

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

49TH Sitting

Tuesday, 16TH April, 2013

Assembly convened at 2.52 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

[Written Replies]

1. JOINT GUYANA-BRAZIL WORKING INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister say -

- (i) Which regional government/private sector/civil society/Amerindian representatives of Regions 4, 8, 9 and 10 are members of the joint Guyana-Brazil working infrastructure group, which met in Guyana on 20th – 21st February, 2013?
- (ii) If no regional representatives in each of the four above categories (RDC, private sector, civil society and Indigenous Peoples) are not represented on the joint Guyana-Brazil working infrastructure group, why not?
- (iii) Which representatives of Opposition Members of the National Assembly are members of the joint Guyana-Brazil working infrastructure group, which met in Guyana on 20th -21st February, 2013?

- (iv) If no representatives of the Opposition Members of the National Assembly are members of the joint Guyana-Brazil working infrastructure group, why not?
- (v) Does the Government of Guyana consider it important to include Opposition Members?

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]:

- (i) The regional administration of Region 9 is represented on the joint working group.
- (ii) The joint working group is a technical one and comprises representatives from State agencies of the Republic of Guyana and the Federative Republic of Brazil. The regional administration of Region 9 is included.
- (iii) The joint working group is a technical one and does not include legislators from either of the two countries.

See response to (iii).

- (iv) As mentioned before this is a joint technical working group. However, at the appropriate time the Government will be engaging the relevant stakeholders.

2. TRAIL BETWEEN LINDEN AND LETHEM

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister advise that further to and recalling the study carried out by Conservation International, Guyana, and others for the IDB on the possible environmental consequences of converting the present trail between Linden and Lethem to an all-weather highway (in the Brazilian sense), how have these findings been taken up in the discussions?

Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]: The Government of Guyana has always attached critical importance to upgrading the trail between Linden and Lethem to an all-weather road. In fact, the National Development Strategy identifies this road project as the essential north-south link in the overall national transport network of Guyana.

The Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Public Works, completed a feasibility study in 2012 for upgrading the trail between Linden and Lethem to an all-weather road. This study was funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, executed by SNC Lavalin of Canada, an

International Consultancy Firm in collaboration with VIKAB, Guyana, a local partner, and received numerous specialist inputs such as from Conservation International (Guyana). The study included detailed assessments of the potential social and environmental impacts of the construction of an all-weather road, and has identified strategies to be pursued in eliminating and/or mitigating these impacts.

At the same time, the Government of Guyana has diligently pursued, under the auspices of the initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA), for the recognition of the Linden-Lethem Road Project as essential to the physical integration of our continent. This has resulted in the Linden-Lethem Road Project being selected as one of thirty-one from over five hundred other projects for inclusion in the Integration Priority Project Agenda of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

The positive results of the feasibility study and the inclusion of the Linden-Lethem Road Project in UNASUR's Integration Priority Project Agenda have advanced the realisation of this project. At this time, a technical working group of officials from Guyana and Brazil are tasked with developing a strategy for the realisation of upgrading the trail between Linden and Lethem to an all-weather road. The working group includes officials of Guyana's Environmental Protection Agency and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to ensure that social and environmental aspects of the potential road project are considered prominently.

3. TRAIL-LINK BETWEEN NORTHERN BRAZIL AND THE ATLANTIC COAST OF GUYANA

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister state that with regard to persistent calls over the years for a rail link in order to carry faster and heavier traffic between Northern Brazil and the Atlantic Coast of Guyana, what comparative studies in both engineering and economics have been carried out in connection with this IIRSA-initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America-link?

Mr. Benn: The Government of Guyana has diligently pursued, under the auspices of the initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America (IIRSA), for the recognition of the Linden-Lethem Road Project as essential to the physical integration of our continent. This has resulted in the Linden-Lethem Road Project being selected as one of thirty-

one from over five hundred other projects for inclusion in the Integration Priority Project Agenda of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

The Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Public Works, completed a feasibility study in 2012 for upgrading the trail between Linden and Lethem to an all-weather road. The study was funded through the Inter-American Development Bank's Integration Infrastructure Fund, which was established to support cross-border projects designed to reduce transport and logistics costs to expand trade.

The feasibility study alternative road options, but not rail. The previous pre-feasibility study has identified a marginal economic feasibility for a paved road project, so that it was not likely that a more expensive rail project would be feasible. The feasibility study corroborated this finding since a paved road project was found to be feasible at an estimated cost of two hundred million United States Dollars, well below what would be required to construct a rail link. Notwithstanding this, the construction of a rail link can be considered if substantial new generators of goods are created in Northern Brazil.

4. TRAIL-LINK BETWEEN SURINAME AND BRAZIL

Mr. Bulkan: Could the Hon. Minister advise that given negotiations between Suriname and Brazil for one or more similar linking highways are already well advanced, what coordination mechanisms are in place, are under discussion, or are planned in order to prevent duplication and wastage of resources as well as unnecessary and social damage?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Minister of Foreign Affairs has ascertained that the information provided by the Member is incorrect in so far as it relates to negotiations being "well advanced".

5. VISIT BY THE MINISTER OF AMERINDIAN AFFAIRS TO THE NORTH PAKARAIMAS

Mr. Bulkan:

- (i) Why the duly elected Regional Democratic Council of Region 8 was not invited to nominate at least one (1) of its members to be a part of Minister Sukhai's delegation, which visited the North Pakaraimas and a continuation of the one started in 2012 and

why the Hon. Minister chose instead to have two Members from the appointed element of the Regional Administration to accompany her?

- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister also state why she chose appointed people of the regional administration instead of RDC councillors to accompany her?

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Mrs. Sukhai-Campbell]:

- (i) The Policy followed for any intending Ministry of Amerindian Affairs Ministerial Visit/Outreach to the Regions is that the Ministry of Local Government is duly informed. By virtue of that notification, from time to time as scheduled; officials from the Region do accompany the Minister's Outreach Team.

For the Region 8 outreach, the above protocol was followed.

- (ii) I had no part in selecting appointed people of the regional administration for the visit to the North Pakarimas, Region 8.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013, of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,873)**, excluding fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand, one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, when we took the suspension last evening I had asked for an opportunity to be able to analyse the arguments that I had heard arising out of an objection formally laid by the Hon. Attorney General to Mr. Ramjattan’s motion concerning amendments. With your leave and permission I would like to read my ruling, but before I do I would like to apologise for the delay as the Clerk and I were going through it to make corrections. I believe it is best that I read the ruling.

The ruling is intituled Reference #4 of 2013. Ruling on the admissibility of a motion in the name of Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. to amend the 2013 Budgetary Estimates.

In 2012, during the consideration of the Estimates accompanying the 2012 Budget, the Committee of Supply, by way of a simple majority vote, amended the Estimates presented by the Minister of Finance by removing a total of \$20.9 billion from within various heads of the Budget. The Minister of Finance in proposing the Appropriation Bill – Bill No. 3 of 2012, to be taken through its three (3) stages, reported that the Assembly had approved the Bill, as amended. After much angst, confusion and distress, the 2012 Budget of the Government was approved with amendments. It was unanimously accepted that the National Assembly had the power to amend the Estimates in 2012 was never in any doubt as even the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., stated on 17th April, 2012:

“Over the next six days we will be considering the National Estimates and it is the legitimate right of the Opposition to ask any questions it wishes, within the

Standing Orders, in relation to those numbers. It is, indeed, the legitimate right of the Opposition to propose any change, within the boundaries of the Standing Orders, to any of those numbers.”

Understandably, and as was repeated last night, the Hon. Minister stated that at that time we were, collectively, in uncharted waters and that he did so without the benefit of the collective experience of all and without the matter being put to the ultimate test, that is, of being scrutinised by the High Court.

Subsequently, on June 4, 2012, the Hon. Anil Nandlall, M.P., Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs, instituted Civil Proceedings No. 216-W of 2012, Demerara, a Generally Indorsed Writ, to challenge the validity of the amendments passed by the National Assembly. On July 18, 2012, the learned Chief Justice, the Hon. Ian N. Chang, C.C.H, S.C., (hereinafter Chief Justice), gave a “preliminary” Ruling that emanated from an Ex-Parte application filed by the Hon. Attorney-General asking for the Hon. Finance Minister, Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., (the third-named Defendant” to –

“be at liberty to make advances/withdrawals from the Contingencies Fund pursuant to Article 220 of the Constitution for the purpose of restoring the funds to the Agencies...as originally budgeted in the Estimates of the Revenues and Expenditures of Guyana for the year 2012”.

As far as could be ascertained, since the date of the provisional ruling, no further steps have been taken, and the Court is yet to make a final ruling on this very critical matter.

On Friday, April 12, 2013, as per the procedure laid out in the Standing Orders, and as was the case in 2012, Notice of Motion for amendments was received in proper form from the Hon. Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

On Monday, 15 April, 2013, in view of the Point of Order, formally raised by the Hon. Attorney General, to the Motion in the name of Mr. Ramjattan, M.P, whether or not it was properly on the Notice Paper for consideration, and as the Speaker being, in my view, the authority to decide on the due regularity of Motions based on Standing Orders 26 and 27, I invited arguments for and against the Motion being introduced.

Previous Rulings numbers 2 and 5 of 2012, given on the 15th March, 2012 and 13th June, 2012, respectively by me, as Speaker, have established that in strict compliance with the doctrine of the separation of powers, the Executive has the right only, and only the right resides in the Executive, to formulate the Budget and, correspondingly, the National Assembly has the right to scrutinise, approve, disapprove, or amend, by reducing only, the Government's Estimates of Expenditure. In a manner of speaking, therefore, this Ruling is an expansion and continuation of numbers 2 and 5 of 2012.

For the sake of clarity, I have identified the essence of the arguments of the two sides of the House to be:

Government's arguments:

- The word "approved" must be given its literal meaning and interpretation and can never mean "amend".
- The power to amend would have been explicitly granted to this National Assembly if this is what the framers of the Constitution intended. The words would have been set out as they are in Article 113 (2) of Constitution of India.
- The Guyana situation of the National Assembly amending Estimates was never contemplated, given the unique political system that includes features of a hybrid Westminster/Presidential system, and proportional representation. Further, the constitution reform process of 1998 – 2001 neglected to address this anomaly.
- The Constitution of Guyana is supreme and all institutions of State, including the National Assembly, are subject to it.
- The High Court, as the only institution that can interpret and make binding declarations on the Constitution, has, through the Hon. Chief Justice, made a ruling that must be followed by the National Assembly.
- Article 171 (2), (a) and (b) have no applicability to the consideration of proposed Estimates, but rather, relate only to existing charges on the Consolidated Fund.

In turn the Opposition's Arguments discern to be:

- The power to “approve” must include the power to “amend”.
- The majority of the National Assembly is empowered to make changes to the Estimates.
- The Hon. Chief Justice’s “ruling” was restricted to just one matter being whether the Minister of Finance could make advances and withdrawals from the Contingency and Consolidated Funds.
- The High Court has no jurisdiction to interfere with the National Assembly in the performance of its functions. The High Court’s constitutional duty and responsibility commence after the National Assembly has acted.
- The ruling of the High Court did not strike down the power of the Parliament of Guyana’s decision to pass Appropriation Act No. 3 of 2012.
- The National Assembly has the power to amend the Estimates in the Committee of Supply stage and also to amend the Appropriation Bill when it is being considered.

I now turn to the principle of budgetary control.

Ever since the 17th century, the “battle of the purse”, as it is referred to, began in the United Kingdom and the outcomes were of such that for countries that were former British colonies, these were inextricably affected and influenced unto today by the manner of their constitutional arrangements governing public finance. Many lives were lost and monarchies deposed over this issue about parliamentary supremacy, and the right to approve budgetary allocations for the Crown.

The “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 comprehensively defined the financial role of parliament as it culminated in the promulgation of the 1689 Bill of Rights, which established the principle that only Parliament could authorise taxation by proclaiming:

“That levying money for, or to the use of the Crown by pretence of prerogative, without grant of Parliament, for longer time, or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal.”

Former Prime Minister of Great Britain, William Gladstone, had since 1891 defined the power of parliament over public spending this way:

“The finance of the country is ultimately associated with the liberties of the country... If the House of Commons by any possibility lose the power of the control of the grants of public money, depend upon it, your very liberty will be worth very little in comparison. That powerful leverage has been what is commonly known as the power of the purse – the control of the House of Commons over public expenditure.”

And more recently an Australian Senator Andrew Murray, 2007 stated:

“The transparency and accountability of Commonwealth public funding and expenditure is right at the heart of parliamentary life. Those who understand the history of parliaments know that this is the battlefield on which hundreds and thousands of people have lost their lives. It is about the right of people to determine how they are to be taxed and how that taxation is to be spent by those who govern them. The fact that the history of striving for good government goes back centuries and is steeped in blood should remind us that, as dull as this may seem to those who seek other pastures of interest, this is material which goes right to the very heart of our parliamentary function.”

The very senator also wrote in a paper entitled *Budgets and Finance: Sunlight and the Dark Arts*.

“Democracies are wary of a concentration of power and the abuse of power. If parliament controlled its own budget it would advance the separation of powers. Democracies try to keep separate the parliament’s power to make laws and to tax, from the executive’s power to propose laws and to spend the revenue, from the bureaucracy’s power to administer laws and programs, and from the judiciary’s power to determine disputes according to law. Each of these is meant to act as a check and balance on the other, but if the executive holds the financial and resources whip-hand then there is a great imbalance in power”.

Today, the position that the people's representative assemblies must have the right to raise taxes and to approve spending by governments is well settled and established. Erskine May, the 23rd edition captures the essence of the principle this way:

“The dominant influence enjoyed by the House of Commons within Parliament may be ascribed principally to its status as an elected assembly, the members of which serve as the chosen representatives of the people. As such, the House of Commons possesses the most important power vested in any branch of the legislature, the right of imposing taxes upon the people and of voting money for the public service.”

In Guyana, despite having a unicameral legislature, a hybrid of the Westminster system and proportional representation, it is my considered opinion that the principle of “representatives of the people” is no less potent, and is very valid and alive.

There are several well recognised universal principles and tenets that inform the function of parliamentary control of public money. These are:

1. The Executive cannot levy taxes or borrow moneys without the Legislature's authority.
2. The Executive has spending authority only when it has received such authority from the Legislature and in accordance with the limitations stipulated by the Legislature.
3. Each year the Legislature grants, through Appropriation Acts, approval to the Executive to spend moneys on those expenditure items for which approval has not already been given – normally all expenditures other than statutory items.
4. The Executive must submit an Annual Budget of Expenditure, which are called the Estimates to the Legislature.

One writer, Mr. Joachim Wehner, who is a lecturer at the London School of Economics, observed that:

“Many legislatures have constitutionally unfettered powers to shape budgets, including those in Scandinavia, much of continental Europe and the United States. To the contrary, ‘reductions only’ restrictions apply in the Westminster tradition, so that Parliament may only reduce existing items but it may not include new ones or increase existing ones...Finally, the Westminster tradition precludes a creative role for parliament in budget policy through the amendment process. Any amount from an expenditure item that is cut cannot be shifted to increase spending on a different item elsewhere in the Budget.”

Even in the face of what many consider to be clear and defined rules, the matter of the right of Parliaments to exercise control over public spending is one that continues to generate tension and confusion. The relationship between the legislature and the executive, and the powers over public spending, vary from region to region, and from country to country. The varying systems deployed are the subject of much debate and judicial intervention. A 2003 National Democratic Institute paper traces the various systems used to regulate this delicate balance and the tense situations these evoke from time to time. In that paper it is said that:

“In almost all political systems, it is generally accepted that the executive has the primary role in developing an Annual Budget and presenting it to the legislature. The legislature has the right to review, debate, in some cases amend, and approve or reject the spending plan proposed by the executive...In developed presidential and parliamentary systems the executive and legislative branches have traditionally struggled to find an equitable balance of power over financial matters. That struggle continues today as executives and legislatures seek to exercise their budgetary prerogatives, fashion new ones, and mould policy through the allocation of the nation’s resources to priority programmes.”

Similarly in a paper entitled *The Role of Parliament in the Budget Process* by Warren Krafchik and Joachim Wehner, the authors boldly advance the position that:

“As representatives of the people, Parliament is the appropriate place to ensure that the Budget best matches the nation’s needs with available resources...the international debate is framed as a tension between the roles of the executive and

the legislature – between technicality and democracy. In virtually all countries it is accepted that the executive has a mandate to prepare the Budget. The role of the legislature is to exercise oversight and to authorise the executive to raise revenue and spend money.”

Finally, Mrs. R. A. Ahmadu from Nigeria, I believe she is known as the Secretary General or comparatively the Clerk of the Parliament of Nigeria, writing in a paper entitled “*The Appropriation Procedure - An Aspect of the Budgetary Process of Nigeria in 2001*”, wrote:

“In virtually all Parliaments of the world there is common provision in their countries’ constitutions as to whose duty or responsibility it is to pass laws. This duty is invariably bestowed on the legislature. The responsibility is indeed more pronounced in regard to money matters – that is ‘Appropriations’ and ‘Finance’ including even bills whose subsidiary elements involve money. In order, however, to implement the constitutional provisions in practice, Parliaments employ rules and regulations commonly known as ‘Rules’, ‘Standing Rules’, or ‘Standing Orders’ which are generally similar for legislatures in democratic countries, but may vary in operational details.”

I turn now to Guyana.

The 1960s, being the era of self-determination, Guyana, like scores of former British colonies, received political independence; but not without being given the tools to organise and govern the State, which we know as a written Westminster-type Constitution. Most former colonies have altered and refined their original independence Constitutions. Guyana is no exception as in 1970, 1980 and in 2001, Guyana’s Constitution received substantial amendments. Nevertheless, the portions dealing with public spending and finance have remained virtually untouched.

The regime, which regulates the various aspects of public spending, can be found largely in three primary instruments, being firstly the Constitution, secondly the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, and, thirdly, the Standing Orders of the National Assembly. The relevant sections and articles of these instruments are set out in schedules

to my ruling and are attached, but for the Constitution the relevant provision are at articles 171, 218, and 219, for the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act it is sections 16 and 17 and for the Standing Orders of the National Assembly. It is Standing Orders 71, 75, 76 and 77.

Article 9 of the Constitution of Guyana, interestingly in my view, recognises the legality of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly:

“The rules and orders of the existing Assembly as in force immediately before the appointed day shall, until it is otherwise provided for under Articles 165 and 173 of the Constitution, as the case may be, be the rules of procedure of the National Assembly and of the Supreme Congress of the People established under the Constitution, but shall be construed with such modifications, adaptations, qualifications and exceptions as may be necessary to bring them into conformity with the Constitution.”

Parliament, in its wisdom, went further by placing into the Constitution, the following, in Article 165 (1):

“Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the National Assembly may regulate its own procedure and make rules for that purpose”.

It is apposite to note that in a Ruling given by Hon. Speaker Ramkarran, S.C. in the 9th Parliament, arising out of a Point of Order raised by Mr. Anil Nandlall, M.P., as he then was, on the legislative potency of the Standing Orders, the Speaker ruled thus:

“I therefore disagree with Mr. Nandlall and rule that the Standing Orders fall within the definition of “written laws.”

Then, Mr. Ramkarran was using the interpretation given to him by the Interpretation General Clauses Act, Chapter 2:01 of the Laws of Guyana. I endorse this Ruling.

The relevant Standing Orders relating to the business of parliamentary scrutiny and approval of financial bills are set out in Standing Orders 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78 and 79.

I turn briefly to what obtains in other jurisdictions.

Reference has already been made to the fact that in all instances, save one - and that one where the exception is New Zealand, where I pointed out last night that there is no written Constitution, but for every other Colony of Great Britain there is a written Constitution quite similar to the one that we inherited in 1966 - the regime and architecture for financing government spending is for all intents and purposes, the same. To this end, reviews have been made of the Constitutions and Standing Orders of Parliaments and Assemblies in other jurisdictions with a Westminster tradition and a written Constitution. In those reviewed as a representative sample of all – I looked at Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Canada, New Zealand, India, Ghana, Singapore, and Sri Lanka and even Nigeria - the power to amend financial statements is recognised and upheld.

- Only recently (March 2013), in Singapore, the Parliament passed the government's budget, but not before a gargantuan number of Motions, (483) to be exact, for amendments were submitted. Even though they were not passed they were submitted for consideration by their committee.
- In India, “cut Motions” are actually so named in the Standing Orders and the procedures are more defined and expansive than ours. Members of the Lok Sabha guard their right to file these cut motions both vigorously and jealously. As an aside, I believe that given India's extensive and impressive judicial activism, which was referred to last evening, this is one area that the Supreme Court of India would have struck down as being unconstitutional, a long time ago, if, in fact it had been so.
- In Australia, a country with a written Constitution and Westminster-styled parliamentary system, the Parliament, contrary to the opinion of some, has retained its amendment powers, where as recently, as 1995, a nominal amendment in the form of AU\$250,000 reduction was made to Capital Expenditure.

- In 1994, in the United Kingdom’s House of Commons, admittedly operating without a written Constitution, that is supreme, an amendment was made to a budget resolution which was carried by 319 to 311 votes.
- In Trinidad and Tobago, the relevant Standing Order (67) is identical to Guyana’s National Assembly’s Standing Order 76, and gives the House of Representatives the power to amend by way of a reduction.

The fundamental point being made is that in all these Commonwealth territories, with a Westminster tradition and written Constitutions, the power of the legislative assembly to amend, is preserved.

I turn now to the Chief Justice’s Preliminary Ruling in Civil Action No. 216-W of 2012 – Demerara.

Much ado has been made about the Chief Justice’s ruling in Civil Action No. 216 of 2012 – Demerara. Far be it for me to use the Speakership to exercise as an appellate or review function over the High Court, but indeed, what is incontrovertible, and needing of no debate, is the fact that there is no burden, or duty, placed on this House, to adopt or enforce rulings of the High Court. Following on the arguments of the Hon. Attorney General on this matter, I am not convinced that the High Court exercises a supervisory jurisdiction over the National Assembly. What, I believe, it can do, and has a right to do, is review decisions made by the National Assembly to ensure constitutional compliance.

It has been, previously, indicated that the National Assembly will observe, strictly, the concept of the separation of the powers, and with it, the recognition of the fundamental pillar that the National Assembly is in charge of its own procedures. The statement made in Ruling No. 3 of 2013, and that was a ruling given by yours truly on the right of Hon. Member Clement J. Rohee to speak and participate in the business of the National Assembly, still holds as valid. I stated in that ruling and I quoted:

“The exercise of my duty should not be interfered with, or fettered, by the Courts, or be determined by the outcome of the issue before the Courts; though we are both respectful of, and grateful for, opinions and interpretations provided by the High Court from time to

time. Nonetheless, the National Assembly is legally and intellectually empowered, and capable to work out its own procedures and settle its own issues.”

Unless, or until, the Standing Orders are amended, or deleted *in toto*, they must be recognised, applied, and upheld in this National Assembly. The Standing Orders provide the only procedure of this House. This House cannot, with the greatest of respect, be bound by a “preliminary” ruling of the High Court made in an interlocutory application for interim relief, over and above its own Standing Orders, but can, and does, invite those with a deep interest, in matters constitutional, to engage the judiciary to provide a more final and definitive ruling on this issue - as a means of providing guidance and interpretation for the House’s fullest consideration.

It has been suggested in this House that because the word “amendment” is not included in the Constitution’s language, that the National Assembly cannot amend the Estimates. This, in my humble opinion, is quite a quantum leap to take. If taken to its logical conclusion, its manifest absurdity is immediately evident. Articles 65, 170, and 171 of the Constitution establish the Parliament’s sovereign authority to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Guyana. The National Assembly is a constituent member of the Parliament of Guyana.

Nowhere in these articles is the word “amendment” mentioned, yet, it is accepted, as trite, that the Standing Orders, in particular Standing Order 60, relating to amendments of clauses of Bills, are valid and applicable to every Bill that is introduced into the House. We therefore cannot approbate and reprobate on this matter of the power of the National Assembly to amend Bills brought before it for approval. The National Assembly has the power to amend any Bill brought into the House - though in the case of financial Bills, that power is circumscribed to be a power to amend by reductions only - except where a Minister proposes an amendment to increase expenditure.

Further, if indeed the House of Assembly has no power of amendment, by way of reduction, then I posit that this would render the function of, and necessity for, the Committee of Supply, obsolete, as it would have a simple robotic function of approving or disapproving the Estimates – which in my view is a mere minute’s work. The authors

of the National Democratic Institute's (NDI) research paper, that I referred to earlier, capture this sentiment better, than I ever could, when they wrote:

“The ability to amend the government’s proposed Budget is one of the most direct and powerful means for a legislature to influence national policy. In most countries, amendment power is considered a critical tool for enhancing the public’s involvement, enabling effective oversight, bolstering transparency, and monitoring fiscal policy. Without the opportunity for amendment, legislatures become ‘debating societies’ or lose ambition and simply rubber stamp legislation, thereby depriving the people of their most direct links to the governance of the nation.”

3.22 p.m.

In the research paper, *Back From the Sidelines? Redefining the Contribution of Legislatures to the Budget Cycle*”, the author wrote:

“The ‘power of the purse’ is an incontestable democratic fundamental. This also means that there is an obligation on the legislature to ensure that the revenue and spending measures it authorises are fiscally sound, match the needs of the population with available resources, and that they are implemented properly and efficiently”.

