



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF  
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC  
OF GUYANA

# OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2020-2025) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN*

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104<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Friday, 23<sup>RD</sup> May, 2025

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**PARLIAMENT OFFICE  
HANSARD DIVISION**

*The Assembly convened at 10.24 a.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)**

**Speaker (1)**

\*Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.,  
*Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Parliament Office,  
Public Buildings,  
Brickdam,  
Georgetown.*

**MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)**

**(i) MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY/CIVIC (PPP/C) (38)**

**Prime Minister (1)**

+ Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Anthony Phillips, M.S.S., M.P.,  
*Prime Minister,  
Prime Minister's Office,  
Colgrain House,  
205 Camp Street,  
Georgetown.*

**Vice-President (1)**

+ Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P.,  
*Vice-President,  
Office of the President,  
New Garden Street,  
Georgetown.*

*[Absent – on leave]*

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)**

+ Hon. Mohabir Anil Nandlall, M.P.,  
*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs,  
Ministry of Legal Affairs,  
Carmichael Street,  
Georgetown.*

+ **Cabinet Member**

\* **Non-Elected Speaker**

## **Senior Ministers (16)**

+ Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),  
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance,  
Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance.  
Government Chief Whip,  
Office of the Presidency,  
New Garden Street,  
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
Lot 254 South Road,  
Georgetown.*

+\*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.,  
*Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance  
and the Public Service,  
Ministry of Finance,  
Main & Urquhart Streets,  
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P.,  
*Minister of Public Works,  
Ministry of Public Works,  
Wight's Lane,  
Kingston,  
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Dr. Frank C. S. Anthony, M.P.,  
*Minister of Health,  
Ministry of Health,  
Brickdam,  
Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),  
Minister of Education,  
Ministry of Education,  
Lot 26 Brickdam,  
Georgetown.*

+ \*Hon. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P.,  
*Minister of Home Affairs,  
Ministry of Home Affairs,  
Brickdam,  
Georgetown.*

+ **Cabinet Member**

\* **Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.,  
*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),*  
*Minister of Agriculture,*  
*Ministry of Agriculture,*  
*Regent and Vlissengen Road,*  
*Bourda, Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Pauline R.A. Campbell-Sukhai, M.P.,  
*Minister of Amerindian Affairs,*  
*Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,*  
*Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,*  
*South Cummingsburg,*  
*Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Joseph L.F. Hamilton, M.P.,  
*Minister of Labour,*  
*Ministry of Labour,*  
*Brickdam,*  
*Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Vickram Outar Bharrat, M.P.,  
*Minister of Natural Resources,*  
*Ministry of Natural Resources,*  
*Lot 96 Duke Street,*  
*Kingston,*  
*Georgetown.*

+\*Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P.,  
*Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,*  
*Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce,*  
*Lot 229 South Road,*  
*Bourda, Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Collin D. Croal, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 1 – BarimaWaini),*  
*Minister of Housing and Water,*  
*Ministry of Housing and Water,*  
*Brickdam,*  
*Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Vindhya V. H. Persaud, M.S., M.P.,  
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),*  
*Minister of Human Services and Social Security,*  
*Ministry of Human Services and Social Security,*  
*Lot 357 East and Lamaha Streets*  
*Georgetown.*

*[Virtual Participation]*

**+ Cabinet Member**

**\* Non-Elected Minister**

+ Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P.,  
*Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports,*  
*Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports,*  
*Main Street,*  
*Georgetown.*

+ Hon. Sonia Savitri Parag, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam),*  
*Minister of Local Government and Regional Development,*  
*Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,*  
*DeWinkle Building,*  
*Fort Street,*  
*Kingston,*  
*Georgetown.*

#### **Junior Ministers (4)**

Hon. Susan M. Rodrigues, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),*  
*Minister within the Ministry of Housing and Water,*  
*Ministry of Housing and Water,*  
*Lot 41 Brickdam & United Place,*  
*Stabroek,*  
*Georgetown.*

Hon. Deodat Indar, M.P.,  
*Minister within the Ministry of Public Works,*  
*Ministry of Public Works,*  
*Wight's Lane,*  
*Kingston,*  
*Georgetown.*

Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P.,  
*Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,*  
*Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development,*  
*Fort Street,*  
*Kingston,*  
*Georgetown.*

[Absent]

Hon. Warren Kwame E. McCoy, M.P.,  
*Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister,*  
*Office of the Prime Minister,*  
*c/o Colgrain House,*  
*205 Camp Street,*  
*Georgetown.*

+ **Cabinet Member**

## **Other Members (15)**

Hon. Mr. Alister S. Charlie, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo),*  
148 Lethem,  
Central Rupununi,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.,  
*Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),*  
Lot 4 Public Road,  
No. 66 Village,  
Corentyne,  
Berbice.

Hon. Mr. Sanjeev J. Datadin, M.P.,  
Lot 60 Section 'K',  
John Street,  
Campbellville,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Mr. Seepaul Narine, M.P.,  
Lot 321 BB Seventh Street,  
Eccles,  
East Bank Demerara.

Mrs. Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks, M.P.,  
Mainstay Lake/Whyaka Village,  
Mainstay Lake, Essequibo Coast,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P.,  
Lot 340 East Street,  
South Cummingsburg,  
c/o Freedom House,  
41 Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.,  
55 AA Victoria Avenue,  
Eccles,  
East Bank Demerara.

Hon. Mr. Faizal M. Jaffarally, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),*  
Lot 16-30 New Street,  
New Amsterdam.  
c/o Freedom House,  
Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Dr. Tandika S. Smith, M.P.,  
(Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),  
Lot 290 Area 'J',  
Tuschen, North,  
East Bank Essequibo.

Hon. Mr. Lee G.H. Williams, M.P.,  
Paruima Upper Mazaruni,  
c/o Freedom House,  
Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

\* Hon. Ms. Sarah Browne, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs,  
Lot 251-252 Thomas & Quamina Streets,  
South Cummingsburg,  
Georgetown.

\* Hon. Mr. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P.,  
Parliamentary Secretary,  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Regent and Vlissengen Road,  
Bourda, Georgetown.

Hon. Ms. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P.,  
Lot 32 Crown Dam,  
Industry,  
East Coast Demerara.

Hon. Ms. Nandranie Coonjah, M.P.,  
(Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam),  
Lot 69 Suddie New Housing Scheme,  
Essequibo Coast.  
c/o Freedom House,  
Lot 41 Robb Street,  
Georgetown.

Hon. Mr. Suresh Singh, M.P.,  
Lot 72 Jagan Street,  
Enterprise,  
East Coast Demerara.

**MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (32)**

**(i) A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) (31)**

Hon. Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P.,

*Leader of the Opposition*

Hon. Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.,

*Lot 10 Delph Street,*

*Campbelville,*

*Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Roysdale A. Forde, S.C., M.P.,

*Lot 410 Caneview Avenue,*

*South Ruimveldt,*

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*(Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam),*

*Lot 55 Henrietta,*

*Essequibo Coast.*

Hon. Ms. Catherine A. Hughes, M.P.,

*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),*

*Lot 13 A, New Providence,*

*East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P.,

*Lot 94 Prem Niranjana Street,*

*Prashad Nagar,*

*Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Sherod A. Duncan, M.P.,

*Lot 590 Good Hope,*

*East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Volda Lawrence, M.P.,

*Lot 7 Freeman Street,*

*Castello Housing Scheme,*

*La-Penitence,*

*Georgetown.*

Hon. Ms. Dawn Hastings-Williams, M.P.,

*Lot 933 Block 1,*

*Eccles,*

*East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. Christopher A. Jones, M.P.,

*Opposition Chief Whip,*

*Lot 20 Onderneeming,*

*New Housing Scheme,*

*West Coast Berbice,*

*Mahaica-Berbice,*

*c/o Lot 609 Conciliation Street,*

*Tucville,*

*Georgetown.*



Hon. Mr. Vincerooy H. Jordan, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),  
Lot 214 Lovely Lass Village,  
West Coast Berbice.  
C/o Christopher Jones*

Hon. Ms. Amanza O.R. Walton-Desir, M.P.,  
*Lot 1285 EE Eccles Sugarcane Field,  
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*(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),  
Lot 40 Block 3  
Craig Milne,  
Cove & John,  
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South Central,  
Rupununi.  
(Culvert City Lethem)*

Hon. Dr. Karen R.V. Cummings, M.P.,  
*Lot 2 Belfield Housing Scheme,  
East Coast Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Tabitha J. Sarabo-Halley, M.P.,  
*Lot 3382 Caneview Avenue,  
South Ruimveldt Park,  
Georgetown.*

Hon. Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis, M.P.,  
*Lot 1110 Plot ‘B’,  
Herstelling,  
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P.,  
*Lot 842 Eccles,  
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Ms. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.,  
*Lot 1282 Block EE,  
Eccles,  
East Bank Demerara.*

Hon. Mr. David A. Patterson, M.P.,  
*Lot 151 Durbana Square,  
Lamaha Gardens,  
Georgetown.*

Hon. Mr. Ronald Cox, M.P.,  
*(Region No. 1 – Barima Waini),  
Mabaruma Compound.*

Hon. Mr. Jermaine A. Figueira, M.P.,  
(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),  
Lot 136 2<sup>nd</sup> Street,  
Silvertown,  
Wismar, Linden.

Hon. Mr. Ganesh A. Mahipaul, M.P.,  
Lot 14 Plantain Walk,  
West Bank Demerara.

Hon. Mr. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P.,  
Lot 18 Public Road,  
Johanna Cecilia,  
(Region # 2 Essequibo Coast).

Hon. Ms. Nima N. Flue-Bess, M.P.,  
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),  
Lot 88 Nelson Street,  
Mocha Village,  
East Bank Demerara.

Hon. Mr. Dineshwar N. Jaiprashad, M.P.,  
Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne),  
Lot 80 Babu John Road, Haswell,  
Port Mourant, Corentyne Berbice.

Hon. Ms. Maureen A. Philadelphia, M.P.,  
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica),  
Lot 17 Block 1, Section F,  
Plantation Belfield,  
East Coast Demerara.

Hon. Ms. Beverley Alert, M.P.,  
(Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)  
Lot 169-170 Stanleytown,  
West Bank Demerara.  
c/o Lot 13 A, New Providence,  
East Bank Demerara.

Hon. Mr. Richard E. Sinclair, M.P.,  
(Region No. 8 –Potaro/Siparuni)  
Church Street Mahdia.  
Lot 4 Public Road,  
Stewartville,  
West Coast Demerara.

Hon. Mr. Devin L. Sears, M.P.,  
(Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice),  
Lot 90, Section C, Wismar, Linden.

**(ii) A New and United Guyana, Liberty and Justice Party and The New Movement (ANUG, LJP & TNM) (1)**

Hon. Dr. Asha Kisooson, M.P.,  
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Lot 855, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field,  
Cummings Lodge,  
Greater Georgetown.

## **Officers (2)**

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, A.A.,  
*Clerk of the National Assembly,*  
*Parliament Office,*  
*Public Buildings,*  
*Brickdam,*  
*Georgetown.*

Ms. Hermina Gilgeours,  
*Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly,*  
*Parliament Office,*  
*Public Buildings,*  
*Brickdam,*  
*Georgetown.*

## **Hansard Division Officers (17)**

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Ms. Marlyn Jeffers-Morrison,  
*Senior Editor*

Ms. Shawnel Cudjoe,  
*Senior Editor*

Ms. Shevona Telford,  
*Senior Editor*

Ms. Carol Bess,  
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Ms. Indranie Persaud,  
*Editor*

Ms. Lushonn Bess,  
*Editor*

Ms. Roseina Singh,  
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Ms. Somna Karen-Muridall,  
*Reporter*

Ms. Eyoka Gibson,  
*Reporter*

Mr. Daniel Allen,  
*Reporter*

Ms. Rajkumarie Ramdeen,  
*Reporter*

Ms. Jasmine Grant,  
*Reporter*

Ms. Calissa Benjamin,  
*Reporter*

Mr. Parmanand Singh,  
*Pre –Press Technician*

Mr. Saeed Umrao,  
*Audio Technician*

Mr. Daison Horsham,  
*Audio Technician*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

### Comprehensive Report of International Engagements

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have circulated two documents today. One is a very comprehensive report of the international engagements of the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament and, accompanying that, the cost of those engagements. When I became Speaker and I looked at the international parliamentary associations that we belong to, I thought that we should not only be attending these meetings, but we should be active in representing our country and being represented in the decision-making bodies of these organisations. In this regard, Guyana holds the presidency of the geopolitical group, Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) – 26 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Your Speaker sits on the Planning Committee of the Speakers' Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). He also co-chairs with a member of the European Parliament, the IPU engagement with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In the Caribbean, we held the chairmanship of our Caribbean Atlantic region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). We also sit on the executive of ParlAmericas – the parliamentary grouping of the Organization of American States. Last year, we took over the Regional Secretariat of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Caribbean branch, and our Clerk is the Secretary of that grouping. We have had countless engagements with other Speakers from around the world. From that report – I think it is over 110 pages – you can see what we have done in the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I wish to thank all Members of Parliament who fully participated and the staff – especially Ms. Carletta Charles, for coordinating our international engagements.

### Youth Engagements

You have another document which outlines our youth engagements. In 2001, we started the Speaker's National Youth Debating Competition and then we expanded that two years later to the regional competitions. As of today, we have conducted 158 debates. By the end of the nationals, which start next week, it would be 176 youth debates – the longest-running. My very special thanks to the Ministers, Mr. Ramson and Ms. Manickchand, and the two Ministries, along with the regional officials for coordinating, assisting and fully supporting these efforts.

With respect to the Youth Parliament, we have held every Youth Parliament since this 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament convened. Not only that, but our outstanding youth parliamentarians have participated in youth debates in the Caribbean – Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands – and they have gone as far as New Zealand to represent our Youth Parliament at the Commonwealth Youth Parliamentary Association. Again, for these debates and the youth parliament, there are so many persons to thank – our staff, parents, teachers, mentors, judges – and especially many of you who served as coaches and mentors for the youth parliamentarians. Thank you, very much.

### PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper was laid:

1. Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Wildlife Conservation and Management Commission for the years ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

*[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip]*

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

#### [Written Replies]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are five questions on today's Order Paper. All of these questions are in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson. They are for written replies. Questions one and two are for the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water. The answers to those questions have been circulated. Questions three, four and five are for the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service. The answers to those questions will be deferred to a later date.

#### (1) Purposes for the Utilisation of Lands Along the New Mandela-Eccles and from the Haags Bosch Road to Diamond, East Bank Demerara

**Ms. Ferguson:** It is evident that since the commissioning of the new road linking Mandela to Eccles and by extension from the Jaguar roundabout to Diamond, EBD, there have been increased activities with the construction of buildings along these areas.

Could the Honourable Minister indicate to the National Assembly the purposes for the utilization of lands along the Mandela-Eccles stretch, then, from Haags Bosch Road to

Diamond, EBD, as approved by the Central Housing and Planning Authority Board?

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]:** The approval for construction on any land is determined by its land use suitability.

## **(2) The Single Window Unit at the Central Housing and Planning Authority**

**Ms. Ferguson:**

1. Could the Honourable Minister inform the National Assembly on the successful implementation of the “Single Window Unit” at the Central Housing and Planning Authority, since the passage of the Act by the National Assembly?

2. Could the Honourable Minister inform the National Assembly whether the unit has its full staff strength and, if so, what systems were used in hiring staff?

3. Could the Honourable Minister inform the National Assembly of the challenges/pitfalls in the implementation of the new Policy across Agencies that are to be involved, as per the Single Window Unit Legislation?

**Mr. Croal:**

1. The Single Window Unit has been successfully implemented.

2. The Unit is staffed. Recruitment, when required, is done by advertisement, for example, through the print media and on the Ministry’s / CHPA’s *facebook* page. A panel was established to conduct interviews and is required to sign-off on the interview assessment reports.

3. The major challenge on the implementation of the new policy is that not all the Local Authorities are fully utilising the system. They are still transitioning to this digital platform. CHPA, in collaboration with NDMA, continues to provide training to all partner agencies. In addition, training is provided upon request by partner agencies.

It is important to note that the only changes that were made to the planning permission process by the Single Window Legislation are:

- Single entry point for the submission of applications – submission through the portal instead of to the Local Authorities and/or Government agencies.
- Collection of processing fees by CHPA for remittance to the Local Authorities/Government agencies.

The Single Window puts a responsibility/obligation on the respective agencies to provide their responses in a timely manner to ensure efficiency of the application process. All the internal processes of Local Authorities and Government agencies remain the same.

## **(3) Moneys Released from Hess Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits**

**Ms. Ferguson:** In January 2023, Government of Guyana announced the first payment from HESS Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits. Further information provided in a release published by DPI online dated January 10, 2023, stated that the first payment paid is US\$75M. According to the Department of Public Information, the said sum represents the first payment in an agreement that will be worth a minimum of US\$750 million up to 2030.”

Can Honourable Minister indicate to the National Assembly how much monies have been released from HESS Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits as of October 31, 2024?

## **(4) Payment From Hess Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits – Bank Account**

**Ms. Ferguson:** In January 2023, Government of Guyana announced the first payment from HESS Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits. Further information provided in a release published by DPI online dated January 10, 2023, stated that the first payment paid is US\$75M. According to the Department of Public Information, the said sum represents the first payment in an agreement that will be worth a minimum of US\$750 million up to 2030.”

1. Could the Honourable Minister provide to the National Assembly, name of the account at Bank of Guyana, where the monies are deposited?
2. Could the Honourable Minister provide to the National Assembly name of the overseas account, where the monies are deposited?

3. Could the Honourable Minister inform the National Assembly who are the Signatories to the account at Bank of Guyana?

**(5) Bank Statements and Deposit Receipts**

**Ms. Ferguson:**

In January 2023, Government of Guyana announced the first payment from HESS Corporation for Guyana Carbon Credits. Further information provided in a release published by DPI online dated January 10, 2023, stated that the first payment paid is US\$75M. According to the Department of Public Information, the said sum represents the first payment in an agreement that will be worth a minimum of US\$750 million up to 2030.”

1. Could the Honourable Minister provide to the National Assembly Bank Statements on the Overseas and Bank of Guyana Accounts?

2. Could the Honourable Minister indicate whether arrangements are in place for receipts deposited in the accounts, like what obtains for the Natural Resource Fund, regarding the receipts of these funds?

*Questions three to five were deferred.*

**MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY AND MOVED BY A MINISTER**

**Suspension of Standing Order No. 112**

WHEREAS, in accordance with Standing Order No. 112, any one or more of these Standing Orders may be suspended;

AND WHEREAS, the Government is desirous of its motion on support for the Government and people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana reaffirming the sovereignty of Guyana over its internationally recognised territory to stand as the first item of Public Business at the Sitting of the National Assembly on Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2025;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 112 be suspended to allow the motion to stand as the first item of Public Business.

