January 2006 Budget, presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar to the amount of \$102 billion dollars.

The Minister and Officers of his Ministry must be complimented for a job well done not only for a well crafted budget estimate, but also for their tireless days committed for an early presentation. *[Applause]*

Mr Speaker, it is vital in condemning this Budget that we do not oppose for opposition sake, but we must oppose constructively for anyone can only measure development, when an assessment and an analysis is made to where the country was economically and socially and what are the statistics today. That is how one assessed development either positively or negatively. No one can deny that Guyana has progressed, maybe not by leaps and bounds, as some of us would like, but it has progressed in education, health, housing infrastructure, roads, water distribution, farming, mining et cetera *[Applause]*. Yes, the PPP/C Government was elected to office, in 1992 and in our thirteen years in office, we could without hesitation record what was done, what is being done and according to our programme, what we hope to achieve. If only we are given breathing space without demonstrations, court matters and other skulduggery by the opposition so as to foster their aim of shared governance of which they will not have. *[Applauds]*

Today, when I listened to my colleagues in the opposition speak about Education, I wonder if we are all living in the same country for maybe it was not recognised before especially when some spoke of free education from primary to university. They have really missed the bus, in that you can only have a good end product, when the facilities

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and mechanisms are in place, creating that ambiance for good and productive learning. I do not desire to state that when the PPP/C took office in 1992, the record is clear and Guyanese parents are fully aware of what their children went through in those dark days. What is happening today, our passes at internal and external examinations are progressing and with the PPP/C Government, Guyana will experienced those days of excellence.

Referring to *Health*, a good health system in any country throughout of the world, is not only necessary, but vital to total development. In this area, any programme must take care of the needs of the population from the cradle to the grave and this is exactly what this caring Government is doing and will continue to do. *[Applause]* This Government have broadened the range of services with a positive effect on the population. We have launched a comprehensive programme taking into the health ambit nursing care for the aged, paediatrics, gynaecology, cataracts surgeries, midwifery, radiation oncology, cancer programme, cardiac unit for heart surgery, dentistry, HIV/AIDS preventative initiative, continuous training of nurses. *[Applause]*

During the floods of 2005, the Ministry of Health despite their inexperience of floods and all of us, conducted the most excellent programme of preventative measures, which helped immediately to alleviate some of the sufferings of flood victims and this, I must say, the Minister of Health, the Hon Dr Leslie Ramsammy must be congratulated for a job well done.

Housing and Water - Over the years, since 1993, when the Ministry of Housing was established, the PPP/C Government, after careful analysis realised that our thrust must be housing for the thousands of Guyanese, many single parents to own their own homes, to bring up their children in an environment that would prepare them to be excellent parents and an asset to society, men and women to lead Guyana. The task we took on was indeed massive and not only to find land, but land at a economical high price. At that time Guyana had a high percentage of squatting in Georgetown, East Bank, East Coast, West Bank, West Coast, Essequibo, Berbice, and Region 10. Many leaders of the PPP/C under the leadership ... (I am a Tutorial graduate, I want you to know that *[Applause]* and I was well trained in public speaking of which you have to learn) ... of the late President Dr Cheddi Jagan, discussed for hours and days trying to prepare a programme to deal with

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the housing problem. Ultimately, a decision was made to regularise all squatters that were in areas that could be regularised and remove those from dams, reserves and sea-defence areas to maiden lands, earmarked for such programmes. There were lots of difficulties, but we were surmounted when we commenced our first registration in 1993.

[Interruption]

The Speaker: Honourable Members, please do not ridicule the Honourable Member while she is speaking. There is a difference between proper comment and ridicule. Please do not ridicule other members. Continue Honourable Member.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Thank you Mr Speaker. I said it was a massive exercise and today what is the Ministry of Housing and Water doing for the population? One of the Ministries, among the several Ministries under this Government that is standing up properly, proudly to save thousands of house lots that were given out to people which the PPP/C Government is proud of. *[Applause]* And not only house lots for regularisation Mr Speaker, for instance, in Sophia, we have not only regularised Sophia, but we have built roads, we put water and the President announced \$4 billion for electrification of Sophia, which will be on this year.

Roads - Caneville on the East Bank 1,086 house lots with main roads and streets; Block R; Block F; Block AA; Block BB, Block E. I want to give you the bigger figures Block A 647 house lots with a main road one and a half miles with cross streets which should be finished this year.

Section B with 1,328 house lots with a main road right down to the back of the Lamaha, one and a quarter miles.

Turkeyen - Section C, 814 house lots;

Section D 773 house lots, all these are having roads.

Cummings Park, 539 house lots;

Cummings Lodge, 807 house lots, all these roads have been done by the Ministry of Housing and Water.

Now we went a little further in that many of the persons acquiring these house-lots, we have made arrangements with the Banks in Guyana and the Honourable Minister said that where the Mortgage rate is eight percent in some banks and five percent in other Banks.

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Mr Speaker, we are going even further in that we are saying in Guyana if we are to protect the environment and keep our citizens healthy, we have started pilot projects of eliminating pit latrines so that we will have septic tanks. Here, I would like to reveal the areas that we are starting the pilot projects and the amount of septic tanks that will be built with the help from the Ministry of Housing and Water.

- Anna Regina - 68;
- Pomona - 106;
- Tushen - 90;
- Crane/Best - 108;
- Good Hope - 384;
- Non Pariel - 196;
- Foulis - 353;
- Bath - 126;

a total of 1,431 of which the Ministry of Housing is helping to protect the environment We also have community housing groups and an action plan where the EU is funding us to the tune of €1 million

The PPP/C Government in our quest to satisfy the need of all regions is presently completing the housing work in Regions 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9. During 2006, the government will complete its water distribution network with the implementation for hinterland water.

Drainage and Irrigation - The PPP/C Government recognises that there is a problem with drainage and irrigation in Guyana, but the question must be asked why especially when the PNC/R continues to blame the PPP/C Government. What are some of the realities? Let the facts be revealed.

Mr Speaker, it was on 25 May 1976 the PNC/R Government acquired the sugar industry although it is claimed that they have all the technical knowledge yet many of the kokers and drainage canals were abandoned, some given over to private industry. The PNC did this. *[Applause]*

In Georgetown, during the floods of 2005, if the President did not go and order the Sussex Street canal koker to be opened, the residents in Albouystown, East La Penitence, Yarrow Dam and the whole area would have continued to be flooded. It was the PNC then, who never had local government elections that had handpicked people in the

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council who was responsible for that catastrophe. The city of Georgetown - Muneshwar - they now call it Muneshwar Koker; even the Mayor had to ask for permission to open the gate for him to go in to open Muneshwar Koker. We will continue to be flooded in Georgetown, because Muneshwar locked it off. There are many kokers, dams and canals on the East Bank and East Coast that the PNC after they took over the sugar industry blocked many of the dams and disbanded many of the kokers and this other than the rainfall was responsible. Toolsie Persaud had the nerve to say that he would take the President to court. I think the residents of Albouystown should take Toolsie Persaud to court for them being flooded for so many years.

I am not employed with Drainage and Irrigation, but all sorts of things have been said in this Honourable House and that I am responsible. I will give detail a little later in my speech, because one individual said that \$14 million was spent. [*Interruption: 'How much did you get from it?'*] I am not a poor woman. You must know this; my husband is a medical doctor. Good!

Now Mr Speaker, the Poker Street team ... let us examine how wide this team worked.

They are:

- Hodge's Lane;
- Gardena Street;
- Dahlia Street;
- the back land;
- Cross Street;
- Poker Street;
- digging of seven creeks;
- weeding and digging of drains;
- Major playfield;
- the main road - 3,960 feet;
- Riverside Drive - 3,000 feet;
- three canals - 2,000 feet;
- the cross drains and the removal of waste when these drains are dug immediately.

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Mr Speaker, Burnham Drive that has not been done for years and the Chairman of Region 10 should be ashamed to keep Burnham Drive in that condition that they had it in. Along Burnham Drive they cleared the parapets and the rubbish to the Magistrate's Court. You could not even see the top of the Magistrate's Court.

Mr Speaker, there is a wheel and a monument of 1855 that this CDC cleared - a monument of 1855 that nobody knew was there. It was bush and it was cleared. The Magistrate came out to congratulate the workers, he felt so good and so safe to go into the Magistrate's Court.