I turn now to Article 171 2 (b) of our Constitution.

This Article specifically states that no motion can be proceeded with that seeks to impose any charge on the Consolidated Fund or for altering any charge otherwise than by reducing it. It is clear to me that the strict delineations of the separation powers are maintained. The Hon. Minister of Finance moved a motion for the adoption of the Estimates as is his constitutional right.

The Hon. Kemraj Ramjattan, Member of Parliament, has proposed an amendment to that motion to reduce only, which in my view is done without crossing over into the reams of executive by proposing increases. Article 171, in my considered view and opinion, allows

for reduction by this House on any Bill or motion introduced by the Minister responsible for finance, any other Minister of Government or by any Member of his Assembly.

Now, for my ruling.

Ruling

1. The Constitution of Guyana is, as is every Constitution, the embodiment of the nation's fundamental principles and provides the philosophical and guiding underpinnings of the State. It is through enabling legislation that constitutional provisions are given efficacy and effect. In this regard, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act and Standing Orders of the National Assembly, are the enabling legislation to give effect to the provisions of Articles 171 (2), (a) and (b), 217 and 218 of our Constitution.
2. The provisions of Standing Order 76 do not, in my considered opinion, collide with, but rather complement, Articles 171, 217 and 218 of the Constitution.
3. The rules of procedures for the passing of Finance Bills are written and enabling laws that cannot be ignored, or circumvented conveniently.
4. The political system practised in Guyana does not negative the authority of the National Assembly to amend Bills and Motions, including those dealing with public finance.
5. The National Assembly of the Parliament of Guyana has the power to amend, **by reducing only**, the Estimates of Expenditure submitted by the Minister responsible for Finance.
6. The National Assembly has the option of rejecting the entire Budget, or accepting the entire Budget with or without amendments.
7. The power to amend cannot be used capriciously, injudiciously, whimsically, and or wantonly.

8. The Motion submitted in the name of the Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan on April 12, 2013, and placed on Notice Paper No. 179 of the same date, is properly before the National Assembly and can be considered in, and by the, Committee of Supply.
9. The aforesaid Motion is compliant and not in collision with, Article 171 (2) (b) of the Constitution and Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

I would like to say something on what I believe to be the way forward

In preparing for this Ruling it occurred to me that the easier part was in formulating a Ruling; but the more difficult was pointing the House in the direction that is nationally wholesome. Those who gave and those who received, the instruments of Independence, could never have intended that such a hallowed right and privilege of the National Assembly to “amend” Estimates, that was fought for and won with much bloodshed, and sacrifice, many centuries ago, would be usurped, surrendered, or easily given up. Correspondingly, such an important right must be used responsibly. Undoubtedly, the adage that with great rights come great responsibilities rings true here.

The power to amend must not be exercised capriciously, vengefully or wantonly and without any rational basis. The pre-eminent duty of the National Assembly is to pass laws for the peace, order and good government of the State of Guyana. In recognising this right to amend, I believe that it will be exercised responsibly and within the spirit of the Constitution. To do otherwise would be to invite a Court to vacate any amendments as being predicated on wrongful, unreasonable and an unconstitutional use of power.

It is my considered view that the Minister responsible for Finance now has two choices. When the Committee of Supply reviews the Estimates and proposes amendments, if those amendments are adopted by a majority of the Committee, then the Minister of Finance, when reporting to the House, may either report that his Government accepts the amendments and go on to report to the House that the Estimates have been approved, as amended, or he may indicate that he is withdrawing the Estimates entirely as his Government does not accept the amendments and see them as an indication of lack of confidence in the Government.

It is for the Government to make a calculated political decision as to whether it can live with the amended Estimates or not. If it cannot, then the decision is obvious.

In 2012, when the amendments to the Estimates were proposed by the National Assembly and adopted by the Executive, albeit reluctantly, the nation did not fall apart. We have passed this way once before, and now have a better definition of what to expect, and we know that we can survive. The decision is ours to make – to embrace the realities and opportunities of the 10th Parliament or to ignore them altogether.

Hon. Members, there are still mistakes which we will work on and have the ruling circulated in due course, as fast as the Parliament Office can assist me in getting the two exercises done. I thank all those who contributed to the arguments last evening. As I said, I was beyond simply being impressed and have received many emails and phone calls, since last night to this afternoon, in which persons were saying how impressed they were by the level of scholarship displayed on the floor, from both sides, last evening. This is not such an easy decision to make, but I said it is not the decision that I make, it is where we will go from here and what we will do. As I have said, we can, I believe, navigate purposefully forward.

I thank the House for its indulgence and allowing me the opportunity to prepare this and we will, in a matter of minutes, make corrections and have it circulated.

Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I would like to take this opportunity to express satisfaction with the ruling that you have delivered. I would like to give you the assurance that, on the initiative of the Opposition, we did seek an audience with the President of this country yesterday morning to ensure that there was no accusation of any wantonness or arbitrariness in our behaviour and our desire to seek a consensual outcome to the budget debate. The President did accommodate us and, in fact, tomorrow morning we will be seeing him again. I would like to give you the assurance that the Opposition is concerned that the national interest will be placed above partisan interest. I believe that your ruling today is a landmark ruling for parliamentary democracy in this country.

During the year 2012, we have been called lots of names, unruly House, and the Speaker's ruling has been regarded as a travesty. All sorts of names have been called. I hope that this ruling puts

an end to that acrimony and that we can get down to the business of running this country's affairs in a sober and rational way.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Speaker, I want to state my congratulations to you.

Mr. Speaker: Well, Mr. Ramjattan, there is nothing for me to accept congratulations for or for gratitude.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to personally... because I was the mover of the motion and I...

Mr. Speaker: Believe me, I thought of calling the Deputy Speaker and asking her to take the Chair and make this ruling. There is nothing to congratulate me on.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to say it is a landmark and transformational and that we hope that the governing side is going to buy it by the ruling and not to hustle across to the High Court.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Mr. Speaker, we have heard your ruling. It has not gone the way that we were thinking and we will cogitate on it; we will think of it. I want to say that our budget, in every head that we present, we have no doubt that it is the best for our country, at this time, within the means that are available to us. We stand on our budget on just that basis.

Mr. Speaker: That is appreciated.

Hon. Members, I have already indicated to Members, particular of the Opposition, that I may from time to time step out of my role as Speaker to see what I can do to ensure that we do not tend towards having any action that appears vindictive, vengeful, wanton, arbitrary, to use the Hon. Leader of the Opposition words. I know my intruders may not sometimes find favour, but I have so signalled, particularly to the Alliance For Change, that the right to amend is a right that is a sacred right, a right on which blood was shed centuries ago. Up to now, in many countries of the world, it is a very vexed issue. Therefore it is not to be used, as soon as you are given the right and empowerment, as to step across to deliver a blow because you have the right to give a blow. That is not what it is for. It is to ensure that the people are given the best representation possible. It is not to exact and settle scores because you do not like how a particular Minister is

speaking to you or answering, it is that I am going to show that Member that I can use my power. That is not what the power is for. I am going further to say that if it is used, such as that, it is highly unconstitutional because it is never a power given to be exact, as I said, revengeful or to settle scores.

Members, I am wondering whether we can take the recess so that we can consider the ruling. The Prime Minister has so indicated that the Government side needs some time to cogitate on the ruling. By then we will have copies in hand and we can come back and determine how we proceed on the Estimates. It is 3.30. p.m. we are due to take the recess. I am putting that because I know that the Government side, in particular, may want a chance to go through it and to determine whether or not... rather than just for us to enter into... If they wish us to proceed, we can proceed with the Estimates.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, you have made your ruling and we will abide by it here.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, with that said, I propose that we resolve ourselves into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I am just reminding you of your decision yesterday, or that the signal you gave yesterday, that the letter that I wrote you of concerning a significant portion of the Estimates needed a decision and you had, I thought, indicated that you had them before.

Mr. Chairman: My apologies, Hon. Members. Additionally, I had to consider a request made by the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, as to the format of the Estimates, which was presented to the House and the request was that the House does not considered the Estimates until they are returned and amended and brought back. Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, my preliminary belief is that for this House to inform or instruct the executive, as to the manner in which Estimates are to be brought, it means that we are now tendering over into the executive realm. The executive can bring its Estimates on a piece of paper but it stands and falls on how it brings them and we cannot instruct the executive in the manner in which it will approach the House. We may frown;

we may even condemn, but we cannot compel the format in which the executive brings the Estimates. That is my preliminary view. I know that Members may wish to be heard on it, but as it stands now, it is my view, for the Speaker to inform or instruct, which I do not believe I have power to do, but even if I did I believe that that power would be stepping over the line and stepping on the toes of the executive, if I were to direct that the Estimates be prepared in a particular form that is satisfactory. It is for the Minister to be aware, the Hon. Minister of Finance, or whoever is representing Government and it is for that person to bring the Estimates and to stand or fall by the format that the Government chose. That is my believe, Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the dispatch with which you have looked at this matter and given, as you called it a preliminary opinion. I am being not a lawyer, again, kerfuffle by this concept of a preliminary opinion. I am not, and the APNU, in sending you this letter seeking to have you instruct or to interpret anything. In essence, the Constitution itself is extremely clear as regards to the matter of how constitutional offices should be treated. It is not even a question of format. It is saying that the request must be made in a particular manner, and that is all I am drawing your attention to. I assume that as you are in the Chair, Mr. Speaker, you have a function, as you have just done, which was a challenge was made, based upon your interpretation of the Constitution, and a legal decision... I believe I have written you in the same capacity as the Attorney General did, saying that this is what the Constitution states and our discussion in the Committee of Supply should confirm to it. There are several points in the Constitution which address this.

Mr. Chairman: We are in Committee of Supply but we will entertain the argument.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to say this on that aspect of the matter. I have also been given the letter by Mr. Carl Greenidge. I think it indeed has some merit in it, but it will call for us to have lots more research done. I can see the necessity for us deliberating on that on another occasion, rather than this one. As I mentioned, there are certain merits to it as to the formatting, but I am in no position to proceed to make the case or to argue pros and cons, whether it should apply at this stage. I would rather suspect that we should proceed in the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, the nebulous term of “preliminary” is a term, of course, well understood by us lawyers but sometimes we are not very good at

explaining it. I do recognise what Mr. Ramjattan said that this matter needs to be given fuller consideration and even take argument because I did, with your permission, send a copy to the Hon. Attorney General and the Minister of Finance last evening and it is a matter that we have to address, but on the face of it I gave what I thought was just a preliminary opinion. At the end of the day the nation must have a budget and I would like us to expedite that process because the nation awaits. We cannot, in my view, delay it any longer, but I will speak with leaders of the House to see how we can address this process. I have not received a response from the Government but it is not something that we cannot wish away, or should try to wish away, or sweep under the carpet. It should be addressed. I have only given my preliminary views on the matter.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I just want to understand something you have just said a couple of seconds ago. Mr. Greenidge's letter was circulated; it was addressed to you, I was not aware, on behalf of the Government side, that a response was expected from us, which you said you have not heard a response from the Government.

Mr. Chairman: Courtesy would have expected that if the Government received it, it would have, at least out of courtesy,... It is for the edification of us all.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, you may be right in what you are saying. The point is that what we were debating, last night, a very critical issue and awaiting a ruling. This issue has not been considered anywhere, nor were we aware that we were awaited on for such.

Mr. Chairman: Mind you, I was not implying that I was demanding or... It is something that we will get to. But it is not I expected one to be given forthwith or anything like that, or that we were awaiting a response from the House. I will sit with Mr. Greenidge, Mr. Ramjattan and perhaps Prime Minister and the Whips and we will work out a procedure on how we are going to address this request.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, may I respectfully enquire as to when the break is due? If we are going to start the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, APNU's respectful application would be that we go straight through, which would be for an hour, or it is that we take the break now and start...
[Interruption] I was addressing the Chairman, I believe.

Mr. Chairman: We will take the break at 5.00 p.m.

Ms. Backer: Okay. It is fair enough.

Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 - Development of Foreign Policy - \$871,416,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6111 – Administrative: We see that there has been a reduction of six members. My question, through you, Sir, to the Hon. Minister, is whether the Minister can indicate whether these six people have in fact left the Ministry or whether they are now contracted workers. In other words, it is if the six people, from administrative, have all left or if they are now contracted workers.

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. One has resigned and five were posted, so they will be covered under another programme.

Mrs. Backer: My understanding, Hon. Minister, is that they would be on the next head, programme 042.

Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: We see that there has been an increase from 49 to 63 contracted employees and that now brings the number of contracted employees to over 50% of the staff under this programme head. Hon. Minister, could you, through you, Mr. Chairman, share with the House whether the contract...? How does it proceed? Does the Ministry advertise? Is there a panel that does the interviews? Is it a one-person panel? Is it a multi-purpose panel? I am just trying too..., so that the nation can understand how a person would become a contracted worker. Does the Ministry publish publicly that those vacancies? When people would come to be interviewed, is it a single-person panel interviewing them? Is it a panel? If it is a panel, what is the composition of that panel?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are advertisements and there is a panel. the Director General, the Public Service Ministry personnel and our Personnel Officer are on that panel, and depending on which department the staff will be hired to serve in, the head of that department will also be involved.

Mrs. Backer: Could you give us an idea, through you, Mr. Chairman, the... in terms of numbers, because you said the Director General, the Public Service Ministry and then you spoke of a few other persons? Where do those vacancies advertise?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that we do an internal advertisement, within the Ministries, but also there will be a number of applications coming to the Ministry on a daily basis and we go through those applications as well.

Mrs. Backer: Then it would be correct to say that the Ministry does not advertise outside. It does not have external advertisements for positions. Is that correct? In other words, there is no open competition.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Only the Public Service Commission can do those advertisements or Public Service Ministry (PSM). The Ministry does not advertise for those advertisements.

Mrs. Backer: Is it even for contracted employees, Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that that is the position.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, last year, in responding to a question posited by this side of the House, as to the figure which was budgeted for, \$19.6 million, you had indicated that the Ministry also had rented a building for the new CARICOM Secretary General, as the existing buildings had been rehabilitated. Could you indicate Hon. Minister whether the existing building, first of all, is the Colgrain House you were speaking of? If it is, are those repairs completed? Is that rehabilitation being completed?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The CARICOM Secretariat indicated that the building would not have been adequate for the new Secretary General and his family and so the Ministry has rented a new building. The Colgrain House rehabilitation is being done by the Ministry of Public Works. We are hoping that is going to be completed shortly but the Secretary General would not return to that premises.

Mrs. Backer: Is it any truth, Hon. Minister, in the widely held belief that that building is going to be sold to a private person, that heritage building?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is not to my knowledge.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Last year the Ministry budgeted for \$25 million. We see that there was a great excess; the revised is \$45.1 million. Hon. Minister, what was the reason for this increase of about \$20 million? We now see that the Ministry has budgeted for \$35 million and if that will be sufficient, given that last year \$45 million was.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There were some significant postings in the year 2012. As mentioned before, there were five Foreign Service Officers posted; there was a new Head of Mission posted to Paramaribo; a new Head of Mission posted to Brasilia; one Head of Mission returned home; one Consulate General posted to Barbados.

3.52 p.m.

In fact, we had eight Foreign Service Officers posted, but because we had some officer returning is why I mentioned five earlier. So, three FSOs were reposted, and this is the head where we cater for that.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, last year during your Budget presentation, on the same line item, you spoke about setting up a mission. I may have had – I did not take it seriously - inside knowledge when I had suggested that we needed a mission in South Africa. You had said that that was on the cards. We did not hear anything about it during this Budget presentation. I am wondering – I see you have \$35 million there – does that include any movement in terms of posting for the mission in South Africa. In other words, do we expect that that will be done this year? If it is, is the posting catered under that line item for this year?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That is our plan. Some of it is catered for here and some in Programme 042 as well.

Mrs. Backer: Could you indicate where the Embassy is likely to be, which city in South Africa?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Capital, Johannesburg.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. Line item 6281 - Security Services - Hon. Minister, in 2011, as you can see, it was \$9.9 million. There was a pretty big proposed jump for \$15.1 million. I had asked the question as to why this jump. You had indicated very frankly that they

had informed, I presume you or your Ministry, that they would be asking for an increase, hence the jump to \$15.1 million. We see that only \$10.5 million was actually spent. Could I ask whether despite having telling you that they were going to ask for a raise – they informed you; that is what you told the House last year – that they then changed their minds and said that although we told you we are going to come for an increase at the Ministry, we now, out of love or whatever, will no longer be asking for an increase? It is a very definitive statement you made last year. I have the Hansard here.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, we had envisaged a significant increase, but we did not see that significant increase. It was not that significant, but we had catered for that. I provided that answer last year indeed.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, I asked why it was that large increase. You said it is simple as to why the increase - they have so indicated that they are coming. I would have thought that the figure was based on what they would have told you. My questions is: how is it that it is \$5 million less, they having told you, and you having informed the House that they had told you that? Did they then come back and say that although they told you that they wanted an increase they changed their minds?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I repeat, they had indicated, both the Aviation Risk Management which is the security firm at the VIP lounge and the Constabulary. However, the increase only came from Aviation Risk Management. So, yes, we were told that there was going to be that increase. The reality is that we did not have that increase.

Dr. Norton: Thank you very much. Through you, Mr. Chairman, line item 6322 - Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations - listed for international organisations this Ministry has the Organization of American States (OAS), which it allocated \$4 million for. Could the Hon. Minister say if this allocation, in any way, would contribute to the meetings of negotiations in the quest for points of consensus of the Draft American Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples between the Indigenous representatives and member States of the Organization of American States?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is the quota for the core budget. The OAS would determine how it is used. Certainly, if that is a discussion that is ongoing, and it is a discussion that is ongoing, we expect that they would need to use from their core budget to continue those discussions.

Dr. Norton: A follow up, Mr. Chairman: the organisations of these meetings openly said to us that why the meetings had to be funded by friendly countries such as France, Spain and Portugal is because the member states are not contributing funds for this purpose. Have we ever been delinquent in our commitment?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Actually, this is our full payment. I can tell you that last year we made our full payment as well. What happens from time to time is that the OAS would request funding for specific initiatives. I can tell you that we would respond when those specifics are asked. I should mention to you that indeed for the entire OAS budget, member states contribute just over 50 per cent. So we have contributions from other associate members and countries.

Dr. Norton: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Backer: On that same line item, Hon. Minister, 6322 - Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations, for the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) we see \$5.15 million. This year it is more or less doubled. Am I correct in assuming that that is to bring us up to date with our contributions to UNASUR, or has there been an increase in what we need to contribute?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, we have not been delinquent. As you know, UNASUR is a pretty young organisation. During our chairmanship, we were working on the formula for contributions. What you have seen in last year's Budget would not have been the finalised formula. That formula is now finalised and this represents Guyana's percentage of that contribution.

Mrs. Backer: On line item 6294 – Other - just to carry you back up, through you, Mr. Chairman, we see that \$37 million was budgeted last year and, in fact, \$51.7 million was spent. This year the Budget has gone back very close to 2012's in that it is \$38 million. Could you indicate, Hon. Minister, first of all what is covered under this miscellaneous head, as I call it, and what was the reason that you, in fact, under-budgeted \$14 million?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, last year we had the Heads of Missions Conference. We had, as well, some expenses in relation to the establishment of the Consulate in Barbados. We would not have that this year. The head is also used for handling charges for private aircrafts which might come to Guyana with visitors visiting the Government to discuss our Government's business and bilateral cooperation. It is also used for transporting our visitors from the airport and around Georgetown, and for hotel accommodation which we provide as courtesy to our visitors.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6231 - Fuel and Lubricants - I noticed the amounts voted in 2013 is \$5.2 million which represent a \$600,000 reduction from the 2012 budgeted amount.

Mr. Chairman: That is good.

Mr. Sharma: However, the Ministry is purchasing a new vehicle. I do not know whether this new vehicle is working with electricity. So I need an explanation.

Mr. Chairman: What is your question?

Mr. Sharma: The question is that there is a reduction in fuel; the amount is reduced by \$600,000 but they are purchasing a new vehicle.

Mr. Chairman: Are you suggesting that in the face of the acquisition of a new vehicle, there ought not to be a reduction, and you need an explanation for that?

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Very well.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, the actual for 2012 was \$5.173 million, and the budget is \$5.2 million which is of \$27,000 more.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Hon. Minister is pointing out that, in fact, there is an increase, albeit a very miniscule increase, but there is in fact an increase over what was actually used. The revised was \$5.173 million and the request is for \$5.2 million.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I noted the Actual expenditure but the Actual could have been because the vehicle was down or something like that. So I am comparing the 2012 budget. If the Hon. Minister is going to compare the revised, then it is only \$27,000 minimal for the new vehicle which is going to be coming on board.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not know whether the Ministry is practising more efficient management of its fleet or whether with the coming on board of a new vehicle the economies of fuel consumption are better - I do not know. Is there any idea, Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, we are becoming better and better at the management and the use of our vehicles. We do not envisage a big increase this year, because, as we go down later, we would be purchasing two new vehicles, so we would not have to use some of the older vehicles.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6271 - Telephone Charges - I notice in Budget 2012, \$14 million was budgeted and the actual spent was \$5.6 million. In 2013, \$10.1 million is being spent. I do not understand why the fluctuation from budgeted \$14 million to an actual of \$5.6 million and then back to \$10 million when the money is not being spent. What is happening with the budgeted amount for 2013 of \$10.1 million? Is there some special activity, probably that they will increase telephone charges?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, in 2011, we made an advance payment to the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company Ltd. (GT&T) which covered part of the 2012 cost, hence you see that amount of \$5.6 million for 2012. The \$10 million budgeted for 2013 would now reflect the entire cost for 2013, whereas in 2012 we had an advance payment made in 2011.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Hon. Minister is aware that advance payments are not allowed in the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA). Advance payments are not allowed; we deal with cash bases of accounting. I do not know if the Hon. Minister of Finance would like to give us the definition of cash bases of accounting.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Member is a member of the Public Accounts Committee as some of us are ourselves. This is an issue that is disputed in the Public Accounts Committee and it is an issue where there are different opinions on the Government side and on the side of those who we

have consulted. In the accounting field, the Hon. Member's position does not support this. I would prefer that this matter be left to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Firstly, I am aware that there is a difference of opinion in the Public Accounts Committee. Hon. Member Mr. Sharma, I do not know that that is a question which you can put, as we consider the Estimates, in terms of the formatting or the accounting style, whether that is a question that I would see as permissible. We are going through the Estimates, and the manner in which the accounting is done...

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. However, it is not a question as to how the Budget is being prepared, but as Madam Teixeira did indicate, the PAC did look this matter, but we never benefited from the explanation of the Minister of Finance. He is here now and if he wishes...

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. We are dealing with the Estimates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. That can come as a question to the Minister or it can come in the form of a motion, but right now we are dealing with the numbers before us. As I said, the accounting practices of the Ministry of Finance and the different agencies I would leave for another place. Is there any other question?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, line item 6322 - Subsidies and Contributions to Intl. Organisations - could the Hon. Minister state whether and at what stage the Ministry does a rationalisation of its contributions to all of these international organisations that are listed here?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, in light of the increases that are required by many organisations and in the light of the new organisations coming on board, the Ministry is presently involved in exactly what the Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, is peaking about. We started that process. The listing that you see here and the contributions that we have allocated here, we believe is the way forward for this year. But we certainly would be looking closer in terms of the benefits as well from these organisations.

Mr. Chairman: Could we turn to pages 54 and 55?

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6241 - Rental of Buildings - could the Hon. Minister say what are the buildings that are being rented, for what purpose and what the relevant costs are per month for each?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am just double checking Mr. Chairman. We are on Programme 042 now. Is that so?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We did not vote on Programme 041.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, sorry.

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy – \$871,461,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$2,079,247,000

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Do I repeat the question, or is it taken as given?

Mr. Chairman: It is taken. It is rental of buildings.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, this represents the rental of our missions in New York, the permanent mission in New York, the Consulate General in New York, Ottawa, Toronto, Beijing, Brazil, Brussels, Caracas, Havana, Suriname, Nickerie, Barbados, Boa Vista, Trinidad and India. Would you like the cost for each?

Ms. Selman: Yes, per month.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: In terms of the permanent mission in New York, it is US\$22,083 per month. I am going to call all in US dollars. The Consulate General in New York is US\$10,458 per month; Ottawa is US\$5,207 per month; Toronto is US\$3,935; Beijing US\$14,641; Brazil is US\$4,631; Brussels is US\$5,658; Caracas is US\$5,100; Havana is US\$2,945; Suriname is US\$4,000; Nickerie is US\$1,320; Barbados is US\$2,750; Boa Vista is US\$925.57, depending on the exchange rate; Trinidad is US\$1,705; India would be for every six months and we pay US\$13,750. I should mention, Mr. Chairman, that we own London and Washington.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6284 – Other - could the Hon. Minister say what goods and services fall under this category and what is the relevant cost for each?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This would be bank changes, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, could I please go back, with your leave, to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees? We see that there has been a decrease this year of one person. Yet we see an increase this year, Hon. Minister, of the budgeted wages of about \$56 million. Could you indicate, Hon. Minister, the contracted employees, of course not the names, the positions, and what those persons get per month, the mid person and then the lowest person. So I am asking basically for three: the person who gets the highest, then around the middle of the seventeen and then the person who gets the lowest of the contracted employees.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: One ambassador returned. The highest in terms of the contracted employees is \$1,099,000.