[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip]

*Motion put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order suspended.*

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS**

**MOTION**

**Support for the Government and People of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana Reaffirming the Sovereignty of Guyana over its Internationally Recognised Territory**

WHEREAS the Co-operative Republic of Guyana is a sovereign State with exclusive rights and jurisdiction over its territory, including the region of Essequibo, as recognized under international law;

AND WHEREAS the limit of Guyana’s land boundary with Venezuela was determined by an Arbitral Award of 1899, which, according to the 1897 Treaty of Washington signed between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the United States of Venezuela, constitutes a full and final settlement of the land boundary between British Guiana (now Guyana) and Venezuela;

AND WHEREAS the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela arbitrarily and unilaterally sought, from 1962, to challenge and impugn the 1899 Arbitral Award, thus, giving rise to a controversy over the validity of the Award;

AND WHEREAS the Geneva Agreement of 1966 was concluded among the Parties to seek a peaceful and legal solution to Venezuela’s contention, in conformity with which and by the powers conferred upon him by Article IV(2) of the said Agreement, the United Nations Secretary-General chose the International Court of Justice as the means which is now to be used to arrive at a complete and binding solution after twenty seven (27) years of a Good Offices Process and one (1) year of enhanced mediation;

AND WHEREAS for that entire period the Government of Venezuela was never able to prove its claim of nullity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, but

instead embarked on a pattern of intimidation, threat, economic aggression and neo-colonialism against Guyana, using its superior military, economic and political power to try to weaken and force Guyana to agree to the nullification of the 1899 Arbitral Award and the relinquishing of its land and maritime territory;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with the decision of the United Nations Secretary General, the matter is currently before the Court;

AND WHEREAS the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela raised two preliminary objections to the Court’s adjudication of the matter; first challenging the existence of the Court’s jurisdiction then secondly, challenging the exercise of that jurisdiction, both matters of which were dispensed with by the Court which in its judgement of December 18, 2020 affirmed its jurisdiction based on the provisions of the Geneva Agreement and in its judgement of April 6, 2023 rejected the preliminary objection of Venezuela;

AND WHEREAS in defiance of international law and the decisions of the Court the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in December 2023 first sought to hold a referendum with the purported intention to oust the jurisdiction of the Court in resolving the matter, annex Guyana’s territory in the Essequibo region and grant Venezuelan citizenship and identification cards to Guyanese citizens in that region;

AND WHEREAS the Government and people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana deeming this purported referendum to be contemptuous of the legal process prevailing before the International Court of Justice and repugnant to the accepted principles, tenets, norms and practices of international law, sought and was granted a protective order from the Court, wherein the Court by its Order of December 1, 2023 ordered Venezuela to refrain from any action that would modify the status quo in the disputed territory, where Guyana currently administers and exercises control, and also ordered both parties to refrain from any action that might aggravate or extend the dispute;

AND WHEREAS in further defiance of the Court and the rule of international law, the Government of

the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela conducted the referendum, subsequently enacted domestic legislation purportedly to give effect to the results of the referendum, by establishing the state of ‘Guayana Esequiba’ and, in January 2025 announced its intention to hold elections for a governor and legislative council for this said state which is Guyana’s Essequibo Region;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana on March 6, 2025, made a further request to the Court for the indication of provisional measures against Venezuela;

AND WHEREAS the Court in considering that Guyana’s request of 6 March 2025 is a request for the modification of the Court’s Order of 1 December 2023, indicated that since the delivery of its Order of 1 December 2023, the serious risk of Venezuela acquiring and exercising control and administration over the territory in dispute has significantly increased. In particular, the adoption by Venezuela of legislative measures and decrees concerning the territory in dispute, and the announcement of the preparation for and conduct of elections in that territory, which Guyana currently administers and over which it exercises control, “represent grave developments which constitute a change in the situation”. On these bases, the Court modified its Order of 1 December 2023, as Guyana requested, by further specifying its scope;

AND WHEREAS the Court by its binding Order dated May 1, 2025, reaffirmed Guyana’s sovereign rights and directed Venezuela not to take any action that would alter the status quo, including the holding of electoral or other administrative activities in Guyana’s Essequibo region;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Venezuela has, in flagrant defiance of the Court’s Order, announced and undertaken steps toward holding elections and extending state authority over parts of Guyana’s territory, constituting an act of aggression and a breach of international law;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly:

1. Recalling its Motion passed on November 6, 2023, in reaffirming the recognition of the 1899



Arbitral Award and the 1966 Geneva Agreement;

2. Unequivocally reaffirms the sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and indissolubility of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana;
3. Strongly condemns the actions of the Government of Venezuela in defiance of the May 1, 2025 Order of the ICJ and views such actions as a violation of international law and a threat to regional peace and stability;
4. Expresses its full support for the Government of Guyana in its efforts to protect and defend Guyana's territorial integrity through peaceful and lawful means, including continued recourse to the International Court of Justice;
5. Calls upon the international community to support Guyana in upholding the rule of law and the binding decisions of the International Court of Justice; and
6. Directs that copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Secretaries-General of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Organisation of American States, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community as well as other relevant international bodies.

*[Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation]*

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation [Mr. Todd]:** I rise today, with the solemn duty and profound honour to move a motion reaffirming the sovereignty of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana over its internationally recognised territory. This matter is beyond geography or cartography. It is a matter of principle, of law, of history and of our national identity as Guyanese. The borders we inherited are not arbitrary lines. They are the product of international agreements, arbitral awards and the rule of law that are respected by the international community and upheld by the values of peace and justice that we subscribe to as a nation, as contained in the Charter of the United Nations (UN).

The Guyana-Venezuela controversy remains the paramount threat to not only the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guyana, but the continued political independence of this great nation, its economic aspirations, the social development of our people, and their human right to live in a country that is secure; free from fear; and without the constant threat of violence, coercion or oppression from external forces. Guyanese faced this threat from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela even before our nation attained independence on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1966. Then, from the very moment of our emergence as a sovereign nation, Venezuela relentlessly sought to assert its baseless and expansionist claim to our Essequibo region – more than two-thirds of our national territory – in furtherance of our rejection of the 1899 Arbitral Award, a legally binding international decision that definitively settled the border between the then British Guiana and the then United States of Venezuela.

The latter recognised and accepted as valid and binding for over 60 years from the time of its issuance until 1962. Since the Government took Office in 2020, Venezuela's threats, intimidation tactics and illegal actions have grown more frequent, more desperate and more intense, based on an effort to force Guyana to abandon the process before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and return to the negotiation table with Venezuela.

*10.39 a.m.*

On 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, following the issuance of the International Court of Justice's ruling, that it had jurisdiction to hear Guyana's case on the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award, Venezuela's National Assembly adopted a resolution rejecting the jurisdiction of the Court. This action defied the Geneva Agreement and signalled Venezuela's refusal to abide by international law.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, President Nicolas Maduro issued Decree No. 4415, unilaterally claiming Venezuela's sovereignty over Guyana's maritime space, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. This directly violated the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the general international law of the sea, and breached the Geneva Agreement's requirement for there to be no enlargement of existing claims. On 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2021, the Venezuelan Navy intercepted and detained two Guyana-registered fishing vessels, Lady Nayera and Sea Wolf, along with their crews, within Guyana's Exclusive Economic Zone near Waini Point. This

constituted a clear violation of international law and demonstrated Venezuela's use of illegal coercive tactics.

Mr. Speaker, in March, 2021, Venezuela's armed forces announced the creation of an integrated defence zone near Guyana's maritime space and deployed military assets to the area. This violated Article 2.4 of the United Nations Charter, relating to the threat of the use of force. Throughout 2021 into 2022, Venezuela escalated military activities along the border with Guyana, including low-altitude flyovers of troop mobilisations near the Cuyuni River, breaching Guyana's airspace and adopting an aggressive posture by mobilising military assets. In late 2022, Venezuela intensified the domestic propaganda campaigns promoting sovereignty over Guyana's Essequibo region. This laid the foundation for the referendum held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023, with the aim to garner public support for the creation of a State of Guyana Essequibo, and incorporation of that state into the map of Venezuela, dismissing the jurisdiction of the ICJ as a means of settlement to the controversy.

The Venezuelan National Assembly passed a resolution on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2023, calling for a referendum regarding the enforcement of Venezuela's so-called claim to Guyana's Essequibo region. On 24<sup>th</sup> September, the same year, 2023, three fighter jets from Venezuela's Bolivarian National Armed Forces conducted flight manoeuvres over the Guyanese community of Eteringbang on the Cuyuni River. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2023, Venezuela published five questions to be answered by the people of Venezuela in the referendum scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023. The most egregious questions that were put to the Venezuelan people sought to determine whether they agree with the creation of the State of Guyana Essequibo, the incorporation of that state into the map of Venezuela, and Venezuela's historical position of not recognising the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as a means of settlement of the controversy.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2023, Venezuela reiterated its claim to our Essequibo region, challenging the ICJ's jurisdiction. These statements were condemned internationally, which sought to discredit the Court and undermine international legal norms. On 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023, the ICJ issued binding provisional measures ordering Venezuela to refrain from disturbing the *status quo* in which Guyana administers and controls the Essequibo region, our Essequibo region, and to refrain from escalating the territorial controversy. Within 48 hours, Venezuela violated that order. On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023, Venezuela held a consultative referendum supporting the annexation of our Essequibo and proposing the creation of a so-called new state, Guyana-Essequibo. On 6<sup>th</sup> December,

2023, Venezuela initiated legislative and administrative actions to enforce the referendum's results and create a so-called Guyana-Essequibo, defying the order of the International Court of Justice.

On 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2023, Venezuela completed and inaugurated a bridge constructed by the armed forces of Venezuela linking the Venezuelan mainland to Guyana's half of the Ankoko Island, which was unlawfully annexed by Venezuela. Guyana formally protested the occupation and the infrastructure built on the island. This infrastructure subsequently collapsed. On 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2023, Venezuela continued advancing the referendum's results, ignoring international condemnation. In late 2023 into early 2024, Venezuela engaged in sustained aggression, including military deployments near the Guyana border and anti-Guyana propaganda, and first hinted at the potential inclusion of our Essequibo in Venezuelan elections.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2024, Guyana protested Venezuela's interference in the Amaila Falls Hydro Project through a note reaffirming the project's execution in Guyana's sovereign territory. On 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2024, two Venezuelan aircraft flew over Guyanese territory in Imbotero, violating Guyana's airspace. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2024, Venezuela passed an organic law for the defence of the so-called Guyana-Essequibo, attempting to formalise its claim to our Essequibo in violation of the ICJ's provisional measures and the Joint Declaration of Argyle. On 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2024, Guyana protested, *via* a note verbale, Venezuela's military activity and preparatory work to reconstruct a bridge connecting Ankoko Island to its mainland, further militarising the island where the boundary between the two countries passes. The bridge was later completed in December, 2024.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2025, President Maduro announced plans to hold elections for our Essequibo region, including for a governor and legislative council of the so-called Guyana-Essequibo state. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2025, a Venezuelan warship entered Guyana's Exclusive Economic Zone and approached the FSOs operating in Guyana's sovereign territory, demanding information. On 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2025, Venezuela announced the government's elected governor candidate for the fictitious Guyana-Essequibo state for the so-called elections. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2025, Venezuela rejected the 1<sup>st</sup> May order of the International Court of Justice, directing Venezuela to refrain from holding elections for Guyana's Essequibo region. Venezuela called the order a statement and declared its refusal to comply with any decisions from the Court on the Essequibo matter.

In each and every situation that I mentioned here, where Venezuela violated our territorial integrity, we took immediate, decisive, and strategic action. We first lodged a protest with Venezuela. Secondly, we reaffirmed to the International Court of Justice the belligerent actions of Venezuela in a matter that is currently before it. The Court now possesses a chronicle of all of the actions of Venezuela that represent an affront to the said Court's jurisdiction and a breach of international law, which it can use in arriving at a final decision in this case. Thirdly, we informed the United Nations Secretary-General. The Secretary-General has a clear picture of the increasing belligerence of Venezuela in the furtherance of its illegal claim to Guyana's territory. Fourthly, the entire diplomatic mechanism within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is engaged on a two-pronged basis. The Ministry engages its international partners on the issue, including key international organisations like the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Commonwealth of Nations (Commonwealth), the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), the European Union and other states, on a bilateral basis.

Further, all of Guyana's missions abroad, including honorary consuls, received instructions and the technical support that they need to engage their host countries, and countries that they are accredited to, on this issue. Guyana currently has diplomatic representation across the world. It therefore means that we are engaging several parts of the globe on this issue. We will continue to ramp up our diplomatic representation abroad. The Ministry also, in the spirit of transparency, makes public statements on particular issues regarding the controversy that it is at the time engaging. We have significantly intensified our legal and diplomatic efforts to preserve our sovereignty and territorial integrity in response to Venezuela's escalating claims over our Essequibo region.

*10.54 a.m.*

Mr. Speaker, on the legal front, you are aware that in March, 2018, Guyana filed an application with the International Court of Justice instituting proceedings against Venezuela, in which it asked the Court to determine that the 1899 Arbitral Award is valid and binding to both states, and that the lawful international boundary is the one established by this said Award. The Court determined that it would first decide on the question of jurisdiction. Following written presentations by both states and oral hearings on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, the Court issued a decision on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, that it had jurisdiction to hear the case on the merits of

Guyana's application concerning the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award and the related question for the definitive settlement of the land boundary between the two countries. Venezuela condemned that decision, without justification, as biased and irregular. However, that decision is binding on both parties under international law.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2022, in accordance with the Court's scheduling order, Guyana filed its Memorial on the merits of its case against Venezuela. In response, Venezuela filed Preliminary Objections to the admissibility of Guyana's claims on the 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, and urged the Court to exercise its discretion to refuse to rule on those claims. In accordance with the rules of the Court, the proceedings on the merits were suspended until the determination by the Court on the matter of Venezuela's Preliminary Objections. Guyana submitted its written response to the Preliminary Objections on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2022. The Court heard oral hearings from both Guyana and Venezuela, and Venezuela's objections over the period of 17<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2022. On 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, it gave its judgment on Venezuela's objections, which is final, without appeal, and binding on the parties. The Court rejected Venezuela's objections and decided again that it will adjudicate upon the merits of the claims of Guyana. We, of course, welcomed the Court's decision. Venezuela, for its part, indicated its dissatisfaction.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2024, Guyana submitted to the Court its final written brief on the merits of the case. Venezuela's final written submission is due to be filed on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2025. Thereafter, the Court will schedule oral hearings on the merits of the case to be followed by the Court's deliberations and issuance of its final judgment, which will be binding on the parties under international law.

Mr. Speaker, you are also aware that on two occasions Guyana was forced to request, from the International Court of Justice, protection against Venezuela, and was successful in each of its applications. In the first instance, the National Assembly of Venezuela passed a resolution on 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2023, calling for a referendum regarding the enforcement of Venezuela's claim to Guyana's Essequibo region. We had condemned the passing of that Resolution as illegal since it violates the 1966 Geneva Agreement and is inconsistent with the Secretary General of the United Nations' decision to submit the question of the validity of the international boundary to the International Court of Justice for adjudication. Venezuela's decision to conduct the Referendum also drew condemnation from the Organization of American States (OAS), the Commonwealth and the CARICOM community.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2023, Venezuela published five questions to be answered by its people in the Referendum scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023. The most outrageous questions that were put to Venezuelans, sought to determine whether they agree with the so-call creation of the state, *Guayana Esequiba*; the incorporation of that state into the map of Venezuela; and Venezuela's historical position of not recognising the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as a means of settlement of the controversy.

This honourable House passed a motion on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2023 in response to that threat. We approached the International Court of Justice for provisional measures specifically to request that Venezuela be ordered not to take any actions that will be called for by the Referendum, including, especially, the creation of a new state of Venezuela consisting Guyana's Essequibo region, incorporating it into Venezuela's territory, or granting Venezuelan citizenship or identity cards to the population because these actions would amount to an unlawful annexation of Guyana's territory in violation of the most fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The oral arguments of Guyana and Venezuela were presented to the International Court of Justice on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2023, respectively. On 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023, the International Court of Justice unanimously issued its order, which states *inter alia*:

“(1) ...Pending a final decision in the case, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela shall refrain from taking any action which would modify the situation that currently prevails in the territory in dispute, whereby the Co-operative Republic of Guyana administers and exercises control over that area;

(2) Both Parties shall refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the Court or make it more difficult to resolve.”

On the second occasion, it came to the attention of the Government that on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2025, President Maduro announced that Venezuela will hold elections for a governor and legislative council of the so-called, *Guayana Esequiba* state. These are to be elected by the people of that said state, which is the name that Venezuela has given to Guyana's Essequibo region. Despite Guyana's protest, the elections has been scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2025. In response to Venezuela's announced plans and actions, on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, Guyana filed a new request for provisional measures with the International Court of Justice, seeking an order

prohibiting Venezuela from carrying out elections for our sovereign territory. We pointed out that Venezuela's plan to hold elections in the territory would flagrantly violate the Court's order of 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023. On 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2025, the International Court of Justice issued its order. In this order, the Court:

“(1) Unanimously,

*Reaffirms* the provisional measures indicated in its Order of 1 December 2023, which should be immediately and effectively implemented;

(2) By twelve votes to three,

*Indicates* the following provisional measure:

Pending a final decision in the case, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela shall refrain from conducting elections, or preparing to conduct elections, in the territory in dispute, which the Co-operative Republic of Guyana currently administers and over which it exercises control.”

I will take a moment here to address two critical points of the Court's decision on 1<sup>st</sup> May. The first is that the three votes of Judges Xue, Bhandari, and Nolte, against the provisional measure, are not votes against Guyana. In their dissenting opinion, the Judges pointed out that they voted against the provisional measure only for a procedural reason. They indicated that they agree in substance that Venezuela must refrain from conducting elections or preparing to conduct elections for our territory. The procedural reason was that the Judges felt that the Order of 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023, already prohibits the actions that are now planned by Venezuela, and that accordingly, there is no need for an additional order. Twelve Judges agreed that the existing order prohibited Venezuela's planned actions, but voted for an additional order which brought even more relevance and importance to the matter before the Court.

The second issue with respect to the order that I wish to address is an important segue into the next topic that I wish to discuss, which is the role of diplomacy and the role of the Government in preserving Guyana's territorial integrity. Paragraph 39 of its Order states:

“The Court observes that the acts taken or planned to be taken by Venezuela after the Court's Order of 1 December 2023 have given rise to expressions of concern by the Security Council in a statement dated

15 April 2024 ‘about the possible escalation of tensions between Venezuela and Guyana’”.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2024, Venezuela promulgated the organic law in defence of the so-called, *Guayana Esequiba*, purporting to formally incorporate our Essequibo region into Venezuela, breaching the Order of 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023. On 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2024, the United Nations Security Council facilitated Guyana’s request for a private meeting of the Council to address the promulgation of the law by Venezuela, purporting to annexe more than two-thirds of Guyana’s sovereign territory and make it part of Venezuela.

11.09 a.m.

Following the meeting, the Security Council issued a statement on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2024, expressing their concern about the possible escalation of tensions between Venezuela and Guyana. They urged the parties to exercise maximum restraint, reminding them of the obligations to comply with the Order issued by the International Court of Justice on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023. The Security Council also reaffirmed the importance of upholding the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, and the prohibition on the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of another state, as enshrined in Article 2.4 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, as far as I can recollect, that statement by the Security Council is the first and only statement that the Security Council has ever made with respect to the Guyana/Venezuela controversy, which, through the strength of Guyana’s diplomacy, has now become part of the Council’s agenda, under the agenda item, Threats to International Peace and Security. The Court observed that it was the actions of Venezuela that concerned the Security Council. We continue to address this matter at the diplomatic level. Guyana has used every United Nations General Assembly since 2020 to reaffirm our position on the controversy. We continue to engage the CARICOM, the OAS, the Commonwealth, our bilateral partners, all of which have issued strong statements supporting Guyana’s sovereignty and the International Court of Justice process. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation continues to improve its public relations strategy to educate the public and counter Venezuela’s misinformation. We have engaged in direct outreach through our diplomats abroad to bolster our support and understanding of the legal process.