Now, the state-of-the-art pool in Amelia's Ward that was constructed - so beautiful - but the Region did not see it fit to have the grounds cleaned. These people had to clean the drains in the area. Two women were bitten by snakes and the Region did not see the need to clean the compound. And when we speak of the Region, I think my Honourable colleague should ask the Regional Chairman and previous Regional Chairmen, why it is every year they keep sending back money to the Treasury? They cannot spend the money. Why, every year? I am looking at this year to see what is going to happen.

Now we are talking about teachers and hospitals in Region 10. Mr Speaker, I usually make regular visits to Region 10. Wismar and Mc Kenzie are not Region 10 and you have to go down the Berbice River and go straight on to Kwakwani then you will travel the whole thing.

Now we are talking about *teachers*. This complaint was made to me on one of my trips to Region 10. I came back to the Ministry of Education and I asked, why it is it is being said that this school do not have enough teachers and that school do not have enough teachers and the other school do not have teachers. I was told by the PS that Region 10 has its full complement, but because the Regional Education Officer and the Chairman of Region 10 failed to distribute the teachers equitable.

Now the Ministry of Education is calling for Jeffrey. The regions run their affairs in the distribution of teachers for the various schools in their regions.

Health - I am certain if our Ministry and our Minister had full control of the allocation of nurses and the state of hospitals, they would have been far better. The region is directly responsible. We are now helping out - the national government is now helping out, where the hospital is concerned. [*Noisy Interruption*] Mr Speaker, you know it is said that

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the truth hurts and it is hurting bad, because the PNC over the years have failed and what they are trying to do today is to accuse and abuse the PPP/C, but the people cannot be fooled all the time. *[Applause]* I would like to ask Region 10 why over the years they have changed three Chairmen and three Mayors. Why? *[Interruption: 'When you come you get knock out as Deputy Mayor.']* I left for higher ground and you know that. *[Applause]* Some of you say that everywhere Philomena is, but when you learn the art in formalising in politics, then you will win, but now you cannot win, because you do not have the art, you have to learn it.

Mr Speaker, I think I am having a little fun here in that you know it is said that *lives of great men of times remind us that we could make our lives sublime and departing leaves behind us footprints on the sands of time.* *[Applause]* We, of the PPP/C have our footprints on the sands; we continue to have and will always have ... They could only take reign of office when they cheat. *[Interruption: 'We will run it out.']* You cannot run it out; you are not capable; you are incapable of doing it. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Mrs Backer, it is getting late, please.

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury: Yes, tell them it is getting late. I will wind up just now.

Mr Speaker, I will now go to Community Development Councils of which our theme is *UNITING COMMUNITIES ACROSS GUYANA*. The residents in various communities throughout Guyana from Regions 1 to 10 of which there are over 400 Community Development Councils, realising their responsibilities to their communities, committed themselves not only to live in a safe environment, but committed themselves to unite together in harmony; to foster social and economic programmes in the interest of the residents irrespective of race, colour or creed or economic standing. Today, what do we have in Community Development Councils? What are our achievements over the years?

- (i) There are sewing circles; *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up Honourable Member

Mr Cyril CL Belgrave: Mr Speaker, I ask that the Honourable Member be given ten minutes to conclude her presentation

Question put and agreed to

The Speaker: You may proceed Honourable Member

Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury : Thank you, Mr Speaker.

(ii) We have poultry rearing.

They are talking about people are not employed; we are trying in our own way in the various communities to make people entrepreneurs. You do not give them food all the time; you give them the tools whereby they could help themselves.

(iii) Farming;

(iv) Home economics;

(v) The environment - we look after the environment;

(vi) Health;

(vii) Education and so far we have two centres:

- The remedial centre in Linden; and
- A skills training centre in Aroaima.

During the summer time, the majority of the CDCs come together; they arranged and conducted summer classes. For instance, Yaracabra of which my friend knows well, this last summer, we had a wonderful summer class in Yaracabra. We also had a summer class in Albouystown. We helped with feeding school children and seniors.

Mr Speaker, today, as I stand here, I stand proud and tall, because my Government - the PPP/C Government - have not only answered the wishes and aspirations of the people of Guyana, but have fulfilled many of their dreams. We are going to alleviate poverty, but what do we need, not for people like wolfs in sheep's clothing to go into the communities and make mischief. I want to say one thing that the PNC/R feels especially Linden that the black people belong to them. You do not own anybody; they own themselves and the record time is going to come, when the PNC/R is consciousness scared now. This is why they are always accusing me; they are scare; they are running and we are going to make them run more.

Mr Speaker, I want to quote from Page 27 in the Minister's Budget Speech. It says:

This Budget reflects a set of priorities that the Government has determined are critical to the achievement of our vision. These include: strengthening the foundations of the traditional industries, including upstream and downstream activities; expanding non-traditional areas and

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diversifying into new growth areas, improving the environment for private sector development; securing and expanding the economic infrastructure, strengthening quality, access and delivery of social services; greater efficiency; transparency and accountability of Government; making our communities safer; a cleaner and healthier environment and social assistance to the poor and vulnerable.

Mr Speaker, with pride, I commend this Budget and say to the Minister of Finance that we are so proud to have him as our Minister and to all the other Ministers, who have been torn apart here, do not be afraid, we, the battalion stand with you. Thank you. [Applause]

The Speaker: Thank You Honourable Member

The Honourable Member Miss Judith David

Miss Judith David: Mr Speaker, I rise to add my contribution to the debate of the 2006 Budget, but before I do so, I must make some responses to some statements made by some of the Members on the Government's side.

Mr Speaker, I will start with the Honourable Member Mr Neendkumar, who spoke a length about the bauxite industry and who spent valuable time in this House being one hundred percent out of context. I am certain Mr Neendkumar's speech on bauxite will surely give the Prime Minister a difficult time to present his speech. But the fact is in his sports speech he failed to account on the discrimination that occurs among sporting organisations towards the allocation of funds and sports gears. I want to let this House know that the Bartica Community Centre is in a deplorable state and we are speaking about giving monies to community centres and community sports complexes. The ground is closed and it is only usable now for cows and other animals. I want to remind him and I hope that he listens carefully and attentively to me tonight that the children of Region 7 are still playing catcher, Mr Neendkumar; Chinese skip with rubber bands; war break in the bushes and shooting slingshots at recreation time during the school hours. Are these the gears you are speaking about that you are giving to sports organisations and the youths in Guyana?

The Honourable Member Mr Lumumba spoke at length about the President's Youth Choice Programmes in this country, but he must be honest that the majority of these projects are not intended or used for their rightful purposes. Mr Speaker, I want to

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remind Mr Lumumba that according to him I do not visit the project at Bartica, but the fact is, I never visit a short-time hotel and I will never visit one. I will never associate with the passa-passa gang. Mr Speaker, this programme has been changing its objective very frequently. This was a project comprising of a building, four computers and a lathe machine and it is called a multi-purpose centre. Well, I would like to let this House to know, yes, it is indeed being used for many purposes that is not beneficial to society or to the young people. Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member stood in this House to accuse members of the PNC/R about stealing. Let me remind him to ask the Honourable Member Mrs Sukhai about the cricket field. Let him ask the Honourable Member Mr Donald Ramotar about the piece of land allocated for greenery by the NDC in Bartica that the PPP/C silently produced a land title to build their office. What a disgrace. Mr Speaker, I want to tell this House that the Honourable Member Mr Husman Ally is still annoyed about this move by the PPP/C through the back door to gain this peeve of land. I want to remind him too that all the engines that he proudly announced that were delivered to communities, let him tell this House how many political fights are happening in these communities for the engines. Mr Speaker, the truth is that it finally counts down to a political money-making aspect for PPP/C families.

Mr Speaker, someone spoke about hot meals for school children, but this is all done through NGOs; through organisations such as the Golden Girls Feeding Programme of St John the Baptist Church and the St Anthony's RC Feeding Programme of which I contribute very often to.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Mr Baksh stood in this House to praise himself about the perfect housing scheme and water project, but he refused to say that as they stand in this House to tell the nation that they are giving out house lots, people are truly paying as much as \$500,000 for a plot of land, which is either bushy or swampy. In the days of the PNC (and I want to say that I said this last year and I will say it again), we never give people a plot of land, we give them the key to their homes that they could walk in and live in right away and we have them standing tall. *[Applause]* I want to remind him that if the women in Bartica did not protest and made strong representation by using the media, the Four-Mile Housing Scheme would have still been a dream scheme. We had to protest and fight to get it started and it is not even completed. The

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allottees of Four-Mile paid for infrastructure and now they are being told that they have to buy lamp poles in order to have electricity. This is exploitation. What he did not tell the Honourable House is that if there was not competition, at the banks for the meagre business they are getting, the interest rate would have never decreased.