Mrs. Backer: This is Guyana dollars I hope.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, this is Guyana dollars.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The mid-range is \$500,983. The lowest is \$60,531 for a secretary.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Hon. Minister, could you share with us details of the temporary employees? I see that we have three temporary employees. What are their portfolios?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are a legal officer in Brasília and two gardeners, one in Paramaribo and one in Havana.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Line item 6311 - Rates and Taxes - I believe that this figure represents the rates and taxes we pay on the land in Brasilia that was given to the Guyana Government by the Government of Brazil. Is that correct Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, you are correct.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you share with this House, given that the Auditor General for the last couple years spoke about the fact that we have this land and we have not even gone so far as to fence it... Last year you did indicate that the Government had presently, and I am reading from your speech, "As I said earlier, the Government of Guyana had decided that for more than cost benefit analysis it needs to utilise this land to build our embassy in Brazil. It is

presently engaging an architect in Brazil to look at the design.” Could you share with this House, particularly when we see that US\$4,600 is being paid per month, based on the figure you gave just now, what the status of this proposed building is?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, following the process established in Brasília, we have made progress in shortlisting a number of architects. We are hoping that we would be able to proceed more rapidly this year. We were hoping, at one point, to see if we can have an architect from home here in Guyana but, due to a number of regulations and so on in Brazil, we have decided to use an architect from Brazil. We have been working with the authorities there to move forward. So, we are hoping that we will make some significant progress this year.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, I just want to get... Last year you said that it is presently engaging an architect in Brazil. You then said to us just now that you are looking at a set of architects. Could we get a very definitive statement from you Minister so that when I ask the question next year we would know that we are at least moving forward? What is the position? Do we have an architect? Are we still looking from a pool to decide? Where are we with this?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I was correct with what I said last year. We received a few quotations. The quotations we received were very exorbitant. So, we decided to see what we can do with an architect from Guyana, but there are quite lot of building codes. So, we have gone back again to Brazil to engage with the authorities there to see if they can help us to find some architects that are good architects, but reasonable architects. So we have a shortlist now. Once we decided, we would be able to move forward.

Mrs. Backer: Just a last question for completeness: Hon. Minister, in terms of your mid-term projections, are you in a position to share with this honourable House a time when you see at least the construction of this building starting?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I do not commit to things that I cannot foresee, and you have the majority.

Mrs. Backer: Fair enough.

Mr. Chairman: One second, Hon. Member Mr. Trotman. Hon. Minister, for my own edification, given the fact that this is a plot of land designated for an embassy, under the Geneva Convention, do we still have to pay taxes? Could something not have been negotiated so that there is waiver? This figure, as the Hon. Deputy Speaker pointed out, is a heavy figure to incur every month for a piece of land.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: In Brazil, it is a little different I am advised, but they are not outside of the Geneva Convention. So it is a tax that we have to pay.

Mr. Chairman: You should be pushing for exemptions from all local, state and federal taxes.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would like to take the Minister back to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees. My questions to the Minister is: in a situation, Madam Minister, where the number of employees has been reduced by one, what is the situation that propels an increase in your budgetary allocation of \$56 million in 2013 as against that which existed in 2012?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There has been an increase in salaries and station allowances. In some countries, the domestic allowance for helpers are determined by the country, by law, so there would have been increases in those as well. You will recall that we have had some appointments. For instance, in Toronto we have a new Consulate General there now. We had to cater for those increases.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In relation to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - indeed there is a decrease of one employee, but there is a substantial increase in the cost. We heard that the highest amount that the individual is paid here is in excess of \$1 million. What are the salary and allowances per month for that individual who is receiving in excess of \$1 million per month?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I answered earlier.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister has provided an explanation. It may not be one that you liked or expected, but is there any specific question you would like to ask based on her explanation? She has already explained why there is that increase.

Mr. Sharma: I think the Hon. Minister gave the basic salary, but what is the emolument for the individual who is receiving a salary of over \$1 million? What are the additional benefits attached to that? Is it \$1 million plus another \$1 million in allowances?

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Hon. Minister, do you understand the question?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, they are station allowance, gratuity, domestic allowance, education allowance, vacation allowance and medical insurance; these are standard across those serving abroad. Do you want me to go to the figures?

4.22 p.m.

Mr. Sharma: I am interested in the cost of these allowances. What do they cost?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They vary depending on the mission.

Mr. Chairman: Would you like to hear about any particular mission?

Mr. Sharma: Give me the highest one.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The highest would be \$8,000 station allowance. The gratuity is on a six monthly interval, based on the salary that I mentioned. The domestic allowance would be \$500 per week. The education allowance is US\$8,000 per year. The vacation allowance, as well, is based on the provision of air tickets. It could be for children under the age of 18 and those air tickets could range from two to four depending on the children. For the medical insurance, we pay two-thirds of it.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6114: there is an increase of two employees and this is reflected by an increase in employment cost of \$33.736 million. How is this possible? Two additional employees were employed and the employment cost is \$33.736 million. I need an explanation.

Mr. Chairman: We are at line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support. There has been an increase by two, from 38 to 40.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We have had some increases in salary but we have employed two persons in Barbados, a confidential secretary and a receptionist. The salary is BBD\$4,575 for the

confidential secretary and BBD\$3,629 for a receptionist. This is a monthly salary in addition to some of the increases we have had.

Mr. Sharma: Could I have those amounts in Guyana currency and the allowances attached?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I could Google the Barbados exchange rate.

Mr. Chairman: I was just about to ask what rate we are going to use, whether it is that of a cambio or commercial bank.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is approximately 2 to 1. It is 1.9, I am told it is.

Mr. Chairman: It is normally rounded off at 2 to 1 for those of us who have studied there and visited.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6294 – Other: could the Hon. Minister say what the nature of the other operating expenses is which comes under line item 6294?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We give a small stipend to some of our honorary consuls when they have to deal a little bit more with our nationals in those countries. We also use moneys from this line item for operational expenses for our consulate in Trinidad and Tobago. It is to purchase gifts for departing ambassadors.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$2,079,247,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$37,959,000

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, with your leave and that of my colleagues, I would like to ask one question on staff – line items 6111 – 6117. Hon. Minister, we see that your staffing in this area has gone down from 19 to 12 and we see, also, that when we look at the project objective, which is on page 50, this programme objective of the development of foreign trade policy is a very heavy one. My question, therefore, Hon. Minister, is: are you satisfied that 12 persons have the capacity to really give effect to this very... I do not want to read the programme objective. I am just referring to it. Members can look at it to see how critical it is. Our concern is whether the 12 staff members that are assigned here have the capacity to carry out this very, very critical

programme objective which, among other things, deals with us being able to develop new markets for existing goods and services and new exportable goods and services. Is the number 12 sufficient? We do not think it is but we would love to hear what your thoughts on this matter are, Hon. Minister.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: You are absolutely right, Hon. Member, through you, Mr. Chairman, that we need to have adequate staffing for this particular area of trade. The two Ministries have merged so the seven persons are still within the organisation. We have done restructuring. For instance, we have a CARICOM Unit and persons dealing with trade issues in CARICOM would be in that Unit. What we are trying to do, too, is have foreign trade officers as foreign service officers. So, it is not just strictly trade. Not to go back to Programme 041, but you would have seen that there have been some increases. We have hired some young, vibrant officers whom we are going to be training as well. The short answer is: yes, I think we would be able to manage this foreign trade portfolio with the human resources that we have.

Mrs. Backer: A follow-up question, Hon. Minister. As you rightly said, we cannot go back to the other heads because they have already been approved and, of course, we have no intention of doing anything in terms of cutting them. I am just making an observation. When one looks back at the two other heads that we have approved, in terms of training and the moneys set aside for training, it does not jump out at us in any significant matter. In fact, under line item 6302, on the pages that we are now looking at, there is nothing provided, at all, for training.

This training – we agree with you completely – that it is vitally important but we do not see that reflected in the amounts set aside for training. In this programme, nothing is set aside for training.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, we have arrangements with a number of organisations and countries. Last year, for instance, 19 of our officers were trained through the DiploFoundation. Four of our officers were trained with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Ten of our officers did overseas training and we had some of our officers benefiting from training in Guyana. A lot of these training we do not pay for and we will be utilising that. For instance, we have a standing arrangement with Brazil in terms of training and we would be utilising that. We would make use of those training opportunities that are available to us.

Mr. Sharma: In relation to line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support - there is a decrease in the number of employees by one but, somehow, there is only \$48,000 reflected under the budgeted amount. What timeframe would \$48,000 cover to pay this individual? Is it for the whole year or one month?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The employee was hired at a particular time last year. That would have been catered for after the Budget last year. Some of the actual costs for 2012 would have catered for part of the salary.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I do not believe that the Hon. Minister is looking at the particular head. I am looking at line item 6114. The budgeted amount for 2013 is \$48,000. Unless they paid this individual for the entire 2013, I cannot understand this explanation.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, sorry, I did not hear the final part of the question. Could he ask it again?

Mr. Sharma: Please explain how an employee will be receiving \$48,000 for the entire year.

Mr. Chairman: What is the salary of that one solitary employee?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: A clerk II who was promoted to a foreign trade officer. Somebody moved up. That person would now be catered for under line item 6112 – Senior Technical. A telephonist was also transferred to Programme 041. That should probably explain.

Mr. Sharma: The explanation is not valid. Apparently, the Hon. Minister did not understand.

Mr. Chairman: There is an identification of a person. If there is a person under this line item and that person is collecting – from what we are see - \$48,000 for the year, that is \$4,000 per month. We want to know whether the Minister of Labour should be called in.

Mr. Sharma: Correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member is asking for an explanation.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, there must be an explanation.

Mr. Chairman: There must be.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: What I will undertake to do is provide that information. There was some movement between...

Mr. Chairman: Is the House prepared to accept the Minister's word. If not, we can cut it. Hon. Members, this pertains to \$48,000. The Hon. Minister is saying that she recognises that there is something there that, perhaps, she cannot immediately, at this point in time, answer. She has given her word that she would provide the answer and correct it if it is wrong.

Is there some way, Minister, that we could get an answer a little earlier? What Mr. Greenidge is intimating, in fact, is that if we are to approve this, it will be approved at \$48,000. If it is \$48,000, being the salary of a person, we are, perhaps, committing a crime against that person. If it is not \$48,000 and it is a higher amount, we would not have approved that higher amount.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that the sum that is here is adequate. The explanation is what I would provide. We could provide the explanation by tomorrow but I do not think that we want to detain the House.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. So, there is not likelihood that the figure will be adjusted.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, if I should make sense out of the nonsense that has been said, this amount may be treated as an allowance. It may be an acting allowance or a responsibility allowance, which is catered for in a next line item. However, there is the same scenario at line item 6115 – Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled. There is one employee under this line item and that person is to receive \$43,000 for the entire year.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, Sir, I would like to endeavour to be of some assistance to the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am advised that this was a person who, during the month of January, was paid under Programme 043. It was a telephonist, in fact. At the end of January, the person was transferred to Programme 041. For 11 months, the person was budgeted for under Programme 041, but the amount paid to the person in January under Programme 043 has to be appropriated under Programme 043. The amount of \$48,000 equates to one month emoluments for that person. I hope that clarifies the issue, Sir.

Mr. Sharma: That explanation is adequate but, in the staffing details, it should be reflected. It should not have been maintained as staffing being filled for the entire year. It should have been

put at zero and then it would have been seen reflected. What is the explanation for line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled? Is it similar to this?

Mr. Chairman: Line item 6115 - Semi-Skilled Operatives and Unskilled - has an amount of \$43,000. Is the explanation the same or similar?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: A cleaner was transferred.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I hear, even if not placed on the floor, the question of why a person was placed in the staffing details table. Of course, we are seeking an appropriation of an amount and that amount is in relation to one person even if it is only for January. We could not possibly put zero and then seek an appropriation of an amount. That is why there is one person indicated.

Mr. Sharma: In relation to line item 6243 – Janitorial and Cleaning - there is a large amount. I consider it a large amount because the amounts for this particular programme over the years have been diminishing. It is a very important area but the amount budgeted has been diminishing. If one looks at the expenditure from actual for 2011, it is \$79 million; the budgeted amount is \$59 million; and the revised amount for 2012 was \$53 million and now it is \$37 million.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you?

Mr. Sharma: I am at line item 6243. I just gave an indication that the amount budgeted for the programme has been diminishing. It is a very important programme and the amount has been diminishing. I consider \$720,000 for cleaning as very exorbitant. I do not know the size of the building. However, when one compares that under this particular programme, some \$1.1 million will be spent to maintain the building...

Mr. Chairman: Which programme? What is the question about line item 6243?

Mr. Sharma: Why is there such a large amount to clean a building as compared to \$1.1 million to maintain the building?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, cleaning has to be done.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Member wants to know where has to be cleaned.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is the cost that we have estimated to clean. Remember, the two Ministries have merged.

Mr. Chairman: Is it Takuba Lodge?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, it is at Takuba Lodge. In the compound, there are Foreign Affairs Protocol...

Mr. Chairman: It is a fairly sizeable structure, Mr. Sharma.

Ms. Selman: Mr. Chairman, could the question be put so that we can move on to the consideration of the capital expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: The Chairman is at the disposal of the Members.

Programme: 043 - Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$37,959,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Development of Foreign Policy - \$20,800,000

Ms. Selman: Project code 2400300 – Land Transport: could the Hon. Minister say how many vehicles will be purchased, the types of vehicles and the estimated costs?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Two vehicles will be purchased. We have to obtain the quotations so I would not be able to say exactly what types of vehicles, but they will be vehicles that befit what we will have to do in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mrs. Backer: You are saying two vehicles but you cannot tell us the individual prices because you do not have the invoice as yet. Then, how do you know that it is going to be \$17.3 million?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is the amount that we have been allocated and, based on previous experiences, we try to make the amounts do. We think that this would be adequate.

Ms. Selman: Project code 2501100 – Office Equipment and Furniture: Could the Hon. Minister identify the overseas missions for which efficiency will be improved as a result of the purchase of furniture and equipment?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is Programme 041. The furniture will be at the headquarters in Georgetown at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Selman, you went into Programme 042.

Programme: 041 - Development of Foreign Policy - \$20,800,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$56,000,000.

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister state the type of vehicles, the costs and how many vehicles will be purchased for the embassy in Brazil?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: One vehicle will be bought for the embassy in Brazil. In terms of the cost, the same explanation that I gave earlier applies.

Mrs. Backer: Project code 1200500 – Buildings: the legend states, “Rehabilitation of buildings”. When we look at Volume 3, the legend, number 39, we see that this project entails rehabilitation of buildings: Guyana Embassy in Washington and the High Commissions in Ottawa and London. Hon. Minister, could you give the House an update on what decision the Ministry has made concerning our High Commission’s building in London? It is something that has come up. It is in the Auditor’s Report, as I am sure you are aware. What portion of that \$24 million goes there and what is the Ministry’s medium term proposal for that building in London?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We are not going to sell the building. We are going to refurbish the building so that on the top floor there can actually be one of our diplomatic staff. We are hoping to use probably one-third of the money allocated to do that.

Mrs. Backer: Any idea, Hon. Minister...because that was the exact answer you gave us last year. Could you indicate what projections you have for when this is likely to be completed?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We did significant work last year and so we do not have a whole lot of work to do. I would say that we would definitely complete the work this year, based on what we have done. I can be definitive about that one because we did quite a lot last year.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Policy Promotion - \$56,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$312,000

Programme: 043 – Development of Foreign Trade Policy - \$312,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That concludes our review of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before you rise Minister, I would just like to say that it just occurred to me that all of the principal officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are all females and I think that is worthy of congratulations. I want to mention, as well, that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Foreign Relations Committee of the National Assembly are also females. The foreign policy of this country is in good hands, apparently. Congratulations. I think your short sojourn this afternoon is testimony to the fact that most of us agree – I think Mrs. Backer stated that – that this is an important ministry and the policies we stand together on. There is no division or anything like that.

I see Minister Irfaan Ali looking very apprehensive about whether he will get similar commendations.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are suspended for one hour.

Sitting suspended at 4.50 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.57 p.m.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon Members we will proceed to go through the estimates for the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Supreme Court and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) in that order.

Before we commence, prior to the suspension being taken, the Hon. Minister of Education had intimated – I do not know if she has spoken to anyone about it – about the possibility of having the Ministry of Education done after the Ministry of Legal Affairs, by consent with the others.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: Sir, as far as I understand, I think that either Chief Whip will be able to confirm that we are going to go until we are finished tonight.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Manickchand: If that is the agreement we will go at the end.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$14,583,000

Mr. B. Williams: Might I respectfully refer you Mr. Chairman to line items 6111 and 6116. Could the Hon. Minister say whether that contracted employee moved into the administrative slot? And, if so, what is the designation of that worker who is earning over \$2 million.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Are you speaking of programme 521- line items 6111 and 6116?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: I see here salaries and allowances for the Permanent Secretary. Do you want the names of the persons?

Mr. B. Williams: We want the designation of the person earning over \$2 million.

Mr. Nandlall: The Coordinator of the M & E, Confidential Secretary, a Driver and the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. B. Williams: No, you are not following me. If you look at line item 6111, there was none in 2012 and there is one now. For contracted employees, there were two and there is only one now. What we want to know is whether that one moved up to Administration.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, we have a new position created and it is in the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit which is an oversight department within the Ministry of Legal Affairs. A new staff has been appointed as the M & E Officer. That is a requirement of the Modernisation of the Justice Improvement (MJAS) Programme.

Mr. B. Williams: And the salary?

Mr. Nandlall: \$195,988

Mr. B. Williams: In relation to line item 6116, the two contracted employees and their emoluments.

Mr. Nandlall: The first is the M & E Officer and the second is the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. B. Williams: You have two contracted employees earning over \$6 million. Who are they?

Mr. Nandlall: The Permanent Secretary and the Driver to the Permanent Secretary.

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$14,583,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$50,588,000

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman in line item 6116- Contracted Employees- there are four new contracted employees. Could the Hon. Minister state the designations and emoluments of those new employees?

Mr. Nandlall: They are accounts clerks.

Mr. B. Williams: All four? And the emoluments?

Mr. Nandlall: \$47,605 each per month.

Dr. Ramayya: In 2012, there were no rented building in line item 6241, but I see here \$4,305,000. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister how many buildings is this for and where?

Mr. Nandlall: Are you speaking of Programme 522, Hon. Member?

Dr. Ramayya: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: Which line?

Dr. Ramayya: Line item 6241.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told by both of the officers on either side of me, the Permanent Secretary and the Accountant, that we have no rental; we are renting no building.

Dr. Singh: The Ministry of Legal Affairs has made representations to the Ministry of Finance that they are under severe space constraints at their current location and have indicated they require additional office space to accommodate their accounts, personnel, administrative and commercial registry staff. This allocation is provided for the possibility of a location being rented to accommodate these facilities during the course of the time.

Mr. Nandlall: I am grateful for the Hon. Minister's guidance.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6293- Refreshments and Meals- Hon. Minister we see that last year \$80,000 was budgeted – not a large figure – but we see \$416,000 was spent, but this year again you budgeted for only \$80,000. Could you indicate what caused that spike in refreshments and meals?

Mr. Nandlall: We had a number of engagements with teams coming from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in relation to the Modernisation of the Justice Improvement Programme. Also, I held a number of consultations in relation to legislation which came before this House. That accounted for the increase in expenditure under this head.

Mrs. Backer: A follow-up question: by going back down to \$80,000 Hon. Attorney General, are you indicating to this House that you do not expect to be doing any further consultations or entertainment in Hadfield Street.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not understand the question.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know it has been a question really.

Mrs. Backer: With greatest respect, the sum was \$80,000 and you have given the House an explanation as to why it has moved to \$416,000. I am asking Hon. Attorney General as you have again budgeted for \$80,000 is it that you are indicating to the House that during 2013 there is unlikely to be any consultations held by you, or entertaining of people that come in from IDB as you said, that you do not anticipate anything like that would occur during this year.

Mr. Nandlall: The likelihood of those types of engagements taking place is extremely slim, the reason being that the programme will be concluded within the next two to three months.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chair, line item 6231- Fuel and Lubricants- for Budget 2012, \$600,000 was voted; revised 2012, \$1.1 million, and for 2013 \$700,000, a reduction of \$400,000 over what was spent in 2012. In view that, this Ministry indicated in the capital programme that they are purchasing a new vehicle, how is it that the fuel is reduced?

Mr. Nandlall: A component of the MJAS Programme involved almost nationwide consultations as part of the legal awareness programme which carried teams of personnel including, yours truly, into several outlying regions of the country. Also, we had the project having a component that dealt with the establishment of an initiative in Region No.9 to do with the hinterland residents being able to resolve their own legal disputes. We had a launch where Justice Singh and several personnel, both from the IDB as well as from the Ministry, travelled to Lethem and other areas in Region No.9. So the transport in relation to this expenditure was largely air travel; sorry, it was overland.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chair, the Hon. Minister has to decide if he used a car or an aeroplane. Did he use an automobile or an aircraft?

Mr. Chairman: Do you mean to go overland?

Mr. Nandlall: We used both.

Mr. Sharma: First he said aircraft.

Mr. Chairman: Then he corrected himself and said he travelled overland.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, the Hon. Member would know that aeroplanes do not land in all parts of the interior so we move for long distances on land. *[Interruption]* We go by aeroplane to Region 9 then we have to hire vehicles et cetera. Vehicles travel from Georgetown to go there and then they take us from there. We travelled right across the coast. We went to Linden, Kwakwani, Ituni, we went to various parts of Berbice and we went to Region 2. *[Interruption]* I am explaining the use of fuel and lubricants.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chair, I am listening to the Hon. Minister and I am kind of confused because fuel and lubricants is for your own vehicle. So unless the Ministry of Legal Affairs has vehicles throughout the length and breadth, at each and every region in this country, only then that explanation would be relevant. However, there is an increase of \$500,000 over Budget 2012 and that would explain the increased activity that the Minister is alluding to. However, the actual increase is \$100,000 in fuel. Would \$100,000 be sufficient for the new vehicle you would be purchasing?

Mr. Nandlall: I am not sure whether \$100,000 would be enough. I do not have that skill to determine how much gas I would use.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chair, if the Hon. Minister is satisfied that this amount is comfortable for him, we are okay, but we should know because we do not want to be entertaining a supplementary provision later.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$50,588,000 – agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers – \$120,024,000

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, at line item 6111- there are six additional employees attracting \$16 million. Could the Hon. Minister say what are the designations and the salaries?

Mr. Nandlall: They are all State Counsels, which is a welcome addition to the Chambers of the Attorney General. The salary is \$159,216.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman- line item 6116 Contracted Employees – there are seven additional contracted employees attracting \$6. Could the Hon. Minister say what their designations are and their salaries?

Mr. Nandlall: A Typist, a Principal Legal Adviser, a Personal Assistant to the Solicitor General, a Registry Officer, a Personal Assistant to the Minister and an Office Assistant. For the Typist Clerk \$41,000; for the Principal Legal Adviser \$159,216; for the Personal Assistant to the Solicitor General \$157,000; for the Registry Officer 52,318; for the Personal Assistant to the Minister \$157,500; for the Office Assistant \$37,657.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Attorney General, under the Administrative, I am sorry Mr. Williams already asked the question.

Mr. Bond: Mr. Chairman, line item 6282, could the Minister advise us as to what equipment requires maintenance?

Mr. Nandlall: Repairs have to be done to photocopier, computer, printers and air condition units within the Ministry.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister advise whether it would be cheaper to have those equipment replaced as opposed to servicing?

Mr. Nandlall: That option was explored, but was found to not be feasible.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister advise us as to the current life span of the equipment that requires servicing under line item 6282?

Mr. Nandlall: The Minister cannot so advise.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chair, can the Hon. Minister indicate what are the items of expenditure under line item 6284- Other?

Mr. Nandlall: Payment for internet services and payment for advertisements, public advisories, notices et cetera that are required to be published in the newspapers by the Ministry.

Mr. Ramjattan: Line item 6302- Training- I notice none was used last year, but there is \$150,000 for this year. What is the training for and how many?

Mr. Nandlall: The figure indicated that there is no major training. I am told it is training for clerical staff.

Programme 523 – Attorney General’s Chambers - \$120,024,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor – \$28,382,000

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister advise on line item 6111 as to the service or additional benefits this administrative staff would be offered in 2013 that was not offered in 2012?

Mr. Nandlall: The Ministry has merged three offices into one- the Public Trustee, the State Solicitor and the Official Receiver. We have created a secretariat proper for the first time as competently and adequately staffed as we possibly could have. There is a multiplicity of services especially to the general public in relation to persons who cannot afford certain legal services, for example, to administer estates or to liquidate companies that have gone into bankruptcy or were abandoned. This is a vital service and the work load is heavy, so it was thought rather than pay three separate persons to consolidate the functional responsibility into a singular officer, creating a singular unit and merging these departments into one. That is the reason why there is this increase in expenditure.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chair, through you line item 6111. Last year there was one person there and that person's revised salary was \$3.6 million. Now there is one person still and there has been a \$9 million increase. The question I would like to ask is how much does that person get? We are hearing about three offices being merged but there is one person still; one administrative staff's salary was increased by \$9 million per year. The question is how much does that person earn monthly and what are his or her other benefits?