Venezuela has again rejected the ICJ’s Order, asserting that the Court lacks jurisdiction over the matter and that it intends to carry out its planned elections. While our intelligence is that there is currently no physical activity taking place in any of our communities close to the border, or suggest that there is any preparation for elections to be conducted in our Essequibo, it is important for Venezuela to understand that Guyana will not be bullied, threatened, or intimidated, to surrender any portion of our patrimony. We remain committed to international law and the peaceful resolution of this matter through the International Court of Justice process. We call upon Venezuela to comply with the Court’s legally binding orders and to refrain from actions that would destabilise this region and violate Guyana’s territorial integrity. Today’s motion is not merely symbolic. It is a reaffirmation of the will of the Guyanese people. It is a message to the international partners that Guyana remains steadfast in its commitment to peace, but unwavering in our defence of sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, let me take a moment to recognise the leadership of His Excellency the President. Let me also thank our officers at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation here in Guyana, who have been working diligently in developing and promoting Guyana’s diplomacy as directed by His Excellency the President. Let me also thank all of our diplomatic staff at the missions across the jurisdictions. Last but not least, I would like to also thank our legal team abroad, the legal team here in Georgetown, and the Attorney General (AG), who has been very integral in appearances at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Let history record that in this moment, we stood firm, we stood united, and we stood resolute. Let it be recorded that when our sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country was challenged, our unity was unbreakable. Let it also be recorded that when it mattered most, we raised our voices in dignity and determination for our Dear Land of Guyana. I put this motion to this National Assembly for its adoption by this National Assembly. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

**Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Norton]:** Mr. Speaker, when I was a child at school and the class was not paying attention, the teacher had the tendency to tell the class, stand up, hands up, hands down, to bring them back to life. I will not use that approach today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying, at the outset, we reject a statement regularly made by the Vice-President that, at some stage, we, as a government, were offering Venezuela a concession. We never did, and we never will. If that

contention is made, then the record should be brought here. If you scrutinise the records, you will recognise from the first engagement of the Prime Minister, Mr. Forbes Burnham, we rejected that approach, and consistently over the years for every President under the People's National Congress (PNC) and then the Coalition. If anything to the contrary is suggested, it should be laid in this National Assembly. In the last debate in this House, I stated that this threat toward developmental purposes demand that we:

“...need to harness our collective energies to oppose Venezuela.”

This Government did not heed my advice. It comes to this House with a motion that has no input from the Opposition. We obviously have ideas – probably more than the Government – but it chose to exclude us, to its own peril. On this issue, unilateralism will not succeed. Venezuela is an adversary that we must confront together, and it is unfortunate that this Government refuses to do so. Let me put on the record immediately that we believe the Arbitral Award of 1899 settled our border issue; we believe that the so-called elections in the Essequibo should be condemned. One of the marked failures of this Resolution is that it failed to condemn. Had you consulted us, we would have told you that it would be remiss of you if you do not condemn Venezuela's attempt to convene elections in our territory. At no stage, and at no point in this motion, you see that condemnation. We support our soldiers and condemn Venezuela's aggression against them, even as we bemoan the fact that we urge this Government to recapitalise the Guyana Defence Force, and it has failed to do so. Let us note that the distinguished Guyanese Diplomat and Author, Mr. Cedric Joseph noted that:

“...Brazil is the only one of the neighbouring states against whom Venezuela has not advanced a territorial claim.”

One would have expected that the Government would have outlined a clear foreign policy approach to ensure we continuously mobilise the support of those countries, noting what Venezuela portends. Note as well, Venezuela has a problem with Caribbean countries with which it has maritime boundaries. We need to, in a structured way, engage these countries and promote our cause of protecting our sovereignty and territorial integrity. When I listened to the Minister, I thought Guyana was being run by the International Court of Justice. Everything that he said was about what the International Court of Justice will do, but he said nothing about what the Government will do. It is the

biggest limitation of this motion. This motion is very limited to the extent that it fails to outline the actions that Guyana will take. Go through the resolve clauses and *dey gunn* share this here, share this there, but nothing of what the Guyana Government will do. Listening to the Minister, I felt the Guyana Government has a vacancy for a foreign minister. In expressing our support for the last motion, I said the following:

“We have a *caveat*. It is: we urge the Government to put the question of the education...on this matter on a permanent basis. We believe that there has to be continuous, permanent education as it relates to this matter.”

The Government did not heed our call, so there is no proper public education programme to educate the people of Guyana and the world.

11.24 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, let us recall that we call for the establishment of a commission on the territorial controversy, and that Commission must involve a wide cross-section of stakeholders. Let me remind this august body that the Government rejected the idea. They averted the view that the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs could serve the same purpose. I hope you remember that. In response to the Government's position, we stated at the time that the Committee was not meeting. The Government promised that it would meet to discuss foreign policy issues, inclusive of the Guyana-Venezuela territorial controversy. It met once and never again. In our second meeting with His Excellency the President, the issues of the non-functioning of the Committee and the question of rotating the chairmanship were discussed in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation committed to convening a meeting and handing over the chairmanship to the Opposition. Until now, this has not happened.

The Government failed to honour its obligation and manifested the usual incompetence and arrogance. How do you expect to obtain our cooperation when you fail to honour your word? How do you expect to obtain cooperation when something as simple as convening a meeting to hand over the chairmanship you cannot do? As a Government, you manifest no interest in working with the Opposition, and now we are compelled to reciprocate. You cannot choose not to work with us, but selectively decide when you want to work with us. I hope you enjoy the reciprocation. Education

is critical. We must tell all Guyanese and the world that, since the 1960s, in the case of Honduras versus Nicaragua, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled,

“...a state was precluded from challenging previously established boundaries, even though defined irregularly and defective legally, if that State had recognised or acquiesced in...”

These...

“...lines or failed to protest against them particularly when the contiguous state... relied...”

In...

“...good faith upon such acquiescence and had considered the matter finally settled.”

Venezuela did just that. For this fact and numerous reasons, we are confident in the victory of good over evil and right over wrong and support our foreign policy approach and our case before the ICJ, which we expect to succeed. We have no doubt that the court will rule in our favour. It is in this context that this motion – and I want to pull it up – should have been strengthened in the third Whereas Clause. The motion should have noted as well that Venezuela accepted the Arbitral Award for 62 years and even produced a stamp with our present border, and celebrated the fact that Guyana lost territory to them. Had we included this in the third Whereas Clause, we would have strengthened this motion. As it stands, the inclusion of this fact would have strengthened the motion and served as very useful information to our people and the world.

At minimum, the motion needed to state that the Government would take action to ensure patriotism is instilled in Guyanese. There is no action in this motion, none whatsoever. The motion should have stated specifically that the resolution must be circulated to all African states and the African Union and that special envoys will be sent out to inform and mobilise support for the protection of our sovereignty and territorial integrity. We cannot ignore the significance of the support of 54 African countries. I take it as an oversight and that the Government will rectify it. In this House, we called for the oil resources to be used as part of our diplomatic offensive against Venezuela and to mobilise countries. The Government failed to do it. Probably the major flaw is that this motion does not state what concrete actions the Government will take moving forward. It is a banal motion that would merely obligate the Government to forward the resolution to a few selected

states and institutions. We can and must do better. How could we pass a motion as critical as this, and all we are agreeing to in the Resolve Clause is to send the motion here and there? It makes no sense.

Let us recall that in our last engagement on this issue in the National Assembly, we recommended that special attention be given to border communities since they are at the forefront of our defence. To date, nothing has happened. I am saying to you here, Mr. Speaker, that the Government has failed in terms of every promise it would have made. In preparation for the previous motion on the Guyana-Venezuela territorial controversy, the Government consulted with us, and we arrived at a joint motion which enjoyed the support of both parties. Today, you chose a different path. This time around, there was no consultation, *lipsy*. You sent the motion demanding that our Chief Whip sign it. We rejected such callousness as out of hand. We are therefore not obligated to support this motion since it is you, the Government, that has breached our trust and operated arbitrarily.

We also recommended that, because of the nature of the threat, we should have continuous education. You failed here again. We suggested that we send special envoys to Latin America and the Caribbean nations to inform them and to solicit their support for a cause. You failed again. You believe in parachute diplomacy; touch down at a conference and get support. You need to do more than that. We recommended that the Government take out, in Spanish, full-page advertisements in key Latin American newspapers. It was not done. You failed the people of Guyana again. You must recall that Venezuela is a Spanish-speaking country, and we need to find ways and means of communicating with Spanish Latin America. We pointed out that it was the era of social media, and we should use social media to promote our cause. You failed to develop such a programme. I want to tell you, Mr. Kwame McCoy, I heard that the President wanted to do it, but you were the tool that caused it not to happen. You are well prepared to use social media to attack our opponents, but you are unwilling to use it to promote and protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As a Government, you proved to be unpatriotic and not worthy of our support. We recommended a national commission on the Guyana-Venezuela territorial controversy. You rejected the proposal, contending that the said work could be done by the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and promised to convene and have regular meetings of that Committee. Do you want to know when we did that? Go back to the last motion that we were drafting,

and your Minister could tell you that we placed it in there, and he engaged us to say, 'Okay, let us not fight over it. Let us agree, and the Parliamentary Committee will function'. So, do not raise that. You had one meeting, no more. You failed again.

In a recent meeting with His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation undertook to turn over the chairmanship of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs to the Opposition as parliamentary rules dictate. He never did – a failed promise. It was also agreed that the Opposition will be kept abreast with developments *vis-à-vis* the territorial controversy. You never did. It took another shooting incident at the border for you to engage the Opposition. You are inactive until Venezuela gets active. That is unacceptable. This Government cannot be serious. I said before, we recommended the recapitalisation of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). Little or nothing was done. My understanding is that the Army's aircraft flies more Government officials than Army personnel. There are also reports that the soldiers at our borders are not well taken care of. This must end.

This Government likes to talk about patriotism. The Government's calls for patriotism ring hollow. It is difficult to get patriotism in a police state. I want to repeat that for you. It is difficult to get patriotism in a police state. The renowned political scientist and author, Andrew Heywood, notes that, "In a police state, the police force operates outside a legal framework and is accountable to neither the courts nor the general public". He further says, "Police states have totalitarian features, in that the excessive and unregulated power that is vested in the police is designed to curtail civil liberties and create a climate of fear and intimidation in which all aspects of social existence is brought under political control". He continued, however, "...a police state is not run by the police force in the same way a military regime is controlled by the armed forces. Rather, the police force acts as a private army that is controlled by and acts in the interest of the ruling elite". That is what we have here in Guyana. This definition of a police state aptly describes Guyana today and for this reason...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, you have the floor.

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]:** Mr. Speaker [*interruption*].

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, go ahead.

**Mr. Benn:** Mr. Speaker, I want to condemn in the strongest sense the suggestion that we have a police state.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you may get a chance to do your condemnation when you respond. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please proceed.

**Mr. Norton:** Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that the truth hurts. I could understand, Mr. Robeson Benn. This definition of a police state aptly describes Guyana today, and for this reason, patriotism is in crisis, and we cannot support this authoritarian and totalitarian regime.

11.39 a.m.

We support the people of Guyana in our quest to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, we will do the people of Guyana a disservice if we support the lawlessness that now characterises Guyana. When you want to doubt it is a police state, turn and look at the case of Adrianna Younge, in which the police did not operate independently and investigate. More than a week had passed, and they had not taken one statement. It is a clear case of protecting the elite. Whether you like it or not, the cover-up is now uncovered. All of us know that justice eludes little Adrianna Younge and the other victims like her because we live in a police state.

As members of the Government and His Excellency speak about patriotism, I want to say this to you: patriotism does not come from the sky. It comes from education and involvement in patriotic activities. We are so ridiculous, Venezuela is threatening us on 25<sup>th</sup>, and we are holding a concert. Patriotism comes when people are being treated fairly in their own country. Most Guyanese do not believe that they are treated fairly. It comes from people's trust in government and national institutions. In Guyanese today, there is little or no such trust. We live in a society in which all and sundry know – do not run Mr. Robeson Benn – that the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras work conveniently. If the crime is committed by the elite, their families, their friends and favourites, the cameras do not work. They only work and come alive to prosecute and persecute the poor and the powerless. This is sad, but it is true. We live in a society in which the Government seeks to instil fear and wants everyone to kowtow to them. Such a system does not produce patriotism. It produces people who just want to get rid of the government. Here is where most Guyanese are today. They want to see the back of the Government.



Patriotism comes when people feel a sense of belonging. It comes when people believe they have a stake in the national cake. Guyanese believe and know they get the crumbs while the ruling elite – family, friends and favourites – can shop in Dubai at the expense of the people. It comes when people feel they are treated equally before the law, when there is the existence of the rule of law. Sadly, there is none in Guyana. The law is for the ruling elite, their family, their friends and their favourites. Patriotism does not come when you misuse the law and incarcerate innocent people under a terrorism law. That produces hostility. [Mr. McCoy: Who put it in place?] Who used it? You. You used it. It was put in place by a government that expected people to live by the letter of the law and not to misuse it. You are misusing a law that was put in place to deal with terrorism. It is you; it is Mr. Robeson Benn; it is your government that is misusing the law. That is all we are saying to you.

Patriotism does not come if you charge looters with terrorism. You need to charge them under the appropriate law and end the abuse of the Anti-Terrorism law. While we do not support looting and violence, we must condemn the Government for the misuse of the law and the abuse of power. The law in itself is not wrong; it is not properly implemented. Patriotism comes when people know their country and not when they cannot afford to travel their country. Patriotism does not come when it is cheaper to go to the Caribbean than go to Lethem. Patriotism emerges if it is instilled from childhood. Patriotism cannot come if you remove the singing of patriotic songs from the life of the society, especially the schools, you are destroying the basic practices that lead to patriotism.

Patriotism does not come under totalitarianism and dictatorship, like we have in Guyana. It does not emerge when the government wants to control all aspects of people's lives as is the current case. It comes when there is a sense of belonging. Guyanese do not feel they belong in this society. It comes when there is the rule of law and there is none. It does not come with a Speaker of the National Assembly that operates in a partisan way, and refuses ...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, this is a good time for you to seek an extension to conclude. You may want to watch how you thread on the Speaker.

**Mr. Norton:** I did say the Speaker... I never said, 'the Speaker'. I said, 'a Speaker'. I am very careful in the choice of language.

**Opposition Chief Whip [Mr. Jones]:** Thank you very much, Cde. Speaker. I do move that the Hon. Member be given minutes to continue his presentation.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Norton:** It does not come with a Speaker of the National Assembly that operates...

**Mr. Speaker:** I urge that you move off from that line.

**Mr. Norton:** Mr. Speaker, a National Assembly needs at least, at minimum, a modicum of impartiality. Patriotism does not come when your Parliament is a farce. I hope I have offended no one by speaking the truth. [Bishop Edghill: That is what you are saying to Venezuela?] I am not speaking to Venezuela. I have already spoken to Venezuela. I have already said to Venezuela that we support the Arbitral Award. I have already said to Venezuela that we condemn their actions. I am saying to you in this House now that you are not inclusive and you do not deserve the support.

I want to say this, as an Opposition, we have consistently supported the Government on the Guyana/Venezuela Territorial Controversy. We continue to be supportive of the cause. We have said that the Arbitral Award is final. [An Hon. Member (Government): Oh. Are you changing your mouth now?] We have said that before. [Interruption.] When you are finished *airing off yourselves*, let me say this to you. We continue to support the case. We continue to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity, but we cannot support a government that continues to disrespect the people of Guyana. [Mr. McCoy: Yes, Ms. Cathy Hughes, you give him notes to talk about us with your thieving self.] Mr. Speaker, you heard that, right? Mr. Speaker, did you hear that piece on parliamentary language?

The Government is manifesting why they cannot get our support. We say without fear of contradiction, we support Guyana in its quest to ensure the Arbitral Award is respected. We condemn Venezuela for what they are doing, but we also must condemn the Guyana Government for what they are doing to us. The Hon. Minister in speaking, in chastising Venezuela, said the people of Guyana have a right to live free from fear. We agree, but you should practice it. Do not come with empty words, telling us nonsense. Your motion makes passing reference to 25<sup>th</sup> May, where an election, a farcical election, is supposed to be held. I expected in the presentation that the Minister would have been outlining what we will be doing to keep Venezuela at

bay. You keep telling us what the International Court of Justice will do. We agree.

[**Mr. Ramson:** (Inaudible) ... enemy.] Let me address you, Mr. Ramson. The greatest enemy this country has is the Government of Guyana.

[**Mr. Ramson:** It does not change when you broadcast your strategy to your enemy.] It does not change when you broadcast your tragedy as well. You do not understand young Ramson. A strategy – you can identify the broad elements of an approach. Let me give you an example so that you will become a little more educated. You can say that we will take action to establish a People's Militia. Why? That is simple. That we will have a robust public relations campaign (PR). That we will put resources into border communities so that they are more resilient. You could have said that in this era of information technology, we will invest in technology to ensure that we can help monitor our borders. That is not giving away your strategy.

I want to make another point. It is reported that, in the Rupununi, a security company, without checking, has Venezuelans bearing arms. You signal your strategy. When you do that, you signal your strategy. We have a government that cannot even give us the figures. One time it is 23,000 Venezuelans and the next time it is 100,000. That is not giving away the strategy, that is showing stupidity. Let us be clear. I am saying to you, as a government, you need to instil hope in the people of Guyana. Nothing that has been said today instils hope. You come over as a hopeless bunch, depending on the International Court of Justice. We support the movement to the ICJ, but we are well aware that Venezuela does not honour agreements. Therefore, you should have already been outlining your strategy as to what Guyanese need to do after the pronouncement. You come like a descriptive historian relating dates but cannot tell us anything of substance.

11.54 a.m.

I would recommend to the Government that they withdraw this motion and let us work together on a joint motion. We would not have been at this point if the Government had taken the approach that we took over the years, of engaging the Opposition, and let us agree on a joint statement. I can say this to you...

[**Nandlall:** I will not agree.] I do not want you to agree. If you do not want to agree, why do you want our support? If you do not want us to be involved, why do you want our support?

I close by making a few comments. We wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those countries and

organisations that have expressed support for our cause and are contributing to the protection of our sovereignty and territorial integrity. Mr. Speaker, all Guyanese know, and we are well aware, that Essequibo belongs to us, and we will do everything to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, we cannot overlook the fact that we live in a police state. We cannot overlook the fact that the State has been criminalised. We cannot overlook the incompetence of this Government, its squandering of our resources, their lack of a plan to confront Venezuelan aggression and their unbridled *penchant* for domination and control. We cannot support a motion that is weak and only resolves to circulate documents and fails to do anything that is action-oriented and gives hope that we will treat Venezuela as an adversary that wants our territory and ensure that Venezuela is kept at bay. We cannot support this innocuous motion in its present form. Mr. Speaker, we urge you to come back to the table and let us work on a motion that all Guyanese will be happy with. It is for that reason that this is the furthest we will go in this presentation. Thank you.