As for the water supply in Bartica, the system is there. The water continues to flow on and off and still remains discoloured.

The Honourable Member Dr Westford spoke of the movement of people from Guyana to other countries. She said that it is a free democratic process, but it is also a free democratic process to remain in your homeland and to serve your country by using your skills. Going to other countries should be a want not a need.

Mr Speaker, I will now make my presentation into the Budget. I would like to inform this Honourable House about the Guyanese people's interpretation and feelings of the Budget that was presented. This is what the Stabroek News of Monday, 30 January 2006 in the article *What the People say about the 2006 Budget?* Young people are saying that the Budget is too horrifying; everything is bad; it is lop-sided; the money is too small; they did not follow the Budget because they still have to work hard for a small pay; the money for pensioners cannot do anything; young people are still jobless. These are some of the comments made by some of the people of our country.

Mr Speaker, once again we hear that the economy has shown no sign of improvement; a negative three percent growth has been reported. This country has been known to the world as a country proud to benefit from debt relief. We are classed in the poorest category even though we are filled with natural resources that other countries long for. This is testimony to incompetence, poor governance and a lack of vision for the future by the PPP/C. *[Applause]*

The Government continues to campaign about schools they built even though teachers are limited. The roads, markets and health centres that are constructed, but let us be honest with ourselves, these are things which all governments must provide for its people. What is worrying is that all our human resources are leaving for better and greener pastures. We are continuing to face a brain drain and no employment. Presently our teachers if not preparing are already striking and protesting since the government continues to treat them with disdain and disrespect. Mr Speaker, development comes through investment both in

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the private and public sectors. This creates employment, but sad to say investment will not happen in Guyana, because of the high rate of crime in our country and no proper plan to help to eradicate same. After all the promises by the government, Guyanese continue to work for a mere US\$125 a month.

Mr Speaker, it is incumbent for me as the Regional MP for Region 7; I must make representation for my constituency. Firstly, as always Region 7 is given the smallest allocation of money in the Budget, a mere twenty-five percent of the total request. There is no new employment created. Our youths continue to wander around aimlessly; become more involved in drugs and they are now contributing to the rise in crime that is now present in Region 7, not forgetting the continuous increase in teenage pregnancy, child abuse, domestic violence and schools drop-outs. These are contributors to our means for surviving.

Mr Speaker, the system in the mining sector leaves much to be desired. The GGMC needs to re-look and remodel their laws and regulations so that equal opportunities are given to our miners. Brazilians continue to immigrate into Guyana and are giving priority to the mining areas in comparison to miners. On Page 8 of the Budget Speech at paragraph 3.4 it is being said:

Taking advantage of the very high international prices of gold, declaration by the small gold miners increased by over fifty percent to the 162,527 ounces, easily the highest in decades. However, reflecting the significant loss of output of OMAI Gold Mines Limited which ceased operations in September of last year, overall gold production fell by 26.3 percent to 267,556 ounces. Diamond declaration fell by 19.8 percent to 356,948 carats. These declines caused the output of the mining and quarrying sectors to contract by 17.7 percent. Mr Speaker, our minerals are being taken across our borders by foreign miners to Brazil, Suriname and other neighbouring countries without any royalty and taxes for the country being paid, while small Guyanese miners are pressured to pay taxes and are gradually being pushed out of business. Mr Speaker, a lot of illegal guns and an increase in HIV infected persons are present. Our Amerindian women are abused by miners, while their lands are being bullied from them and no benefits are being realised.

Education - The schools in Region 7 continue to be short-staffed and parents have to fill the void to ensure that our children are well supervised. Parents have to pay for

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examination papers or else their children will not be able to write exams. Mr Speaker, these things are happening because the system in education ministry or sector is not proper. If you do not equipped your region or your departments in your region with enough finance, we have to go begging hand in cap to our parents who are working for even small money than the teachers themselves.

This year, Bartica is supposed to be blessed with upgraded roads and a new market through the Urban Development Project at a tune \$600 million all total. Last year, I think it was November the Head of State visited Bartica for the opening of the Bartica Police Station which took three years and change of contractor before it was completed. On that visit, he promised Bartica a sum of \$650 million for roads - another failed Santa Claus promise. In fact, as I looked at this Budget, there is nothing promised for roads, that is another failed promise. Mr Speaker, I want this House to know that the One to Five Mile area is PNC/R area and that area was promised money for roads for the past five years and we have not been given any money for roads. Of lately in November, there was a Cabinet meeting and \$10 million was promised for roads in the One to Five Mile area, then came the flood and the next message we got from Cabinet is that they are withdrawing the \$10 million because they have to allocate monies to the flood and the people in the One to Five Mile area has been left without a road again.

The Hon HARRIPERSAUD NOKTA also told us in the Hansard of March 2005 that \$6 million was allocated for the maintenance of other infrastructure. Mr Speaker, there was no extension of the incinerator; there was not installation of trestle; no construction of bed springs for Bartica hospital. Mr Speaker, something fishy is going on and this is not fresh fish. Where is this money and what was it used for? There was a promise for more comprehensive work on the sea walls since 2003 when remedial work was done, but once again failed promise.

Mr Speaker, let me speak about the rest houses in our region. Bartica - the facility is in a deplorable state, the beds are old and squeaky sounds which disturbed each other who stayed there throughout the nights while they stayed there. *[Laughter]* Isanno, Kamarang and the others in the interior are not better, no water and no proper light. According to the people who stayed at the rest house, it is better to stay in a short-time hotel or in one of the rooms used at the Kaiamuse. Mr Speaker, is this how we are promoting Bartica or

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Region 7 as a place for tourism. We are speaking about yachts, when these people come with the yachts; they hurriedly escape from Bartica to sleep on the yachts, because it is of a better environment than sleeping in a hotel or in the guesthouses in Bartica.

Sine 2001, the region continues to suffer from the non-providence of new vehicles to replace the largest quantities of old unsafe vehicles. Our Regional Chairman is using a vehicle that is in the region for two decades. This vehicle had to be towed by my vehicle two weeks ago. Every year the request by the Region is being overlooked and denied by this caring government. Mr Speaker, the lives of workers in Region 7 are threatened each time they stepped into these vehicles.

In 1997, there was a lot of construction in the hinterland for schools for example Kako, but they all lacked the basic equipment to facilitate the proper administration of education to the children of hinterland.

The health post in Jawalla was supposed to be extended in 1997; once again it was not done. They are all one-side new shoes; one-side old shoes; one part good; one part bad. Our Amerindian development and hinterland issues are given little or no treatment. The residents of Region 7 will not be fooled by any political game or any elections campaign strategy by this government for example the new urban development project which was due to us three years ago. This is an indication to a campaign election budget.

Under Youth and Sport, the only thing that has happened is a political move to employ a youth and sports officer through the back door and discriminating against two young qualified persons who had applied for the position. Fortunately, these two young people still contribute to the community. This is an issue that was brought to the Minister of Youth and Sport to the Regional Administration that we in the region should interview two people. We interviewed the two people and send the results down to the Ministry. Lo and behold, the people in the regional administration received a letter from the Minister saying to employ Shabir Ally, who never made an application through the region or had an interview with the region.

Our steamer service is way below human standard as it continues to deteriorate ...

[Interruption]

The Speaker: Just a minute, Honourable Member. Are you saying something?

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Hon Gail Teixeira: Would you allow me to speak now or at the end? I did not hear you.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you stood up a few minutes ago and said something. You made an application ... *[Interruption]*

Hon Gail Teixeira: You did not hear me.

The Speaker: Could you just allow me please? You made an application of some sort which I did not hear. Could you please repeat it?

Hon Gail Teixeira: Well unfortunately we are both not hearing each other. I apologise. I am seeking an opportunity whether now or after the MP is finished making her presentation to correct a misrepresentation she is putting to this House.