Mr. Nandlall: The gross salary is \$1,018,500 per month. First of all there were vacancies and this person was performing three functions and has been doing so for a number of years. Therefore it was felt to increase her remuneration to adequately compensate that person for the work she has been doing. She is indeed the longest serving person in the Ministry of Legal Affairs other than in the Legal Drafting Department.

Mrs. Backer: Could you tell me Hon. Attorney General when we look at the staffing at Appendix Q, what salary scale does that person come under? I am going to seek to give you the exact page. It is page 544, Office of the State Solicitor, Programme 4. The salary scale is 13. The question is what is the range for salary scale 13? Let us see if that person properly fits into that scale.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, in an effort to increase...

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, my question is very, very simple. Could the Hon. Attorney General share with this Hon. House the range for salary scale 13? That person has to be employed under the scale because the person is not a contracted employee.

6.27 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I am trying to explain that there is an attempt to increase salaries in the...

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, on a Point of Order, I have asked a particular question.

Mr. Chairman: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Mrs. Backer, we know that questions are not always answered in the way we pose them. Also, lawyers are notoriously... [**Mrs. Backer:** Some lawyers.] They are famous for the manner in which they answer questions. I have never seen a lawyer answer precisely. The Minister is about to answer and I think we should give him the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Nandlall: The purpose of this exercise as I understand it Sir, is to divulge information about public expenditure. [*Interruption*] The Government is being criticised for not paying proper remuneration packages to lawyers. I am saying that there is an initiative to link officers – legal officers – within the structure, to a structure which exists in the judiciary. Therefore, you have the Solicitor General and the DPP linked to that of a Court of Appeal judge; the Deputy Solicitor linked to a High Court judge and; the Principle Legal Advisor linked to a Principle Magistrate and it comes down.

This particular officer because there is a merger of three statutory offices into one, this office holder has been offered the position – the remuneration package – of a Puisne Judge. It is an ongoing process. Hopefully, I can be able to complete those institutional linkages, which would impact positively upon the remuneration package, which will be paid at the DPP's office and the Attorney General's Chambers.

Mrs. Backer: I will re-ask my question and this is my last attempt because I know there is a ruling of this House, which I am not completely happy with, but I respect, that a Minister does not have to answer the question. My simple question is, what is the salary scale ... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Is it the ruling of this Chair?

Mrs. Backer: No. Sir, my question is the salary scale at page 544. This person is listed under Administrative, that is where this person is to be found and I am asking a particular question. What is the salary range for someone that is employed on salary scale 13? What is the range?

Mr. Nandlall: For the direct question I am asking the Minister of Public Service to assist me, but this person obviously has been taken outside of the range. It is as simple as that.

Minister of Public Service [Dr. Westford]: The band that Mrs. Backer is speaking about, which is Band 13, where this position was originally slated on, which will still be in the book, has a minimum of \$248,000 and goes right up to \$436,000. In this case, the Ministry of Legal Affairs wrote asking the Public Service Ministry that they were consolidating these three positions into one with all the explanations that the Minister just gave. **[Mr. B. Williams: Salaries?]** Yes.

Currently, there is a document in the possession of the Ministry of Public Service and they are reevaluating the positions at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, so all of those positions will be removed out of those band structures based on the new positions. They will be having nomenclatures based on qualifications and all of those things. That is why there is that salary for that position right now.

Mrs. Backer: One last question then I would not worry. Hon. Minister, would you not agree that those three offices have been held by one person since the time of Mrs. Patricia Agard. She was the Public Trustee, State Solicitor and the Official receiver in the 1980's and never got three salaries? That post was always held for years, at least 20 years, by at least one person. So it is not merging now, it was merged 20 years ago.

Mr. Nandlall: My learned Friend is unaware that Mrs. Agard was paid a judge's salary at the time. *[Interruption]* I have simply restored that historical link and that is the point I am making. I intend to restore it in relations to the other positions because it was so in the 1980s and the period my friend is referring is that very period.

Mrs. Backer: That was why you could not want to answer me before.

Mr. Nandlall: I did not want to answer you before. You did not ask me that question before.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In relations to the said line item 6111 – Administrative

Mr. Chairman: Minister, please pay attention.

Mr. Sharma: I would like to know if the individual holding the post is a public servant, as a result, they are stated under the Public Servant line item 6111 – Administrative. The maximum salary of which was just announced by the Hon. Minister of the Public Service. What I want to know is, was this individual appointed by the Public Service Commission?

Mr. Nandlall: The person was appointed by the Public Service Commission. They have been there for the last 10 years – a minimum of 10 years.

Mr. Sharma: The question is did the Public Service Commission issue a General Order (GO) stating that salary?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. *[Interruption]* Sir, I am accused of lying here by the Hon. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: I did not hear it. I am trying to focus on Mr. Sharma. Am I to pause and deal with lies and cross accusations?

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, can you protect me from the Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Chairman: I have always been protecting you; you just do not know it. You do not even know that you have been enjoying my protection. Go ahead Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Sharma: Can the Hon. Minister at some point in time submit a copy of the General Order to this House?

Mr. Nandlall: Certainly, if the Hon. Member wishes that.

Mr. Sharma: In relations to line item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support- there is no increase or decrease in the employment here. However, there is a decrease in the cost for 2013 as against what was budgeted for 2012. Can an explanation be given?

Mr. Nandlall: There has been, as the Hon. Member ought to know, salary increases and hence there is an increase in expenditure.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you for that, but this amount actually decreased – Budget 2012 \$3.743 million; Budget 2013 \$3.553 million - that is a decrease. Can I get an explanation?

Mr. Nandlall: There has been an increase; I do not understand how you are reading that there has been a decrease.

Mr. Sharma: Budget 2012 - \$3.743 million; Budget 2013 - \$3.553 that is a decrease.

Mr. Nandlall: I understand that there was one employee who has left the employment.

Mr. Sharma: There is no such indication in the staffing details of any movement of staff.

Dr. Westford: Mr. Chairman, I did promise my colleagues and I think I will do so probably sometime after the Budget. When we look at these Staffing Details and we see figures, it does not mean that the same persons were employed. You may have a change sometime during the year with different categories of staff, with different salaries. I am sure my colleague who is asking these questions is fully well aware of it, but he is within his rights to ask those questions.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Dr. Ramayya: Line item - 6116 – Contracted Employees- in 2012 we had two contracted workers, now we have five. I would like to know the positions of the three new contracted workers?

Mr. Nandlall: Legal Clerk II \$47,605; Legal Clerk II \$47,605; Legal Clerk II \$47,605 and a Trust Officer \$60, 224.

Programme: 524 - State Solicitor Office - \$28,382,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 525 - Deeds Registry – \$83,522,000

Mr. Bond: Line item 6111 – Administrative- could the Minister advise us as to what are the job titles and the descriptions of the first tier, middle tier and the lower tier officers?

Mr. Nandlall: We have the Registrar of Deeds, System Administrator, M and E Information System Officer, Legal Clerk II and a Registry Officer.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister advise us as to the salary scale of the highest person, those in the mid range and those in the lower tier?

Mr. Nandlall: Where are those?

Mr. Bond: The highest tier, the middle tier and the lowest tier.

Mr. Nandlall: At line item 6111 – Administrative- the highest paid obviously would be the Registrar of Deeds - \$400,000; then the System Administrator \$ 107,240 and the lowest paid is \$84,565.

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, line item 6116 – Contracted Employees- we have here in 2012, 16 contracted workers and in this Budget we have 23. I would like to ask the Minister to give us the reason for such a huge increase and what the salaries are.

Mr. Nandlall: There has been an increase in the employment of Legal Clerks within the Deeds Registry in order to increase efficiency. There are going to be greater increases when the Bill comes into force, which will establish the authority. But, the new persons employed all hold the position of Legal Clerk II and their salary is \$47,605.

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister advise as to what are the skill set these Clerk IIs are bringing to the Deeds Registry?

Mr. Nandlall: They are Legal Clerk IIs; they work for a salary of \$47,605, take home.

Mr. Chairman: What are their skill set?

Mr. Nandlall: They do not come with a large repertoire of skill sets, I can tell you that, but they are trained on the job and gain the requisite experience as they are employed or remain in office.

Mr. Bond: I am sure the Hon. Minister recognises that capacity building does not entail increase in numbers. [*Interruption*] Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees- what is the Ministry doing to invite persons who have the legal skill set training into the Deeds Registry system?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, do you wish to venture and answer? Is there a programme to attract persons?

Mr. Nandlall: If I may seek some clarifications. Which line item is my friend asking me this question under?

Mr. Bond: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

Mr. Nandlall: Could you repeat the question please?

Mr. Bond: The Minister advised earlier that the increase in staff numbers were particularly Clerk IIs, he also further stated that those persons came into the system without any legal training and are then trained. I am asking what is the Minister ...

Mr. Chairman: Is this the Clerk II?

Mr. Bond: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: As Counsel myself, my clerk needs to be punctual, reliable, honest, et cetera, but at the Clerk II level, I do not know.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, in addition there is a requirement for a minimum number of CXC's. If that is what my friend is asking he should have just asked me that.

Mr. Chairman: If you knew the answer, rather than wait for him to ask that specifically, if you anticipate what it is he is seeking...

Mr. Nandlall: I am now getting, in his very circular way that that is what he wants to ask me.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Nandlall: I have answered him voluntarily; I have volunteered that information.

Mr. Chairman: What is the minimum amount of CXC's then?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told five by the Permanent Secretary (PS).

Programme: 525 - Deeds Registry - \$83,522,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office \$361,000,000

Mr. B. Williams: Project 1501100 – Justice Improvement Programme - \$361 million. If we have recourse to the profile the description given is,

“The project entails:

1. Enhancing institutional capacity of the Judicial Services Commission.
2. Strengthening linkages among judicial institutions.
3. Improving access to justice.”

Can the Hon. Minister say what amounts are allocated to each of these items?

Mr. Nandlall: Consultancy for the training and mentoring of prosecutors - \$10.2 million...

Mr. B. Williams: No, we are talking about the amount allocated one. This talks about the Judicial Services Commission. The profile is 244, in volume three.

Mr. Nandlall: Are you asking what the sum is?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, that is allocated for each of the three categories –three. How much for enhancing institutional capacity; secondly, for strengthening linkages, et cetera?

Mr. Nandlall: \$10.250 million, that is for experts to undertake training and monitoring.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that one?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. B. Williams: How much for item 10.2?

Mr. Nandlall: \$12.915 million – refurbishing of the DPP’s offices in Georgetown and Essequibo. \$1.845 million to refurbish the DPP’s offices in Georgetown and Essequibo – that is the design. \$7,714,150, to procure and install furnishing for the DPP’s Chambers.

Mr. B. Williams: What are you doing there? We are not talking about that.

Mr. Nandlall: That is the breakdown. You asked me for the breakdown of the Capital Expenditure.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, I have referred the Hon. Attorney General to project code 1501100 – Justice Improvement Programme.

Mr. Chairman: Is that the sum of \$361 million?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: I am giving you the breakdown of how it reached the \$361 million. Do you not want the information?

Mr. B. Williams: This is what I have asked: One is enhancing institutional capacity of the Judicial Services Commission, how much money is allocated to that?

Mr. Nandlall: \$137,025,785.

Mr. B. Williams: That now makes sense. How much for the second category – strengthening linkages?

Mr. Nandlall: The second category is \$22,550 million.

Mr. B. Williams: How much for the third category – improving access?

Mr. Nandlall: \$42,827,780.

Mr. B. Williams: You are still short; by plenty too.

Mr. Nandlall: You have Law Revision, which is \$40,403,450.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that under category three?

Mr. Nandlall: You have Administration, which is \$23,107,600.

Mr. B. Williams: You are still way out.

Mr. Nandlall: You have Public Awareness...

Mr. B. Williams: Is that \$100 million?

Mr. Nandlall: \$1,025 million. You have Informal Justice \$1,025 million...

Mr. B. Williams: Can I suggest that the Hon. Minister lays over the breakdown for us.

Mr. Nandlall: I can do that.

Mr. B. Williams: I want to ask some follow-up questions. What are you contemplating in terms of, one, enhancing institutional capacity of the Judicial Services Commission; what do you intend to do under that head?

Mr. Nandlall: Is this the institutional capacity?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes.

Mr. Nandlall: There is a consultant for more training in relations to prosecutors.

Mr. B. Williams: It is the Judicial Services Commission (JSC).

Mr. Nandlall: Is it the Judicial Service Commission?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, that is what it says. Why do you not ask behind you?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have always wondered why, at this Committee of supply stage, the relevant officers, who know more sometimes than the Ministers, cannot speak. I see nothing wrong with inviting officers from time to time to speak. A Minister is not going to be aware of everything that is happening in their ministry, so you are going to find different officers with different institutional knowledge and memory. I see nothing wrong sometimes with having an officer address the Assembly.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told the Judicial Services Commission is responsible for the administration of this part of the project.

Mr. B. Williams: What is it you are going to do to enhance ...

Mr. Nandlall: They will administer training.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that all you are going to do for \$137 million?

Mr. Nandlall: The training of judges, magistrates, prosecutors, officers of the DPP's office, repairing of courts, the management information systems, the provision of legal materials for the library, etc. It is a host information.

Mr. B. Williams: I do not know what he is talking about. Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say in relations to the second item, "Strengthening linkages among judicial institutions" what is contemplated by that?

Mr. Nandlall: The linking up of the DPP Chambers across the country, the Attorney General's office, the library, the procurement of electronic equipment, records for management systems, to procure equipment for the DPP's registry as well as the Ministry of Legal Affairs Registry, conducting of workshop, refurbishing of building to M and E unit which has been established within the Ministry. Those are some of the initiatives.

6.57 p.m.

Mr. B. Williams: Thirdly, Improving Access to Justice.

Mr. Nandlall: Under this head, we have the law revision aspect of the project: The conclusion of the printing of the Laws of Guyana which would include quality control, the launching of the Law Reports, et cetera.

Mr. B. Williams: Improving Access to Justice?

Mr. Nandlall: That is the heading that I... That is how the programme is structured. I did not structure this programme. This is how it was last year. This is an ongoing programme which began in 2006, I believe. I did not structure it. This is how it is structured.

Mr. B. Williams: But you are the custodian for it now.

Mr. Nandlall: The information that you are being given is on the head which I did not design. I am merely giving you the information as they are presented.

Mr. B. Williams: No. You are the custodian now.

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot alter the way the programme is structured.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. Hon. Attorney General, be a little bit more forthcoming.

Mr. B. Williams: That is enough for me but I ask that the Hon. Minister could lay over the breakdown that I have asked for within 24 hours.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, of course, Sir, I will do that.

Mr. Nagamootoo: The first of many questions in this area. This is a programme, as the Hon. Attorney General had said, that started in 2006. It is stated that it is funded externally by the IDB, but the explanation in the Central Government Development Programme, Capital Project Profiles, it stated that most of this money – that is \$2 billion – will come from “loan/grant”. I would like to know if this is a loan or a grant and if so, what part of it...

Mr. Nandlall: It is a loan, Sir.

Mr. Nagamootoo: It is not indicated and the way it is stated – I would see this in all of the profiles and I would not want to repeat the question – it should be indicated whether it is a foreign loan or a grant but it states:

“total finances by foreign loans/grants”

In the next column, though this does not have a stroke, it has:

“amount to be financed foreign loans grant”

So we do not know for sure which is a loan and which is a grant.

Mr. Nandlall: This particular project, just for the information of the Hon. Member, the copy of the loan agreement, itself, was tabled in this House.

Programme: 521 - Main Office - \$361,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$9,900,000

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if any new building was purchased or intended to be purchased for this year because I have seen at line item 2501600 that

in 2012 \$2.4 million in furniture was purchased and here is a budget for \$2.9 million. Is this for a new building or is the same building which has to be furnished?

Mr. Nandlall: This is for furniture and equipment for the entire Ministry; \$2.9 million. If you want the equipment that will be purchased: air conditioned unites, filing cabinets, office desks, heavy duty scanner, water dispenser, stabiliser, sitting chair, a shredder. Those are the equipments that would be purchased under this head.

Mr. Chairman: I put the question that... Mr. Sharma, are you indicating that you wish to speak?

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Well go ahead.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 2401100 -Land and Water Transport-purchase of vehicle: Can the Hon. Minister give us a brief description of the vehicle and who it will be assigned to?

Mr. Nandlall: It is a vehicle for the Hon. Attorney General, Minister of Legal Affairs, Member of Parliament. The vehicle that the Minister currently uses is a vehicle that is in excess of five years old and the cost of maintaining such a vehicle would render it not a feasible exercise.

Mr. Sharma: What is the description of the vehicle? Is it a Prado, is it a 4x4, what is it?

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot say at this stage what the vehicle... I do not know what type it will be.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Minister has answered that he is unaware, at this moment in time, as to the type of vehicle and I think that that is a satisfactory answer.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$9,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$2,400,000

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$2,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$3,900,000

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$3,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 55 Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$692,145,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6294: I see that there is...

Mr. Nandlall: Could you...

Mr. Chairman: Sorry.

Mr. Nandlall: I just need the officer to come, please.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, Minister. Is everybody seated? Hon. Attorney General, are we ready?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say, with respect to item 6294, an increase of \$17 million, what items of expenditure he has under this head?

Mr. Nandlall: There has been the establishment of a civil and criminal justice committee. This is a new institution created under the modernisation project which is a new addition to our legal system, actually, that allows for civilians and laypersons to have an oversight over the administration of justice. It is being coordinated by the judiciary itself, through the Hon. Chancellor and currently it is housed at the Court of Appeal.

Mr. B. Williams: What is that, salaries, \$23 million for an oversight committee? What is that? We want to know what the items are.

Mr. Nandlall: It is comprised of 41 persons and there are honorariums which are being paid but this has to do with the establishment of it, holding of meetings, consultations, etcetera; the whole cost of establishing it and paying honorariums to those that have been appointed.

Mr. B. Williams: \$23 million to establish that?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that this is an organisation that is spread across the three counties and they have subcommittees established in Essequibo, Demerara and, of course, Berbice.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say how the 41 persons were selected and on what criteria?

Mr. Nandlall: They were selected by the Hon. Chancellor.

Mr. B. Williams: Alone? No criteria?

Mr. Nandlall: I am not sure what criteria were employed but the appointments and the selection was done by the Chancellor of the Judiciary.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say what the remit of that committee is?

Mr. Nandlall: The committee, as I understand its role, is to oversight the workings of the judicial system.

Mr. B. Williams: Oversight? What do you mean by that? Civilians? Oversight of the judges who are supposed to be independent?

Mr. Nandlall: It is to get a feedback from the community as to the problems citizens may be facing in relation to the access to justice and those related issues.

Mr. Chairman: I heard of it but I thought that we would get some more explanations. That seems a strange creature, this committee.

Mr. Bond: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line items 6281: Could the Minister advise us as to what has caused the increase in security services for the year 2013?

Mr. Nandlall: That allocation is for security service for the High Court, Court of Appeal, Land Court, Marshal Bond, Lombard Street, Berbice Sub-registry. Increase in the provision represents security guards for the Essequibo Registry, security services provided by Strategic Action Security Limited for the High Court, Georgetown – the Marshal's Bond – Brands Security Service provides security service for the Court of Appeal, the Police Constabulary providing security service for the Berbice Sub-registry, Judges Quarters, Essequibo Sub-registry, Land

Court, Georgetown. Many of these agencies were taken over. They were secured by constabulary and new security arrangements were put in place.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Attorney General, the fact that the High Court's fence, the ornate beautiful wrought iron fence, was stolen... Was anybody surcharged for that or anything? The whole fence went. I could not believe it.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that that is quite an integument on the system itself which, as I stated emphatically in this Parliament, is outside the sphere of influence of the Executive. Be that as it may...

Mr. Chairman: You are saying that if you had the responsibility you would have dealt with it.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that the security company – the company that was providing security services at the time, Strategic, I am told – has been asked to pay some form of compensation.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I want to direct the Minister's attention to line item 6241- Rental of Buildings- and I note there is a huge increase in the amount of money allocated for rental in 2013 vis-à-vis 2012 and a sum of about \$21 million. I wonder if the Minister can indicate to this House what the reasons are for this increase and, additionally, if it represents increase number in the amount of buildings that are being rented, can he identify those buildings and the accompanying costs.

Mr. Nandlall: This allocation is for payment as rent for a facility which is being leased to accommodate the Marshal's Bond located at Lombard Street. Originally, this property is owned by National Industrial and Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) and originally the officials at the Supreme Court were led to believe that the property was going to be extended to them rent free but unfortunately they were subsequently informed that a rent is to be paid at a sum of \$500,000 per month for that facility. It is a huge warehouse so the accumulation is for the arrears of rent outstanding – 42 months' rent, actually.

Mr. B. Williams: For line item 6242, Maintenance of buildings, the sum is \$17,200,000. Could the Hon. Minister identify which buildings they contemplate maintenance of?

Mr. Nandlall: Continuous maintenance will proceed in respect of the High Court Building...

Mr. B. Williams: Stick a pin at what you are saying there.

Mr. Nandlall: Provisions have been also made for maintenance work, including repair work, to the Essequibo Sub-registry, repairs to certain parts of the Law Library and the installation of security lights at the Berbice and Essequibo Registry.

Dr. Ramayya: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to see here that there is no increase in contracted workers or employees but there is an increase in the budget for this year. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if this is an increase in the contracted workers salaries; line item 6116.

Mr. Nandlall: I am advised that that increase, and you would observe that it is a marginal increase, is accounted for by the 5% increase across the board for employees in this sector.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder, while we are on the question of emoluments, whether the Minister could inform me as to the reason for the movements in lines 6011, 6012. You will notice that for 6011, Statutory Wage and Salaries, a sum was budgeted. The revised sum – the actual to-date – seems to be in excess of the 5% increase and the budget for 2013 also shows a significant increase. Could the Minister explain what is underlying this?

Mr. Nandlall: Though this is a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, there has been the appointment of three judges whose appointments would have been made after the submissions were made.

Mr. Greenidge: Can the Minister give us the assurance that these are the only two causes of the movements? Have any of the existing incumbents had their emoluments amended either by order or by any other device?

Mr. Nandlall: I am advised that the reason for the increase is to pay the three new judge their salary.

Mr. Greenidge: New judges only?

Mr. Nandlall: That is what I am told, yes.

Dr. Ramayya: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister a question pertaining to line item 6116. Are contracted workers entitled to an increase of 5% and, if they are, is it an annual agreement as contracted workers?

Mr. Nandlall: I think that it is a fact of public notoriety that contract workers are public sector employees and they benefit from all of the increases that public sector employees get. It is a very hackneyed explanation given as to why contract employees exist.

Mr. Chairman: Last year the Minister of Public Service spent much time on her feet on this matter, explaining it.

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$692,145,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy - \$388,779,000

Mr. Bond: On line item 6241, could the Hon. Minister advise us as to whether the rental is in particular reference to the building at Middle Street?

Mr. Nandlall: The answer to that question is “no”.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister advise us as to what rental of buildings this line item relates to, which buildings in particular?

Mr. Nandlall: It relates to the rental of an apartment for a Magistrate in Berbice, three court rooms for the Georgetown Magistrates’ Court, not the Middle Street premises.

Mr. Bond: Is the Middle Street premises anywhere in these line items? Is it catered for under this programme head?

Mr. Nandlall: It is not catered for under this programme.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say whether the Middle Street building is being rented by his Ministry? Which line item? Under the same line item there with “rental”.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there are two points I would like to make. The first is that this process is meant to gather information and to share information and so, Ministers, let us not wait until a particular line item comes up or if you feel... If one knows where the answer is, provide the information. The other thing is that last year this matter of the building in Middle Street also was discussed because the Minister had anticipated that we would be in a new building by this year but there was some discussion and some questions asked about the Middle Street building, its rental, and I recall that those answers were given. That should not be a problem for the Minister to say... I believe that Members need to know what is happening with the Middle Street property.

Mr. Nandlall: Those rentals are paid under the project. They are not paid here.

Mr. B. Williams: Project?

Mrs. Backer: Which project?

Mr. Nandlall: The Modernisation of the Justice...

Mr. B. Williams: You did not mention that just now.

Mr. Nandlall: ...Sector Project. You all have to ask me about it. I did not mention anything.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy - \$388,779,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$189,672,000

Mr. Williams: Line item 1201400, \$36.672 million - Completion of building and driveway, rehabilitation of courtrooms and upgrading of electrical system. The profile is at 258. Could the Hon. Minister say, firstly, what work is contemplated under item 1 for the High Court of Georgetown?

Mr. Nandlall: The High Court works will include...

Mr. B. Williams: The amount of money.

Mr. Nandlall: One second. The Georgetown High Court will receive \$4,330,625.

Mr. B. Williams: What is that for?

Mr. Nandlall: That will be spent to upgrade a walkway, driveway, drains and corridor.

Mr. B. Williams: And the amount of money to complete the Mediation Centre at New Amsterdam?

Mr. Nandlall: \$5,684,345.

Mr. B. Williams: That leaves item 2, “rehabilitation of courtrooms and upgrading of electrical system”. How much money is to be spent on upgrading the electrical system for the High Court in Georgetown?

Mr. Nandlall: \$26,657,030.