*Members of the Opposition withdrew from the Dome at 11.57 a.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]:** Mr. Speaker, we have just had a perfect example of a shameful demonstration of patriotism. A most unpatriotic address, not this House only, but to the people of Guyana, by one who supposedly is remunerated to perform the duties of Leader of the Opposition in this House. A House divided cannot stand, and what we had there was a perfect example of an attempt to divide the people of Guyana. The phrase, 'a house divided cannot stand' is a proverb that means an entity, like a family, organisation or a country with internal conflicts and disagreements, will weaken and fail. We shall not be weakened and fail as a nation. Our people are united on this cause. The only people who seem to have a difference and are unpatriotic are the Leader of the Opposition and, perhaps, those who are following him. They will be left behind as we seek to defend and develop Guyana.

The sovereignty of Guyana over its internationally recognised territory is crucial for maintaining peace and stability, not only in Guyana but in the whole Latin American and Caribbean region. It is important for Guyana's government and citizens alike to support and uphold this sovereignty to ensure national unity and international respect. If the Members of the Opposition just search social media, they will see that, through the length and breadth of

Guyana today, our school children at nursery, primary and secondary levels are demonstrating the patriotism that the Opposition should have been demonstrating. Our children know better than those who are paid to keep the government on its toes. They are paid as elected officials to represent the Opposition. Our children today are sending a strong message to those Members of the Opposition that we know that 83,000 square miles belongs to us in Guyana, residents in Guyana and the diaspora. The only people who seem not to know that and seem not ready to support that are the people who just left this House. Walked out of this House and, perhaps, are downstairs awaiting the bell to take lunch.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the Geneva Convention and Mr. Forbes Sampson Burnham, the then Prime Minister, signing that Convention. What he did not tell this House is that Mr. Burnham did not consult anyone – none of the stakeholders, none of the Guyanese, none of the Opposition leaders at that time. He just went ahead and signed. We have come a far way from those undemocratic practices. This country was returned to democracy in 1992, after 28 years of undemocratic rule by the same Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham Government.

According to a famous philosopher, 'those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it'. As a people, as a government, collectively, we must never forget the past. Therefore, we will not be condemned to repeat those undemocratic practices of the People's National Congress, now redressed as the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) with their partner, the Alliance For Change (AFC) that formed the last Government. A reminder of the undemocratic rule in Guyana. They were democratically elected in 2015, but we had five years of undemocratic rule by the APNU/AFC in Guyana. Five years of executive lawlessness. That is the only reason why they can come to this House and tell us that they are not supporting this motion.

In draft, this motion was submitted through the right course of the right channel to the Chief Whip requesting that they read the draft, that they submit their amendments and that they support a joint motion before this House. In the House today, we had a Leader of the Opposition who came and said he did not see the draft of the motion. The motion was submitted in keeping with the deadline, without the value of any amendment and any support by the Opposition. Yet, posted on social media was a diatribe from the Leader of the Opposition on the notion that the entire country has read and, obviously, is in total disagreement with.

We have a People's Militia. We may have had a name change to the Guyana National Reserve. However, it remains in essence a case of every citizen being allowed to be a soldier; every citizen being allowed to defend Guyana. The Guyana National Reserve is as strong as it has ever been at any time in Guyana. This is the information that the Leader of the Opposition must come to this House with. We have an ongoing public relations (PR) campaign and if you listen to the man in the street, or minibuses or bus driver, the hired car driver, the maid, the school children or the market vendor, today in Guyana, every Guyanese is better informed about the Guyana-Venezuela Controversy than any other time before in Guyana, perhaps, more than the Opposition.

Every year around Independence, we have a set of nationally oriented activities to celebrate our Independence. This year is no exception. We are celebrating our 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Independence. We have Flag Raising, which will be held in Region 6. We have Flag Day, which will be held tomorrow. The Opposition was asked to get on board by no other than yours truly, and they refused. Yet, they come to this House and try to tell us that we are keeping them out, and we are a police state, we are undemocratic. This is the same Opposition that lost the election in 2020 and tried to barefacedly hold on to power. They have attempted to rig the election, an election that was observed by observers, not only from Caricom, but from the Organization of American States (OAS) and from the wide and afar international community, including the European Union (EU), and the Commonwealth. We spent five months agreeing to a recount that verified everything we had suspected as a people, that the Opposition, that was then in government, was attempting to rig the elections and to continue in Office as an undemocratic government. Yet, they come in this House today to tell us that we are a police state. It is obvious that they live in an alternate universe; five years and counting.

In moving the motion, our Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation would have given the history of this whole controversy. As a nation, we went through 27 years of the Good Offices process. We have kept this controversy within the confines of the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's purview to find a solution to this matter. We have had 27 years, from 1990, the 27<sup>th</sup> of the Good Offices process. In 2018, the UN Secretary-General determined that the Good Offices process had not resolved the territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela and thus Mr. Speaker, Venezuela's determination to uphold this conflict persists to this day.

*12.09 p.m.*

It was the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General who referred the matter to the International Court of Justice to determine the validity of the claims. Guyana has dutifully filed a request with the ICJ in that regard. Venezuela's claim at the time was that Mr. Gutiérrez had exceeded his authority – the same authority that had been relied upon and trusted for 27 years during the Good Offices process – and further refused to recognise the ICJ's jurisdiction. Guyana continues to follow the rule of law and invoke Article 53 of the ICJ statute, which allows the Court to rule in its favour if one party fails to participate. In December, 2020, the Court established its jurisdiction in the case. We are well aware that in this current time, much of Venezuela's contention stems from Guyana's growing oil and gas industry, following the world-class oil discoveries in Guyana's territorial waters. Venezuela's claim includes the waters of the Essequibo, where many of those oil discoveries exist.

In its most recent development, Venezuela's unlawful persistence is seen in the unanimous approval by the Venezuelan National Authority for a referendum, which you heard was held in 2023. We want to emphasise that Venezuela's refusal to accept the 1899 Award and its ongoing hostile actions and insistence on acting in opposition to the award's provisions erode the fundamental principles of international law. Upholding these principles is crucial for preserving global peace, security and stability. In a statement made in September, 2023, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) voiced deep concerns regarding Venezuela's threat to use force against Guyana's licensed operations in its waters, describing it as a process and demanding peaceful conflict resolution in keeping with principles of peaceful resolution of conflict.

Support was also provided by the European Union (EU), which expressed confidence in the ICJ's authority in settling this matter and urged parties to avoid unilateral actions that could escalate the situation. We deeply appreciate the solidarity and understanding demonstrated by the international community and international bodies. Their unwavering confidence in pursuing a lawful and peaceful path, along with their recognition of the ICJ's jurisdiction, is a clear endorsement of the shared values of justice, fairness and the rule of law that unite us all. As democratic nations, we must remain steadfast and they must remain steadfast in upholding the sanctity of sovereign borders and the principles governing international relations. We did in the past, and we do again today, call upon the international community to continue its support for our just cause. We urge all nations to recognise that this issue transcends a

bilateral dispute. It is about upholding the international legal order and the principles that bind us all. It is about ensuring that justice triumphs over aggression and intimidation.

As a country and as a people, we must together urge Venezuela's current Government to respect the ICJ process. The ICJ remains an impartial and reputable institution. The ICJ is well-equipped to objectively assess the situation and ensure a fair resolution. We also, as a nation, maintain our trust in the rule of law and have confidence that the ICJ will uphold the principles of justice and respect for sovereignty. Guyana knows and has denounced unlawful acts to illegally elect a government for Guayana Esequiba. To elect a governor for Guayana Esequiba is unlawful because the State of Guayana Esequiba does not exist. There is no such state in Guyana. Venezuela has not demonstrated or exercised any political or legal control and jurisdiction over such a state since it does not exist in Guyana, a state that has no legal status in the sovereign state of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana. Instead, what we have are elected officials at the regional democratic level who exercise political and legal control over the entire Essequibo, in the 10 administrative regions that comprise or share that part of Guyana known as Essequibo: Regions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9. We have seven Regional Chairmen and Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) that exercise political jurisdiction over the Essequibo region – and so it is, and so it shall be.

The seizure of Guyana's territory would amount to the grave international crime of aggression. It is essential to understand that neither a Government nor its people, under international law, possess the authority to seize, annexe or encroach upon the territory of another nation. International law strongly prohibits such actions. Guyana firmly rejects Venezuela's persistent attempts to undermine the sovereignty and integrity of our nation. From 2020, we have commenced a structured recapitalisation of our Defence Force to enhance our defence of Guyana and to better define aggression on our borders, both land and maritime borders. This recapitalisation is ongoing and has increased the security of our western border. This recapitalisation, along with increased security cooperation with our hemispheric and international partners, has led us today to be better able to exercise enhanced maritime domain awareness and increase surveillance on our western frontiers.

One would expect that defence, being a bipartisan issue, if there are any doubts in the minds of the Opposition, they should discuss them at the forum that is defined and organised for such discussion and not come into this House

and try to condemn the Government for not doing enough for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). We have – and I speak here as a member of the Defence Board – in a sustained and democratic approach, listened to the Defence Force and have provided the necessary budgetary support for their continued development, expansion and recapitalisation, to better able to define aggression on our frontiers. The endurance of this controversy has been excessive, and Venezuela's unrelenting pursuit of unfounded territorial claims not only insults our nation but also undermines the cherished principles of justice and sovereignty held by the international community.

All Guyana and all Guyanese – at home and in the diaspora – must continue to denounce these actions with the utmost strength and urge the global community to stand by us as we pursue a peaceful and equitable resolution through the International Court of Justice. Together, we will secure the triumph of justice and preserve our nation's sovereignty. Again, as I started, I must end by saying that *a house divided cannot stand*. As a nation, we are not and must never be divided on this important issue of our sovereignty. On that point, I want to end by saying that I support this motion reaffirming the sovereignty of Guyana over its internationally recognised territory – all 83,000 square miles. Essequibo belongs to Guyana. Essequibo belongs to us. Our Essequibo. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, let us take a suspension now and we will return at 1.23 p.m.

*Sitting suspended at 12.22 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 1.44 p.m.*

Thank you, Members. Please be seated. Hon. Members, I now invite the Hon. Member, Dr. Asha Kissoon, to make her contribution.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members, I would have never believed that today I would have needed to stand here and say that as a Member of the Opposition, I support this motion. What this should have been is all of us standing together and saying, as Guyanese, Essequibo is ours and we stand together united. Clearly, what we have seen is a classic case of them mistaking the word “Parliament” as a synonym for “circus.” The performances were not even entertaining. How can we stand here in this honourable House and play politics at a time like

this, when in two days, Venezuela wants to take part of our territory?

*1.45 p.m.*

How dare they stand before this honourable House and try to get political gains and mileage through something as important as this? For the Guyanese people at home listening, I am adding my voice to this motion to say that I stand with Hon. Minister Todd, to say that I stand with the Government of Guyana, and to say that I stand with you, the Guyanese people, to protect you. So much has been done. I applaud Guyana's legal way of handling the matter. If it were up to the counterparts in here who senselessly call for violence, who senselessly speak against this motion, we would have war on our hands. Look at what is happening in the far East, Guyanese people. Do you understand in which direction we would go if things were to get out of hand? The Government has taken steps to the International Court of Justice to prevent violence and to prevent it from escalating, and they have no understanding of this concept.

While I may not have a lot to say, because our Hon. Prime Minister and the Minister have already outlined all the parts of the motion and how they are doing it, I want to stand before you today to say that as an Opposition Member, there is support. As an Opposition Member, there is an understanding that this very important and pivotal issue is supported. I came here today thinking that, well, we are all going to come together, united. There is no Government. There is no Opposition. But what I saw was very disturbing as a young person. They continue to display their lack of understanding of this serious issue. Essequibo is ours. It will continue to be ours. We are not giving up even a square inch of it to Venezuela. I am sure they are looking on right now and thinking that Guyanese cannot even keep their own Parliament in order. It is shameful. It is shameful behaviour from the Opposition. The international community is looking at us, and this is what they are seeing.

Let me take this opportunity to also call on the international community to let them know that good sense still prevails in this Parliament. Not to listen to the nonsense and the division that is being pushed by the Opposition, but to continue supporting us on this issue with Venezuela. We have to stand united. We have to show a strong front. We have to continue to protect the sovereignty of our land. So, Members and Guyanese people at home, your best interests are at heart. Do not be fooled by the divisive politics. Do not be distracted by political gimmicks at this time. Let us stand united. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Deputy Speaker, Dr. Kissoon. Now we invite the Hon. Member, Mr. Alister Charlie, to make his presentation. Hon. Members, I also want to remind you of the unparliamentary words. I shall start interjecting by saying ‘unparliamentary’ when I hear them. Hon. Member, Mr. Charlie, proceed.

**Mr. Charlie:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my honourable colleagues on this side of the House to add my contribution to this motion laid before us. The Leader of the Opposition’s earlier remarks on the Venezuela border controversy, I would deem them as unethical, unmeritorious and misleading. [Ms. Manickchand: Unpatriotic.] Unpatriotic, also, Mr. Speaker. This is not a time for political point-scoring. It is a time for national unity. Contrary to the Leader of the Opposition’s claims, the Government of Guyana has taken consistent, lawful and proactive steps before the International Court of Justice and on the global stage to protect our territorial integrity. The Opposition chooses to criticise and not support this motion, this pivotal motion, based on internal grievances, petty grievances and unrelated issues. This is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

Defending Guyana’s sovereignty should never be conditional. I stand here with complete dedication and national pride as an indigenous voice in and out of this august House to fully endorse the present motion before this honourable House. This motion protects our nation’s sovereignty along with its territorial integrity and global position against Venezuela’s unlawful territorial claims to the Essequibo region of Guyana. This is not a geopolitical issue. The existence of Guyana’s indigenous peoples depends on this matter. The issue at hand represents identity, together with history and community, and justice.

Since ancient times, the indigenous peoples of Guyana have resided in the western frontier and the area that Venezuela illegitimately claims today. These spaces carry vital significance for indigenous people because they sustain their cultural heritage and ancestral roots. These lands have received the sweat of our farmers, the prayers of our elders and the traditions of our ancestors. We safeguarded that very forest and protected biodiversity while developing communities which have never accepted foreign governance. Our national loyalty has always remained faithful to Guyana. We are not a people detached from the land. We are of the land. The Essequibo region contains more than natural geographical formations because its rivers, mountains and valleys represent sacred heritage, which proves Guyana’s complete sovereignty over this territory.

The action of Venezuela started with its invalid rejection of the 1899 Arbitral Award through the unconstitutional December, 2023 referendum. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation took us through, Mr. Speaker. Guyana’s National Tshaos Council (NTC) has officially stated its absolute opposition to Venezuela’s actions in the Essequibo region through a formal declaration. The NTC issued a public declaration earlier this year, which strongly denounced Venezuela’s illegal actions in the following terms:

The National Tshaos Council strongly opposes the dangerous, illegal actions of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela regarding the Essequibo region. The indigenous peoples of Guyana have peacefully inhabited these lands throughout multiple generations as they have consistently declared their Guyanese identity. The NTC views any foreign claim of this territory as a violation of our ancestral rights and our democratic participation, and our national identity. The NTC demands international backing to stop Venezuela’s aggression and protect both Guyanese sovereignty and international legal standards.”

Mr. Speaker, the NTC declaration represents an unambiguous expression of hundreds of indigenous leaders spread across the length and breadth of Guyana. This is not the voice of one organisation. It is a collective voice of hundreds of indigenous leaders representing communities and Regions from 1 to 9, and to some extent 10. The statement of our indigenous leaders derives from their deep connection to ancestral traditions and their active participation in civic activities, and their established legal authority. The Venezuelan claim stands in direct opposition to the basic principles because it seeks control over a region whose inhabitants have rejected them and have refused their rule already. The citizens of Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, who predominantly belong to indigenous groups, receive public services from the Government of Guyana and participate in Guyanese elections while being subject to Guyanese law. The lack of Venezuelan governance over this region completely invalidates their attempt to establish historical or administrative control. There is no *de facto* or *de jure* Venezuelan governance in these areas. Their claim lacks not only legality but also legitimacy.

The Guyanese State maintains active involvement in these areas through meaningful investments for all indigenous communities. The People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government continues and will continue to execute strategic

investments for our indigenous communities. The State conducts these measures as part of its sovereign authority. Border communities consisting of Kaikan, Arau, Eteringbang, Parima and others serve as both historical observers and frontier protectors of Guyana's western territory. Throughout several decades of border disputes, these communities have proven their strength through peaceful means, while demonstrating the power of national pride and resilience. Every indigenous community in Guyana has refused to display the Venezuelan flag or accept Venezuelan Government control. At this time, across the country, our school children are portraying unity, and I hope the Opposition is looking at them and taking the example of what they are doing. But shame, Mr. Speaker.

The inclusive democratic system of Guyana has achieved remarkable success because it remains a powerful indicator of our country's democratic approach. The integrity of our people stands as powerful proof. We need to analyse the situation by using the framework of international indigenous rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples prohibits Venezuela from imposing political control on indigenous communities against their will and their cultural identity. Venezuela's actions violate Article 3, Right to Self-Determination, and Article 4, Rights to Lands, Territories and Resources, of the Declaration. These are not symbolic provisions. They are binding norms recognised across the international human rights framework. Venezuela violates international human rights standards as well as state-to-state legal principles through these actions.

Mr. Speaker, Guyana's indigenous people maintain their absolute commitment to stand with this Government, with the PPP/C Government, in its peaceful and principled management of this situation. We strongly oppose Venezuela's growing disregard for the International Court of Justice's procedures. A foreign power must not claim ownership of our ancestral lands. The Essequibo region belongs to Guyana, through legal statutes and historical records, and citizen status and personal identity.

2.00 p.m.

The true strength of our nation does not lie in its weaponry or its wealth but in the unity, dignity and courage of our people. The Indigenous people of Guyana have delivered invaluable contributions to national unity. Our dedication to the Republic's future remains strong while we uphold our cultural traditions. On behalf of Guyana's Indigenous people, I stand firm and resolute in full support of this motion. Let this House speak with one voice – a voice that

echoes across the mountains of the Pakaraimas, the banks of the Mazaruni and into every chamber of global diplomacy. Essequibo belongs to Guyana. Our sovereignty is intact; our people are united; and our future is ours to shape. Essequibo is ours – yesterday, today and forever. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Member of Parliament (MP), Mr. Charlie. The next speaker listed here is the Hon. Ms. Walton-Desir. I do not see her here, so I now call on the Minister of Health, the Hon. Member, Dr. Anthony.

**Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Distinguished colleagues and fellow citizens, I rise today to speak not only as a Member of Parliament but also as a Guyanese armed with historic truth and the law. Our nation, forged through struggles and unity, now finds itself at the centre of a manufactured controversy – one not of our making but one we must face with unwavering resolve and unity.