The Speaker: When the Member is finished.

Hon Gail Teixeira: Thank you.

Miss Judith David: Mr Speaker, our steamer service is way beyond human standard as it continues to deteriorate. The speedboats service even though it is a rescue to residents is to the disadvantage to poor people. Our patients continue to travel the rough waters to seek medical attention while pregnant mothers walk the Bartica/Potaro Road as much as five miles to attend prenatal clinic because of potholes in the road. The theatre at Bartica Hospital is still non-operational. It is clear that this government has all interest in the communities that are their stronghold, because every year there is one community Agatash that is given priority to disbursement through the budget.

Mr Speaker, in the 2006 Budget, no money is allocated for any other river transportation, but a river ambulance and an outboard engine. This came after requests since 2004, when we were given no money. In 2005, we got \$1.5 million and this year - election year - we are getting \$6.8 million. Isn't this an election Budget?

Mr Speaker, as a government the PNC/R will bring relief to all Guyanese. It will implement new systems in health, mining, youth and sport sectors and all others that will transform us to a new Guyana with a vision. We will ensure that our human resources remain in Guyana. Our pensioners will be satisfied; our country will be flood-free; there will be special emphasis on young people and gender issues; the hinterland development need modern and sustainable development initiative with real acknowledgement of community wishes. The PNC/R government after elections 2006 will ensure that this is a

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reality. We, the PNC/R will return Guyana to a pro-active stance in the world. We will take a bold step in ensuring Guyana is once again the bread basket for the Caribbean.

One of the things that we will do after the 2006 elections, we will ensure that when we attend Parliament, we will not have any comedians in here or time-wasting people.

[Laughter] Last but not least, we will ensure competence governance under the PNC/R government of young disciplined leaders with a vision for development and progress. I thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Yes, Honourable Member, do you want to say something?

Hon Gail Teixeira: Yes Mr Speaker, I will try to be quick on this one. I know about this, because I was the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport then. Region 7 had two Sports Officers many years ago. One of them was a Member of Parliament in this House, Andries Kelly from the Upper Mazaruni. The gentleman who was at Bartica left the job to work in another sector. We decided that our work could not be done in the region and we asked the region to advertise on the television and to get the word into communities to bring forward a list of persons and their recommendations. There were about six or seven people who applied for that job. Of their selection, they put forward two, one was a young lady who was a newly trained teacher just come out of Cyril Potter College and the other person was not recommended by the region. It was an order of priority. When the Ministry looked at the two applicants and knowing the shortage of teachers in Region 7, we took a policy decision, it was not me alone, that instead of taking a newly trained teacher out of the school system that was sent by the region to be trained at Cyril Potter, we decided not to take that person. The region itself was not confident of the second person. I did not write the letter, Miss David; it was written by the Personnel Officer advising the policy of the Ministry. After that, there were several months where no names came forward from Region 7. In the interim, Mr Shabir Ally whose name has been called in this Parliament is a Youth Award Unit Leader for the Region, he has been active in the President's Youth Award Republic of Guyana Programme which is under the Duke of Edinburgh Programme, where Guyana has over 4,000 members in this country and in which he is the key person in getting the programmes running in Bartica. After several months of nobody in Bartica and no new names coming from the region, we decided to take Mr Shabir Ally, who was a volunteer as a Regional Co-ordinator for

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Region 7 and we hired him. He is an excellent young man and I would not like to go on the public television or anywhere else making it seem as if he is not a good youth leader.

[Applause]

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mrs Chandarpal

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to congratulate the Minister of Finance and his team for the work they have put in to bring such an impressive Budget, so early in the year.

My presentation seeks to address the Budget theme *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP*. This theme to my mind highlights the most important issue for us as a people that is, where we would like to be as a nation and how we intend to get there. This issue is central to all of us irrespective on which side of the fence we are sitting.

Forty years of independence with all its ramifications has provided opportunities for us to assess and confront the challenges that face us. My colleagues who preceded me have referred to the international and national realities that make it difficult to garner enough resources to accelerate the path of development in a much more rapid pace. And even those we garnered have conditionalities tied to them.

Nonetheless, the PPP/C Government during the last thirteen years has been providing some of the building blocks that are necessary for the transformation to a modern Guyana. Some are questioning how far we have advanced along this path. Indeed, we do have a far way to go. But when we look back to where we were thirteen years ago, we were categorised as being the poorest nation before Haiti with a GDP of \$350 and with eighty-six percent of the people living below the poverty line. We must appreciate that we have come a far way and this is all due to the positive way in which the PPP/C has managed the economy during its tenure. Maintaining the macro economic stability indicators and adhering to strict financial management practices have pointed us in a forward-looking direction. We cannot ignore the fact that much more could have been done if we had a stable political environment to do so. The acts that were intended to destabilise and destroy the democratic gains did not fully materialise because of the maturity and patriotism of the majority of the Guyanese people. We do hope that our economy would never go down; our country would never go down that road again where

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some sections of our people were encouraged to destroy what we worked so hard for. Ever so often we are reminded about the wealth of Guyana and how fortunate the Guyanese people are to have so many land and so few people. The question is often asked my many both in and out of Guyana as to when we will become the bread basket of the Caribbean again. This is the common dream of all Guyana and that is not only to be the bread basket of the Caribbean, but to regain the respect and status we once had in this hemisphere.

Mr Speaker, in September 1994 His Excellency the late President of Guyana Dr Cheddi Jagan in a paper to the European Union presented a case for debt relief in the Caribbean Region for a document entitled the New Global Human Order. I quote from Page 22:

The cost of the debt crisis has been extremely high. Living standards at the end of the 1980s in many developing countries have fallen to the levels of the 1950s and 1960s. The Caribbean Community of CARICOM countries are burdened with a huge foreign debt of over US \$9 billion. Guyana's foreign debt was \$2.1 billion at the end of 1991 perhaps the highest per capita in the world. The foreign debt service ratio in 1992 was sixty-eight percent of the merchandise export income and total debt payments in the same year were ninety-six percent of the current revenue. We cannot achieve the articulated; the well-linked and enlightened modernisation of production if the State is burdened with enormous debt and within inherited structures that have no room to make way for new activities. When the debt burden is great, there are no resources for acquiring the knowledge and the new ideas to manage the economy and to train workers for productive employment.

This concern was articulated previously by the late Martin Luther King (Jr) in the early 1960s when he said: from the words of Martin Luther King (Jr.) selected by Coretta King on Page 74:

Every new government confronts overwhelming problems. During the days when they were struggling to remove the yolk of colonialism, there was a kind of pre-existent unity of purpose that kept things moving in one solid direction, but as soon as independence emerges all the grim

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problems of life confront them with stark realism, the lack of capital the strangulating poverty, the uncontrollable birth rates and above the high inspirational level of their own people. The post colonial period is more difficult and precarious than the colonial struggle itself. The west must also understand that economic growth took place under propitious circumstances. Most of the western nations were relatively under-developed, under-populated when they searched forward economically and they were greatly endowed with the iron ore and coal that were needed for launching industry.

Most of the young governments of the world today have come into being without these advantages and above all, they confront staggering problems of over-population. There is not possible way for them to make it without aid and assistance.

The rationale for debt removal in any form became imperative for development. The aggressive campaign for debt relief either rescheduling or cancelling pursuit by the government has paid off. Mr Speaker, we welcome the significant development by the G8 Countries under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative where Guyana's debt to the IMF and IDA will be cancelled by a hundred percent. We are pleased with the decision by the IMF that all debts incurred by Guyana prior to January 2005 approximately US \$65 million as well as US \$ 218 million will be cancelled by the middle of this year. We support the establishment of the National Capacity Building Plan for Aid and Debt Management Administration, which we hope will accelerate the lobby from the Inter American Development Bank started by His Excellency the President in 2005. Debt relief has made more resources available for developmental issues. This should be music to the ears of all Guyanese. Yet there are some who will make us feel that this achievement is worthless. We should all feel proud in this achievement since it is testimony to the determination and resilience of our people in their ability to triumph. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency the President, Government Ministers and Officials and all those who were involved in making this persistent and determined fight for success for a successful debt relief.