Mr. B. Williams: So the balance is for the rehabilitation of the courtrooms. Which courtrooms in particular are you addressing in the High Court?

Mr. Nandlall: The planned works include the installation of air conditioning units in all of the courts in the High Court complex and that would obviously include making them ready for the installation of air conditioning (AC) units because, as you know, they are not built for AC so one has to seal them off and of course do the electrical installations that would become requisite for the AC to work.

7.27 p.m.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature - \$189,672,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 552 - Magistrates’ Department - \$144,000,000

Mr. B. Williams: Project 1201400 – Buildings, \$135,000,000: “Completion, construction and rehabilitation of magistrate’s courts and payment of retention.” Might I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister to the profile number 260 and the project details: “1. Payment of retention. 2.

Completion of Lethem, Linden and Leonora and Wales Magistrate's Courts. 3. Construction of No. 51 Magistrate's Court. 4. Rehabilitation of Georgetown Magistrate's Court."

I have two questions for the Hon Minister. The Leonora Magistrate's Court, what is the Ministry doing with that? Is it completing the construction of that building, which looks completed to us? How much money is intended to spend on that building which has been completed for the past four or five years?

Mr. Nandlall: The sum of \$4 million will be spent to complete that court. There has been a problem with the contractor. The work that was completed was inspected and found to be unsatisfactory. The Attorney General shall soon take the contractor to court for breach of contract, but there is a sum budgeted which will be used to complete the works that have been identified to be unsatisfactory.

Mr. B. Williams: Follow-up. Could the Hon. Minister say how much money has been spent on the Leonora Magistrate's Court to date?

Mr. Nandlall: Currently I am unable to answer that question, but as soon as I get that information...

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Minister provide that information tomorrow also with the other information?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes.

Mr. B. Williams: Now, could the Hon. Minister say when he expects the Leonora Magistrate's Court to be operational?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that within two months after the procurement process would have been completed, budget approved, the building should be ready. The work, I understand, is not of any exceptional nature. There are certain small things, hence the sum of \$4 million, so it should be ready within two months after the contract would have been awarded.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say how much money is earmarked for project description number 4, "Rehabilitation of the Georgetown Magistrate's Court?"

Mr. Nandlall: It is \$40, 935,000.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say how much money has been spent on that building to date?

Mr. Nandlall: I do not have the exact figure, but what I can say is that there has been a variation of the contract and two additional courtrooms have been added. A decision was also made to air-conditioned the building, the entire complex. The fence has to be done; the parking lot and the acquisition of a generator are some of the expenditures.

Mr. B. Williams: Could I get the moneys spent on that building to date? Could the Minister lay that tomorrow?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that it is yes.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say when it is estimated for that building to be operational?

Mr. Chairman: Every week I notice that something is about to be done there – the opening.

Mr. Nandlall: The variation contract has been awarded so within the shortest possible time I suspect that it should be commissioned.

Mr. Chairman: So, Mr. Minister, are you saying that a variation contract has been awarded to do further works?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is it including the two...?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: That will be another year.

Mr. Nandlall: No Sir. It will be in July.

Mr. Chairman: I believe in your budget speech you did give a different date.

Mr. Nandlall: I said it will be in July, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Have you said July? Last year you said what? Last year you said July.

Programme: 552 - Magistrates' Department - \$144,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 56 Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions - \$87,362,000

Mr. Bond: Line item 6111 – Administrative: Could the Minister advice us as to the job description and title of the four additional staff?

Mr. Nandlall: They are four State Counsels.

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions - \$87,362,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561 - Public Prosecutions - \$4,712,000

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions - \$4,712,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I propose half an hour suspension, coffee break, and we will resume promptly at eight o' clock so that we can complete the two Ministries before we leave tonight, those being Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education.

Sitting suspended at 7.37 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.07 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members with the time available we will do the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education tonight, and with dispatch.

Agency: 21 Ministry of Agriculture

Current Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$ 3,933,808,000

Mrs. Lawrence: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: I note in the staffing details that two persons are added. Could the Minister kindly indicate what positions these two positions will fill?

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: Two persons have been promoted to Assistant Accountants.

Mrs. Lawrence: Promoted? It was eight and now it is going to be 10. If they were promoted then they should have been under another head.

Dr. Ramsammy: It is within the same category.

Mrs. Lawrence: Is it in the same line item?

Dr. Ramsammy: We are talking about line item 6113. Within line item 6113, there are different workers. Those two persons were added through promotions into line item 6113 and they are Assistant Accountants.

Mrs. Lawrence: Where did they move from, Mr. Minister?

Dr. Ramsammy: It was from line item 6114 - Clerical and Office Support.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, through the Chair, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: I note that there is an increase of some 24 persons here and the total amount added would be in the vicinity of some \$71 million. Could you kindly indicate to us what positions these persons are going to fill?

Dr. Ramsammy: These are all persons assigned to the Ministry through the public service. These are scholarship students who have either returned home from Cuba or who had local

scholarships at the University of Guyana. These persons are Agricultural Officers, Engineers - Civil Engineers, Electrical Engineers, Chemist, Quarantine Inspector, Veterinary Officer and Mechanical Engineer.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister kindly go with me to line item 6117 – Temporary Employees? I note that there are 11 temporary employees added. Last year he told us that this line were gardeners. Are these 11 persons gardeners too?

Dr. Ramsammy: They are still gardeners.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister kindly indicate to which office of residence these 11 persons would be added and if any will be given to the Speaker?

Dr. Ramsammy: I believe the Speaker has one. It could cater...

Mr. Chairman: I do not have a gardener.

Ms. Ally: Do you not have a gardener...?

Mr. Chairman: No. Anyway what is the matter?

Dr. Ramsammy: The gardeners can be assigned to the Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and Ministers. It is not everyone who is eligible has requested. The Minister of Agriculture does not have a gardener.

Mrs. Lawrence: It is just as the last time the Minister indicated that the Speaker should have one and this time he is saying that he has one and the Speaker is indicating that he has none.

Dr. Ramsammy: The Speaker is still eligible to have one.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could we kindly move to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations? I look at page 399, drainage and irrigation, and I come back again another year and will ask the Minister the same question in which the Auditor General keeps referring to, all the time, that this particular entity must have its own accounting body. Here we are, another year, after he said last year that he did agree that we either adhere to the law or seek to repeal that part of it. Could he kindly tell the Committee what he have done?

Dr. Ramsammy: The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) receives a subvention, as listed on page 399. Indeed, up to the end of last year, the management of that finance was within NDIA, however, the entry used to be in the Integrated Finance Management and Accounting System (IFMAS) system of the Ministry of Finance entered within the Ministry of Agriculture account. This year we have, thus far, applied to the Ministry of Finance to have an account that belongs to the NDIA so that its subvention will not only be managed by it but also fully integrated into its account. Therefore what the law envisaged as in National Agricultural Research & Extension Institute (NAREI) and Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA) will apply also now for the year 2013 for the NDIA.

Mrs. Lawrence: Well, I am very happy to hear that. Could the Minister indicate to the Committee what provisions have been put in place, in relation to the issuing of fuel by this particular entity, because the Auditor General has been flagging it in his report for several years now?

Dr. Ramsammy: The management of fuel and other things... but let us stop at fuel for now. We have ensured that every equipment, excavators, bulldozers and pumps, now are reported on a monthly basis to the NDIA board. There is a report that comes to the Ministry and to the board so that we can track the usage, in terms of hours and in terms of each of the equipment, so that we could see whether any one of these is out of sync with what should be expected. It would never be exact. It would not be the same for all of the equipment but it should be within a certain utilisation rate, so that we can see when they are working, what is the rainfall in a particular area to see whether pumps should be working or not and we do a reconciliation within the Ministry. That is one step we have taken.

The other step is actual inspection of the various places.

Thirdly, a depot is established at Lusignan, so that instead of people having to go and pickup and have delivery from GUYOIL directly to them we have centralised control.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Minister also say, with regard to the NDIA, what provisions have been put in place to ensure that all of those equipment, excavators, pumps, bulldozers and draglines, and so on, are not being used by persons for their own personal benefit?

Dr. Ramsammy: This has indeed been a challenge. The Ministry has been providing services, not only to do public work but also to help farmers to do individual empoldering. I have said publicly before that there is evidence that sometimes some of the operators also do private work. We have conceded that. Now there is a more active supervision of it, the assignment of work that is done. Sometimes we learn from other places. In the sugar industry people are assigned as to how many fields they would do. We assess a piece of work that they need to do. Let us say they are doing a canal, how many rods have to be done. The Ministry will estimate how long it will take and the use of fuel for that period of time. The supervision is not only an active supervision to see that they are doing what they have been assigned to do, but when the work is completed and the time spent we could also reconcile and know that they may have gone outside of that mandated work or that assigned work.

It is a bit of reconciliation...

Mrs. Lawrence: Does the Ministry have the capacity to do that?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes.

Mr. Ramjattan: I want to ask whether there are proper logbooks to that reconciliation so that if we want to inspect we can see them.

Dr. Ramsammy: The Ministry has always had logbooks. The keeping of those logbooks and how diligent operators were in the past were opened to question. Now we are ensuring that there is greater diligence in keeping the logbooks so there is a daily examination of logbooks.

Mr. Ramjattan: I am happy to hear that.

Dr. Ramayya: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: I would kindly ask the Minister if there is a breakdown, according to each region, for the amount of money allocated for vehicle repairs in those regions and which one have the priority?

Dr. Ramsammy: We are dealing with programme one, programme 211, which is about the vehicles at the Ministry of Agriculture on Region Street, Georgetown.

Mrs. Lawrence: Page 399, Guyana Livestock Development Authority...

Dr. Ramsammy: It is line item 6321.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could the Hon. Minister kindly indicate to the House whether any moneys, within the amount budgeted here, is allocated for the Saint Ignatius pasture? If so, how much?

Dr. Ramsammy: The Saint Ignatius pasture is not included in the capital item. However, in the current operation all of the pastures are catered for. I would not be able to say how much exactly is for Saint Ignatius.

Mrs. Lawrence: This current because this comes under...

Dr. Ramsammy: I am just giving a bit extra. In this year capital project Saint Ignatius is not catered for but in the current budget pastures generally are catered for. The exact amount, I cannot say.

Mr. Ramjattan: The same item, under Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), the subvention here, the \$1 billion is going towards what?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is going into the account of GuySuCo to help its cash flow. Presently GuySuCo utilises about \$50 to \$60 million dollars per week for fuel. The weekly salaries are \$250 million. Presently the GuySuCo's creditors are about \$1 billion locally. It defrays on a three-month basis, but there is a continuous... I think it is fertiliser that it takes. The \$1 billion is going into cash flow, helping to meet salaries, fuel, fertiliser and the things it needs to prepare land and so for the crop.

Mr. Ramjattan: Follow-up. In relation to the revised \$4 billion that was there, the same one and in relation to GuySuCo, could a status report be provided as to the transfer of that \$4 billion and where it went? Remember we had to grant \$4 billion...

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I ...

Mr. Ramjattan: Could you give us that commitment?

Dr. Ramsammy: I could give it now too. In the year 2012 a sum of \$1.744 billion, \$207 of that came from GuySuCo directly. About \$1.5 billion of the \$4 billion went to meet expenses that were related to the retroactive pay on the job evaluation that occurred in the year 2012. This was

the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) for the job evaluation and part of the \$4 billion, approximately \$1.5 went for that.

Local creditors, this is for fertilisers, and so on, that GuySuCo needed to pay, were paid \$796 million towards payments for National Insurance Scheme (NIS), and so on, and for parts of the May/June salaries. Five hundred and twenty-five million dollars was used. One billion dollars was used for crop financing, preparation of land and so on, and \$142 million went towards the Bosch Engineering contract.

8.27 p.m.

Mr. Trotman: I want to go back to line item 6116, Contracted Employees, to follow up on a question Mrs. Lawrence had raised and that is in relation to the 24 new contract workers who have been brought in to these schemes. The Minister has spoken about a number of categories of skilled persons who are coming in and presumably those skilled persons will be paid differently, according to the skills that they have. I am wondering if, for the purpose of this Committee, the Minister could identify the skills and the number of persons relative to those skills and the amounts that would be paid to them to the different categories so we can develop an understanding of why it is there is a \$71 million increase in this appropriation.

Dr. Ramsammy: There were six Agriculture Officers who are being paid at a rate of \$159,414. There are four engineers, at grade nine. They are paid \$167,006 per month. There are six Civil Engineers paid at \$159,414, grade nine. There is an Electrical Engineer, at grade nine, being paid \$167,006. There is an Agriculture Programme Officer, at grade 13, who is paid \$283,500. There is a chemist, at grade nine, being paid \$159,414. There are two Veterinary Officers, at grade nine, \$159,414, a Mechanical Engineer, grade nine, \$159,414. There is an Agricultural Diversity Specialist, at grade 12, \$413,910. Those are 24 additional persons.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I speak to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. I want to come back to the issue of subvention and GuySuCo, the Hon. Minister has said he got the answers asked by my learned colleague, Mr. Ramjattan, with regard to the \$4 billion voted last year as the subsidy to GuySuCo. I want to ask: What percentage, if any of this money went to sugar workers, was for the increase in wages for last year?

Dr. Ramsammy: The job evaluation was a pay increase to different categories. The workers' representative, in this case, was by the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union. The amount paid off from the \$4 billion, as I said, was \$1.744 billion, \$207 million, of which came from GuySuCo, and approximately \$1.5 billion from the subsidy. In addition to that the \$525 million was paid, in terms of wages and benefits, in the regular payment to workers. Approximately more than 50% went into the workers, whereas \$1.7 billion went into crop preparation, and so on, and \$142 million went for the Skeldon estate rehabilitation work.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Just as a follow-up. What percentage of this \$1 billion being asked now is envisaged as payment to sugar workers?

Dr. Ramsammy: They are going into the cash flow, including, as I said, paying salaries. I cannot, for the \$4 billion, give the Member the exact breakdown of how it is planned to use. Once it is given to GuySuCo it would be used within its cash flow to meet the operation cost. If at the time that it receives this money and salary is what has to be paid, then it will go towards salary. It is at the time it receives this money and whatever the payment will be, it will have to make it.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, you did mention last year that part of the resources of the \$4 billion was to meet operational expenditures, but you just indicated to us four items of which one was fertiliser. Fertiliser cannot be an operational expense; it has to be a part of the manufacturing expenses. You said that \$796 million was spent on fertiliser.

Dr. Ramsammy: It is including fertiliser.

Mrs. Lawrence: Fertiliser is a manufacturing expense; it is not a part of the operational expense.

Dr. Ramsammy: It is crop financing. GuySuCo has creditors from whom it buys various things, such as fuel and fertilisers.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations: Could the Hon. Minister say why Hope Coconut Estate is subsidised to the tune of \$3 million? What is the situation at that estate?

Dr. Ramsammy: Hope Estate has a budget of approximately \$16 million. The revenues from Hope Coconut Estate, I am just giving average, is approximately \$12 to 13 million. The subsidy of \$3 million is to meet the full operational cost of Hope Coconut Estate.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Follow-up please. Why is that being done?

Dr. Ramsammy: A number of the people who lived and work in the Hope Coconut Estate area do not pay for land leases, and so on. They are permanent residents there, so some of those costs are absorbed by Hope Coconut Estate.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, you have come back to the National Assembly asking for another billion dollar for GuySuCo. You indicated last year that GuySuCo will be operating at a deficit and that there would have been an action committee which would have overseen GuySuCo and what it would have been doing, in terms of its finances. Could you kindly tell us, now that you have come and ask us for only \$1 billion, whether you are asking for \$1 billion because GuySuCo is now seen, in the year 2013, to becoming out of that deficit and will turn a profit?

Dr. Ramsammy: I am hoping that in the year 2014 we would be in a position not to ask for as much as \$1 billion, but I cannot, unfortunately, say, at this time, that GuySuCo will turn a profit in the year 2013.

Mrs. Lawrence: What are the projections? Are we going to see the Minister coming for a supplemental? The fact he is asking for a billion dollar, because there are some figures, and he believes that the billion dollars will help.

Dr. Ramsammy: I am not planning to come back for a supplemental for GuySuCo.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, could we just continue on the question of GuySuCo and subvention that the Minister has requested? I heard the Minister, himself, explained that the moneys being requested are going, as they did the last time, to fund a number of operational expenses. I think I need to emphasise that we are very concerned, as it was indicated before, that the Government has come to us apparently with a plan, the intention of which was to move GuySuCo out of the financially difficult situation in which it found itself, and that plan did not work. The Minister in his budget presentation promised a new plan. What exactly are the

problems that have to be addressed to restore GuySuCo viability and where is it this transfer the Minister is asking for fits in to that exercise? Because it is not clear that there is a viable plan and most certain it will be seen that in our own interventions, or our statements, that publicly we have asked for a credible programme and emphasise that the plan seems to take no notice of the concerns that have been raised by a variety of observers in and out of the industry, including GAWU. Would the Minister please address that?

Dr. Ramsammy: The indeed turnaround plan of the year 2010, I believe it was, has not given us the result that we expected. I am not going to stand here and say we did. There is a revised plan that we are working on and some meetings have been held, the draft strategy is being prepared. It is my intention, and I have been talking to the board, that we must not open that for further inputs. Once the draft is prepared we will open it up for broader consultation. As I said last year, and I have said to the Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, in meetings at my office, I would welcome and invitation from the economic sector committee to have its input with not only themselves, but with their invited technical people, so that we could really have the widest input in putting together a revised plan.

Indeed, I know that the management and the board have planned later - I do not mean later far down the year - within the next couple of months, to invite various people to have a session on the plan itself. Whilst I am not going to stand here and give the Member..., but I think he did ask about the plans or the things to be addressed. I am going to list, maybe, two or three things. One is that fact that GuySuCo needs to plan for crop... - I do not know if I am using the right term - the length of the crop because there are usually two crops which are between 15 and 18 weeks. This has been the traditional crop and GuySuCo continues to plan, including in the turnaround plan, that plan which was there, for those crop lengths.

Clearly, the experience of the last several year have shown that with the weather pattern, which were there, those crops length are not prudent, in that those lengths need to be adjusted. That is something that GuySuCo has to think about. If those crop lengths are kept, how the weather pattern will be dealt with or the crop lengths can be reduced so that there could be full operation at a increased rate, so that the amount of work that is done in 15 weeks can be done in 10 weeks, that would mean planning for more machines. For example, an estate with 400 punts might need a 1,000 punts. I am just giving an example. That is one thing it has to cater for in this new plan.

Clearly, the mechanisation has to be accelerated and it has to be for all of the estates and we have to look at management and trainee to prepare for the 100% mechanisation. Our efforts at private cane farming, which has increased, also have to be accelerated. It is just some of the points in the strategy that we are looking at.

Mr. Ramjattan: I thought that we have heard that there is also going to be, at the board level... I do not know if I have got it wrong, but is there any agronomist?

Dr. Ramsammy: There is an agronomist on the board. Is that what you are asking for?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. What is his name, if I may ask?

Dr. Ramsammy: Dr. Permaul actually is a trained agronomist that then was utilised in the Ministry of Agriculture, in livestock development. Mr. Badray Persaud is a trained agronomist.

Dr. Ramayya: I would like to ask the Minister, how much of that money from the \$4 billion was given to the Skeldon Estate? My second question: I would like to ask the Minister whether or not, at this stage, GuySuCo is a profitable enterprise.

Dr. Ramsammy: I think I answer both, Mr. Chairman. In the breakdown I said \$142 million went to the Bosh Engineering for the Skeldon factory work. There would be additional money, of course, because some of that went to workers. Whatever is the component for that, I cannot give that breakdown per estate, how much went to the workers. I did answer that before. In terms of the profitability, I think I did answer that by saying that I do not expect GuySuCo, in the year 2013, to come out with a profit.

Mr. Greenidge: I have listened carefully to our distinguished colleague on a number of occasions. I think I need to say the first thing that strikes us is the sincerity of his presentations. We are always persuaded that his is a very sincere and informed presentation. I would not change my view on that, but let me just say that when the presentation, he provides, is looked back at the reality does not really lend support to the accuracy perhaps of the analysis that he provides. What I would like to say on this occasion is this: It is normal that when there is an entity that faces difficulties of the type GuySuCo faces over a period it is to fashion a recovery plan before finances are approached. We were asked the last time for \$4 billion. We were assured before that the plan in place would fix the problems of the company. Those problems

included field, problems of yield, for example, problem of the availability of labour at critical times or the lack thereof. Those problems included also field operations and most importantly the problems include the quality of management which GAWU, itself, emphasised on a number of occasions.

Once the Minister has identified a number of areas, and those areas doubtless are of some significance, the reality is that there are a number of fundamental problems that would have been tackled. What, for example, is happening to yields? How is the money actually going to...? Is it being addressed to critical areas? Because if there is a financial difficulty of this type and it is spread all over the place it poses a difficulty, that it just goes on providing plasters on a range of sores, and no major impact is being had by the transfer. That is the impression I am getting. It is very worrying because at this stage one does not want to feel that the Minister is going to ask for a billion dollars now when very little is seemed to have be done relatively to the problems of last year. I think we would be very concerned if in June, the Minister were to return, as of the want of the public enterprises that we have supported in the recent past, within a few weeks, if not months of the budget, to ask for more money.

When is the plan for recovery to be available and when is it to be laid in this House? The Minister has been asked the other question about the use of the money. That does not sound terribly satisfactory. I hope that when a document is provided we will get a better picture. But when is the plan to be available and what are to be the focuses? Because these areas that the Minister has listed... Mechanisation, itself, of the field operations of the sugar industry cannot be undertaken unless the Minister is planning to do some things about the layout of the field, for example, given the very peculiar nature or rather unique nature of the sugar operations here. I gather that some of the resources, which the industry had garnered them in the past, were a prelude to that higher degree of mechanisation that does not appear to have happened. What is to happen now is that the Minister is to speak to mechanisation; it is part of a process. What is happening to the rest of the process?

Dr. Ramsammy: I agree with the Hon. Member. Whilst I did talk in broad terms of mechanisation, I think he knows that in the turnaround plan, under the mechanisation, those were the things that he talked about, the layout of the field, and so on. Indeed, GuySuCo has completed, in terms of the laying out of the field preparing for mechanisation acquiring some

harvesters, bell loaders, and so on, about 30% of it mechanisation plan. We have to accelerate that. We should be at around 50% at this time. There is an existing strategy. What I have said before, and we are working with that strategy, is that this existing strategy, the so-called blueprint turnaround plan has not resulted in what we were looking forward to. Therefore, in order to meet our expectation, we are revising that plan and that is the new strategy that is being worked on, right now. There is a draft of that new strategy that is now being opened to wider consultation, outside of the GuySuCo structure, that is its board and its management. I am hoping and I am confident that by the end of July and into the period perhaps as Parliament reconvened that that could be laid in the House.

Dr. Roopnarine: I want to ask my friend, the Hon. Minister, whether given all of the experience the limitations, the failures, the number of turnarounds that we have had and what sounds to me as fairly modest expectations in the near future, if any consideration is given, looking at the board itself. This remains to me a serious problem. We can device plan after plan and we can improve a lot of what we are attempting at the middle management and even senior management level, but what are we doing about the board? Do we seriously believe that a board, which has failed to turnaround this industry, notwithstanding well laid plans, is go to be capable of turning it around in the future?

Dr. Ramsammy: I will give a simple answer and say yes. I do not think it might be too wise for me to expand on that answer. I should just say yes. As Minister of Agriculture, I believe, in reference to the question that the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge asked, in looking at the new strategy we also have to look... I think in a previous answer, this afternoon, I talked about management being looked at, but that should include the board.

Mr. Ramjattan: I just want to clarify a matter dealing also with the board, in relation to the extensive mechanisation that it is going to do under this plan. Is there on the board an Agricultural Engineer or a Process Engineer and does the Minister feel that an expatriate chairman enhances the performance of the board?

Dr. Ramsammy: I do know that when the board was appointed... I am trying to recall all the names but there is an engineer on the board.

Mr. Ramjattan: But there is the expatriate chairman.

Dr. Ramsammy: There is a chairman on the board.

Mr. Ramjattan: No. I ask if...

Dr. Ramsammy: What did you ask? Seriously, I did not...

Mr. Ramjattan: The expatriate chairmanship, is it an interest of the board and beneficial to the board?

Dr. Ramsammy: I would hope that a chairman - I am not talking about an expatriate chairman, I am talking about a chairman - would bring something to the board. Outside of that I think I will go with the answer I gave to the Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine that I believe, in looking at GuySuCo and management, that that should include every member of the board.

8.57 p.m.

Mrs. Backer: I have a supplementary question. Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, in your Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) discussions with the company, has GAWU ever expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the Chairman of the Board is, to borrow Mr. Moses Nagamootoo's words, a fly-in-fly-out chairman? Has GAWU ever expressed dissatisfaction in its meetings with the institution about that?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Komal Chand, who is the President of the Guyana Agriculture and General Workers Union, has publicly, in this House and in other places, expressed his dissatisfaction with the operations of GuySuCo. He has done so also in private. I am not going to say the specifics but I know that Mr. Chand and GAWU have expressed various concerns and some of those concerns relate also to the Board and management.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Members, please bear in mind that our sectoral oversight committees should be, when they get up and running, performing some of the functions of interrogating Ministers, getting a plan and so forth that we are carrying out tonight.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Member or to bring to his attention that his budget, under line item 6281 – Security Services – was underspent in 2012 and increased in 2013. I would like to ask him to provide an explanation for that increase.