I came this morning to this National Assembly thinking that together, whether Government or Opposition, we will pass this motion because of what Venezuela is doing. To my surprise, having listened to the Leader of the Opposition, I am totally dismayed. For the entire history of this controversy, we have always stood together as one people. We did not have opposition; we did not have government; we were one people against Venezuela's aggression. Today, this is quite surprising. It is the first time in the history of this controversy that we have the Opposition breaking ranks. This begs the question about their patriotism – the patriotism of the Leader of the Opposition and those whom he led astray. The Guyanese people would remember them. If they want to contest to rule this country, then the Guyanese people would remember them for this dastardly act that they perpetuated today. The last time we had such a motion in this National Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition got up. Here is what he had to say – I pulled up the *Hansard*:

“Politically, we have fought for years, but one reality that we should be proud of is that throughout the history of our country, we have always been united on the Guyana/Venezuela territorial controversy. For us to even consider fighting over political power, we must first own our country. There will be nothing to fight for if we are not united in defence of our sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

I want to ask him what he did today. All these lofty words he had. Why did he and the Members of the Opposition walk

out of here when we should stand together to oppose Venezuela's claims? These were his words, but today, he changed them. He came and lectured us about a police state. I think he is delusional about who is managing a police state. Perhaps, it is the neighbours who have a police state because we know what is happening out there in Venezuela. He is not interested in the rule of law. He came here and defended the rights of looters and the people who were on the streets the other day blocking the roads, burning tires, beating up people and looting. He came here to represent them. That is what he did and said that this country is a police state. Well, if it is a police state because the police are upholding law and order, that is the state that I want to live in. We want to say to him that if they deviate from the law, we are asking the police to lock them up. That is the state that we want to live in.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a book called, *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado* written by Graham Burnett. I want to turn to page 258. He quoted a very famous Guyanese, a man named Eusi Kwayana. It states: Eusi Kwayana, a respected Opposition intellectual, linked the perpetual boundary crisis not only to the United States meddling but also to the dictatorship of Forbes Burnham. He went on to quote Eusi Kwayana now: One reading of the present trends is that Burnham is using the border issue to help maintain a sympathetic hearing abroad and blackmail Guyanese into a position which seems to advise against confrontation with the dictatorship to browbeat the working people into starvation or a semi-starvation level of living in the interest of defence.

This is what Eusi Kwayana said of the People's National Congress and the Burnham dictatorship. When we talk about a police state, we should refer Mr. Norton to what his Government was doing at the time. He made a big speech on how we should educate the public, but going back to that speech that he delivered, as an afterthought, at the end, he said, I think there is a need for more public education. That is all he had in the speech. You would think that he made such a wonderful speech about public education on this border controversy. Mr. Speaker, I move on because I do not think that we should spend more time on the Leader of the Opposition, who has no vision for this country or who is not willing to stand and defend this country when it is needed. As I said, the Venezuelan-manufactured controversy surrounds the Essequibo region, which comprises nearly two-thirds of our national territory. This land is not merely a set of lines on a map; it is the home of generations of Guyanese Indigenous communities, as MP. Charlie said –

farmers, teachers, nurses, miners and our children who have all known no other nation but Guyana. Their identity, their rights and their future are not subject to negotiation. The facts are clear.

Historically and indisputably, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1899, an international Arbitration Tribunal, comprising distinguished jurists from Great Britain, the United States of America (USA) and Russia, unanimously settled the boundary between the then British Guiana and Venezuela. Although neither party received the outcome it had originally sought, both sides accepted the decision made by the Arbitral Award as the full, perfect and final settlement as outlined in the Treaty of Washington. There is substantial evidence that Venezuela accepted the Paris Arbitral Award. For example, in a letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 1899, José Andrade, Venezuela's Ambassador to Great Britain in London, the brother of the then President of Venezuela, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Arbitration had ultimately awarded Venezuela exclusive control over the Orinoco River, an objective that the nation had long sought to secure.

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1899, his brother, the President, expressed satisfaction with the Award, stating that it had restored some of Venezuela's usurped territory and vindicated its rights. The legal team for Venezuela, which was led by former President of the United States, Benjamin Harrison, also expressed satisfaction with the Award. This led to President William McKinley also going to Congress in his State of the Union Address in December, 1899 and stating that the decision appears to be equally satisfactory to both parties, meaning British Guiana and Venezuela. Venezuela not only accepted the Award but also engaged in a Joint Border Commission, which was established to demarcate the borders. This Commission operated from 1900 to 1905 and was responsible for mapping the coordinates of 825 kilometres between the two countries. On 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1905, after completing the survey, the Joint Border Commission produced a detailed report and a comprehensive map which outlined the agreed upon border between British Guiana and Venezuela's territory. The representatives of both governments formally signed that agreement to accept the report and the map as demarcated. All official maps produced by Venezuela from 1905 to 1962 were in compliance with the Treaty of Washington, the Arbitral Award and the demarcation performed by the Joint Border Commission of 1905.

Another point to note is that the tripoint junction where the borders of Guyana, Venezuela and Brazil converge holds significant importance as it establishes the agreed-upon



boundary among these three countries. In 1931, there was a physical marker was placed on Mount Roraima, which also included the specific geographic coordinates. This arrangement was further solidified in 1932 with the establishment of a tripartite agreement regarding this tripoint junction. This agreement was largely influenced by Venezuela's commitment to adhere to the 1899 Arbitral Award and a subsequent demarcation that was done in 1905.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you see, historically the facts are all there – this territory is ours. It was only in 1962, on the eve of our Independence, that Venezuela revived this claim unilaterally and without legal basis, trying to cast a shadow over our sovereignty. Since then, Guyana has pursued every diplomatic and legal avenue to resolve this matter peacefully. The Geneva Agreement outlines a four-step process. The first step was to have a mixed commission. The second step was trying to pursue a peaceful settlement in accordance with Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations. If that failed, both governments were to agree on a third step. If that also failed, the fourth step was to ask the UN Secretary General to decide on a means of resolution.

Mr. Speaker, you have heard the history from my Colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who spoke about all of the challenges we had and the time we went through following what was in the Geneva Convention. We started out with a mixed commission from 1966 to 1970. When that did not yield any result, the Venezuelans asked for a 12-year moratorium, which was done and called the Protocol of Port of Spain. At the time, when they asked for that moratorium, they were trying to settle their borders with Colombia, so they did not want to engage two countries at the same time. After that failed, we ended up with a stalemate and Venezuelan asked us to have direct talks. We said no, that we wanted to go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Venezuelans refused, because they did not want to go to the ICJ. That was in 1982.

To break the deadlock, that is how we ended up with the Good Officer Process, which was from 1989 to 2017. We went through a number of notable persons who served in that position. However, when that failed, we had no other option but to go to the ICJ because we believe – and Guyana's position has always been that principal position – in the rule of international law and not the rule of force. We believe in diplomacy and not in intimidation. My Colleague outlined many of the steps we took going around the world, meeting people, telling them about the controversy and educating

them so that they could support what is right. I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition was talking about when he said that we were not going and doing the diplomacy. We have almost gone to every continent and talked to people about this matter. We seek peace and not provocation.

Mr. Speaker, as you heard, we filed that case on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, and Venezuela has tried their utmost to stall the case at the ICJ. First, they said the Court lacked jurisdiction and the Court found that it has jurisdiction. Then, they said our case was not admissible and the Court again rejected that. The two times Venezuela went, they lost at the ICJ because they were not standing on strong legal footing. That is why, when they lost to the ICJ, they started resorting to changing things domestically in Venezuela. They went to the referendum on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2023. Before they went to that referendum... It was because of the content of the questions they were asking, we went to the ICJ and asked for a Provisional Order. We got that Provisional Order restraining them from having the referendum but, nevertheless, in contravention of the ICJ, they went ahead and got the referendum. You heard of the next steps they took by trying to usurp our territory putting all sorts of bogus laws in place. We were able to get an Order that prevented them in 2023.

Again, this year, when President Maduro declared he was going to have an election, not only did we go back to the ICJ to get another order, but we were also able to speak with our partners, so that they understood what was happening. Many of the multilateral agencies issued statements condemning Venezuela's action. The United Nations Security Council issued a statement and we had a lot of bilateral, where countries themselves supported Guyana's position. Again, on 1<sup>st</sup> May this year, the ICJ issued another order telling Venezuela they should not have that election. We will wait to see what they will try to do. Regardless of what they do over there, we are not going to be held accountable for what they do over there. We are responsible for our territory. We stand strong and we stand proud in the defence of our country. Let me say very clear, the Government of Guyana and all of us on this side of the House, reject in the strongest terms, any attempt by Venezuela to annex or assert control of Guyana's territory. We reject the December, 2023, Referendum that was held in Venezuela, which purports to claim that the Essequibo region is their own and we reject the upcoming elections that they want to have on 25<sup>th</sup>. We reject the elections. President Maduro's decrees or any threat would not override international law.

Sovereignty is not a popularity contest. It is a legal fact grounded in treaties, in arbitration and consistent state

practise, such as this Government practised. Guyana remains committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and upholds the jurisdiction and authority of the International Court of Justice. We call on the international community, governments, regional organisations, multilateral organisations and civil society to stand with Guyana in defence of international law, our territorial integrity and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. I want to say to our Venezuelan brothers and sisters, we have no quarrel with you. Our people have shared a common cooperation and history, but friendship must be built on respect, not on threats and aggression. To our Guyanese brothers and sisters, the President of our country, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali and our Government would stand resolute to defend our country against any aggression. Let us move forward with unity. Despite their walkout, I am sure there are many people in the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) who want to see unity. The couple who we have here do not represent the interests of the people of this country. We want to move forward in unity. We want to move forward with courage and resolve, confident that history and justice are on our side. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, very much, Hon. Member Dr. Frank Anthony, the Minister of Health. Now, for the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, the Hon. Brindley Horatio Benn.

**Mr. Benn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members, I want to join this debate in support of the Government and the people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in reaffirming the sovereignty of Guyana over its internationally recognised territory.

The Opposition is not here. We had a rousing and a malign presentation by the Leader of the Opposition, to the extent where he proceeded to attack the State by calling it a police State and attacked the Guyana Police Force (GPF), that he is apparently upset with in spite of all the challenges they have faced. They did their job in terms of protecting the citizens recently –protecting the people, clearing the roads, bringing back stability and safety to communities on the West Coast Demerara, and all over Guyana such as Linden, East Coast Demerara and all the way to Berbice – where people were being attacked, hurt and insulted in matters which had nothing to do with the political ambitions of the Leader of the Opposition. The exploitation of the very unfortunate death, of course, of the young lady at the hotel pool continues. The information will be out in respect of this matter soon. We will see whether there will be another change in expression when the information will come from both the internationally recognised medical and legal

forensic experts. When that report is out, then perhaps they will try something else.

Mr. Speaker, I know you remember, of course, the opening line of Mr. Macaulay's, *Horatius at the Bridge*, where LARS Porsena speaks of:

“...house of Tarquin

Should suffer wrong no more.”

I want to take that line – we should suffer wrong no more – first, in relation to this controversy with Venezuela and the difficulties it has presented to Guyana over all these years, and piling up on that, what I can only view as treasonable statements being made here by a Guyanese Leader of the Opposition. I am not surprised. I am not sure, arising out of the speech he made here today, he should continue to be the Leader of Opposition. He should be removed by his people just for the speech made here today in this National Assembly. Then, he took them out and they went away – *nyam go weh*. They are not here. They ate the food because they were first in the line. They have gone again – happy go lucky – feeding off of the people of this country in the House of Parliament, pretending to be properly leading the people of this country, in respect of matters relating to the existential threat – the question of sovereignty of our people – which is being challenged and being discussed. They *nyam go weh*.

When we speak about the question of the support we need in respect of this matter, the speakers before me – Dr. Frank Anthony, who is now more than a medical person and an amateur historian, and the Hon. Member, Mr. Charlie too... The resolve of our people and the historical facts – and not alternative facts – in this matter have been settled since 1899. They were making some noise on that side because I think some time ago I talked about whether Guyana could go up and stand toe-to-toe against Venezuela. I think I said and recalled properly that if it comes to blows, we may have to shoot and scoot until help comes to us.

2.30 p.m.

The Venezuelan Army alone is over 150,000 members – 150,000 members. It is more than 30 times our military establishment. Its equipment is more or less for South America itself, related to Colombia and all those other countries of a much superior quality and quantity. Anybody who thinks that we will go and stand toe-to-toe and get wiped out at the first engagement has to be crazy. There is no way that we can stand up and go toe-to-toe with them.

We intend to do and are doing, at this moment, is for the territory we control, which includes the Cuyuni River from Eteringbang downriver – that is Guyana's territory – to the northern and western bank as it is.

For Venezuelans using that river, they only have innocent passage on the river. They cannot interfere with or shoot at our people who are going to do work in the area or who are using the river. They cannot shoot and do things to interfere with our people without a representative and an adequate response. If they shot at us, we would shoot back two or three times more, in respect of this matter, because the territory is ours. We will respond and we have responded in every instance – in every instance. In relation to the question of the support we need... I know we are going to be talking about the Regional Security System (RSS) later on today, I hope. However, there is a famous writer, Ms. Barbara Tuchman, who wrote a series on the Great War and other things. One of her books is *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890–1914*. On pages 34 and 35 of *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890–1914*, she speaks about the settlement and the controversy in relation to British Guiana, as it was, and Venezuela.

The point that the British made then when Mr. Olney, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, had written a note to Lord Salisbury, was that he was not prepared to answer the British, because he said that all the territory that belonged to what was then British Guiana existed as British or other territories before the existence of the Republic of Venezuela – before the existence of the Republic of Venezuela. The Venezuelans were pretty upset. If I may quote a bit of the question, it reads:

“...the disputed frontier of Venezuela has nothing to do with any of the questions dealt with by President Monroe.”

This was in a refusal to the letter Mr. Olney wrote to Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister then and who was also the foreign minister. Lord Salisbury refused to deal with the matter. He rejected it. Without wanting to get into too much detail, the Venezuelans goaded – to use Stockmann's words – the Americans to get involved in a dispute on the question of the Monroe Doctrine, which declared: President Monroe's doctrine was that no country can interfere in the affairs of the Americas without the say-so of the United States of America. That was the basis for their involvement in the issue: the Americans. In fact, at one point, there was talk in some of the papers – jingoism, as was said. Here it states:

“...a tornado of jingoism swept...”

...over the United States of America.

“WAR, IF NECESSARY,” proclaimed the *New York Sun*. The word “war” was soon being used as recklessly as if it concerned an expedition against the Iroquois or the Barbary pirates.”

There was a question, perhaps, that there may be war between the United States of America (USA) and Great Britain, then the biggest power at the time, on the question of this frontier. However, in any event, the Venezuelans goaded the United States of America to use the Monroe Doctrine to bring the issue to some point of settlement, hopefully arbitration or whatever. In any event, in between, there was what they called the Cuyuni incident. I know that there is a Venezuelan General called Mr. Sifontes, who was recently placed in the National Pantheon of Venezuela in Caracas. He stood his ground at some point where there were disputes over the border and was accorded a lot of national honours in respect of demarcating for them what they thought was the border then.

As was said, they had the Arbitral Award. Significantly, the United States of America, represented by former President Benjamin Harrison, was the lead person representing Venezuela on the matter – the United States. Two former Supreme Court judges of the United States also represented Venezuela on the matter. When it was full, final and perfect, everybody was happy with it, including the Venezuelan Government, as was said. As Minister, Dr. Frank Anthony, pointed out, the stamps had it; the maps had it; the tri-junction points were established all around; there were the border surveys to establish the boundaries; and everyone was happy with it. I think, it was until 1949 that we got a tale from the crypt because Mr. Mallet-Prevost, who was some little assistant lawyer to these large luminary figures representing Venezuela, wrote a letter only to be opened after he was dead to say some – to use a Guyanese term – *jiggery-pokery* took place. He was not prepared to be alive to contest and to bring to the fore, when he was alive, when the actors were still in place, when he was alive to have defended what he was saying. He made sure that... [Dr. Anthony: The Venezuelan Government gave him the highest award.] Yes, yes. He made sure that he only gave out this tale from the crypt to be opened after he was dead.

Since then, particularly when the question came about on whether or not Guyana under the People's Progressive

Party/Civic (PPP/C) was going left or wherever, when the question of... Kennedy was not sure after meeting with Dr. Jagan where Guyana may go, if it may go with Cuba or wherever it may go, they decided to allow this matter to be opened. It was allowed to be opened to the point where Guyana's Prime Minister, Mr. Forbes Burnham, went to Geneva and signed an agreement that opened up the possibility to re-discuss or re-interpret this problem. That was done. It was not done by the PPP/C. The PPP/C had nothing to do with the matter. The PPP/C were not consulted. The people of Guyana were not consulted. However, that was what happened. I think the honourable gentleman who is not here and who spoke on that side of the matter, Mr. Aubrey Norton, should have been coming here to apologise to the nation on this matter, for that particular issue on that particular question.

Where it comes now to the point with all the incidents, all the problems, in their time and in our time... When I talk about how we should suffer no more in respect of this matter, we have suffered a lot in respect of this matter. Then, we put all of our money, when taxes were raised, to do the Upper Mazaruni Hydropower Project, it was forestalled and slowed down. That is because, in their time, they had perhaps changed tack and no one was sure where they were going. Millions of dollars and increased taxation moneys went down the drain. Roads and everything were abandoned in the bush. The studies are festering somewhere, gathering dust if they are still around. We did not get the Upper Mazaruni Hydropower Project, which should have taken us along a pathway of having an alumina plant, then an aluminium smelter, and having cheap power in the country. We have not been able to get that developed. Then, much later, I could call a few other ones. When the PPP/C came to power and, again, in the fashion that we saw today, there was rabid opposition in Guyana to the question of the Beal Aerospace Project.

The Beal Aerospace Project – it was not an attack. It was not an attack really. Andrew Beal did not give up on the project because of doubts in the United States of America or any other place. It was the attack in Guyana by the Opposition's People's National Congress, and by people who think themselves do-gooders – they call themselves environmentalists and others out there – who always spring to the fore when there are development issues. They talk about Indigenous rights, environmental rights, and all these other things. They do not read the reports. They do not have a concern for development. All they want to do is prance and posture themselves on issues in the press. Now they have

social media to use in respect of these developments. [Mr. McCoy: Pamapaset.] *Pamapaset* is the word. Now, we have the question of the oil spill and all of these things. Do they want development? Do they want our country to grow? Do they want Guyana to grow?

We must realise that we must pay for; we must overcome our history as a country, the sacrifices our foreparents have made to bring us to this point here. They need the imperative we have to give over a better country to the next generation of Guyanese – to our children of all strides, all cultures, all races, all religions: Amerindians, Indians, Africans, the mixed ones in between, Chinese and all of those. Do we not have the right to give them a better life than we have had? We say, in the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), with the leadership of President Irfaan Ali, this is an imperative we are bound by. This is one that we have to make sure that we pass on to the next generation. This is what we exist for. This is what we have always existed for: to make Guyana a better place, a safer place, a more respectful place, a more empathetic place, so that the next generation of Guyanese must be better resourced, better trained, better educated, and have better health services than we ourselves have had.

This posturing on the other side, all these long talks, all of these issues in relation to... I do not really want to go to the time when we had... I have to say it perhaps. Venezuela has always given us trouble. They have always undermined us. In 1969, we had the Rupununi Rebellion – financed, resourced and supported by Venezuela. We thought that we were going into a better place when the Bolivarians came. Mr. Chavez himself came and acknowledged that this thing was something which was made up in the 60s and really does not have merit. He said it was a manufactured controversy. He said it at the Pegasus and I was there when he said it. I was happy when he said it to go and shake his hand, and said I wish you success. He said it was a manufactured controversy.