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Mr Speaker, the other issue to which I would like to refer is the question of partnership. The PPP as a party has a history of building partnerships and of constantly exploring new areas for alliances. The PPP/C Government embraces this principle which has become the cornerstone of collaboration and decision making. The PPP/C Government is a reflection of that partnership. The emergence of a new partnership in the pre-1992 period and the acceptance of a joint manifesto of 1992 subscribed to by a civic slate was described as follows:

- This new dimension in Guyana's politics bring together patriotic Guyanese of every walk of life, of every race, of every political view, of differing religious backgrounds to recreate once again the great momentum and hope engendered by a united people.

Referring to the pre-1992 period the PPP in addressing the question of economic and social objectives stated on Page 9 of its Manifesto:

Our Government will count on the goodwill of overseas Guyanese, friendly organisations, multilateral lending agencies and local businesses to provide the inflows to refurbish our infrastructure and put back on stream our idled productive capacity, which will have a direct impact on our nation's ability to produce and export. We hope to provide our people with the essential services for a meaningful life and we envisage support for a mini-martial plan through debt write-off, long term rescheduling, soft loans and grants.

These were very prophetic ideas and we can feel justifiable proud that these turn out not as empty phrases, but have become some of the most important catalyst for development. This partnership of which I speak must also be seen in the context of the compact between the State and its citizens. Many of us will recall the statesman's like declaration of the late President Jagan after the 1992 elections when he said, that there will no recriminations by his government against those who had carried numerous transgressions while they had held the reigns of power. The collaboration and constant engagement by the government with all sections and sectors of the country has been a continuous one. The Honourable Minister of Finance and his colleagues before him adhered to the framework for consultation during the preparation of budgets in order to inform as well

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as to seek the views of others. Partnerships with civil society were encouraged and consequently hundreds of NGOs and Government's civic society partnerships and community development groups were established. Agencies such as SIMAP, Basic Needs Trust Fund and Poor Rural Communities Support Services are all examples of co-operations at various levels for community development. From the aforementioned it is clear that collaboration, cooperation and partnership is well and alive in Guyana in the practices of this government.

Additionally, the other type of partnership that I would like to speak to is the one of the level of the Parliament that is between the parties that form part of this august body. We recall the process of constitutional reform that was started by my colleague Hon Bernard De Santos when the Special Select Committee travelled to many parts of the country and compiled several volumes of evidence. However, it was unable to conclude its report and present its recommendation, because Parliament was dissolved and elections were held in December 1997.

Mr Speaker, the events that unfolded after the 1997 elections are known to all of us. The process of constitutional reform was once placed on the agenda and the agreements that were signed unto by the government and opposition parties accelerated the process with the establishment of the Constitutional Reform Commission. Many sweeping recommendations were made to amend the Constitution through numerous provisions with which we are all familiar. I would like to reiterate just a few to remind ourselves of these changes:

- Reducing the powers of the President;
- Opposition veto on the appointment of the Chancellor and Chief Justice;
- Expanding the functions of the Judicial Service Commission;
- Strengthening the financial independence of the Judiciary and the Auditor General;
- Institutionalising capacity by participation of social groups in the decision-making process;
- Expanding human rights;
- Involving the National Assembly in the appointment of service commissions that is: Police; Public Service; Judicial and Teaching;

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- Modifying the electoral system for national and local government elections;
- Establishing five standing committees to examine and review government's policies in the
 - social;
 - economic;
 - foreign policy; and
 - natural resources sectors
- a Parliamentary Management Committee;
- a Human Rights Commission;
- a Procurement Commission;
- a Standing Commission to review the functioning and composition of the security forces;
- the Women and Gender Equality Commission;
- the Rights of the Child Commission;
- the Indigenous People's Commission; and
- the Ethnic Relations Commission.

Additionally, through the dialogue process between the President and Opposition Leader bipartisan committees were established on the following:

- Local Government Reform;
- Border National Security;
- Distribution of Land and House lots;
- Resuscitation of the Bauxite Industry;
- Depressed Community Needs; and
- Radio Monopoly and Non-partisan Boards.

Considerable progress has been made in the realisation of these agreements. I am confident that the few that are still unresolved will be concluded soon. The aforementioned agreements were intended to create an atmosphere of inclusiveness, trust and transparency.

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You may recall that the Honourable Minister Clinton Collymore referred to cooperation between himself and the Honourable Member Mr Alexander in the field of local government reform.

From my own experience, having participated in the PAC, Social Sector Committee as well as in several special select committees, I have every reason to submit that those ideals referred to are being achieved to a large extent. In this regard, I wish to commend all Members of the PAC which functions in a very collaborative and bipartisan manner. We are encouraged by the new responsibility that comes to this committee especially with the decision to have the PAC having oversight responsibility of the Office of the Auditor General that will report to Parliament through the Speaker. We welcome the laying of the Treasury Memorandum and the anticipated response and measures to improve the efficiency in this institution. References were made to the quality of work being carried and the need to have value for money. As a member of the PAC, I would certainly support such a measure and I am sure this would find favour with the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

GOPAC was introduced in the debate and as far as I know and I have the details as well about this entity all MPs can become members of this Organisation. The fight against corruption and all its negative consequences must be a concern for all of us.

I also wish to commend the sector committees in the way they have been functioning. We are well aware that we are in the learning curve, but the fact that all sides are prepared to be flexible has reinforced very vividly that irrespective of our political leanings, we can work for the development of Guyana in a harmonious way respecting each others' views and opinions. This is the way we need to grow rather than taking the negative view that nothing is possible unless we have shared governance at the level of the executive. We need to maximise what we share rather than emphasize our differences.

Another area which is critical to the delivery of goods and services is the public sector. Provision of a reliable and efficient service is critical for national development and we support the initiatives that were taken in this regard. As we seek to improve and modernise the country, this sector has to be given a lot of attention. Preparing the public service to manage a changing environment is not an easy task especially when there are

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many who preferred to function in the same old way. They are not unaware the change often meets with resistance from those who are caught at this time from attitudinal stagnation. Training and retraining as well as the provision of the appropriate technology for efficiency are what we need as well as the will to modernise. In this regard, we should all welcome the allocation of the sum of \$521 million allocated for the Fiscal and Financial Management Programme, the installation of a modern information technology system for tax and custom administration as well as the other stated projects. We believe that efficiency in this area will make more financial resources for development. The Honourable Minister of Finance referred to the performance of the Guyana Revenue Authority when he said on Page 12 of the 2006 Budget:

Current revenue rose by \$4.4 billion or 8.4 percent to reach \$56.1 billion. Of that amount the Guyana Revenue Authority collected \$52.9 billion or 94.3 percent. Contrary to the popular belief, this growth in revenue was not as a result of any windfall collection of consumption tax and oil imports. Indeed the latest estimate shows that revenue from the source that revenue from the source was a mere \$290 million above the target, but still below the level collected in 2004. Instead, this significant showing was due to higher non-oil imports and corporate tax collection and the benefits of the substantial reforms implemented over the last five years. Revenue collected by the Customs and Trade Administration increased by \$2.3 billion increased to \$25.8 billion while the internal revenue department increased its collection \$2.4 billion to \$27.1 billion.

Mr Speaker, I wish to refer to the presentation by the Honourable Member Mrs Volda Lawrence dealing with the social problems affecting society. The issues the Honourable Member spoke about are not unique to Guyana. Unfortunately family disintegration, female headed household, school drop-outs, male alienation, alcoholism, absentee fathers, suicide, drugs, HIV/Aids and street dwellers among others are realities that we should not disagree about, because they are real and they need to be addressed. The 2001 Manifesto of the PPP/C Government in dealing with this issue under the caption *Restoring Moral and Ethical Standards a National Pride* states:

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Restoring a people's confidence, trust and hope is far more challenging than laying bricks and mortars. The PPP/C Government is committed to these ideals, but these are fought with constant constraints.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member sought in her presentation to infer that we have not kept some promises and in order to set the record straight, I would like to clarify these issues.

Firstly, the accusation that we are uncaring and we have taken away the stipend from pensioners, from those elderly who are resident at the Palms. This is not true and I would like to quote from an amendment that was made in 1980.

A person shall be disqualified for receiving or continue to receive a pension notwithstanding the fulfilment of the statutory conditions:

- (a) While he is an inmate of any public or any charitable institution which provides him with board and lodging without charge.

Maybe, this is something that we should consider and make recommendations to see whether we need to correct it. At first glance, it appears that these residents are being provided for at government expenses and thus a pension would be a double benefit.