Dr. Ramsammy: The security service for 2013 was by public tender and that was the budgeted amount which is equivalent to the bid price. I am talking about for 2013.

Mr. Felix: A follow up question please, Mr. Chairman: which company secured...?

Dr. Ramsammy: Strategic Action Security.

Mr. Felix: Minister, can you say whether there is or was provided to the Ministry, an estimate of the number of guards and the rate per hour for charge for the service?

Dr. Ramsammy: I know that in their bid price, it was \$240 per hour. I cannot say the exact number of persons at this point. I should also add that part of the security at the Head Office is provided by the Constabulary.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think I am in a position to put the question.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$3,933,808,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$177,956,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries – \$177,956,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$390,764,000

Dr. Roopnarine: I believe this to be a probably quite simple question to answer, which is in relation to line item 6131 – Other Direct Labour Costs – which was underspent by a substantial amount in 2012 and has now gone up in 2013 to \$5.363 billion. I am wondering if the Hon. Minister could explain this fluctuation.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, the Guyana Hydrometeorological Service has 58 staff. Thirty of them are contracted employees. With contracted employees, sometimes under the salaries it also includes not just their wages but some of the benefits are caught up there. We are trying to shift it so that it is properly reflected. That is why there was the under-spending in 2012; it was captured under the salary section.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - can the Minister say why there has been an increase of just over \$11 million in 2013 when it is that the number of contracted employees remains the same? Why has there been an increase of the 2012 amount when it is that the number of contracted employees remains the same?

Dr. Ramsammy: This is the category that sometimes included the meteorologist. Every year now, we are training the meteorologist from just simply being people without professional training that we hire and train on the job. We are now sending them to Barbados. In addition to sending them to Barbados, we are also sending them, this year, to Israel and Australia. When they come back, whilst they stay as contracted employees, they are elevated to qualified meteorologists with different salaries.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services – \$390,764,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration – \$4,201,026,000

Dr. Roopnarine: Looking at project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority – turning to the profile document, reference no. 66, I see that what is being sought here is \$1.3 billion. The total project cost, it states, will be \$9,489,415,000. May I ask, in relation to the description of the project which lists a number of places where these drainage structures will be installed, where pump stations will be completed and constructed and so on, since \$7,689,415,000 was spent and there is \$1,300,000,000 remaining, which of these projects have actually been completed and, secondly, which projects we expect to complete with the \$1 billion now being sought in 2013?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, I anticipated that Dr. Roopnarine, the Hon. Member, would ask that. There have been hundreds of structures worked on. We now have these documents, conditional surveys done on all structures in Guyana for Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. These are kokers, pump stations, et cetera. The one I have in my hand happens to be for Region 6. It is a conditional survey, so we know which ones are priorities to get done and so on. What I can do for Dr. Roopnarine... In fact, I have prepared three copies: one for Dr. Roopnarine, one for Mr.

Ramjattan and one for the Chairman. The total number of projects within this project in 2012 is listed.

This year, we have 60 planned. You asked, for example, of one that is done. The cottage sluice was completed and handed over to the Ministry. It was 100 per cent completed, though in 2013 Budget we had to cater for a final payment of \$6.9 million which is included in the 2013 Budget. That project was \$144.3 million. As I said, it was handed over to us. The payment made up to that point was \$131.4 million; \$6.9 million is to be paid as final payment from the 2013 Budget.

What I have for the House, Mr. Chairman, in the copies of you, Dr. Roopnarine and Mr. Ramjattan, is a lot of information. I do not know whether it would be useful to just copy them. We could prepare CDs for each Member. There are 38 activities or subprojects within this project that started before this year. They are catered for either in final payment or to complete the work. For example, there is the Grove/Diamond expansion of the sluice, which will be completed this year; it was started last year. There is the construction of the sluice at Buxton. The mobilisation was started in November, 2011. Work went on last year and will be completed this year. Those are two examples of work that started before and will be completed this year. Then there is new work. So the amount of work that was started last year and will be completed this year amounts to \$713,967,000. Then there is an amount of work that will be started in 2013 which amounts to \$586 million. Those are 22 projects plus the 38 that are being continued, which is the 60 making up the \$1.3 billion. The \$1.6 billion from last year's expenditure within the \$9 billion, there is a list that I have for you which you could look at.

Mr. Ramjattan: Last year, under Financial Paper No. 6, under this head, \$500 million was sought and approved for flood management and water control. Minister, could you state what was done basically with this \$500 million then?

Dr. Ramsammy: Is this a supplementary?

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes.

Dr. Ramsammy: The \$500 million was utilised to procure excavators and tractors.

Mr. Ramjattan: Just a follow up on that: is there a certain project called the Community Drainage and Irrigation Project (CDIP)?

Dr. Ramsammy: It is project code 1301800, reference 68.

Mr. Ramjattan: It comes under another head in the capital.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes.

Mr. Ramjattan: Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Kissoon: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority – could the Hon. Minister say how many drainage structures have been identified in the West Watooka area and the cost for each?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, could I say that the Member would be able to examine it? It would be difficult for me to go through all the projects and pick them out.

Ms. Kissoon: Could you lay it in the House please?

Dr. Ramsammy: I did say that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Ministers have been very forthcoming with information which Members have been asking but the press has also indicated that much of this information could be shared electronically rather than having to print reams of paper.

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, we are grateful for that, but we still want it to be mentioned in this honourable House, the commitments of Ministers in relation to, for example, works in Region 2. Is Dartmouth Village included, for example? We want to hear those things. We do not mind them submitting, but at least they should be able to tell us in here, *viva voce*, about these things. I would want, under this same head, to find out about Region 4 also and some specific villages which I would like responses to.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Selman, you can go ahead and pose your question. Perhaps the Minister could be assisted in finding some specifics for the Regions.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Project code 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project – could the Hon. Minister say whether there is any community on the East Bank of Demerara, Region 4, which will benefit from this provision? If yes, can the Minister please name them and provide the estimated cost for each project?

Dr. Ramsammy: CDIP is not construction projects. CDIP is the employment of, I believe, 1,900 community drainage and irrigation workers who are assigned to various NDCs around Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10.

Ms. Kissoon: A follow up on project code 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project: could the Hon. Minister list the areas in Region 10 that would benefit from this project and how much is allocated for each area? Also, can the Minister say which section of the Ministry manages this project? Also, for Region 10, is the RDC involved in the management of these projects or does it have any role in its execution?

Dr. Ramsammy: Region 1...

Ms. Kissoon: Region 10.

Dr. Ramsammy: I was just going to give... Another Member asked me for Region 4.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I suggest that you go through from Region 1 to 10, because there are Members from all ten Regions here and each will have the same interest. Just give some, not all, the details.

Dr. Ramsammy: Region 1 has 102 CDIP workers; Region 2 has 237 CDIP workers; Region 3 has 124 CDIP workers; Region 4 has 436 CDIP workers; Region 5 has 296 CDIP workers; and Region 6 has 79 CDIP workers.

I am missing a page, Mr. Chairman.

Region 10 has 8 in Rockstone, 12 in Kwakwani, 7 in Ituni, 11 in Amelia's Ward, 7 in Blueberry Hill, 12 in Central MacKenzie, 25 in Christianburg, 18 in Kumaka, 22 in Half Mile, 13 in Industrial Area, 11 in Lower Kara Kara, 10 in Nottinghamshire, 8 in Old Kara Kara, 24 in One Mile, 15 in Poker Street, 12 in Retrieve, 15 in Silvertown, 6 in South MacKenzie, 12 in Victory Valley, 19 in West Watooka, 21 in Wismar and 23 in Wisroc.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I respectfully refer the Minister to the reference 68 which states that the project entails rehabilitation and maintenance of community drains, culverts and parapets? It was against this background that I was asking him to identify the communities in which the maintenance of drains culverts and parapets will be done.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, as I said, this is to ensure the drains are kept clean, the culverts and so are kept clear, et cetera. On the East Bank of Demerara, the areas are Caledonia, Good Success, Eccles, Ramsburg, Golden Grove, Diamond, Herstelling, Little Diamond, Mocha-Arcadia, Barnwell, Soesdyke to Coverden, Timehri and 'A' Field. Those are the ones on the East Bank.

Mr. Morian: I would like to expand on project code 1301600 – National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. I am looking at the legend which speaks about completion, construction and rehabilitation of drainage. I just got from the Hon. Minister the number of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) workers. In expanding on that question, I would like to know, in Region 10, which drains are to be constructed and rehabilitated, which irrigation canals, not just the workers. This is project code 1301600 in which the legend reads construction and rehabilitation of drains.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, as I said, I will pass around the 60 activities under this project code. I was giving an example before. One of them is to construct controlled structures at West Watooka. That started last year. A contract of \$18.7 million was given out. So far we have paid \$4.5 million and \$14 million is to be completed this year.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the Hon. Minister for that. He promised to give us the full figure. There is another question I would like to ask based on this same issue here. Is there a national flood plan? Every year we are spending moneys under drainage and irrigation. Is there a national flood plan that could be shared with us?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have always had a plan. Last year, we drafted a new disaster risk management plan, including for flood, for the Ministry of Agriculture. There is a national plan, but there is now a subsector plan that was finalised. I recall sometime in January we launched that. I can have that distributed to the House electronically, because it is a large document. It is presently on the website of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Ms. Kissoon: I did ask the Hon. Minister - probably he missed it - which section of the Ministry manages this project under project code 1301800 - Drainage and Irrigation Support Project. And is the RDC involved in the management of these projects, or does it have any role in its execution?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, it is the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) that manages this project. The NDIA manages this project together with the RDCs and the NDCs. The RDCs are requested to approve the scope of work and the RDCs are also engaged in the assessment of the work done. In fact, the delays in the past, in terms of payment to the workers, have been - and I am not saying a specific RDC, but the availability of the RDCs during the assessment of the work... While we do invite them, I have made it clear to my engineers that when they go to check these works they should not be delayed by anyone so that the workers could get their pay on time.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to make an observation. I have been listening to the Hon. Minister very carefully and I am very much appreciative of the detailed answers he has given so far.

9.27 p.m.

I want to focus on project code 1301700 – Drainage and Irrigation – and I would like to ask in respect of the project code just above that that he had said in the NDIA that last year the Ministry overspent. The Minister came here with a supplementary – 6/2012. I recall that on that occasion I had said that the Alliance For Change (AFC) would not withhold support for allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture, particularly in the areas of drainage and irrigation. We supported that supplementary. It is just to say that I listened to him say that they had bought pumps. I find it to be very contradictory, when we look at project code 1301700 – Drainage and Irrigation – that the National Assembly voted in excess of \$2 billion, but the Ministry only spent \$595 million. I want to ask why that is. Is it that there is an under capacity for the Ministry of Agriculture to spend what is being provided by the National Assembly of Guyana? What project was the Ministry not able to complete last year with the money voted by the National Assembly?

Dr. Ramsammy: The \$449 million supplementary, which, I guess, the Hon. Member is referring to, is not under this line item.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I know. I have said that.

Dr. Ramsammy: All of that money was spent. This particular item, reference number 67, project code 1301700 – Drainage and Irrigation - covers the expenditure for two very significant

activities that we have all paid attention to. One – and I know that Dr. Rupert Roopnarine has already signalled to me that he has a lot of questions on this – is the Northern Relief Channel at Hope/Dochfour and the other is the Indian Line of Credit for the 14 pumps. Yes, we underspent the money allocated in 2012.

Let me deal with the issue of the pumps first of all. The commencement date, not the date of signing because there are three clauses in the contract, would be on the release of the first payment. The times that we have asked for payments to be made were not necessarily the dates when payments were made because payments are made by the Export-Import Bank (Exim Bank) directly. The first payment which activated the contract was in March, 2012 and, therefore, the end date for delivery of the 14 pumps was March, 2013.

The 14 pumps are divided into two sets: one set that is referred to as fixed-site pumps and one set that is referred to as mobile pumps, some of which can be used as fixed-site pumps. These are large pumps. Six of those pumps, complete pumps, were delivered. They were shipped before March and, indeed, arrived in Guyana. Components of them had arrived from December to March, but the complete set with the pumps for those six, which were shipped from Miami, were fabricated and tested in Miami, arrived two days ago. The complete components arrived two days ago. So, components have been arriving since December, but the final set to complete those sets arrived two days ago.

The other eight pumps were fabricated in India and we were requested, in early March, to send our engineers for the final verification for shipment to a [inaudible]. This is for the other eight, components of which are in Guyana. There are the engines and the pumps themselves. The engines are in Guyana. The pumps cannot be shipped until our engineers verify that they were fabricated in accordance with the specification. Our engineers are travelling...because we wanted one of the engineers who are not part of the Ministry of Agriculture – from the private sector. I do not know whether I can publicly say who it is but I can share that with you. It is somebody who all of us know and who has worked with all of us. He is from the private sector and we were waiting on his availability.

The engineers are leaving Guyana for India on the 26th April, 2013 to do the verification and that would lead to shipment to Guyana and then that contract will be completed. Because of our

lateness in going to India, we extended that contract for one month until the end of April. Shipment would occur once our engineers complete that. We pay upon verification of each component. It is only then that we would instruct the bank to make the payment. That is why about \$654 million is budgeted. On the profile page, you will see that number there. There is a little box at the bottom with two lines with two numbers. I believe that the top number is \$654 million and that is for the 2013 payment. Some of that have already been paid because the bank was notified that components arrived in Guyana in accordance with the specification. The final payment, as I said, will be made once that is done. That is for the pumps. I do not know if I have been expansive enough on that.

On the Northern Relief Channel at Hope/Dochfour, there can be no doubt that three of the contractors for the eight-door sluice on the Atlantic, the construction of the bridge over the highway and the construction of the head regulator, demonstrated significant sloth in 2012. There were some good reasons why but, I believe, as I have said publicly and as has been reported in the media, that in spite of those difficulties which were genuine, they could have completed more of those works. They have explained to me – and my engineers concur – that about 30% to 40% of the work to be done consumed approximately 80% of the time. The time consuming work has now been completed. Even though we budgeted for a certain amount, we cannot hand it over to the contractors. We pay in accordance with the work that has been verified as completed in accordance with the specification. We had expected the contractors to complete much more of that work but that was not done and that is why the payment was held.

In a meeting with engineers and contractors, we sat and looked at the rest of the work and determined what would be a reasonable time to complete the work in 2013. Based on that agreement by both the Ministry of Agriculture engineers and consultants and the contractors, it was agreed that 31st August, 2013 would be a reasonable time to complete the work. That is why we have budgeted for the completion of that work some \$745 million.

Ms. Wade: Could the Hon. Minister say how much of the budgetary amount would be spent for the completion of the drainage structure at Profit?

Dr. Ramsammy: The work at Profit was budgeted at \$139.6 million. The Courtney Benn Contracting Services Ltd. has completed part of that work. They have been paid \$125.6 million. To complete the work in 2013, \$13.96 million has been budgeted.

Ms. Wade: I have noticed that nothing has been mentioned for the Strath Campbell area and the four-door sluice for the Basket Primpla canal. Comrade Minister, you know the difficulties that the farmers are facing in that area and I would like to know if during 2013 anything will be done there. If not, why not?

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is yes. Before the evening is over, I will find the document and give it to you.

Ms. Wade: Project code 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project: Mr. Minister, can you say what criteria are being used in the identification of these community works?

Dr. Ramsammy: Is it 1301800 - Community Drainage and Irrigation Programme (CDIP)?

Ms. Wade: Yes.

Dr. Ramsammy: In Region 5, the CDIP workers are supervised by the Mahaica/Mahaicony Abary (MMA) Project. Hon. Member, you know because the board determined that it would work with the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and it identified the areas and how many workers were assigned to each. I have said how many it is in numbers, but I can also give you it for each area.

Dr. Roopnarine: If I may, I would like to take the Hon. Minister back to the issue of the Hope Canal. I wish to understand. The Minister said, just recently, that he anticipates that the project will be completed by 31st August, 2013. Does completion mean that the necessary work is going to be done on the outfall beyond the sluice and into the Atlantic? Without that work being done, it is very doubtful that the water coming down from the conservancy will, in fact, have the outlet that it is meant to have. Does completion also mean the dredging of the outfall beyond the sluice at the Atlantic?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, the outfalls, as best as we could, are continuously being desilted. I wish that we could have more equipment to do it more regularly because these works should be

continuous and not just every three months or so because, as soon as the areas are finished being desilted, within a week they need to be desilted again.

Dr. Roopnarine: Were the defects, which were made public, identified by experienced Guyanese engineers, Mr. Sohan and Mr. Ali, on their visit to the site, taken into account by your own engineers? And are you satisfied with the responses to the identification of the defects?

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is yes. Both of these gentlemen were invited in the past. Both were asked to be assigned to the board as advisors and both declined. I am again making the offer to you, Hon. Member, and the sector committee to invite and bring along whomever you want to bring along for my engineers to [inaudible]. I am not an engineer but, when I read these things, I do have concerns. I cannot say which one is right but I do convene meetings to have people explain it to me and consultants, our engineers and other engineers are satisfied that their concerns have been taken on board. There are times when even as I read what is written in the newspaper, I know that these were concerns already identified by the in-house engineers and dealt with by the contractors. Some of the issues raised in the newspapers have also been raised by our engineers and have been dealt with to their satisfaction. For others, put all of the engineers together and they have different views. But, thus far, some of their concerns have proven to be things that the engineers within the contracting firm, the consultants and the Ministry have been able to manage.

Dr. Roopnarine: Given the potential danger, as the residents of the East Coast say, of “bringing the conservancy to the coast”, does the Minister not believe that it would have been wise to have conducted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of this project. I know that the Ministry has, in fact, done an environmental management plan, but my understanding of the way these things go is that the environmental management plan is really a written response to an EIA and what it has found. I know that the Ministry has done the environmental management plan and has been kind enough to provide it and I am thankful for that. But my fear is that there still exists, in the very close vicinity to the Hope Canal, as you know, a major school that was constructed not so long ago and this school is within, literally, spitting distance of the Canal and what is going to be an eight-foot high structure. This continues to certainly give me some concerns and I am wondering if, in looking at how the project has gone, whether the Minister

does not believe that this is a matter that a properly conducted EIA would have identified as an issue.

As I am on my feet, the other question that I want to ask – and I am glad to see that my Friend from the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority is here – is: could you tell me what is being done in relation to the Dochfour farmers who, as you know, have suffered major dislocations as a result of the construction of the Canal? The promised work to deal with the drainage and irrigation has not so far been done and I am asking, when do you anticipate that the necessary work can be done with the drainage and irrigation to bring relief to the situation of the farmers at Dochfour?

Dr. Ramsammy: As the Hon. Member said, an environmental management plan was developed and I have shared that with him. An environmental impact assessment was not done because the consultants who were developing the project had recommended that an EIA was not needed, but an environmental management plan was. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) concurred with that recommendation. Whether it should have been done or not, we are now deep into the project. Albeit, it is a different kind of structure but it is not the only opening within a residential community for the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC). On the East Coast itself, previously, smaller structures have come out from the Conservancy, as you know, and there are still several of them. Whether there should have been an EIA done or not, time has overtaken that and we are now working with the environmental management plan.

The farmers: when this project was done, a lot of you know that at least one Member from the other side was engaged in talking to the farmers and compensations were given and we still do that because even though originally, I believe, 30 farms and 27 households – I am speaking from the top of my head – were identified as households and farms to be compensated – and they were all done – subsequently we discovered additional ones. In addition to 2010 and 2011, 2012 also saw some compensation. There are, in fact, six which are presently awaiting compensation. It is now at the Ministry of Finance for us to conclude.

In addition to the compensation, the farmers along the Canal, whose drainage was impacted... I have a long list of farmers who were part of the arrangement to have 16 hours of empoldering work done. The vast majority have had 100% of that done because we extended it from 16 to 24

hours. Some still have to be completed. That part of it is almost concluded. A major part of that work had to be parallel to the Relief Channel for the drainage canal to be built. It could not be built because, as the canal is dug on the area that would become the dam, because it is soft material, it spills onto the area occupied by farmers. Now that those parts are being completed and the earth is more compact, we can now develop the dam and, within the 300-foot span, build that drain. If we had done it earlier, it would have necessitated us taking another 20 feet in addition to that and encroaching on the farmers' land. We offered that. Some farmers were agreeable and others were not and, therefore, we had to wait for the compacting of the dam in order to build within the 300-foot parameter.

Mr. Greenidge: I have two follow-up questions to the ones that were raised earlier. Let me continue with the Hope Canal, if I may. The Minister has just given us an elaborate explanation of measures that he proposes to take to protect those around, at least, one side of the dam. On the question that Dr. Roopnarine asked about the widespread concerns about designed floors - that is the best way I can capture the issue - the Minister answered that he is satisfied that those concerns have been addressed and he has invited the Economic Services Committee to meet with them if it can.

I think, more importantly, right now when he is asking for resources and he should have his people around him, we need to know which of the specific design flows that have been identified he feels have been satisfactorily addressed and how they have been addressed. That would be helpful to know.

The second question has to do with project code 1301800 – Drainage and Irrigation Support Project - that he addressed immediately prior to Dr. Roopnarine's question. It was the question on support to Community Drainage and Irrigation Projects. I think that the question asked of the Minister was what criteria – he then told us about Region 5 – informs the selection of the areas that were identified on the list. What were the issues? It is important to know what the objective criteria used in selecting the different areas were. That would be helpful.

Dr. Ramsammy: On the aspect of the technical flaws that persons may have identified... I am not saying that there were technical flaws; that is not my place to say. I am simply saying that you and I, all of us, have read every now and then that people have written that something may

represent a technical flaw. My approach to this has been to bring my engineers, the consultants, who have been hired for this project, and the contractors together to give responses to these issues. That is what I can do. I have often invited the people who have identified those defects to come to those meetings. They have not done so. Therefore, I have to go with the technical experts who surround me. If I were in the Health Ministry, I may have argued with them, but I never overruled those in the Health Ministry, even though I argued with them. Very few times I have had the occasion to say that I did not agree. In engineering, I would not dare to do that. I have to go with what the experts tell me. That is why I say that I am satisfied. If I have three groups of people in a room and they all agree, I have to go along.

On the CDIP, the 1,900 workers who are part of this programme are not meant to take over the community drainage and irrigation. The RDCs and NDCs still have that responsibility. This is to complement what they do, to assist them to do a better job. Therefore, in consultation with the Regions, the areas were come up with – this was before my time – and how many people would be assigned. Every now and then it gets revised a little bit but that is how it was done. We try to identify critical drains. If there are 100 drains in a community, it does not mean that they will work on 100 drains. We try to identify critical drains that are important for the flow of water around and for some sanitation purposes. That is the main purpose of this programme. It is not to take over the drainage and irrigation and sanitation work that the NDCs, RDCs and municipalities have to do.

Mr. Chairman: We will have to resume in Assembly and then a motion would have to be moved for us to go beyond 10 o'clock and then we will continue.

Assembly resumed.

9.57 p.m.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I propose that we suspend Standing Order No.10 so that we may continue and conclude the planned programme for today.

Motion put and agreed to.

Assembly in Committee

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman we have been given a very long and articulate explanation by the Minister but that was not in answer to the question I asked. When I asked about the criteria the answer he has given is that the 1,900 workers were not meant to take over the job of the NDAs. I understand that; that is not what I am asking.

If you have demands from the different authorities for assistance on 5,000 projects, on what basis do you decide where your input is to be made? Is it the largest projects or the projects that have the greatest technical difficulties, or those that only need a little assistance, or those that need technical oversight because they are complicate, or is it that they are maybe furthest behind, or they are least efficient? There has to be some criteria that is used. That is all I am asking for. I would appreciate an answer to that.

Again, in relation to the Hope Canal, I am not expecting you to be an expert in drainage and irrigation, as a Minister you are responsible for policy and you have technicians with you. Those technicians will be aware of the criticisms by way of the design flaws. Are you saying, and I do not think you are, but let me just ask: are you saying that of all the design flaws, it has been alleged, the system suffers or is likely to suffer from, they have addressed all of these and decided none were of any significance or agreed that some were significant and then they took steps to fix them. And if they did which are those? If they did not, which are the ones you decided were important to look at and you then dismissed them. I am not asking you to take over the work of the engineers but in giving them guidance, I heard you and I am happy to know you do not overrule them, but in the end it is a policy decision as to where they go and you must in the end make a decision. My understanding is not that you are a passive Minister, but that is not at issue. What were the considerations that you had to deliberate on?

Dr. Ramsammy: I think most people would disagree that I am a passive Minister.

Mr. Greenidge: No, I am not saying you are passive; not at all.

Dr. Ramsammy: I am a very active Minister and whilst I am not intrusive, I am also very engaged or I would not be able to stand up here and answer without support.

Let me just say this. In answering Dr. Rupert Roopnarine before I did not say that everything identified as a possible concern has been dismissed. I answered that before, that some of these

concerns were identified even by our own people, and others were raised, were followed and some were found... I do not want to stand here and go through all those engineering things. For example, the placement of steel plates at the outfall sluice was one. As the canal was being constructed – I do not know whether I am going to use the right word – the alignment. Those are two examples that were identified by both our engineers and by outside people. People agreed that we needed correction and those were corrected. So, yes, all these concerns were addressed. And my approach to things has always been the worst-case scenario, assuming people are right, and then have the technical people look at them and persuade me that they have genuinely looked at them. I do not want to go on and on with that.