2.45 p.m.

The troubles we have had in relation to these issues – the fall out of the lack of development, mismanagement of political troubles and economic troubles that were fostered by poor governance in the era of the PNC which saw flight of the people from Guyana. People took the air, took the boats, went to the Caribbean and to the north. To the east, they went into the Republic of Suriname and to the south they went into Brazil. The *vaqueros* went and then the cows went before or after them. To the west, there are thousands of

Guyanese who went to Venezuela - to Manapiare, El Callao - all of those places have significant Guyanese population. They are our cousins somehow. [Mr. Nandlall: There is San Felix.]

Yes, San Felix and all of those places have thousands of Guyanese. They are now coming back because of the crisis in Venezuela. In spite of the difficulties and in spite of the challenges we have, we are happy to provide support to them. We are happy to welcome them back - those who came back and are now our cousins or extended relations. We are happy that they can come. We want them back and we want to make sure that we take care of them in a respectful manner and it does not become a *casus belli* for our relationship with Venezuela.

An important thing that I want to keep talking about is the need for us to occupy Essequibo. Some of us behave as though we are absentee landlords, investors, believe we are from Berbice or Demerara and we go to do something there, and then we run back. We have to increase Guyana's population in Essequibo itself. The contest itself in the future will come about the question of numbers of people and whether we realistically occupy the area. There are numbers of people from Venezuela who are there. We have said and I have said clearly on the question of the elections on 25<sup>th</sup> May, they have for this mythical place called Guayana *Esequiba*, any person who takes part, promotes it and is a Guyanese, he/she will be arrested and put on trial for treason. We have said so. I am repeating it. Any person who promotes, who takes part in, who is behind this question of Guayana *Esequiba*, this mythical place in Guyana will be arrested and charged for treason - will face the courts.

I think even now, there is a Guyanese person who is facing some troubles in relation to posts on social media. Rightfully so, let the courts deal with that matter. There are some impressions that we do not have people out there who are our eyes and ears at the frontier, that our Amerindian people are unaware and uncaring, but we have had the presentation made by Member of Parliament, Mr. Charlie. We get information every day. We are alert and we are ready for response or for call for help. We know that we can only deal with this matter to the fullest extent if it comes to blows. If we get the full support of our CARICOM brothers, of the persons who are our international partners - the United States of America, the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and the Commonwealth, we know we can only deal with this matter if it comes to a real contest if we have their support and we have been assured of their support. I want to thank them again for plainly, including CARICOM, stating that the support is ready and waiting. In the meantime, we are

practising with them. We are practising with them regionally. We have many visits and many interactions on the question of this eventuality and how we will respond.

I want to take the opportunity to promote more of our physical occupation of the Essequibo region - the minerals, the forests, all of the other things and the touristic places that we have. The Minister, Ms. Walrond, said it is the most wonderful place for tourism in Guyana. Our infrastructure going out into the interior is developing and those places are becoming more accessible. We are going to have our flag day in Essequibo on the 25<sup>th</sup>. We will raise our flag. We will identify, again, for the world, what Essequibo means to Guyana. There are doubts or they have given up on that side. The Leader of the Opposition has abandoned this question. His presentation today is what the "Maduristas" want to see. They are celebrating this now in Caracas and Tel Marimo. That presentation; this new division; and this bringing in of doubts on this question are what they will be celebrating. We will be seeing it just now on social media and other places. The speech the Hon. Member made, to me, for all intents and purposes, is totally unpatriotic and should have him removed as the Leader of the Opposition of Guyana.

On this question alone, there should be no separation. The Hon. Member and I, if we went together to the frontier and we have guns to shoot at the other side, he might shoot me or run away, given the speech he made today. The Hon. Member cannot be trusted. Maliciously, there is an attempt continuing to undermine the will, the confidence and the professionalism of our forces. The Hon. Member wants to drive fear in terms of proper professional action from our Guyana Police Force and by extension our soldiery. This type of presentation suggests that there is no will here; there is no unity; and there is no common sense of the good of the future in relation to Guyana. This is what he instilled here today. The Hon. Member does not want us to succeed. The Hon. Member does not want Guyana to succeed and so, I do not know why the Hon. Member should be kept as Leader of the Opposition. The little I can do is to say that the Hon. Member should be immediately removed or recuse himself.

The People's Progressive Party/Civic Government stand always and will always stand - under the leadership of President Irfaan Ali, following the example of all the Presidents, Prime Ministers and others of the PPP/C for all these years - hard and fast with the people of Guyana on the question of sovereignty of Guyana and Essequibo being a part of Guyana, always and forever more for the future generations of Guyanese. Again, I can only condemn, in the strongest terms, the presentation made on the Opposition

side by Mr. Norton. I think that under those who have left would perhaps be feeling ashamed that they did not speak for themselves on the issue as Parliamentarians in the House, even as Opposition Parliamentarians. The opportunity again was taken to try to excoriate the PPP/C, try to excoriate the Government, to try to say the greatest danger and enemy of the people of Guyana is the People's Progressive Party/Civic. That is what the Hon. Member said here.

Against all facts, against all rationality, then on the ground in every place in Guyana, particularly too in Essequibo, growth, development, prosperity, better health and education are coming to all of our people. That is what the Hon. Member said here. With that alone, the Hon. Member should not remain in his place in this House, in the PNC or whatever configuration they will come up with the next time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, for the opportunity. I think I will have to go now on social media and places to expand more on some of the things I have said here. I will expand more on this question. [Ms.

**Rodriguez: TikTok.]** Yes, *TokTik*. I am not on those places but I am prepared to go now for this very reason. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, minister for ticking the tock. Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Mr. Nandlall, proceed.

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to register my unequivocal and unambiguous support to the Motion that is before us, presented by my distinguished colleague, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

I have been in the Parliament now for nearly two decades. I have done some amount of reading on this Venezuelan issue. It first came to the fore in 1962 when Premier, Dr. Cheddi Jagan petitioned the then Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) requesting Independence for the then British Guiana. That Petition of Premier, Dr. Jagan was met by an objection in the form of a Resolution, backed by the United States of America from Venezuela objecting to the request for Independence. Then, it was put on the public record, Venezuela's claim to 2/3's of what was settled as the land mass of the then British Guiana. From that moment to until Mr. Norton, the Hon. Member, spoke here this morning, the political parties in Guyana, the political actors in Guyana from which ever political party were singular; they were cemented; and they were consolidated in their support for Guyana's territorial integrity.

The history of this country will now record unfortunately that the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the People's National Congress has broken that immaculate record on this matter. Two days before our independence and two days before the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is scheduled by law to hold elections in Guyana's territory Essequibo, to take place on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> May, in which politicians in Venezuela will be contesting for eight seats in the Parliament of Venezuela, in 66,000 square miles of Guyana's 83,000 square miles.

3.00 p.m.

The Leader of the Opposition, the alternative president of the Republic of this country, the main Opposition party, the alternative government of Guyana, chooses this moment of our history to disengage, to withdraw their support from Guyana because that is what they have done here. They have used all types of pretexts to justify what is clearly unjustifiable, and will deal with the fanciful, the capricious, and the specious reasons advanced by the Leader of the Opposition. There are many things that we have never said on this side of the House. We have heard a little when Premier Forbes Burnham proceeded to Geneva to sign the Geneva Agreement. He spent several months in the United States of America before proceeding from New York to Geneva to sign that agreement. Dr. Jagan never made it public – his position. Mr. Ashton Chase was dispatched as an emissary to try to persuade Mr. Burnham against that move; the reasons were never made public because Dr. Jagan saw it since then that he could not say what he wanted to say. Up to now, we have never said it. We have a lot of information that we will not make public, but at some point in time, when the objective history of this country on this matter is written, this information will come forth.

These are people who love to speak about their track record in foreign policy; they are the foreign policy architects of this country, and they have blundered this country's foreign policy. They nearly made us lose our battle with Suriname. What was held against Guyana was a statement made by a Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PNC Government in the National Assembly of Guyana. That was held against Guyana in the Law of the Sea, in that matter. As I said, at some point in time, we will deal with those matters.

Mr. Norton sought to justify his position here today by citing some domestic issues as the basis for his position. On this matter, on the international plane, Mr. Norton cannot fathom, he cannot conceive, he cannot comprehend, that the nation state of Guyana is indivisible. Nobody cares, on this

matter, about the internal wranglings of Guyana. We have the United Nations on our side, we have the Commonwealth on our side, we have the Organization of American States on our side, we have the CARICOM on our side, we have every major power in the world on our side, but we do not have on our side our elected Opposition. That is what the world witnessed today, and Guyanese of this generation and Guyanese of generations to come must judge them on that basis. What was Mr. Norton's reason for behaving the way that he did? What was the reason? He said that some committee in the Parliament was not established; he said the motion was not properly crafted; the language did not meet his approbation. We know from the Chief Whip that we sent the motion to them, nearly one week before it was tabled, with an offer for them to cosign and to make a contribution. However, they could not find him. I guess he was at Bam Bam Alley attending to matters of greater importance.

Mr. Speaker, I sat right here when the Chief Whip on that side, the Hon. Member, Mr. Christopher Jones, came to Hon. Member Gail Teixeira and worked out speaking arrangements of who will speak on that side. Mr. Norton's leadership, the leadership that he extended today, was to scrap all of that and walk out of the Parliament because he – and he spoke about unilateralism – unilaterally decided that he would not support the motion. There are few political parties on planet Earth, in the history of electoral politics, that have endured more than the People's Progressive Party has endured at the hands of the PNC – very few political parties in this world. They stole elections from the PPP in 1968, in 1973, in 1980, and in 1985. They stole the referendum to create a constitution for their own liking. They stole ballots, the franchise, the freedoms of more than 60% of the population of this country for three decades. The PPP was the main victim; not one day did Dr. Jagan and the PPP ever say that we will use that as a basis not to support them on Venezuela. That is leadership.

They are talking about political conduct; they jailed persons that we do not even know of. They blew Dr. Walter Rodney, a political opponent, to pieces with a bomb that they put in a walkie-talkie by an officer of the Guyana Defence Force, but there is a finding of an international commission of inquiry on that matter that said that they were implicated in the murder, in the assassination of Dr. Walter Rodney. We have never used that as a basis to break ranks on this matter. They destroyed the economy of this country, moving it from one of the richest colonies of Great Britain to when they left power in 1992 as a bankrupt state, where the Caribbean Council of Churches said that we were poorer than Haiti.

That is what they did. The PPP was here all of the time. During all of that destruction, we never, ever withheld our support on this Venezuela issue. So, there is nothing that Mr. Aubrey Norton can hold up that can justify what he has done here today. That is why I agree with my brother, the Hon. Robeson Benn, that today should be the end of his political career.

Mr. Speaker, imagine, Mr. Norton is telling us that we cannot expect patriotism when people do not feel a belonging, when people do not feel that they are a part of the state. This man's party stole the government of the country for 30 years; deprived 60% of the population of this country their right to elect the government of their choice; and those people yet felt, those very people whose power they took away, whose freedom they took away, still felt that sense of patriotism to support them when they were in government on this issue. I cannot believe he would stoop to the level that he has stooped today by trying to defend those people. **[Ms. Walrond: Scrapes.]** I do not even want to call them 'scrapes'; those alleged criminals that took over the streets of this country; who highjacked the mourning and grief of a family and used it to advance their criminal and political causes, burning the roads, burning private properties, beating people, looting, burning vehicles, extorting, chopping vagrants as they lay on the streets. Mr. Norton comes here to cite that because the police locked those people up and charged them. Mr. Norton says because the police has acted in defence and in the prosecution of the law, he would not support us on Venezuela because of that. I cannot believe that this is an opposition leader.

Mr. Speaker, I have here the law that he has a problem with, and let me read the law into the *Hansard*. Let me read the law because I sent for a copy of the law, and I want to read it into the record. This is the law that they find objectionable; they accused us of misusing the law. They say that we must charge the people for another offence. Let me put on the record of this Parliament, as I have said elsewhere: today, CARICOM is now looking for a law similar to this to put in the statutes book across the region, to make a criminal offence a terrorist act committed in open space, because the entire Caribbean is gripped with the kind of behaviour that we saw exhibited here; and they are looking to Guyana.

We did this in 2003, when Mr. Norton and his ilk were burning the streets of Georgetown – burning the roads, burning the Regent Street. I remember when they bricked your house in Lamaha Gardens; I remember the leader of the United Force (UF), Mr. Manzoor Nadir, saying on television, 'well, they have chosen for me'. I remember that

speech, Mr. Speaker. You do not know I follow you so closely. That is when Mr. Manzoor Nadir said that the PNC has made a choice for him. He cannot sit on their side of the Parliament anymore. That was the time, Mr. Speaker, that we introduced this Bill. Let me read the relevant portion of this Bill for the population to hear me. It is article 309A of the Criminal Offences Act, and it reads:

Whoever –

(a) With intents to strike terror in the people or any section of the people, does any act or thing by... any other means whatsoever, in such a manner as to cause, or likely to cause, death of, or injuries to any person or persons or loss of, or damage to, destruction of, property... commits a terrorist act;"

What is wrong with this law if you set out to do something that is intended to strike terror in people or any section of the people? When you have one highway to travel from the East Coast of Demerara to Berbice and you light that highway afire, and you beat everyone and rob everyone that crosses that highway, what do you intend to do if not to reign terror?

3.15 p.m.

There is one roadway across the river at Phoenix Park. You cannot get from the Harbour Bridge or Canal to Vreed-en-Hoop unless you pass Phoenix Park. You light that afire, and you beat everyone that passes there, you rob everyone that passes there, and you molest the women who pass there. What are you planning to do, if not to cause terror in a population? That is what we have outlawed. The Bill states that whosoever does that, or conspires, or attempts to commit that offence, they commit a terrorist act. We have no apologies. In fact, next week, we are going to bring a law to strengthen it. They stand on the side of the scrapes. We stand on the side of the law-abiding citizens of this country. That is where we stand. There is nothing that Hon. Mr. Norton could have said here to justify what he has done. They talk about unilateralism. Not only did we support them right through when they were in Government... Before they filed the proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), they invited the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, and Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, took yours truly, and I believe now President Irfaan Ali, to attend the meeting with the Leader of the Opposition. They said that they were going to break off the 'good office' talks because it was not getting anywhere, and we were going to file this case. We gave them our full support.

When they filed the case – and they filed it in the name of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carl Barrington Greenidge – and we won the elections, we did not have to continue with Mr. Carl Barrington Greenidge. We could have changed the sponsor, but in the spirit of magnanimity, in the spirit of cooperation, in the spirit of oneness and unity, we left everything untouched. Whenever we attend the Court – the Leader of the Opposition – we ensure that he has a representative who travels with us to The Hague. In addition, obviously, to Mr. Carl Greenidge, we have Mr. Ronald Austin. Good gentleman. I get along well with him. We go to several places in Holland, not appropriate to speak about at this forum, on this sober occasion. Great gentleman. He represents, and does so with commendable professionalism, the interests of the Leader of the Opposition. We have never ever left him out.

[**Dr. Anthony:** You will make the man get 'knock off'.]

No. The Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation knows many on that side are very envious of the man. They tried all kinds of strategies to get on the trip, but they did not – to the credit of the Leader of the Opposition.

At every level of the way, we ensure, and we have a team that is a broad-based, multi-partisan team that meets on a regular basis at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, comprising many Members of the Opposition and/or their representatives. They meet regularly with our lawyers, with the policymakers, with the diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. They are very much part and parcel of our international diplomacy on this matter. They help us craft statements. They help us with the notes verbales and they interact with us on a regular basis. Mr. Norton is aware of that because they report to him. When there was an incursion in our waters some weeks ago, I had the privilege of sitting with the President when he engaged Mr. Norton in a meeting on the matter at State House. My brother was there, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He was very happy, though we had to wait about six hours to find him. When he eventually turned up, he was very happy and left in good spirits. So, Mr. Norton cannot, he cannot authentically say that we have ever kept him out. I do not know what consumed him this morning, or rather, the reverse, what he consumed.

It is quite unfortunate that I have to begin my presentation on that note because I wanted to spend some time sharing with the public what we have done in particular at the International Court. We filed the case, as you know, in 2018. They first lodged an objection to the jurisdiction of the



Court, and that consumed nearly three years of the litigation because Venezuela did not want to submit to the jurisdiction. They said that the Court had no jurisdiction over them. The Court, in a very reasoned judgment that they delivered in December, 2020... The Court examination began from the 1965 Geneva Agreement and pointed out to say: 'look, you signed this Agreement. There is no question on your part that the Agreement does not represent your signature or your agreement. In other words, there is no duress, there is no fraud, there is no compulsion, there is no misrepresentation that you allege. It is your deed. Once it is your deed, and then you acted on it... because from 1965 until 2018 the processes outlined in that Geneva Agreement were unfolded and the parties were acting under it.' Venezuela was estopped from denying that it participated under the Agreement. It is that very Agreement that says, when those steps fail, then resort can be made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to recommend another course of action because the Agreement is now exhausted.

That resort was made to the Secretary-General of the UN, and it is the Secretary-General of the UN who recommended that the judicial arm of the UN, the International Court of Justice process, be activated, and for the matter to be sent there for resolution. When the Court outlined all of that, the Court found as a matter of law, because of their active participation, that they cannot now say that they are not part of this, and the Court does not have jurisdiction. They gave the Court jurisdiction, and they cannot approbate and reprobate at the same time. That is the essence of how the Court ruled that it had jurisdiction. It used, at the international level, a domestic or a municipal concept called estoppel by action and estoppel by deed. Venezuela was estopped from denying the Court's jurisdiction. When we crossed that hurdle and the Court said, 'okay, Guyana, present your claim', they, rather than file their defence, filed another challenge. They then claimed that the claim of Guyana is now inadmissible. Why is the claim inadmissible? It is because the agreement that the Court is to review – the 1899 Arbitral Award – is between Venezuela and the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom is not a party before the ICJ. Therefore, the claim is inadmissible in its current form. We had to tender into evidence the whole process of Guyana becoming independent. We had to tender all independence instruments. We had to explain the law of how independence takes place, and what is the impact of independence in law – both municipal and international law – so everything that was Great Britain's in relation to Guiana had become Guyana's, and that is how Guyana is a proper party.

As we barely recovered from that, they went ahead to pass the referendum now. When they were going to do the referendum, we approached the Court and we complained to the Court that if they go and do this referendum, and they pass the laws that they were planning to pass, and they take actions as they were planning to do under those laws, then they would be taking steps that would be detrimental to the case that is pending. The laws and the rules of the ICJ say that the Court is empowered to grant what is called interim measures to protect the integrity of the case that is pending before it. In other words, if there is a likelihood that steps will be taken, which steps can have the effect of damaging the *res*, damaging the subject of the dispute, or irreversibly, or cause great prejudice to one of the parties in the dispute, before the dispute is actually resolved by the Court, then the Court must take steps to protect that dispute and maintain a status quo. That is what we went to the Court with and we got the orders in, I think it was 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2023. It is important that we read what the orders were. This is the Court order that was granted in December, 2023.

“Pending a final decision in the case, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela shall refrain from taking any action which would modify the situation that currently prevails in the territory in dispute, whereby the Co-operative Republic of Guyana administers and exercises control over that area.”