Reference was made to the Palms Building; there is a long story about it, but to make it short, I wish to say that this matter went to Cabinet in 1993. The National Trust intervened and requested that the building should be restored rather than re-cited. A group of people under the leadership of a Miss Leigh Albert-Samuels and other members from civil society including Mr Stanley Ming who was the Chairman sought to raise funds to undertake this project. The designs were done, but the funds were not found. The Committee took a decision to pull down the old structure and this was during my tenure. Mr Speaker, the present situation is that Cabinet in 2005 discussed this issue and it was agreed that a proposal for re-location be made with all the necessary details. This matter is still under active consideration.

With respect with the family court, the Bill was drafted, but it was felt that it should be presented together with the children's Bill in the National Assembly. Cabinet has approved of the five Bills, but it was felt that the government should engage the opposition in a discussion before the Bills are presented to the House. This is in keeping with the Government's commitment to ensure inclusiveness and collaboration with the

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other side. I am aware that the opposition was written to by the HPS and we are awaiting their response.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member in making accusations about broken promises spoke about the building for a cottage industry for women of Mahaica. Again, this had to be put on the back burner, because the building identified was vandalised and the resources was not available to building a new structure. This does not mean that the initiative has been abandoned. It is something that should be still pursued.

The concept of the sixty-five community counselling centres was a direct outcome from the National Committee for the Reduction of Family Violence that was established in 1999. It was felt that such centres should fill the void that exists where many family matters are left unresolved and ever so often lead to dire consequence. These centres along with the family court will help to alleviate some of the social problems. This proposal was submitted for funding. Unfortunately we did not receive the funding. I do believe that an initiative such as this will redound to the benefit of our people and I do recommend that we keep it on the front burner. *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: Your time is up, Honourable Member.

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

Question put and agreed to.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member

Mrs Indranie Chandarpal: The establishment of all the various commissions whether related to family, elderly, women, children and people who are physically challenged, has as its intention address the needs of the various segments of the population.

One may argue that much more could be done, but we need to realise that these institutions are evolving and very often it is dependent on the type of leadership at the helm of these bodies as well as some other factors that are needed to make them successful. We are dubbed uncaring, but yet it was this government that established the Difficult Circumstances Programme in response to reality that the Public Service was unable to provide services to people who were desperately in need of these. The Honourable Minister Bibi Shadick referred to the fourteen categories of persons who benefited numbering 2,907 people. The shelter for street persons as well as the home for

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street children is intended to deal with some aspects of destitutions, but there is still so much more to be done.

The provision of school uniforms to more than 25,000 school children, the provision of birth certificates and school books are intended to assist those who are in need.

Empowerment of women and young people must be seen as an ongoing process. The Honourable Member Mr Lumumba reported on some of the many initiatives taken to empower young people. The Guyana Women's Leadership Institute as well as projects such as the Poor Rural Community Support Services in Regions 2 and 3 and all the various actions are intended to accelerate this notion of empowerment. It is a dynamic process that is mainstreamed in the national development process.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member regaled us about the groups set up by the PNC/R providing services to people throughout Guyana. I am happy to know that they are still thinking and working with the masses. We, from the PPP/C have always worked with the masses providing whatever assistance that is available. Our people deserve no less. Mr Speaker, these issues referred to so passionately about the Honourable Member are issues that I as well as other members of the Social Sector Committee and of this entire House along with many others in society. We do feel strongly about them. The discourse has already begun in the Social Sector Committee to take on board some of these matters.

Let us put our collective shoulders to the wheel, to present a united front as we showcase our country next year. The Honourable Minister of Finance spoke about modernisation and he has cited the various sectors the initiative that have taken and those that are yet to come. We are part of this dynamic process in making our country a better place. The respective roles we play are necessary for this process whether it is through the management of the process or the identification of the inefficiencies or weaknesses. The fact is as decision makers we need to realise that our diligence and leadership can make a difference to Guyana. The desire by all of us to see a better Guyana is within our reach. This possibility already exists by us working together, utilising the technologies and other resources to propel development. Mr Speaker, we have a lot to celebrate in this long journey. The paths we take may differ, but the destination must be the same of building a better Guyana. We have embarked on a significant journey that generates hope and

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optimism for the future. This must be the type of leadership that we need to continue to give to the Guyanese nation. Our people deserve this and we must not fail them. The PPP/C Government has given this leadership for the past thirteen years; forty years after the achievement of our political independence we must redouble our efforts to accelerate the rebuilding process by transforming Guyana through modernisation and partnership. I reiterate my strong support for the provision of 2006 Budget and call on all sides to support it. Long live our great nation. *[Applause]*

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I rise on a point of order. Mr Speaker, I would like to refer the House to Order 39 (d) Rules for Member not Speaking and I would like to draw to this National Assembly and I do so with great reluctance, I always advocate a very lively Parliament, but Mr Speaker, I think I have a duty to stand to indicate that the person who is about to speak has repeatedly and I am not the only person who has seen it, Mrs Bancroft has seen it and Mrs Lawrence has seen it; he has repeatedly been showing us his middle finger and I think it is totally inappropriate. *[Interruption: 'Call the name.']* The person who is about to speak and if you want me to call his name I will call his name Mr Komal Chand and all three of us saw it. *[Interruption: 'I did not see it.']* You cannot see it from where you are sitting; the three of us saw it. I want to draw that to the attention of the House.

The Speaker: Do you have anything to say about the matter?

Mr Komal Chand: Mr Speaker, I want to assure this National Assembly that I am in no way guilty of anything like this. I could not imagine that this was conceived by the Members on the opposite side of the House. I do not know. That is unknown of me. I want to assure the Members that if I might be using my hand in any way and they feel so, I want to apologise. I would never, never in any way be guilty of such behaviour. *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: Would you allow the Member to explain please, Honourable Members.

Mr Komal Chand: No, I would never. If the Members feel so, I am totally innocent. I would never do this; this is not me. I could not understand Debbie that you are making out something.

The Speaker: Proceed, Honourable Member.

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Mr Komal Chand: Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the 2006 Budget. The fourteenth PPP/C Budget since the historic victory of the PPP/C at the polls on 5 October 1992. I am sure that on the next year the PPP/C will have the opportunity again to present another budget and others in the ensuing years. The wishful thinking of many members on the other side of the House that they will take over the reigns of government after the next election is indeed a figment of their imagination. Where we are today and where we were in Guyana fourteen years ago will be the yardstick used by all Guyanese to decide whether the PPP/C or the PNC/R should be elected in Government for the next five years after this year's election. Of course, the Guyanese electors are politically astute and are aware that in the electoral struggle for political power there will either be a PPP/C or a PNC/R victory at the forthcoming elections.

Guyana has made remarkable strides since the advent of the PPP/C in government in the latter part of 1992 to the present time.

House lots - Over 60,000 as of last year;

Rice Production from 107,000 tonnes to an average of 314,000 tonnes over the last five years, including last year when production dropped to 277,000 tonnes due to the flood;

Sugar Production from 129,920 tonnes to an average of 300,000 in the last five years, including last year when 20,052 tonnes were produced due to the flood;

Gold Production up from 64,912 ounces to 267,567 ounces last year;

Forestry Production in value from \$300 million to \$1 billion;

Seafoods in value \$200 million to approximately \$12 billion;

Spending on education \$1, 293,000,000 budgeted, for 2006 \$3.08 billion;

Police Budget from \$45 million to \$2 billion last year;

Per capita income from US \$231 to US \$857 last year;

The monthly minimum wage from \$3,137 to \$24,828;

Inflation rate dropped from almost triple digits to single digit;

Poverty was reduced from seventy-six percent to thirty-five percent;

Significant Foreign Debt Investment (FDI) was received during the last thirteen years and large investments were made between 1982 and 1991 Foreign Direct Investment inflows in Guyana averaged only \$2.6 million, between 1992 and 2003 annual FDI inflows

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averaged US \$71 million. This testified to Guyana's ability to attract foreign investment since the early 1990s.

Mr Speaker, it is pleasing to learn that old age pension will be increased by seventy-five percent effective from 1 January 2006. With the abolition of the means test in 1993, some relief are brought to the thousands of senior and needy citizens.