On Community Drainage and irrigation Programme (CDIP) as I said, when it was started there were these discussions with the regions as to which communities etcetera. In some regions like Region No. 5 all the communities were assigned CDIP workers to work along with the communities. In terms of what structures or drainage to be taken care of these were identified during early consultation – that these communities require help in these areas. That is the work they do. As I said we revise that every now and then. In Region No.10, for example, early last year the Region identified some additional structures they wanted CDIP to work with and they did that. That is how it is done.

Programme: 211 – Ministry Administration - \$4,201,026,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Service - \$2,299,760,000

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I have a question under this programme. It is in relation to project code 1209700 and has to do with provision for promotion of cluster groups, institutional strengthening, equipment, construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure. I want to ask the Minister a couple of questions. The first is: can he say in relation to the promotion of three cluster groups fruits and vegetables, livestock, agriculture, and aquaculture if these groups are specific to a certain area or are they countrywide.

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is countrywide.

Dr. Roopnarine: I wonder if with your permission Mr. Chairman I can ask the Hon. Minister if my conclusion in relation to profile page 69, the Conservancy Adaptation Project (CAP). I see that we are about to spend the rest of the money remaining in the total project cost. I see you have here this is to run until December 2013. Does this mean you anticipate the CAP will be completed by December and, if so, will it be available for us to study?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, you will have to advise me because we have already approved this. But I can give you that information afterwards. The answer is yes, but we did approve this already.

Dr. Roopnarine: It is alright; sorry.

Mr. Morian: I know the Hon. Minister promised to give us a breakdown so in the same vein, I would like a breakdown for project code 1209700; the same breakdown he promised before for the region.

Dr. Ramsammy: No, Mr. Chairman, I am willing to share what information I have.

Mr. Morian: Okay, go right ahead.

Mr. Ramsammy: But this does not apply. This programme is broad, for example the design and construction of veterinary lab, bio-control labs et cetera. The clusters, where the activities are, are not identified by us. It is the livestock people, aquaculture people, and the crops people who come. From a previous year it is the people who are invited to come and apply. They have to design their own projects and come. It is not that we sit down and design where we are going to put it.

Mr. Morian: Thank you very much. A follow-up question is could you give us the direct unit they need to apply to in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Dr. Ramsammy: I think that period was before my time.

Dr. Roopnarine: Mr. Chairman, may I ask in relation to the same item whether the strengthening of the Guyana Livestock Development Authority is going to mean that the several projects being undertaken by the Authority - I am referring now in particular to the embryo transfers and the insemination project - if we can see in 2013 an improvement in relation to the

monitoring of these projects. Because as I indicated when I spoke on the Budget there were repeated concerns from farmers, who had benefited from these particular projects, that after the calves - and at US\$1,000 each for the transfer - these rather expensively bred calves were born there was no particular follow-up from the livestock people in relation to the development of the calves.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, we are strengthening the various institutions including GLDA. One of the institutional strengthening we are doing that is going to apply to Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and others is the establishment of a monitoring and evaluating unit for the agriculture sector that could do operational audit and check on impact. That is being established in 2013. We are hiring an M & E expert. Whether it is artificial insemination, embryo transfer or just procuring pure bred bulls, pure bred heifers, in our breeding programme we need to ensure we monitor much more carefully. As part of that the public service training programme with scholarships to Cuba we now have more veterinarians and we are distributing those vets more equitably in the 10 regions of Guyana to make sure they could have active follow-up and are nearer to the communities.

Dr. Roopnarine: In relation to aquaculture can the Hon. Minister say that the problems being faced by at least the people in Region Nos.5 and 6 who have undertaken tilapia breeding projects with support from the Ministry. What they are finding is that when the support for the feeding of the tilapia has dried up they cannot be sustained. One of the difficulties is that the tilapias prefer not to feed at the bottom. What is happening is when the feed is not tray fed there are difficulties arising. I am wondering in relation to aquaculture attention is going to be paid to the people who are breeding the tilapia for export.

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman. One of the expensive inputs for aquaculture is indeed the fish feed. These are imported into the country at a very high cost. Indeed starting late last year and beginning this year we took the initiative to begin a research project within the aquaculture section, but we are also working with NARI to develop our own fish feed in Guyana to reduce cost. I believe whether it is the larger producer or the smaller producer that will be a critical element for us. Whilst that remains a challenge the number one problem they face, aquaculture producers, is that their production has surpassed the demand in Guyana. So for their supply to the local market they have exceeded the market. There has to be imports. Even with the expensive

cost of fish feed if we had an export market, a sizable export market, these same producers could double and triple their products and that can reduce the expensive nature of fish feed. That is the work the Ministry is doing now, locating those markets. I think many of you have read that I have been having active discussions with Trinidad that imports about \$50 million worth of tilapia from China. The Ministry is addressing a major problem our exporters have whether it is aquaculture fish - because the marine fish people have their act together – or agro-processed food, that is, the phyto or phyto sanitary standards. The food safety bill that was being drafted for a while we have now come to the stage where we can bring it to cabinet then to parliament. The traceability legislation is being drafted and training of our producers to meet the sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards is being done. Once we have those standards met there is the export market we can tap into. I think that is the solution.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd)Harmon: Mr. Chairman, project code 1301900, Mangrove Management, could the Hon. Minister state whether there has been an audit of this programme with respect to its effectiveness and how much re-growth has taken place since the programme started?

Dr. Ramsammy: This programme, whilst it is funded by the national government, does have a small foreign input, and because of that we have to maintain impact studies. Indeed, this year a sizable investment in the \$268 million being spent is on consultants for impact study. The answer is, yes.

In terms of how much growth has occurred I know there are approximately 515,000 seedlings that have been planted so far, and I do know there is dense growth in some areas, but to give an exact amount of seedlings that have been successful I can provide that later.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: When is the impact study that is going to be done by the consultants likely to be completed?

Dr. Ramsammy: It has to be completed this year. We are in the process of hiring those consultants right now.

Ms. Wade: Mr. Chairman, agency code 1300600- Civil Works, MMA- could the Hon. Minister say where these works will be carried out?

Dr. Ramsammy: Ms. Wade which one, please?

Ms. Wade: Agency code 1300600- Civil Works, MMA, rehabilitation of roads and drainage and irrigation. Where will these works be carried out and how much of the budgetary amount will be spent on each area?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, there is a list of them. In Abary conservancy and control structures which include the conservancy and conservancy dam, the weeding of the borough trench from Sand Hills to Two Wells Swamp; the rehabilitation of the Seven Door Sluice and the acquisition of machinery, draglines. That will be \$58 million. For primary drainage and irrigation system in the Abary, Mahaicony area there is the rehabilitation of the main canal embankment at IR 3 and 4; there is reconstruction of the facade drain at the breach area at Profitt; the construction of the Abary drain and river embankment from Onverwagt to Profitt; the rehabilitation of Branch Canals 23 and 23A, this is from Bath and Rosignol to Blairmont Estate. We also have a channel infrastructure which is construction of the Abary Mahaicony main canal; this is extending the main canal to the Mahaicony side. The construction of flood embankment on the left bank of the Abary River; the rehabilitation of dam at Perth Savannah and we have budgeted \$44,500,000. We also have the rehabilitation of Jai Singh Canal, all weather and fair whether roads in the Abary area; there is \$40 million for work at Trafalgar pump station; the rehabilitation of the Herstelling sluice, the construction of access bridges from first point to second point at Hyde Park and Mora Point; construction of irrigation structures at Pine Ground; rehabilitation of structures at Mora Point and construction of a check structure along the Burma main drain at the old railway junction; \$15 million for secondary drains at canals in the Mahaicony area.

Ms. Wade: Just one question Mr. Minister, when all is said and done will the flooding be reduced south of the main canal area where the farmers are suffering?

Dr. Ramsammy: The answer is yes.

Ms. Wade: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Trotman: I want to refer to project code 1701600. Under this head there is an astronomical increase in relation to the provision for 2013 vis-à-vis 2012.

Mr. Chairman: Where are we?

Dr. Ramsammy: Profile page No. 80, page 426.

Mr. Trotman: There is \$503 million for support to the agriculture diversification programme, construction of buildings at Monkey Mountain, Aishalton and Annai, and purchase of an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV). I would like the Minister to say first what is the nature of the agriculture diversification programme? I would like him to spell it out.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mr. Chairman, there is \$538 million on this programme; \$10 million will be spent at Annai to construct living quarters for extension workers; \$10 million will be spent at Aishalton for the construction of living quarters for extension workers; \$16 million will be spent on a building at Monkey Mountain for living quarters and a research centre; \$2 million is being spent in Region No. 8 for an ATV; \$500 million is for a programme referred to as agriculture support programme, and I think the Budget Speech referred to the fertilisation support programme. This is to help in developing and modernising, crop farming - outside of rice and sugar - what we call the traditional crops, and some new crops like spices etcetera. This is mainly to procure shade material, seedlings, planting materials, specialised fertilisers, drip technology materials and certain animals like breeding animals. There is a breakdown on how we would spend that \$500 million.

Mr. Trotman: Could the Minister undertake to provide the breakdown he refers to?

Dr. Ramsammy: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Programme: 212 – Crops and Livestock Support Service - \$2,299,760,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$6,446,000

Programme: 213 – Fisheries - \$6,446,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

10.27 p.m.

Programme: 214 – Hydrometeorological Services - \$390,764,000

Programme: 214 - Hydrometeorological Services - \$390,764,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Agency: 41 - Ministry of Education

Current Expenditure

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$451,250,000

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Members I would ask that we turn to pages 142 and 143 as we consider the Current Expenditure for the Ministry of Education, Agency 41, Programme: 411 – Main Office. I propose that those estimates be considered.

Ms. Selman: Line 6116 – Contracted Employees, could the Hon. Minister say what is responsible for the \$10 million increase in the budgetary provision, notwithstanding the fact that the number of employees remain the same?

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: The number of employees remains the same, but we actually had persons who had resigned and new persons hired at different salaries. That accounts for the increase.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Selman, is there another question?

Ms. Selman: Not in this same line item, thank you. Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings- could the Hon. Minister indicate what buildings have been identified for maintenance and the breakdown in the budgetary provisions?

Ms. Manickchand: We intend to repair and rehabilitate sanitary facilities, electrical facilities and other routine maintenance work at our United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) office at Dargan House.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure- could the Hon. Minister name the other infrastructure identified for maintenance under this line item?

Ms. Manickchand: It is \$300,000 allocated for the weeding, cleaning of drains and the fence at UNESCO – the same building.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6284 – Other- could the Hon. Minister say what is captured under the line item- Other?

Ms. Manickchand: This programme deals with, to answer you directly, water for the offices and DSL broadband for the UNESCO office.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6320 – Training (including Scholarships) - could the Hon. Minister say who the potential beneficiaries are under this provision and the number of persons that will benefit?

Ms. Manickchand: There is zero allocation proposed to that.

Mr. Chairman: That is right. Go ahead Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, when we look at page 399, we see for the National Library a figure of \$174,782,000. The question is, first of all does the National Library has a branch in Essequibo? That is the first question.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, there is a branch there.

Mrs. Backer: Could I ask if any of that money, the \$174,782,000, earmarked for that branch. I know recently, from the newspapers, that there was some expression of disquiet about the state of the branch in Essequibo.

Ms. Manickchand: The moneys allocated to the National Library, I would think, that would mean all the branches of the National Library.

Mrs. Backer: The figures changed, last year it was \$165,232,000, this year it is \$174,782,000. The question I am asking is when that figure would have been sent to you for your approval, would it just have been one figure. Would it not have indicated that this is for that branch or \$10 is for that branch or would it just be one figure that you would blindly approve, recommend and bring here Minister?

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, I do not want to answer, I am getting different answers. We have a Board that runs the National Library and this subvention would go to the National Library and then they would spend from it. I do not want to mislead the House. What I can do is lay over tomorrow exactly how they plan to spend this \$174,782,000. They would have given us a work plan, but we did not walk with it.

Mrs. Backer: Fair enough.

Mr. Chairman: That is fair, thank you.

Mrs. Backer: More than fair.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Trotman, go ahead.

Mr. Trotman: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions. The first one is taking the Minister back to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. She did say that the reason for the increase in the allocations under this head has to do with the fact that there will be some persons outgoing and some incoming. I really want to ask her if in actual fact... well this is for the purpose of clarification, are the persons incoming going to be in possession of salaries greater than those who are outgoing? That is my first question.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes Sir.

Mr. Trotman: Could you give us an idea of what were the respective positions that will realise a larger income as different from those persons who are outgoing?

Ms. Manickchand: The persons who are outgoing were very junior officers; the persons who are coming in are senior accreditation officers, a focal point person for HIV and AIDS and a health promotion facilitator.

Mr. Trotman: Thank you Mdm. Minister. I want to take you to the details of line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, on page 399- I note the fact that the Guyana Book Foundation has been given a sum of \$250,000. I wonder if the Minister, in her own deliberate judgement, believes that based on the work that the Guyana Book Foundation has been doing overtime, in relations to helping to lift the educational standards in the country, if \$250,000 is an appropriate amount for the work that that entity is doing.

Ms. Manickchand: We would love to support everyone who supports us ultimately and that is what the Book Foundation does. They do fantastic work. But, they are a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). If we were to fund them from the Government then it would change their nature.

While we would like to give them more, this is what we are giving them now and they have not complained, as far as we know. There probably will always be request for more. Would we like to give them more? Perhaps, but we have to spend within our limits.

Programme: 411 - Main Office - \$451,250,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$211,406,000

Ms. Hastings: Mr. Chairman just for clarification, are we at programme: 412?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead.

Ms. Hastings: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees - I have noticed that the number of Contracted Employees remain the same as that of 2012. However, the moneys allocated for this line item has been significantly increased by \$9.660 million. Could the Hon. Minister, explain to this Hon. House why this increase?

Ms. Manickchand: The same explanation that went before, that is we had resignations of two junior staff. So although we have the same number, it is not the same people or the same offices that are occupied. We had two senior staffs appointed; they are the Learning Resource Development Officer and a School Inspector. That caters for the increase.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical- Hon. Minister we see 16 persons here as in last year. Could you indicate which officers are under this head of Senior Technical?

Ms. Manickchand: Assistant Chief Education Officers – we have nursery, primary, secondary, Technical Education Officers across the country, school welfare officers; that line or category.

I do not think that is exhaustive. [*In aside with officers: Is that all?*] That is only for Georgetown.

Mrs. Backer: But it is just 16 persons. Senior Technical – you did say included in that, would be welfare officers. My respectful question is how many of the 16 persons of senior technical are welfare officers?

Ms. Manickchand: Four is catered for under this head, but four is not the total amount of welfare officers we have.

Mrs. Backer: Four is catered for under that head; so four of the 16 persons are welfare officers. I then go to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees- you have 28. In those 28 contracted employees, would we find other welfare officers?

Ms. Manickchand: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, yes we would. I see you are asking specifically about welfare officers.

Mrs. Backer: Welfare or Senior Welfare Officers.

Ms. Manickchand: Do you mean guidance and counselling officers too or are you speaking specifically about welfare officers?

Mrs. Backer: Well I am looking at page 523, which is Appendix Q, List of Approved Positions under Ministries/Departments/Regions, and the only category I see is, Chief Schools Welfare Officer and then I see Senior Schools Welfare Officer and Schools Welfare Officers. I see nothing about guidance in that and that is why I am asking. Also, if we have guidance Welfare Officers or Guidance Officers, you can indicate.

You see Minister what I am trying to get at is we know the serious problems we have in schools with discipline and violence. I am trying to get a sense from you of how many persons you have in that area, whether we call them Welfare Officers or Guidance Officers. What is the total picture? We want to picture countrywide of what is the strength of our Welfare/Guidance Officers.

Ms. Manickchand: We would be happy to give you that. The thing is, the way the whole education budget is divvied up or the structure is divided, this budget caters for Georgetown alone. I can give you an answer about the strength of our Welfare Department, whether they are Welfare Officers or Guidance and Counselling Officers in Georgetown. Across the regions we have officers assigned and hired under the regional budget.

In Georgetown, we have as far as I can account for on this sheet of paper, our staff, in addition to the four, comes under Senior Technical 11.

Mrs. Backer: Are you satisfied Minister that these 11 officers are sufficient to service the schools in Georgetown? I presume and I do not want to go to nursery, at least primary and secondary schools are you satisfied given the serious problems we have in our schools, that 11 officers in Georgetown are sufficient? If not, what efforts are we making to increase the numbers?

Ms. Manickchand: No, we are not satisfied, either with the numbers we have across the country nor are we satisfied that we are sufficiently trained to address all the issues. We are presently reviewing this particular department both here in Georgetown and as well as our compliment across the country, to look at both how we can attract and retain officers, as well as how we can train further and retrain those that we have.

In fact, right now we have running with the Leslie University of Boston, a programme where 14 of our officers who we have presently on staff, being trained up to the level of a Masters in Guidance and Counselling. I think that is the Masters they would get; Guidance and Counselling, using the arts to resolve issues.

Mrs. Backer: Well it cannot be 14 of the 11, so would these be persons who are away presently on training; like out of the country?

Ms. Manickchand: No, the 14 that are training are not all from Georgetown, we have pulled in some persons from the regions so that we can send back that capacity to the regions.

Mr. Sharma: Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees- the Minister explained the reason for the increase in cost without increasing the numbers. What I would like to know is, with the additional staff that compensated for those that left, what was the salaries payable to these new staffs?

Ms. Manickchand: As I had said earlier in response to similar questions, there are two new persons hired; the Learning Resource Development Officer, who is being paid a monthly salary of \$242,822 and a School Inspector being paid a monthly salary of \$222,076.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Line item 6222 – Field Materials and Supplies- could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of the amount requested in 2013?

Ms. Manickchand: This money, once approved, will be spent on the operation of the school's health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS unit, provision of safety, protective and rain gears for the Monitoring Evaluation Research Development (MERD) and Inspectorate Unit, field duties of the school welfare unit and the PTA unit. It will help with the work of the one Deputy Chief Education Officer and the four Assistant Chief Education Officers, as well as the School Board Secretariat when visiting schools. It is \$2.410 million.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you. I am interested in the materials that are going to be purchased for these offices. Can you give me some specific materials in terms of the highest cost? I do not want the very small items, but the large items; the costs for the items.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, we plan to buy things like raincoats, umbrellas, and so. What we can do is get a quotation tomorrow from a store to see which will be higher or not. I cannot say that now at all, but we will be happy to do it for tomorrow.

Mr. Chairman: What the Member wants to know is what the categories are. Generally, what are you procuring here?

Ms. Manickchand: Raincoats, umbrellas, long boots, torch lights; those kinds of things.

Mr. Chairman: Accessories, okay. Thank you. Go ahead Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you Mr. Chairman. However, these things may be purchased year after year, so I do not know why you continue to buy. Let us move on.

Line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials- could we have a break down there?

Ms. Manickchand: Sorry, I did not hear that. Is it Print and Non-Print?

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Ms. Manickchand: It is to print curriculum guides, fliers, posters, to purchase daily newspapers, certain magazines, that is what we would use this line item that is projected to give us \$5,200,000.

Mr. Sharma: What is the area in that break down there that would cost the most money?

Ms. Manickchand: Perhaps the curriculum guides. The curriculum guides are used to ensure that all schools have a uniform guide as to what to teach. These are usually thick and we usually want all our teachers to have one all across Guyana. We are dealing with 10,000 teachers and every year we would have to renew those that have become damaged. That is perhaps going to cost us the most here.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, a follow up to the question asked by Mr. Sharma, under line item 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials- I heard the Hon, Minister speak of curriculum guides. That has been a very sore point in this House for a very long time. I wonder whether the Hon. Minister can tell us what the status quo is with regards to those curriculum guides. Whether all the schools will now have adequate quantities of these curriculum guides.

Ms. Manickchand: These specific curriculum guides under this line item – 6224 – Print and Non-Print Materials, under programme 412, are really curriculum guides for the HIV/AIDS programmes. To answer you generally on curriculum guides, it is going to come later, so if I can answer you here. We believe that every teacher should have the guides. It might be a little bit of a breakdown in management that saw teachers not having the guides because there was no reason for guides to not have been in schools. But, you are right, we have found that there are schools without and we are looking to correct that this year.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, a soft question for the Hon. Minister. Line item 6281 – Security Services, my question to the Hon. Minister, which media was used to advertised for the security service? Was it the newspapers, television?

Ms. Manickchand: The newspapers.

Mr. Felix: Can you say which month that publication was made and which of the daily newspapers?

Ms. Manickchand: We are thinking it would have been around February/March because it was a contract that was advertised last year and it expires this year. We are going to be advertising again. I am going to be happy to bring it to your attention when we put it in the newspapers this year.

Mr. Felix: Did the company provide you with the security appraisal of the location to be guarded or the location guarded?

Ms. Manickchand: They provided us with an appraisal.

Mr. Chairman: Was the question answered of satisfactory to you Mr. Felix?

Mr. Felix: So far.

Mrs. Backer: I just want to go back very briefly at line item 6112 – Senior Technical and 6116 – Contracted Employees. I am not sure under which head, but Hon. Minister, could you indicate to the House, who gets the Schools Welfare Unit? What is the designation of the person?

Ms. Manickchand: Chief Schools Welfare Officer.

Mrs. Backer: I thought so. Thank you very much. Could you indicate to us what is salary scale that person, who is presently employed, enjoys?

Ms. Manickchand: GS 11.

Mrs. Backer: I am surprised to hear you say that because when we look at Appendix Q on page 523, the salary scale that is assigned to that person is salary scale 12. I really wanted to know in terms of real money.

Ms. Manickchand: What did I say; did I say GS11?

Mrs. Backer: You said GS11. I am seeing here GS12 at page 523; if someone wants to double check with me.

10.57 p.m.

For the Chief School Welfare Officer, salary scale 12, under Programme 2, page 523, just under the halfway mark of the page...

Ms. Manickchand: We are thinking that perhaps, because she is acting, it might be that she is on the salary scale lower than is actually indicated in the...

Mrs. Backer: Could the House get the benefit of what that means in real money? What does Salary Scale 11 mean translated into money? I have been told that it is at page 571.

Ms. Manickchand: The ranges are \$159,000-\$216,000 and \$264,000-\$762,000.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, the question that I now want to ask is; do we think that that salary scale could attract and retain the kind of person we need to head such a critical unit and perhaps it is these circumstances, seeing that the Government seems to have a 'likeness' for contracted employees perhaps we can use someone in contract to come in here. Given what is going on in our schools, this person has an awesome responsibility and I think to have that person at a salary scale beginning at \$159,000 – which is before tax – to \$264,000, I am not sure that we may get the best person that we possibly can and I just want to suggest that perhaps you might look at employing someone under the contracted employees that you may be able to give what traditionally the Government called 'super salaries' but now are given to the 30-odd Office of the President Advisors – \$700,000 and \$800,000. This is a critical post given what is happening in our schools. Sorry, there are 35 Advisors; I have been advised by the Attorney General.

Ms. Manickchand: We are constantly reviewing salaries. What I would hesitate to concede is that people perform at the rate at which they are paid. I think that I perform much higher than my salary and what I love about this particular Ministry and indeed the Ministry I came from before; officers are committed and do the best they can which is sometimes very good, irrespective of the salary.

As to whether we can look at increases: Certainly. Depending on what becomes important in the Ministry and I would concede readily that this is an important area that has to be addressed. There is always room for us to review how we are dealing with any particular department and this one is no exception.

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$211,406,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$2,216,577,000

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6116- Contracted Employees- could I ask the Minister why his contracted employees moved from 72 to 95 and what these positions are and the emoluments for each of them?

Ms. Manickchand: The increase caters for 23 new staff members:

Nine for the book distribution unit, which we are trying to make more efficient

A Deputy Permanent Secretary, Administration

Procurement Officer

Cleaner

Stores Clerks

Three Personnel Clerks

Five Registry Clerks

One Exam Clerk

Three Office Assistants

Ms. Ally: Do you have the emoluments?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, we do.

The Accounts Clerks salaries \$47,605

Typist Clerks – \$41,083

Office Assistant – \$37,657

Book Distribution Clerk – \$47,605

Remember that I said that they were five and seven and so on. That would be it.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Hon. Minister, line item 6284- Other -could the Minister indicate what the increase in “Other” accounts for?

Ms. Manickchand: The increase caters for the operational costs of the office assigned to monitor the Hinterland School Feeding Programme – a \$1.1 billion programme – and for consultation exercises on the development of the 2014-2019 strategic plan. It also caters for internet connectivity services and maintenance, water for offices, purchase of wrapping plastic; we bought a wrapping machine so that we could be more effective at the Book Distribution Unit; the marking and supervision of national and external exams so as to maintain the integrity credibility and security of examinations and to facilitate regional observers and monitors from the CXC Headquarters.

Ms. Ally: A follow up question, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the Minister can indicate what portion of that money is allocated for the supervision of the Hinterland School Feeding Programme.