I pause. Importantly, in this is a pre-emptive and early pronouncement by and recognition of the Court that the area that is being disputed is currently under the administration and control of Guyana. Basically, that position should remain, and Venezuela must refrain from taking any action which would modify that situation, or change that situation, until the hearing and determination of the case. That, to some extent, put Venezuela's plan on the back foot. Then we had another very important event. As a result of President Ali's hard work at the level of his colleagues at the CARICOM, we got CARICOM to intervene because, notwithstanding the order of the ICJ, there were still steps being taken in clear violation of, if not the letter, the spirit of the order. As a result, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, in his capacity as Chairman of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)...

3.30 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** As you take that pause, Hon. Attorney General, let us ask Minister Manickchand to move for you to get the extension to conclude – 15 minutes.

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** May it please, your Honour. I ask that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to complete his speech.

**Mr. Speaker:** He can get up to 15.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Yes, 15 minutes to complete his presentation.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much. Proceed, Sir. Thank you. My apologies, Hon. Prime Minister. I did not notice you there.

**Mr. Nandlall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had the Chairman of CELAC and the then Chairman of CARICOM, Prime Minister Mia Mottley. The two of them brokered an engagement that took place at Argyle, Saint Vincent, where the Venezuelan team met with the Guyanese team face to face. President Ali led the Guyanese team, and President Maduro led the Venezuelan team. We met for a number of hours, then we broke off into two different rooms, where we had mediators working between the two groups, and we were able to iron out a document that became known, subsequently, as the Argyle Declaration. In that document, some very important covenants were arrived at. Let me read them briefly for the purpose of the record of the National Assembly:

1. “Agreed that Guyana and Venezuela, directly or indirectly, will not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances, including those consequential to any existing controversies between the two States.
2. Agreed that any controversies between the two States will be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Geneva Agreement dated February 17, 1966.
3. Committed to the pursuance of good neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence, and the unity of Latin America and the Caribbean.
4. Noted Guyana’s assertion that it is committed to the process and procedures of the International Court of Justice for the resolution of the border controversy. Noted Venezuela’s assertion of its lack of consent and lack of recognition of the International Court of Justice and its jurisdiction in the border controversy.

5. Agreed to continue dialogue on any other pending matters of mutual importance to the two countries.
6. Agreed that both States will refrain, whether by words or deeds, from escalating any conflict or disagreement arising from any controversy between them. The two States will cooperate to avoid incidents on the ground conducive to tension between them. In the event of such an incident the two States will immediately communicate with one another, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Community of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), and the President of Brazil to contain, reverse and prevent its recurrence.
7. Agreed to establish immediately a joint commission of the Foreign Ministers and technical persons from the two States to address matters as mutually agreed. An update from this joint commission will be submitted to the Presidents of Guyana and Venezuela within three months.”

Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to be part of that engagement, and my brother, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, was there, and I am going to report on his behalf that Guyana faithfully discharged all its obligations under the Argyle Declaration. On the contrary, we saw what Venezuela did, much beyond bad faith. In a violent breach, they decided to pass a law that would permit them to hold elections in the disputed territory, and they have begun to make arrangements, and have made arrangements, at least on their side of the territory, to conduct those elections, which presented to us another case to rush, again, to the ICJ. This would have been after we made all the rounds, again, to all the parties that are working with us to broker peace in this matter. We made a round all over again – the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the CARICOM, the OAS, the United States Government, the Government of the United Kingdom, the Government of Canada, the European Union – and every body issued calls of condemnation. We saw Mr. Marco Rubio, Secretary of State of the United States, has spoken strongly in support of Guyana. Notwithstanding all of that, Venezuela is proceeding, which forced us to rush again to the Caribbean Court of Justice to seek further protection. Mr. Speaker, that is what we did.

First of all, we had to convince the Court, the Court having granted interim measures already. That is an International Court of Justice; its processes are not lightly activated. We had to go and show a case for a review of the already existing interim measures, and for there to be a modification, because that is what the statute and rules of the court permit – you must either have a revocation of it or a modification of it, because there have been material changes in circumstances since the last time orders were made. We had to go, therefore, and show the Court, make out a case that, from since the last time, this and this and this and this are taking place in Venezuela, in clear violation of the interim measures. These things, unless another interim measure is granted in the orders prayed, in the orders that we are claiming, definitely would affect the merit of the case that is still pending. Mr. Speaker, we did so; we presented our case to the tribunal, and once again we were able to persuade the tribunal, and we were granted another set of interim orders.

First of all, we got a reaffirmation of the previous orders that I read out, and that reaffirmation of the previously granted interim measures was unanimous. All 12 of the Judges said that they are reaffirming the interim measures and that Venezuela must not proceed as they had previously ordered. Three of those 12 Judges felt that there was no need to grant an additional order because they felt that the interim measures already granted, whose reaffirmation they just did, sufficiently and adequately addressed the problem. However, we were able to persuade nine out of those 12 to go an extra piece, to go and grant us an extra measure. That is what they did, and they said this, ‘pending a final decision in the case, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela shall refrain from conducting elections or preparing to conduct elections in the territory in dispute, which the Co-operative Republic of Guyana currently administers and over which it exercises.’

Mr. Speaker, you cannot get clearer and simpler language than that. So, currently, if Venezuela proceeds in the manner planned by them, they will clearly be in violation of the order. The question has arisen: what then? You would have thought that a man of the stature of Mr. Aubrey Norton, the Hon. Member, would know that, firstly, we cannot detail what our security plans are. We cannot detail for public consumption matters of national security. That is the first thing. It is quite incomprehensible for him to demand such details from us here. Secondly, Mr. Norton must know that we cannot stand up to Venezuela in a fighting language on a pound-for-pound battle. We cannot. It is like Dr. Ashni Singh and me, he cannot stand up next to me in a pound-for-pound fight. As my colleague, Hon. Robeson Benn, correctly

said, that possibility does not exist. So, we have to work on diplomacy. We have to rely on international law. Fortunately, firstly, in practice, there has hardly been – very, very rare – a decision of the International Court not obeyed.

In 1987, there was a ruling in Nicaragua against the United States, and the United States vetoed. They used their numbers at the Security Council, and they vetoed certain enforcement actions that were being taken against them. However, the order was complied with after that. I think the last time there was a non-compliance was in the precursor to this Court, the International Court, the permanent International Court of Justice, which was from the League of Nations days. However, the ICJ there, I do not think, in a matter concluded on its merits, that you have had a breach of those orders. The statutes of the Court and the rules of the Court are all part of the Charter of the United Nations that Venezuela has subscribed to, and most countries of the world have subscribed to and have ratified, and they are bound by them. The Charter states that interim measures are binding and enforceable; final orders are binding and enforceable; that the Security Council of the UN is the enforcement arm, and it will determine how the orders are going to be enforced.

First of all, all parties to an order in a case in the ICJ are bound by orders of the ICJ. Whether you subscribe to it, whether you consent to jurisdiction, the Court has found that it has jurisdiction, you are a party, you have participated, you are bound by the orders. So, when these orders are made, and if they are violated, what the world will have to determine is whether they will allow Venezuela to strike at the foundation of world order; whether they will allow Venezuela to strike at the foundation of international peace, international law and order; strike at the foundation of the United Nations; strike at the foundation of the World Court of Justice. That is what it will amount to, because, after that, the world will witness whether these organisations are strong or whether they exist in paper only. If countries are complying, they are complying, compromising to some extent, their individual sovereignty. If they are making that sacrifice, if they are compromising their sovereignty for the public good, would they, 187 of them, allow one recalcitrant, one rogue nation, to destroy all the sacrifices they have made?

3.45 p.m.

This is independent of who have vested commercial interest here as a nation. I am speaking from the perspective of the world order of things – the International Court of Justice, the

United Nations and everything else. That is what, fortunately, for Guyana, is at stake here. If Venezuela is allowed to get away with this, the entire Western Hemisphere.... This is the only peaceful part of the world; the other half of the world is far less peaceful. If we allow a rogue state to take place here and shake the foundations of peace, shake the structures of international law, shake the edifice of public order as we know it in this hemisphere, well then, we are going to go into a different dimension altogether.

I take great comfort in knowing that the world is on our side, our neighbours are on our side, international law is on our side and peace and diplomacy are on our side. The only persons who are not on our side are Mr. Aubrey Norton and a few Members of the Opposition. Unfortunately, without them we can carry this. We have always fetched them on our backs. The People's Progressive Party/Civic has always been the mature child in this country, has always fetched them like recalcitrant children on our backs, and we are prepared to do it again. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Attorney General. To conclude the debate, we have the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Todd.

**Mr. Todd (replying):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, please allow me to thank the Hon. Prime Minister, the Attorney General, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Home Affairs for their sterling contributions and presentations, and for providing context and depth for the people of Guyana on this special day here in the National Assembly. Of course, there is my dear Colleague, the Hon. Mr. Charlie.

It is quite unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition chose to leave the National Assembly and not allow the Members of the Opposition's team, who are slated to speak, to make their presentations and for us to continue the partnership and solidarity which existed for decades pre-independence. It is quite astonishing – I will say – and to some extent shameful that the Leader of the Opposition is really not in tune with what is going on. I am deeply saddened. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that we are inclusive, and that this matter before the court receives the attention of everyone concerned. As my dear Colleague, the Attorney General, mentioned, we left the committees the way they were, the way we inherited them. I wanted to go a little further than the Hon. Attorney General to mention the

names of the persons on the committee, so the people of Guyana have a sense of how inclusive we are.

There is the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Guyana-Venezuela Border Controversy, which is chaired by yours truly. The agent, who is Mr. Carl Greenidge, is on that Committee. He is the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and former Foreign Secretary. Ambassador Mr. Ronald Austin, who is Advisor to the Leader of the Opposition on Frontier Matters, is on that Committee. The former Ambassador, Mr. Rudy Collins, is on that Committee. He served as an Ambassador under the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) Government. Mr. Ralph Ramkarran is on that Committee. The former Speaker of the National Assembly and former Diplomat, Dr. Barton Scotland is on that Committee. Former Ambassador Mr. Cedric Joseph who served the People's National Congress/Reform Administration is on that Committee. I will also mention two members who are now deceased. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Rashleigh Jackson sat on that Committee until the time of his passing. There was Professor Duke Pollard who served at the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and on that Committee until the time of his passing.

So, it is inconceivable to understand how the Leader of the Opposition could come to this House and tell the people of Guyana that he is not aware, and that the Government of Guyana is unilateral in its treating of this issue. This is not true. We hold regular meetings. As the Attorney General mentioned, the Leader of the Opposition identified Ambassador Mr. Ronald Austin as his Chief Advisor who attends meetings at The Hague. **[Ms. Teixeira:** Is that not Ms. Walton-Desir?] It is not Ms. Walton-Desir; she was never included. He also has a Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation who should be following the issues. They need to spend more time doing work – real work – for the people of this country. They also have a responsibility. They also must be accountable. They are also elected representatives of the people of Guyana. Mr. speaker, I would like the record to show that we have a Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Guyana/Venezuela Border Controversy with the names that I submitted to this National Assembly – all of whom are active participants.

I will address the diplomatic outreach mentioned by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition should be aware that, at the level of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Guyana/Venezuela controversy is always on the agenda for updates and, when necessary, statements are released, and they are public statements. They are made public. We issued several

statements at the level of CARICOM over the last four and a half years. There is also a Ministerial Group on Guyana at the level of the Commonwealth, that meets on a yearly basis for updates on the controversy and those statements are also made public.

When the Leader of the Opposition spoke about Africa, we are very present in Africa on this issue, at the level of the Commonwealth. It is disingenuous of the Leader of the Opposition to come to this noble House and say the things he said because they are not true. They are incorrect. I want the record to show that, at the level of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Guyana is a member of the group A3+, which is a very active group that treats with all the issues in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Guyana is representing Latin America and the Caribbean. We have three non-permanent member states on the council that are representing Africa. It is a very active group. These are conversations that are happening all the time. Statements are being released. I am not aware if the Leader of the Opposition is doing any work at all or paying attention to anything with regard to governance. I am talking about CARICOM, which is our viable integration movement. I am talking about the Commonwealth. I am talking about the United Nations Security Council. We also constantly update the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

It is sad to see the Leader of the Opposition, at such a critical time in this country, not doing any work. He is not coming to the House to make representation for those who – well, not those who voted for him because we have to wait on the next General and Regional Elections – want to see what contributions he can make to advance our standing and strengthen the unity we always shared as a people and nation. It is quite embarrassing. Coupled with that, the Venezuelans are listening to everything that we say and do in this country, to the extent that they take it to the court. The Leader of the Opposition must know this. As I recall, he is a student of international relations, so he should understand interstate relations and should know that we live in a rule-based order. The fact that we are before the International Court of Justice, where the matter is properly placed, is because we believe and commit to global governance. If we are going to have a peaceful resolution of this matter and follow the spirit of the letter of the 1966 Geneva Agreement, then we are right where we are supposed to be. For him to come and tell the House that all we are focused on is the International Court of Justice, is to tell the people of Guyana and the rest of the world that he totally – I am trying to find a

word. **[Bishop Edghill: At sea...]** This is worse than being at sea. He is incompetent. He does not deserve to be the Leader of the Opposition. It is embarrassing. He is embarrassing himself; he is embarrassing the Members of the Opposition; he is embarrassing us in the diplomatic community; and he is embarrassing us in front of President Maduro. That is his best friend now. He is going to become President Maduro's best friend because he is condemning us for standing. This is shameful, but on the bright side, the people of Guyana are being well led by His Excellency the President on this issue.

4.00 p.m.

He has been leading from the front; he has been traversing the world; he has been engaging with the media; he has been strengthening our resolve; he has been mobilising across this country, and he has been making strong representation every time, and the Commanding Chief as well.

I would like to let the people of Guyana know that we are strong in our resolve; we are united as a people, as a nation, and as a country. We will defend and protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity. We are on the right side of international law, and we are committed to a peaceful resolution of this controversy that Venezuela has with Guyana. We are hopeful that, at the end of this case, which should come to a completion sometime in 2026, Guyana will be triumphant, and we can put this behind us and move forward in building our country as a united country focused on uplifting our people. I must say that today is still a good day and a successful day in this House for the people of this country with the representation they have received today, not only in context, but in depth.

Mr. Speaker, allow me once again to thank my Colleagues for their support and for their presentations on this motion that is very critical. This is the second motion that we are bringing before this Parliament. We are preparing to celebrate our 59<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary and we are going to do it in grand style. We are very excited. We are all mobilised, and we are ready to put Guyana rightfully where it should be placed, all 83,000 square miles of this beautiful country of ours. We are going to show strong representation, not only today in this House, but throughout our history. Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I do once again put this motion to the Parliament for the support as we continue to represent this great nation of ours. I thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I would like to invite the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation to come here so we can present him with the Resolution. He will be well armed with that Resolution as he continues to fight the aggression and the false claims of Venezuela.

*[Mr. Speaker presented the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation with Resolution No. 83.]*

### **Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1/2025**

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling fifty-seven billion, four hundred and ninety-two million, six hundred and fifteen thousand, two hundred and seventy-five dollars (\$57,492,615,275) for the period ending 2025-12-31.

*[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the House will resolve itself into committee to consider Financial Paper No.1/2025.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I now put the question...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, if I may?

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul:

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service [Dr. Singh]:** Mr. Chairman, before Mr. Mahipaul proceeds, I just want to clarify something. I might be getting my sequencing wrong, but at what point do I give the signification of Cabinet's approval?

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service. Let the Assembly resume.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, you have the floor.

**Dr. Singh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish only Sir to signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025, Supplementary Estimates, Current and Capital, totalling \$57,492,615,275 for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.

### **Motion to approve Supplementary Financial Paper No. 1/2025**

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling fifty-seven billion, four hundred and ninety-two million, six hundred and fifteen thousand, two hundred and seventy-five dollars (\$57,492,615,275) for the period ending 2025-12-31.”

*[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you Hon. Minister. The House will resolve itself into Committee to consider Financial Paper No.1/2025.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Ms. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, before you move...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Ms. Volda Lawrence, go ahead.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Chairman, before we move on to the line items, may I ask the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, with regard to this \$57.5 billion that is now going to be drawn from the Consolidated Fund, what is the position with the Consolidated Fund in terms of its overdraft? Was the 2024 overdraft cleared? If it has not been cleared, could he say what is the present overdraft on the Consolidated Fund?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service, do you want to give us an indication whether you are breaching those limits?

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I find it a bit surprising that a question of this nature should be posed by a person I consider to be a senior Member of this House. The Hon. Member, Ms. Lawrence, has served in this House for many terms. I believe when I came into the House for the first time, I met her here. She has chaired the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the past and I think done so in a manner redounded to her credit. As a person who has had the benefit of vast volumes and years of parliamentary experience, I believe the Member is very acquainted with the process to be followed in order to present a question. If she wishes to table a question, there are Standing Orders that govern the means and processes through which a question is to be tabled. Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, it astonishes me that a Member of the APNU/AFC Opposition would have the temerity to ask about an overdraft when they sat in government and presided over an illegal overdraft for years, which we had to resolve when we came into government. Thank you very much, Sir.

*Motion proposed.*

### Current Expenditure

#### Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other – \$3,000,000,000

**Ms. Fernandes:** Mr. Chairman, through you, Sir, could the Hon. Minister say how many persons have registered thus far?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I must say that the registration and the payment of the cash grant to the people of Guyana, as was promised by the PPP/C centred Government, as of 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2025, we have registered some 617,398 citizens for the cash grant. As I mentioned, this cash grant payment is a success story for Guyana. I am certain that every Member of the Opposition who is entitled to the cash grant payment has cheques that were cut and he/she should have received them, unless he/she demonstrated a disinterest in the registration and collection of their \$100,000. Once you are registered, it is there for you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Member, I now put a question that the sum...

**Ms. Fernandes:** A follow-up, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, Ms. Fernandes, you have the floor.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Thank you, Sir. A follow-up to that question. Could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate by region the number of persons that have been registered thus far?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Again, I must reiterate the success of the registration and payment of this cash grant. The Hon. Member is asking for the disaggregation by region and it is as follows: Region 1 – 20,811 Guyanese registered; Region 2 – 33,193 Guyanese registered; Region 3 – 95,351 Guyanese registered; Region 4 – I know the Hon. Member is more interested in Region 4 – 274,957; Region 5 – 38,998; Region 6 – 81,076; Region 7 – 16,280; Region 8 – 8,250; Region 9 – 18,667; Region 10 – 29,850, and that gives us a total of 617,398.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Through you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Prime Minister say whether the number of persons registered is the same as the number of persons for whom cheques have been printed, or are there persons who were registered for whom cheques have not yet been printed for?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, we have printed 602,927 cheques. Does that answer your question?