It is also pleasing to have an increase in income tax threshold from \$20,000 per month to \$25,000 per month and to know that approximately 20,000 persons would be removed from the income tax net. It must also be said that it is not pleasing that the income tax of twenty percent has been replaced with a single rate of 33.33 percent. In fact, we indeed need a revamping of our income tax system. We need to capture the thousands and thousands of professional's high earners who are merely paying a pittance as income tax to the Guyana Revenue Authority, thus the burden of personal income tax remains on the backs of the ordinary pay-as-you-earn employees. It is time that the Minister of Finance tackles the promised overall of the tax system. Only when the tax system is more equitable, would the burden placed on the PAYE employees will be severely lessened. It is pleasing to have a greater expenditure in the social sectors year after year. If you take education, health, water, housing and the poverty programme close to twenty-five percent of the Budget will be expended in the social. Note the social sectors' expenditure in the days of the PNC was downgraded to single digit from where it was over twenty percent in 1964.

Increases in wages and salaries of employees continue to improve. Of course, the Government was the first to say that economic constraints restricted the administration to offer better increases which undoubtedly the Government would have preferred. It is note-worthy that the public sector minimum wage since 1992 has increased by 714 percent as against an inflation rate of 99 percent over the period. It is also noted that the government was able to attract 140 private sector projects representing an investment of \$68 billion and generating an additional 9,000 jobs for Guyanese.

Mr Speaker, note on Pages 51 and 52 of the Budget, additional jobs will be created. The Minister of Finance said:

Mr Speaker, a new initiative that was launched earlier this year is the Community Enhancement Project (CEP) targeting mostly young people

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without formal education, this project involves the hiring of over 3, 225 persons from various communities in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. These persons will be under the supervision of the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDC), will be given tools for weeding, cleaning drains, keeping roads free of grass on the parapets among other related jobs. The initial period of this project is one year and must be seen as supporting the NDC in the discharge of their responsibilities to the residents.

Mr Speaker, reference to the Budget is made to the complete restructuring of the sugar industry at a cost of over \$600 million over six years. Indeed, the accusation that the government is having no plan and is implementing hotchpotch programmes is far from the truth. This criticism and others are baseless, wicked and aimed at cheap politicking. In the case of the Guyana Sugar Corporation, the Guyana Government is aware some years that sugar reform in Europe was on the horizon. Therefore, the Guyana Sugar Corporation at the behest of the Government conceptualised a strategic plan in 1998. This plan is devised to improve competitiveness by improving productivity and reduces cost to meet anticipated market conditions. The plan includes:

- the Skeldon modernisation project which includes a new factory at Skeldon to produce 110,000 tonnes of sugar per year;
- value added sugar;
- the construction of a distillery;
- the construction of a sugar refinery;
- cogeneration whereby some ten megawatts of electricity will be sold to the national grid, which incidentally would result in Berbice no longer having power outages;
- agricultural improvement plan to increase cane yields to 90,000 tonnes per hectare;
- factory improvement plan to improve sugar extraction and recoveries by 2.3 percent.

Mr Speaker, physical work commenced at Skeldon during December 2005 to meet the deadline of the latter part of 2007, when the state-of-the-art factory will be completed.

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Upon completion the cane production area for the new factory would cover 13,650 acres of land of which private farmers would occupy twenty-five percent. The cane production by GUYSUCO and private farmers will be three times greater than the existing estate production for the new factory which is expected, as I said, to have a capacity of 110,000 tonnes of sugar per year. According to the Chairman of GUYSUCO, Mr Ronald Alli: The Skeldon Project is a corner stone of GUYSUCO's strategic plan and would be a major contributor in our drive to reduce the cost of produce and increase product quality.

At Skeldon cost will be reduced to eight cents per pound and across the industry to eleven cents per pound.

Incidentally, the survival of the sugar industry in Guyana would have been in jeopardy had GUYSUCO and the government failed to embark on the Skeldon Modernisation Project and the other aspect of the strategic plan. In fact, had the agreement to bring on board the project being delay to this year, the loan agreements with World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and Exim Bank of China might not have been possible. The thirty-six percent price cut by the European Union would have deterred lending agencies to support the project. The World Bank is providing US \$56 million; the Caribbean Development US \$25 million and the Exim Bank of China US \$32 million totalling \$113 million out of the \$167 million required. The remaining US \$54 million is to be provided by the Guyana Sugar Corporation. By the way, there were many critics of the Skeldon Project in persons like Professor Clive Thomas and the Honourable Member Mr Dev, who in Kaieteur News on 20 April 2003 wrote:

ROAR critique the plan from several angles mainly to question whether sugar is the best product to spend \$250 million on.

Of course, it is not \$250 million, but as I stated above, the sum of the project is \$167 million.

As was said earlier, the Skeldon Modernisation Project will significantly reduce the cost of production to enable GUYSUCO to remain profitably in business. The price cut of thirty-six percent will take effect from this year and it would be as follows:

- 2006/2007 - 5.1 percent; actually the supply year is from 1 July to 30 June;
- 2007/2008 - another 5.1 percent making 10.2 percent cut in price;

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- 2008/2009 - another 17 percent making a 27.3 percent cut in price; and
- 2009/2010 - another 8.7 making a total of 36 percent cut in four years.

The thirty-six percent price cut on our 167,000 tonnes of sugar export to Europe will reduce the current price from US twenty-eight cents per pound to US eighteen cents per pound. This will cost a significant loss to the coffers of GUYSUCO. Using today's number, GUYSUCO's loss will be in the vicinity of \$7.4 billion which would be equivalent to approximately forty-five percent of its employment cost or about one-third of its current revenue from the sale of sugar and molasses.

Mr Speaker, the Skeldon Modernisation Project will definitely save the sugar industry in Guyana from collapse and disintegration. Had we followed the critique, certainly there would be no sugar industry within the next few years in our country. We must remember that sugar remains the linchpin of our economy, it is responsible for the overall agriculture; the highest contributor to GDP seventeen percent; largest foreign exchange earner - \$133 million per year; employees - 21,000 persons and another 5,000 cane farmers providing at least 10,000 indirect jobs and support approximately twenty-four percent of Guyana's population; provide health, sports, education, training in draining and irrigation services in rural districts.

Mr Speaker, from the above let us do not use sugar as a political football. It has a future in Guyana unlike in many other ACP countries. *[Applause]* In Guyana, thousands of workers and thousands of others indirectly depend on sugar for their economic survival.

Mr Speaker, the action plan of the Guyana Sugar Corporation will need the fullest support of all when it is fully formulated. We must ensure that we receive adequate compensation from Europe for the severe and unilateral price cut. Since we began to grow sugar in Guyana in 1658, our colonisers particularly the British exploited our resources both human and natural to enrich Europe. Indeed the affluence of Europe has its genesis in the exploitation of its former colonies. We need adequate compensation. The US \$16 million identified for servicing the action plan will no doubt ensure the survival our sugar industry from Skeldon to Uitvlugt and Wales. The Skeldon Modernisation Project alone cannot make the industry fully competitive in the ensuing years. The European Union's compensation is required to improve cane yields to the targeted ninety tonnes per acre, to improve sugar extraction and recoveries by two to three points, to

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ensure significantly productivity improvement; to support the value-added programme of the corporation. Mr Speaker, incidentally it is lamentable that the Honourable Member Mr Vincent Alexander exclaim in this august body during this Budget Debate:

We are proud that we imported sugar.

Mr Speaker, since we began to export sugar in 1661, we had never, never imported sugar for local consumption. We imported sugar because of the plummeted sugar production at that time. In 1988, production was 167,550 tonnes; in 1989 it was 164,800 tonnes; in 1990 it reached a record low to 129,920 tonnes and in 1991 production was 160,000. In these years, we did not sell our sugar to Europe to secure high prices as the Honourable Member alluded to, but we exported our sugar to the EU to maintain our sugar quota. Those years when we failed to supply our quota 167,000 tonnes per year, we had to argue a case *force majeure*. Incidentally, we have some very good news; this is a document that is printed in Canada *Information and Analysis for Unions in the Sugar Sector* and is said here on 24 January, *international sugar prices in New York reached 18.75 cents per pound, a level not seen since 1981*. This is really good news that the world price has now reached 18.75 cents per pound. Whether it will say that, it is another question. Another part of the report said:

Production shortfalls are expected in some larger countries such Thailand and China as well as in some not too large countries like those in the English speaking Caribbean. The International Sugar Organisation ISO estimates that world's sugar production would be 1.5 to 2 million tonnes below world consumption.