Ms. Manickchand: The word “Portion” suggests percentage and I would not try to do that. I can tell you this: It is \$2.2 million that is allocated to that. The consultation exercises for the new strategic plan is \$3.3 million. Internet connectivity is \$8 million. Water, wrapping plastic and so on are \$1.2 million. Marking of exam papers and the regional monitors would take up the rest of the money.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Minister. Line item 6302- Training (including Scholarships)- could the Hon. Minister tell this House what categories of personnel would be trained?

Ms. Manickchand: It is under this head that we would pay the work-study students, train Teacher Volunteers under Teacher Volunteer programme and for general staff development training.

Ms. Hastings: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6292- Dietary- I have seen a significant increase to \$1,136,000,000 compared to that \$569,781,000 in 2012. Would the Hon. Minister be kind enough to explain to this House why there is that large increase?

Ms. Manickchand: The Education For All Fast Track initiative (EFA FTI) Programme which had hitherto catered for school feeding has come to an end. The Government of Guyana is now meeting that need of our children – in this case our hinterland children – through the National Budget and so national school feeding with juice and biscuits programme is expected to cost us

\$549 million. The hinterland hot meals and school snacks programme is expected to cost us \$587 million. Remember that together we provide a meal or a snack to 64,000 students every single day.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6133 -Benefits and Allowances- could the Hon. Minister say what expenses will be covered under this category and what is responsible for the increase, from \$22 million to \$73 million in 2013?

Ms. Manickchand: Again the EFA FTI used to pay Remote Area Incentives to teachers who were going into the hinterland region, primary teachers. Again, because that programme has come to an end and we do not want in any way to disadvantage the teachers who had agreed to go in to teach based on the fact that they were going to be given this incentive, the Government is going to pay for that and that accounts for the increase.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you. This is just a follow up on that very line item. Hon. Minister, could you indicate how many teachers will benefit from this head – the benefits and allowances that were previously covered and the Government is now stepping in?

Ms. Manickchand: It would be all the teachers in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 and riverine 10. We do not have an accumulative number now but we can get that in the morning to lay over by tomorrow afternoon.

Mrs. Backer: Could I respectfully ask... in writing, I assume, Minister.

Ms. Manickchand: Yes.

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings -ould the Hon. Minister please indicate which buildings are being rented?

Ms. Manickchand: It is under this line that we rent buildings to either conduct examinations in or to mark exam papers so presently we are at two building in Georgetown where a large number of teachers are together marking the National Grade Six assessment (NGSA) Exam. We would have to pay for those buildings.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6261- Local Travel and Subsistence- we see an increase of approximately \$50 million. Could the Minister explain moving from \$16 million to \$66,967,000?

Ms. Manickchand: This is again taking over from the EFA FTI programme that is finished. This is where the programme delivered the meals and monitors the effectiveness of that programme. It would be under this line item.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member, I heard you say that hot meals are usually provided for some 64,000 children, however, are you aware that the children in Region 9 – I think in the Karasabi area – rather than them being provided with a hot meal they are getting cassava bread and peanut butter. If you are not aware of this I would like for you to investigate and probably update the House on your findings. Thank you.

Ms. Manickchand: I did not say – and the record would show that I did not say – that 64,000 children were getting hot meals. I said either a hot meal or a snack. In some communities in the hinterland I have a list of 48 – Karasabi is included – where we provide a snack determined by the persons of the village and that is cassava and peanut butter, sometimes made locally by women of the village so it provides employment also in the village type market and economy. In other places we provide a hot meal, again provided by kitchens that are small markets in the various villages. On the cost, we provide a fortified set of biscuits, I think seven in number, and juice to all of our children here from nursery to grade two.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$2,216,577,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$1,157,428,000

Ms. Ally: Mr. Chairman, line item 6112- Senior Technical- and 6113- Other Technical and Craft Skilled- I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether these amounts include technical institutes and industrial arts centre teachers. If so, how many of the 38 persons will benefit?

Ms. Manickchand: No. This program deals with National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD), Allied Arts, Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE). The information that you are asking for comes under Programme 5 so I could answer it here if you want or I could wait until Programme 5.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you, Sir- Temporary Employees, line item 6117- we see 375 temporary employees. Could I respectfully ask who these temporary employees are? Are these temporary teachers?

Ms. Manickchand: These are like markers of papers, collators when we are setting exams. We have a lot of young people and women collating the papers, porters carrying those out. Those types of persons; mostly at the NCERD Unit.

Mrs. Backer: They are temporary, but are they continuous for the whole year or would they be seasonal, in a sense.

Ms. Manickchand: Seasonal but we have so many exams now that “seasonal” is almost “permanent”.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6301, through you, Mr. Chairman: We see a figure here. Last year the budget was \$89.5 million and it went down to \$61.5 and again this year it is set at \$89.5 and when we look at page 397 we see that this has to do with the subvention for the Cyril Potter College of Education. My question, Hon. Minister, is what led to that shortfall? You budgeted \$89.5 million but the Ministry spent \$28 million less but you have again come back up with the same figure. Could you indicate what led to that \$28 million? Is it the stipend? Why that reduction in what was actually spent?

Ms. Manickchand: These are stipends that are given to each trainee teacher and I am advised that CPCE, even though last year was the year we graduated the historical 849 teachers – the largest number we have ever graduated – fell short of the enrolment projection so they paid out less than they had budgeted for.

Mrs. Backer: With this unprecedented number of teachers graduating only \$61.5 million was spent towards stipends; is that what we are saying?

Ms. Manickchand: No. This programme is a long programme; less persons when in as new entrants, as pre-service teachers, than they expected. Does that answer the question? For that year, when that year’s graduation batch comes out, even though it may still be a very large number, it was less than we had anticipated it would be. We expect this year that we would have a rise in numbers.

Ms. Selman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line item 6241- Rental of Buildings- could the Hon. Minister say what buildings were rented and for what purpose?

Ms. Manickchand: This is the line item that caters for us to rent apartments to accommodate Volunteer Services Overseas (VSOs). That is our agreement with the VSO organisation; that we would provide accommodation and we have set aside \$3.3 million for that. VSO flats at \$1.2 million for who would work at the CPCE and for the accommodation for Distance Education Students - \$1.2 million, rental of furniture \$920,000.

Ms. Selman: Line item 6242- Maintenance of Buildings- could the Hon. Minister say which buildings have been identified for maintenance?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir, we would be happy to say. NCERD is identified for maintenance at a cost of \$800,000. We intend to sand, seal and refurbish the floor of the auditorium for \$1 million. We intend to do general minor electrical, plumbing, masonry and carpentry works at \$2 million. We intend to replace five plywood doors with panel doors at \$500,000. We intend to repaint internal and external walls in selected areas at \$4.5 million.

At the CPCE, we intend to spend \$20 million on general repairs to the floors, door, windows, walls roof, Blocks A and B and Bain Grey. With \$5 million we intend to install cupboards, partition walls, repairs to floors within the exams division, the production room and the distance education unit and the writing centre at \$3.7 million. We intend to refurbish the staff lounge in the CPCE building and sinks, cupboards, countertops cubicles and floors at a cost of \$3 million. We intend to refurbish the convention centre and the Bain Grey Hall at \$4.3 million. We intend to clean the exterior of all buildings at \$1 million and do general repairs to walls, shelves and cupboards at \$1 million. We intend to refurbish the staff lounge at \$2 million.

At Allied Arts, we intend to spend \$2 million. Replace six shutters and guttering which will cost us \$800,000. Repaint the exterior of the building and the car shed which will cost us another \$800,000. Repair the roof which will cost us \$400,000.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of line item 6224- Print and Non-Print Materials- \$44 million?

Ms. Manickchand: Sorry, Sir, we missed the question.

Mr. Chairman: Print and Non-Print Materials, \$44 million- line item 6224.

Mr. Sharma: What are the five largest items and their amounts?

Ms. Manickchand: This increase caters for the digital presentations and printing of modules for the multimedia unit at NCERD – that is the learning channel. Most of the increase captures the printing of the workbooks and exercise books of the Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) Programme and for the printing of modules and exam papers for the Associate Degree in Education (ADE) Programme at CPCE. It caters for the acquisition of text books, journals, periodicals, instructional materials, teaching guides, curricula, IRI programme, printing pupil workbooks and chequered lined books used in the classroom.

At NCERD we will spend \$37,315,000 once approved. At CPCE, \$5,852,000 and at Allied Arts - \$833,000.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you. I was interested in five of the items and the amount but that will do. This programme caters for the learning channel?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Sharma: In this programme does NCERD do any teleporting of information and the electromagnetic wave spectrum.

Mr. Chairman: Will you be using the electromagnetic spectrum.

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, can I undertake to answer that tomorrow after I get expert advice. I just watch it.

Mr. Chairman: That is good posture to adopt.

Mr. Sharma: In relation to that could the Hon. Minister just indicate which line item this would be dealt with? Which line item is it? Is it the same 6284? She did mention...

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. You asked the Hon. Minister if NCERD intends to do any teleporting and functioning under the electromagnetic spectrum.

Mr. Sharma: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I believe that the Hon. Minister now has to go and find out about the technical details of what you are even saying then to locate it in a specific line item, so I doubt that she could answer the question tonight as to which specific line item that pertains to.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have all of the technical persons assisting the Hon. Minister. I do not know if there are more technical persons than those, however, I may wait. In the mean time, for line item 6284 could we have a breakdown of the \$91.480 million?

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, these are mostly administrative staff member. Teleporting and “electromagneticing” will require more technical expertise that we cannot provide here.

Mr. Chairman: I would have thought so. Line item 6284, unless, Mr. Sharma, you would like to point out a particular officer whom you feel can answer the question...

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry is supposed to have knowledge of every single aspect and every single thing, including the Minister; the Permanent Secretary is the advisor to the Minister so one does not need any more technical person than that individual.

Mr. Chairman: Line item 6284...

Ms. Manickchand: Sir, we do apologise. We will provide that information tomorrow. Line item 6284: This increase caters for the operations of the education television broadcasting station, along with the operation costs of the multimedia unit and that is projected to cost \$66,500,000. The airing of the IRI Programme on the radio is \$13,900. Invigilation and marking of exams for the ADE Programme and the cost for preparation and marking CPCE exams are projected to cost us \$3.979 million. Allied Arts is also to benefit from this line item at a cost of \$696,000 for the hiring of resource persons to administer steel band instruction in schools.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, thank you. The Hon. Minister did indicate that line item 6284- Others- there is an amount for the learning channel of \$66 million or something to that effect. Does this amount include a contract awarded to a contractor to carry out this particular activity?

11. 27 p.m.

Ms. Manickchand: There is no particular activity that I identified. It caters for the operations of the learning channel, the entire unit. How that is done is that either the programmes are developed or programmes are acquired and then they are aired on the television, which is available nationally across the country. We would be happy, because I know that the Hon. Member has particular expertise in this area, to invite him to the unit so that we could exchange ideas on how we could better broadcast the programmes on this channel, but there is no specific activity that this caters for that would require a contractor who will have to be paid.

Mr. Sharma: However, I am looking forward to that information about the teleporting technology.

Line item 6292 – Dietary: Could there be a breakdown of the \$93 million?

Ms. Manickchand: This is for dietary and it is to cater for the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) students who are fed with three square meals per day, for 313 days. These are the students occupying the dorms.

Mr. Felix: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I would like to draw the Minister’s attention to a variation in the cost of security between the years 2011 and 2013 and to ask if she could kindly explain this variation.

Ms. Manickchand: There is a one-off expenditure that has to make for a security system, alarms and so on, for a particular facility, which I could share with the Hon. Member outside of the record and the cameras.

Mr. Felix: May I also enquire which are the security companies involved?

Ms. Manickchand: It is Home Save and Inter Service presently, but again, when contracts come to an end we will advertise and the company that bids the lowest and qualifies in every other respect will most likely be awarded according to the laws of our country.

Mr. Felix: This forces me to ask the other question. How many companies submitted bids for the contract?

Mr. Chairman: Do you mean for last year?

Mr. Felix: Yes Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have that information at hand?

Ms. Manickchand: We are remembering three or four but that is not information that technical officers brought along with them. I would just like to assure the Hon. Member that the acquisition of service was done according to the Procurement Act so it would have been who answered our advertisement and met the qualifications which were being asked for.

Mr. Felix: I take it that the Ministry was provided with the necessary security appraisal.

Ms. Manickchand: I am advised that the Ministry usually put business, such as this, before the competent advisers who would usually check for appraisals, and so on. The Ministry has many areas which have to be secure, and buildings, and so on, and that is why the Member is hearing different names all the time because whoever answers the advertisement in a responsive way that the Ministry puts out...

Mr. Felix: Could I ask if a copy of the last appraisal can be laid in this House?

Mr. Chairman: This would be a security appraisal of the Ministry of...

Mr. Felix: It is of the training and development.

Ms. Manickchand: You would recall, Mr. Chairman, that just now... I have absolutely no problems answering the Hon. Member but I am concerned that if we were to say here, publicly and into the records, what sorts of security facilities the Ministry has...

Mr. Chairman: I recall that last year we went through this exact thing, in which in certain installations, where they were located and what security measures were put in place, we did not want to make them public. That makes sense because we do not want to expose everything. It is not that it is hidden, but we do not want to lay bare everything. I would advise Members to have a chat with the Minister. In terms of sharing confidential reports and assessments of the security layout, I am not too sure.

Mr. Felix: While I am hearing some funny sounds from the other side, I am not asking for confidential information. This is information which ought to justify the cost of security.

Ms. Manickchand: An appraisal of a building or of a site has to have information in it that we do not want to get into the wrong hands. I do not believe the Hon. Member would have wrong hands, but I would be cautious about expending moneys towards securing somewhere and then we disclose all of that to everybody.

What is an appraisal? It is to apprise of where a security is needed, why it is needed, the type that is needed. If we were to share that then it makes no sense getting security. We would be happy to receive from...

Mr. Chairman: There has to be some middle ground on which we can all settle and agree on. The Ministry has installations nationwide and I do not know that if the Minister can even attempt to provide an appraisal of what is happening at each school, at each office. I do not know, but perhaps a general assessment of where things are to give the Member a sense... I do not know that the minutiae is required.

Mr. Felix: Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely correct. This is only in relation to training and development; it is not the entire Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: Is it for training and development?

Mr. Felix: This is the area under which it falls.

Ms. Manickchand: That is area where examination papers are either being set or being marked. We cannot disclose that.

Mr. Chairman: We will work it out.

Mr. Jones: Line item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure: Could the Hon. Minister please indicate what those other infrastructures are?

Ms. Manickchand: It would be for the National Centre for Educational Resource Development (NCERD), CPCE and Allied Arts.

NCERD is projected to spend \$3.850 million, CPCE - \$4.150 million and Allied Arts - \$3.569 million.

At CPCE, the Ministry intends to weed all of the canals and perimeter fence, drains and gutters, landscaping which should cost \$1.123, refurbish the driveway to both entrances Fourth and Seventh Streets and resurface the walkway from the dormitory to the main building.

At Allied Arts, the Ministry intends to maintain the internal walkway to the Allied Arts and other buildings. That should cost \$3.69 million. The Ministry intends to clear the alleyway behind the fence which should cost us \$500,000.

At NCERD, the Ministry intends to do a general cleaning of all solid waste from around the compound, removal of creeping vines from fences and maintenance of drains, which should cost about \$2 million, sanitise and repaint the metal and concrete fences, which should cost about \$800,000, replace barbed wires around the fence for about \$500,000 and maintain the sewage area for about \$500,000.

Ms. Hastings: I just want to take the Minister to line item 6284 in which she said that the education television programme is catered for. Is this channel accessible to the children in the hinterland?

Ms. Manickchand: Yes. It is.

Ms. Hastings: Could the Minister name us some of the communities in the hinterland that have access?

Ms. Manickchand: The television learning channel is accessible in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. There are 1,000 schools spread across those regions. If the Hon. Member want specific areas that have access then that would have to be laid.

Ms. Hastings: I was asking specifically for the Minister to name the communities. However, Minister, if not... because I know of some communities, such as the schools in the upper Mazaruni, some schools in Region 9, which do not have access to this learning channel.

Ms. Manickchand: It is not accessible to everything. It is accessible to hinterland communities which was the question that we got earlier. It was if it was accessible to hinterland schools, which we said yes to, and then communities, which Your Honour is raising now, and we say yes to that. It is an ongoing process where we try to make it a national spread.

Ms. Hastings: Now for the communities that still do not have access to this learning channel, what plans does the Ministry has so that the children, who are left out, in those schools could get access to?

Ms. Manickchand: Our intention... Sir just let me clear this because I heard it a couple of times. This is not a programme meant for schools. It is a national programme. In fact, we hope that not only schools and schoolchildren will use it but that it would be of benefit to adults, persons who perhaps cannot read and will use the programme to learn to read or adult persons who wants to learn Spanish will use our programmes, which are consistently aired strategically at well placed hours, to learn that. It is a learning channel that is designed for every age group.

The Government's intention is that the learning channel will be accessible to all, all over the country. That is, as I said, a work in progress. I think we should all be proud of the incredible spread that we have seen happening in a very short time and offer commendations to that unit and its head, Dr. Seeta Roath.

Ms. Ally: The Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings asked a question whether the learning channel is reaching the interior locations. The Hon. Minister said "yes". I want to reiterate that if the learning channel is reaching the interior locations, we would like to know the communities that it is reaching. If the Minister does not have the answer now maybe it will be a good thing tomorrow to lay it. I just want to reiterate that it is necessary, if it is reaching there.... The Hon. Member is disputing because she is from an interior location. In particular, we are interested in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9 to know what the position is.

Ms. Manickchand: We too are very interested in Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9 as we are in 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10, but, as I said, it not reaching every single community. We are not disputing that there may be communities that do not have access to the learning channel, but we are saying, confidently and assuredly, that the learning channel is accessible by hinterland regions. I would be happy to provide, tomorrow, a list of the places that have access to this facility.

Ms. Ally: Very well.

Mr. Sharma: Follow- up. In relation to the confession that the learning channel is reaching a number of locations in the interior, it is evident that some kind of technology is not being employed.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Sharma, there was no denial that there was technology at use. The Minister was not in a position to answer the specific question about teleporting and electromagnetic spectrums. There is no denial that something is happening, but the Minister has asked for time to come up with the specifics with the technical data that you have requested. It was not a confession. We all know that there is a learning channel.

Mr. Sharma: Which technology is being used, the cost and the contractor?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. It is as many details as could be available please.

Ms. Manickchand: Tomorrow.

Programme: 414 - Training and Development - \$1,157,428,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 415 – Education Delivery - \$5,096,885,000

Ms. Selman: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Considering the safety of teachers, I would like to enquire what this increase represents.

Ms. Manickchand: The increase caters for the provision of additional security to 29 schools in Georgetown. Additional security does not mean they did not have before. It just means that the Ministry is adding to it, perhaps hours or numbers of guards. There are 24-hour security being provided to 29 schools in Georgetown, 32 nursery schools, 3 primary schools, 31 secondary schools, 5 practical instruction centres, 6 institutes, Carnegie School of Home Economic and the Craft Production Unit.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6301 – Education Subventions and Grants: When we look at page 397 we see that the University of Guyana, both the Berbice and Turkeyen Campuses, together, are given grants of \$827,845 million. Given what APNU considered as some alarming statements about the possibility of the University fees being increased and the Government has been silent on this issue, does those subventions include Government’s subvention that would be to take

care of any increase or is the Government's position that it will not support an increase in tuition fees if and when it is formally asked by the University?

Ms. Manickchand: The Government is very keen to create and maintain a university, which was started by the founder leader of the party in Government, we have a deeper interest than we would ordinarily have, that will produce and help to develop Guyanese who will contribute to the development of our nation. We are open to recommendations that will help us to do this and so we are not closed to anything, which might be why we would not have vocally adopted one position or the other.

Only today, I think, I saw a news item that stated that University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, had sent out a notice to the students to say that if they do not pay by Friday they cannot write this term exams. Every university will have to find ways, sometimes employ measures, that may seem harsh but that are necessary to the sustenance of those institutions.

This figure, which is budgeted for, that we propose to give this year, once the budget is approved, does not cater for any increase or decrease because a decision has not yet been taken. We remain committed to providing an environment where the students, who access education at the University of Guyana, whether it be at Turkeyen or Tain, could be students that are worthy of employment anywhere in the world.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. I am partly reassured Minister but I just want you, as you have indicated about Mona Campus and the fees on Friday, to remind you, Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, and I know you would not have forgot, that article 27 of our Constitution is very clear, "Every citizen has a right to free education from nursery to university..." It is not an enforceable section we accept but when read together with article 39 - this cannot be found in any other Constitution in CARICOM - which states: "It is the duty of Parliament, the Government, the courts and all other public agencies to be guided in the discharge of their functions by the principles..." One of the principles is that every citizen has the right to free education from nursery to university.

Minister, it is our sincere hope that the Government will join the APNU in the position that we have to do everything as a nation to ensure that tuition fees at the University of Guyana, both campuses, are not raised or not raised in the foreseeable future. To not do that would be to

discard both articles 27 and 39 of our Constitution. Jamaica does not have that; Trinidad does not have that and I can go through the entire Caribbean. None other has that. This is very advanced constitutional drafting and, I think, we all owe it to our children. No child in Guyana irrespective...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Deputy Speaker, we are considering the Estimates.

Mrs. Backer: Yes. It is something that I am passionate about..

Mr. Chairman: I realise.

Mrs. Backer: I would really like to get that commitment.

Mr. Chairman: I notice that but we are in the midst of the Estimates.

Mrs. Backer: I agree, Sir.

Mr. T. Williams: I wish to ask a follow-up question on the same line item 6301 – Education Subventions and Grants. It is to the Minister of Education and by extension I will ask the same question of the Government. What is the Government’s position on restoring the subvention to Critchlow Labour College as an institution in this country that offers education?

Mr. Chairman: The question would be whether or not the figure of \$89,500,000 includes a subvention for Critchlow Labour College, and if not, why so?

Ms. Manickchand: It is not provided for in this year’s subventions.

Mr. T. Williams: By asking the Government’s position on this particular issue, I want to know if the Minister is in a position to indicate to this Committee whether this institution will be granted, again, its subvention.

Ms. Manickchand: I would confess that I do not think I can give a whole and complete answer. I believe perhaps it is for another Minister in the Government. The subvention comes through the Ministry of Education, but outside of that, I believe that it was another Ministry in the Government who had more engagements with the college. I think it might be a question better posed there. I would be reluctant to answer that question lest I mislead the Committee.

Mr. Nadir: I want to ask the Minister of Education if there is provision under this particular head for the GAWU Labour College.

Ms. Manickchand: There is no provision for the GAWU Labour College. There is for Presidents College, Queens College, the Georgetown Technical Institute, the Linden Technical Institute, UG (Turkeyen), UG (Tain), and the Kuru Kuru College.

Programme: 415 – Education Delivery - \$5,096,885,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$12,215,000

Programme: 411 – Main Office - \$12,215,000 agreed to and ordered to stand as part of the Estimates.

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$3,500,000

Ms. Ally: Could the Hon. Minister say what the handsets are used for in training and development at CPCE?

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman, could you clarify which one we are dealing with? I thought we were dealing with programme 412.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, at programme 412, project 2603100 – Other Equipment: “ Purchase of furniture and equipment.” I do not know whether the profile page has anything referring to handsets.

Ms. Manickchand: There is not any handsets here, Sir, that is why we are trying to figure out where...

Programme: 412 – National Education Policy – Implementation and Supervision - \$3,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

11.57 p.m.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$13,800,000

Ms. Selman: Project 2403300: Could the Hon. Minister tell us how many vehicles will be purchased, the type and the estimated cost?

Ms. Manickchand: The Ministry intends to purchase a double cab pickup and a double cab canter truck. The pickup is to be used by the Building's Division and it is estimated to cost somewhere around \$5 million. The canter truck is to be used by the Book Distribution Unit which distributes exercise books, text books and snacks, biscuits and juices, and that is expected to cost us \$4 million.

Ms. Selman: Project 2603100: Could the Hon. Minister state how much of the budgetary allocation would be spent on steel bands and where would these steel bands be placed?

Ms. Manickchand: The steel bands are not being bought under this programme, it is under programme four and they will be sent to Region 10.

Programme: 413 – Ministry Administration - \$13,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$29,500,000

Ms. Ally: Project 1206500 – Teachers' Training Complex: I would like to ask the Minister if these are really classrooms or dormitory rooms. How many? What is the dormitory capacity and how many mattresses are to be purchased? Those information are provided in the profile.

Ms. Manickchand: The dormitory capacity is 250 persons, but this is to provide for the construction of classrooms.

Programme: 414 – Training and Development - \$29,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Programme: 415 – Education Delivery - \$2,184,269,000

Ms. Kissoon: Project 1205900 – Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools: Could the Hon. Minister say how much is allocated to the One Mile Primary School?

Ms. Manickchand: It is \$60 million.

Ms. Selman: Project 1206600 – University of Guyana – Turkeyen: Could the Hon. Minister say how much money will be spent on the development of the online programmes and whether these programmes are suitable for the demands and needs of Guyana?

Ms. Manickchand: Fifty million dollar is provided for this programme. The programmes that will be created and crafted will be suitable to the needs of Guyana.

Programme: 415 – Education Delivery - \$2,184,269,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: That completes our business for today. I would like to thank the Ministers and the technical officers.

Assembly resumed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until 2.00 p.m. later today.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 2.00 p.m., today, 17th April.

Adjourned accordingly at 12.03 a.m.