This is suggesting that the price could indeed go up. Another part of the report said:

Over a dozen and a half traders based in New York were asked in mid January were asked about sugar prices for 2006. They all agreed that they would probably climb to US 18 cents per pound, but nobody expected it to happen so quickly. In Canada, a top official of a refiner venture to say, I do not know if we will see 25 cents, but I am hearing lots of people talk 20 cents, whether these were Canadian or US, the forecast is for sugar price to rise considerably in 2006.

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I am sorry that the Honourable Member Mr James McAllister is not here to hear this because he has already thrown up his hands and talk about retrenchment of workers. In conclusion, Mr Speaker, plaudits must be given to the Honourable Minister Mr Saisnarine Kowlessar and all those members from his Budget team of the Ministry of Finance who have worked assiduously to craft the 2006 Budget under the theme *TRANSFORMING GUYANA THROUGH MODERNISATION AND PARTNERSHIP* months ahead of the previous budget. They all need our commendation. Let us all endeavour to have a free and fair elections. All political parties must ensure that our elections takes place with the constitutional due time and those elections - regional and national - are held in a peaceful atmosphere. Certainly, Mr Speaker, peace, progress and prosperity will be assured in Guyana after the next election when the PPP/C Government will be elected for the fourth consecutive term. Thank you *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Member Mr Ally

Mr Husman Ally: Mr Speaker, I rise to give my support to the Budget - the largest Budget ever in Guyana.

Mr Speaker, I want to clear up some points here made by the Honourable Member Judith David. Now, Bartica Community Centre is being run by the NDC and it has a Council. Any repairs, any addition that NDC and that Council is responsible for.

Mr Speaker, the Youth Choice Programme also has a Council run by the youths and they are responsible for that programme. For my information, the building is still in use.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member Ms David mentioned that Four Miles the people supplied lamp poles for electricity. For my information also, to speed the electricity for the area, people bought their own poles so that can speed up electricity for the scheme.

Mr Speaker, I will now come to the Budget. Since the Honourable Members on the other side asked about the land, let me tell him that I think he should seek information from the Lands and Survey Commission *[Applause]* whereby he will get the truth.

Despite the setbacks in Guyana, the Minister of Finance and his working team were able to come up with a budget of \$102 billion.

Despite the constraints at home and abroad, the Minister was able to give across the board increase of wages of seven percent.

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Despite the problems at home and abroad also the Minister was able to bring up a Budget of 19.1 percent greater than 2005.

Mr Speaker, I think this would be the shortest speech in this House. The Honourable Member Ms David mentioned that other areas in the region derive nothing. I want to say that an allocation of \$77.272 million was given to Region 7.

Mr Speaker, I want to give a brief run down on how this will be spent. Construction of a concrete bridge and this will join to the main road to the hospital of Bartica. It would not be a PPP/C bridge or a PNC/R bridge or what ever bridge, it will be a bridge for the people.

Buildings and Education - I think the MP has a copy of this book. There is an allocation of \$22 million for buildings and education and it goes like this -

Construction of education office at Kamarang. She mentioned Bartica just like anywhere else has not received anything.

Construction of Teachers' quarters at Falls Top in the Mazaruni. I do not know if she ever went to Falls Top. It would be a good idea to take her there for a trip.

Extension of a mess hall and kitchen at Waramadong; Waramadong is an area with an educational complex - with a lot of buildings, teachers' quarters, dorms, et cetera.

Secondary School Complex in the Upper Mazaruni;

Building and Health - Completion of health posts at Iseneru. It is quite a distance from Bartica.

Construction of a health centre in the Bartica Hospital Compound;

Rehabilitation of health posts at **Chinery**. Let me remind the Honourable Member of Parliament that **Chinery** is on top of a mountain. You have to fly in there.

Completion of health posts in Iseneru up in the Mazaruni.

Let me now move on to roads - The road from Kamarang to Waramadong is \$9.773 million. I think the MPs should visit these areas to know what we are talking about.

Continuation of a construction of a road at Akatash Village in the Essequibo River;

Construction of a section of the Kamarang/Waramadong farm-to-market road, Upper Mazaruni River.

Sea and River Defence - We are not hoping that when floods come we will try to build seawalls. We are trying to build walls before and that will entail \$7.8 million.

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Procurement of a river ambulance for Bartica Hospital - That will be a boat fully equipped against weather conditions; and

Procurement of a wooden boat for the Kamarang Hospital. For those who know that area, it is a serious area to get to the hospital.

From 1992 to 2005 we built a lot of schools and this year the schools need equipment.

They must be equipped; procurement of furniture for Bartica Secondary School to a tune of \$6 million.

Electrical equipment for the Home Economics Department, Bartica School; procurement of furniture for St John's the Baptist School, desk, benches, chalk boards, et etcetera; procurement for furniture for St Anthony's Primary School; procurement of furniture for the Two Mile Primary School; procurement of furniture for Waramadong Secondary School; furniture and equipment for health of \$5.1799 million; procurement of the following equipment for Bartica and Kamarang Hospitals:

- Surgical and dental equipment;
- Microscope;
- Stretchers;
- Blood Pressure Apparatus;
- Portable drip stands;
- Ten bedside tables and no squeaky-squeaky beds, we will buy perfect beds;
- Wheelchairs;
- Dressing Rollers; and
- Chest draining system.
- Computers and accessories
- Three filing cabinets
- twenty-five steel chairs and
- six double beds for the Bartica Hospital.

Power extension for the Upper Mazaruni and Middle Mazaruni;

Rehabilitation of the Kamarang power supply system and generators;

Extension of Kurupung seventy-two miles power supply system to an allocation of \$2.4 million.

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Water supply - \$5.5 million;

Construction of two reservoirs to a tune of over US \$60 million.

Water distribution system at Waramadong, Upper Mazaruni. Talking about water, I think, Bartica has one of the most modern water treatment plants in Guyana *[Applause]*

Building maintenance an allocation of \$8 million;

Projects - Maintenance of government quarters Fourth Avenue;

Bartica health workers building including the replacement of a new roof;

Maintenance of storekeepers' quarters, Mongrippa Hill, Bartica and that is no distance from where the Honourable Member Mrs David lives;

Maintenance work at Waramadong rest house, Upper Mazaruni;

Maintenance work at REOs' quarters, Bartica;

Maintenance work of the Regatta Pavilion so that when you go to the next regatta, you will see some improvements there;

Maintenance work on the Administration Office, Bartica.

Roads - Maintenance of roads - an allocation of \$21.5 million. I want to say that the Honourable Member Mr Ivor Allen did some work on roads in Bartica. *[Applause]*

Despite this, I want to say that we have more roads to do and I am not ruling out that Mr Ivor Allen will be able to capture that contract. The reason for this is that he has the equipment and that is \$21.5 million.

Maintenance of Mongrippa Hill Road, Fourth Avenue, the last section which is not a distance away from MP David;

Maintenance of roadway, Mongrippa Hill, roadway behind GECOM's Office;

Maintenance of roadway Mongrippa Hill, south west of the career centre;

Maintenance of roadway, old scheme, Bartica;

Maintenance of roadway, Carafes Hill.

Maintenance of bridges from Bartica to seventy-two miles going that distance there is a lot of creeks across the roads;

Maintenance of bridge No.6 Kamarang/Waramadong;

Maintenance of footbridge in Jawalla area, Upper Mazaruni;

Maintenance of Drainage and Irrigation allocation \$8.5 million;

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Construction of main drain commencing from where the main drain ends to the koker, First Avenue proceeding west for a distance and running north towards the main koker; the vendors' arcade;

Maintenance of sea and river defence \$2. 2million.

Mr Speaker, within this year, not too far away, we hope to rehabilitate or build a new market in Bartica. From what I have read here, it is from the regional budget and that is why I am saying that MP David should have a copy of this.

Finally, I want to say that with the Budget of 2006 from the Minister of Finance and his able staff, I want to ask both sides of the House to give their support. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Members. This brings us to the end of our business for today.

The Honourable Minister of Trade and International Cooperation

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the National Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, 3 February 2006 at 14:00h

The Speaker: The Assembly is so adjourned. Thank you.

Adjourned accordingly at 23:56h