**Ms. Fernandes:** Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate that by region?

*4.15 p.m.*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** In Region 1, we have printed 20,594 cheques. Bear in mind, I said the registration was 20,811. In Region 2 – 32,273 cheques were printed; in Region 3 – 93,171; in Region 4 – 268,271; Region 5 – 38,132; Region 6 – 78,829; Region 7 – 15,967; Region 8 – 8,187; Region 9 – 18,499; and Region 10 – 29,004 cheques were printed.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Thank you. Could the Hon. Minister say, by region, how many cheques have not been distributed thus far?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I will help the Hon. Member by mentioning that we have distributed 578,182 of those cheques across the country. This represents 96% of the cheques printed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Through you, Sir, could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate by region how many persons the \$3 billion that is being sought here today will be catering to?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, we expect an additional 12,100 more registrants by mid-June 2025, and this will take the total number of registrants up to 629,498 by mid-June 2025. To process the additional grants, we are requesting the sum on paper, Mr. Chairman.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Could the Hon. Prime Minister, through you, Sir, just disaggregate the regions where these 12,100 registrants are expected to come from?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, this is an ongoing registration process. It is difficult to disaggregate at this stage. At the end of it, when we finish the registration at the end of June, then we will be able to disaggregate. There is an expectation that there are some 12,100 people still to come forward and register for their cheques there. At the end of the process, we will be able to disaggregate and say how many came forward and by region.

**Ms. Fernandes:** Thank you. A follow-up, Sir. Could the Hon. Prime Minister say how he arrived at 12,100 persons expected if it has not been disaggregated by region? Where did this figure come from?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, this is based on a forecast. We have to process approximately 26,571 more grants, as I mentioned before, which will take the total number to some 629,498. Therefore, we are making provision in the forecast for the 12,100 – that I mentioned before – additional.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Prime Minister, what is your forecast based on? Is it the previous census, or are you basing it on the list of electors?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the forecast is not based on a previous census but is based on the rate of registration per day – the people who came forward to register in all the regions. We expect that there are some 12,100 people out there still to come forward to register, and we are making provision for that.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Prime Minister... With your permission, Mr. Chairman, could I sit? [An

**Hon. Member (Government):** No.] You do not determine for me.

**Mr. Chairman:** We have asked persons to sit so that they could be closer to the microphone, and we could get the sound. You can sit. PM, you can also sit too.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Prime Minister, earlier, Hon. Member, I heard you say registration sites. My question to you, even before I put the question, what I recalled is that, in Georgetown, there are two sites, one in Kingston – registration site, that is, and at the National Gymnasium. Could you say where in the regions – all 10 administrative regions- are these registration sites located?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, in the administrative regions, we use the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) and the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) as registration sites. Those sites remain open, and you would expect that the number of people who are coming to register now, obviously, is far less than before. We have already registered over 617,000 Guyanese, so we have a trickle coming now. However, the sites are still open, and we are still encouraging people to come register and collect their \$100,000. We want every Guyanese to collect the money. It is their money – every Guyanese to collect the money. We already mentioned that this is not a one-off payment. There will be more cash grants in the future. What is important is for every Guyanese to come and collect the money that is made available to them in this cash grant 2024–2025.

**Ms. Lawrence:** To the Hon. Prime Minister, now that you are winding down and you have fewer sites, could you kindly say to the public what mechanism is in place for the registration of those persons who are incapacitated? I am talking about those persons who are bedridden to be registered.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, we have registered shut-ins, and we will continue to provide assistance to register shut-ins. Even though we are operating at the NDC and the RDC sites, once there are shut-ins who are not registered, once the information comes to our hands, we have teams that are readily available to go to their homes and register them. That has been done, and we will continue to do that. If the Hon. Member is aware of any shut-ins or a list of shut-ins, kindly send it to us, and we will register them.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question... the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We approved \$60 billion in the past, as guided by the Prime Minister in his answer last time when we considered the budget for this cash grant programme, which amounts to 600,000 people. The



Prime Minister indicated that the cheques cut so far are 602,927 cheques. Sir, the additional 2,927 cheques, which amount to \$292,700,000, could the Hon. Prime Minister say how is it that cheques were cut for this sum when we approved \$60 billion, particularly for this programme, and the additional money was for other items?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The exact figure that was approved was \$61 billion, if you could recall. There was a \$30.5 billion and a \$30.5 billion. The money was utilised to cut cheques for the numbers given there. Of course, there were administrative costs associated with the project, too.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. I am checking the Hansard where it was said \$60 billion, but I am guided now that the Prime Minister is saying \$61 billion, as in \$30.5 billion and \$30.5 billion. The Hon. Prime Minister said just now that there are administrative costs, and I remember us asking, Sir, if there were administrative costs aligned to this programme. He said no that it is being run by a ministry, and that ministry is executing with their people. May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister, what is the administrative cost that is associated with this programme now?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The administrative costs obviously would be transportation, tentage, meals, and logistics related to the staff who are doing the work of registering and distributing the cheques. Of course, security is a cost, too.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, so may I ask the Hon. Prime Minister, with your permission, what is the cost associated to the administrative cost to run this programme? Is that being taken out from the \$60 billion, which catered for 600,000 people?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The administrative cost amounted to \$1 billion, and that was provided through the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, through you, was the \$1 billion provided through the Ministry of Finance, separate from the \$60 billion that was budgeted for this programme? Is that what the Hon. Prime Minister is saying?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am trying to say that for a long time now, Hon. Member – \$30.5 billion and \$30.5 billion.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes, Sir. The administrative cost: could the Hon. Prime Minister give us a breakdown of this \$1 billion that is for administrative costs in terms of how much has been spent so far in each region?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I do not have an aggregation of the administrative costs by region here. I will ask that it be laid over afterwards.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Prime Minister is saying that it is \$30.5 billion and \$30.5 billion, which gives us \$61 billion, and we are asking now for an additional \$3 billion, which carries us to \$64 billion. Now, if we are looking for a total of the cheques that he is estimating to be 629,000, let us say 630,000, that would actually mean that it is \$63 billion that is associated with this \$100,000 and the \$1 billion, as he said, came from the Ministry of Finance outside of this \$63 billion. Therefore, what is the additional \$1 billion under this programme for?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The sums of \$30.5 billion and \$30.5 billion will give us \$61 billion. Is that so?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Right. We have the administrative costs linked to the \$1 billion there. Today, we are asking for \$3 billion. The sum of \$3 billion to process the additional grants will be required as follows: \$202,651,000,000 will be utilised for printing the cheques. Okay? The additional cheques that we talked about earlier, and \$342.9 million to cover administrative costs. Okay.

4.30 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Prime Minister is now saying that the administrative cost is associated with the \$64 billion in total. If we take out \$1 billion from that, we will be left with \$63 billion, which is associated particularly with the cash grant distribution. Now, my question is...

**Mr. Chairman:** Again.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes, Sir. Some 602,927 cheques were printed. The \$60 billion that was approved in the past caters for 600,000 cheques. How did we arrive at 602,927 cheques printed when we only had \$60 billion to print 600,000 cheques? Are you saying to us that you cut cheques without having the money for them?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is a case of internal management of the money made available. Some unused operational costs were used to print the additional cheques, and now that money is being replenished. All the money is being accounted for in a transparent manner.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** From the unused operational costs, we have associated them with the printing of cheques. May I ask, how is it we have arrived now at \$342 million being an additional sum for operational costs, given that we have used to print cheques, and of course, from this \$3 billion, it is going to go back to operational costs. Why do we need more money for operational costs?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** You need more money for operational costs because you are now printing more cheques, and you now have to distribute the cheques. Obviously, you will have additional operational costs.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the Prime Minister can recall, I asked him in 2024, when he came for the first allotment, whether any of that money was going towards overhead costs. Sir, you said no, that the administering of the cash grant was being done by personnel from the various Ministries, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), *et cetera*. The *Hansard* speaks for itself. You are now saying to us that you had to use money from the allocation, not only for transportation but also for printing, but you will be getting back the money for the printing. What about the money for the other overheads? Will this be going back to this fund from the various Ministries? You said you are using their personnel. I guess you are using their vehicles, gasoline, *et cetera*, too.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** All the moneys are being accounted for. It was utilised, as mentioned before, for the operational costs. It started small and then it ramped up; it got big and we are subsiding again. All the moneys are being accounted for. Rest assured. The Government allocated \$30.5 million to process cash grants for public servants, pensions, citizens residing in the Hinterland regions and Region 4 last year. This year, we provided more money, and now we are asking for a little bit more to finish the process. The people of Guyana received their cash grants, as promised by the Government. All the moneys are accounted for. The only reason we are coming here is that there is an additional requirement for money to pay those who are still coming forward to register for the cash grant. It has an operational cost.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Hon. Prime Minister, moving on, could you say what mechanism you will put in place to assist those persons in the far-flung villages whose cheques are at RDCs? Take, for instance, the cheques for persons at Upper Mazaruni are at Bartica. [Ms. Teixeira: *(Inaudible)*]

Ms. Teixeira, you are not the Prime Minister. You are not

the Prime Minister, Ms. Teixeira. Allow the Prime Minister to answer. Do you think he is a rubber stamp? Allow him to answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, we have a central Government administrative system. We have a regional administrative system. At the local level, we have an administrative system. All of them are involved in this process to ensure every Guyanese collects their cheques. A lot of work has been done at the RDC level, at the NDC level and with the Toshaos to ensure people get their cheques. The work is most commendable. I think, at this forum, we need to commend the people at all levels who are working overtime behind the scenes, faceless, ensuring the cheques are distributed to everybody throughout the length and breadth of Guyana, even the shut-ins. Even in the remote villages, people are collecting their cheques. That is being done as we speak in the House of Assembly.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** I know that we had a mechanism in place for persons who passed away after registration, and their cheques were printed. There was a mechanism in place for their families or their next of kin to uplift the cheques. May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister how many such cases we have in the system, in terms of the total number of persons who passed away and their family members who had to collect?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I do not have a list of the cases, but I have a story of a particular case that came to me. I so advised the person what to do, and they reported that they received the cheque. The mother had passed away, and the son came for advice, and he was able to receive the cheque, in keeping with the policy that was established for that. I am aware that there are a number of such cases, but I do not have a list of the number. The system is in place, and the system works.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Would the Prime Minister be kind enough to lay that information over, in terms of the total number of cases?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** For whatever it is worth, I will so lay it over for the Hon. Member.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** A follow-up from Mr. Mahipaul's question. I do not know if it is possible, but could the Hon. Prime Minister lay over the list of the 600,000 registered persons?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The list is available at the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Ramsaroop:** Could we access that through the Ministry of Finance, Prime Minister?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I repeat, the list is available at the Ministry of Finance.

**Ms. Ferguson:** To the Hon. Prime Minister, a follow-up from my colleague, Mr. Mahipaul's, question with regard to deceased persons. It is just a suggestion, Hon. Prime Minister, because I am fully ...

**Mr. Chairman:** You cannot make a suggestion. Ask him a question.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Prime Minister, what provisions are in place if persons have the red and white birth certificates? Persons went to the registration centre, and they were turned back. They were told that they had to get an updated birth certificate. What provision is in place to ensure that the red and white birth certificate can be used to effect whatever payments to families of persons who are deceased?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am not aware if the Hon. Member is talking about a death certificate.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Let me simplify it, Sir. If a mother died and her son turned up with a red and white birth certificate...Remember, he has to prove that the deceased person is his mother, and that can only be determined by way of a birth certificate. The young man went to the facility with his mother's red and white birth certificate and death certificate, and he was turned back. The British Guiana Birth Certificate I am speaking about. It still exists today.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am not aware of such an incident. I would assume that we have Commissioners of Oaths to Affidavits. If they appear before one of these Commissioners who will sign off, and it is submitted, maybe they will get through.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I think the Prime Minister is missing something. Let me just explain, Prime Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, the Prime Minister has answered.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Member is raising an actual incident or a hypothetical situation.

**Ms. Ferguson:** There is no hypothetical question.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Did this happen?

**Ms. Ferguson:** Yes, it happened.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Could the person come to me at my Office, and I will deal with it?

**Ms. Ferguson:** I encouraged the young man ... I made a call to the General Register Office (GRO)...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, the Prime Minister is speaking and he is offering a solution. Go ahead, Hon. Prime Minister.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I will ask if the case can be brought to my Office and I will deal with it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question.

*Item 1: 02-022 Office of the Prime Minister – Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management – Other – \$3,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisation – \$7,800,000,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Firstly, could the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate or provide some additional information on the \$7.8 billion being sought?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We are aware that even as we are expending money on building out a new transmission system, the existing transmission and distribution system is undergoing repairs until the new system comes into place. This money is being requested to continue the repairs of the old transmission system that did not receive much attention and is now receiving the attention of our Government. The disaggregation of the \$7.8 billion: right-sizing transformers – \$1,400,000,000; upgrading, replacement of conductors – \$972,284,000; alternative pole structures – \$1,489,790,000; upgrade and replacement of switches – \$790,000,000; and auto reclosers – \$3,136,400,000. That gives us a total of \$7,800,226,800.

*4.45 p.m.*

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much for the disaggregation, Sir. I would not quote the Prime Minister. He may not remember, but in the *Hansard* of the 98<sup>th</sup> Sitting,

on page 2025, three months ago, we asked the Prime Minister, when he came for the \$18 billion, what was the transmission and distribution? The Prime Minister responded that this was being done by Guyana Power and Light (GPL) and that I, as a former Minister, and he was very dismissive, should have known that. Three months ago, that was GPL's position. Can you say what has happened that is no longer GPL's cost for undertaking transmission and distribution, and upgrades?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** This expenditure and the volume of maintenance that is needed now and until the rest of 2025 necessitated us coming to the House for this money. There are 157 kilometres of existing distribution network that need immediate repairs, and we need to address this now. We cannot wait. If we wait, these same Members of the House will chastise us for not repairing the distribution system. Therefore, when they start to suffer from the blackouts associated with a distribution system that needs attention, we will not hear the last of it. This is what we call a pre-emptive measure. We come to the House as a responsible government, we ask for the money, and we continue to do the repairs to ensure that we limit instances of power instability in the homes of Guyanese who are connected to the Demerara-Berbice Interconnected System (DBIS).

**Mr. Patterson:** Very good. Sir, three months ago, almost to the date, the Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips, in response, stated:

“The Hon. Member is fully aware of how GPL operates. The simple answer is that is within the operating cost budget of GPL. Everything he mentioned there is fully funded for the year. What we are funding now is for the fuel.”

Sir, three months ago, GPL, through you, said to this nation that all the transmission repairs, the poles, the switch gears, and the auto closers were being funded by GPL. I am quoting you exactly, Sir. Can you say what has occurred in three months with the management of GPL and your stewardship that has now necessitated \$7.8 billion in supplementary? I hope you know that I quoted you, Sir; do you want the page?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Was that a question? I am sorry. I did not think that it was a question. It was more of a comment.

**Mr. Patterson:** Can you repeat it for him, Mr. Chairman? Maybe he will understand it better.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am trying to respond to the comment

**Mr. Patterson:** It was not a comment.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, he was saying three months ago.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am trying to answer you. Three months ago – and the Hon. Member should agree with me on this – was a long time, a long period in this whole process of power transmission and distribution. We could be looking good today, and tonight, we are faced with having to do massive maintenance. This is an old transmission system. This is a transmission system that suffered five years of neglect, 2015-2020. This is a transmission and distribution system that has to cater for the accelerated development that is taking place in Guyana – new housing schemes, new businesses, and everyone wants streetlights. Should I say more? As a Government, we are utilising the money to repair the existing system so that Guyanese throughout the Demerara-Berbice Interconnected System can enjoy stable delivery of electricity to their homes and to their businesses, for streetlight purposes, to enhance security, and for all the different playgrounds that are now demanding streetlights. So, therein lies the expense.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much. Since the Prime Minister has alluded that three months under the stewardship and management of GPL is a very long time, and all sorts of things can happen. could the Prime Minister say when they last conducted an entire system-wide audit of the status of GPL? This is so that it does not necessitate us coming back here another three months, since you seem to be budgeting in three-month cycles.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** That analysis is ongoing, and we are benefiting from the information garnered from that analysis, and we are making informed decisions to ensure that the electricity situation in Guyana is more stable than when you were in charge.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, that is an impossibility, but never mind. It is an impossibility, and I see you nodding, Sir. Of the five line items that have been mentioned, how many of these have you been out to tender for, and what is the procurement status of the line items here?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The specifications and the designs are completed, and with the passage of this money

that is being requested, the next step will be going out for tender, *et cetera*, to satisfy the requirements here.

**Mr. Patterson:** Could the Hon. Prime Minister say to this House when he expects to start and complete? The start date is important.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I wish to assure the Hon. Member that immediately on the approval of this request, we are ready to start the transparent process of tendering for what is required here. The importance is transparency, so it is step by step.

**Mr. Patterson:** Alternative pole replacement: Could the Hon. Prime Minister say to this House where he is doing this, and if any land acquisition is required?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We are talking about an existing distribution system, and what we are doing is just pulling out old poles that are already planted and replacing them with either fibreglass or with concrete or perhaps wooden poles again. There is no need for any right away land acquisition. There are existing sites that are being replaced. That is why we refer to it as alternative pole structures.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, under the very line item we are considering here, 6321, a follow-up from my honourable colleague on this side of the House. I heard the Hon. Prime Minister say that step by step, things will take a process. You did say that the works will be tendered out. Could you say what method of tendering, taking into consideration that this is an elections year?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, the method of tendering.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** In accordance with the National Procurement and Tender Administration Act, it will be public tendering.

**Ms. Ferguson:** The Hon. Prime Minister stated that the tendering will be done publicly, and we know that in many cases, it takes about a month to two months to get tenders in. This is an elections year. Could you say, Mr. Prime Minister, when exactly the tendering will be done and when exactly the commencement of this project will be? Mr. Chairman, I just want to put on record that, although we are considering this Supplementary Paper, you know that we are in violation of section 24 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, please. Hon. Prime Minister, you have two questions, and maybe you may answer that assertion that you are in violation. The auditor, Ms. Ferguson, is upbraiding you.

**Mr. Nandlall:** It is a violation to run away with the mace, too.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, and that violation was seriously penalised. Hon. Prime Minister.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I wish to reassure the Hon. Member again that upon the approval of this money, the tendering process will start immediately.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister. If you want, you can sit and just pull the microphone forward, and it will help Members of the Opposition who cannot hear.

**Ms. Ferguson:** The explanation just provided by the Hon. Prime Minister is unacceptable. Why am I saying this...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, ask the question. Whether it is acceptable to you or not, it is the answer.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Prime Minister knew that they were coming to this National Assembly to request an additional sum.

**Mr. Chairman:** Good.

**Ms. Ferguson:** And we expect that they should have a work plan in place.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, ask the question if there is a work plan.

**Ms. Ferguson:** So, could the Hon. Prime Minister say to this House when exactly the tender is likely to be published?

5.00 p.m.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I wish to repeat for the Hon. Member's purpose that maintenance is an ongoing exercise. Therefore, there is a maintenance plan, but we have to respect the laws of this country. We have to await the approval of this money before we can tender, and I said it will be done immediately. They have plans, they have the designs and everything, but we cannot *put the cart before the horse*. This must be approved, and then we do the tender. The tender will be in newspapers as early as Sunday newspapers. You know, from being in Government, that on Wednesdays and Sundays, you have publications of many

tenders. Once this is approved, we will be ready for that process.

*Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$7, 800,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

### Capital Expenditure

#### Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Hinterland Electrification – \$737,987,000

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Hon. Prime Minister disaggregate this \$737.9 million being sought in this paper?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The \$738 million being sought in this paper is to connect 17 unserved areas to the distribution network. Mr. Chairman, in the course of practising good governance in Guyana, His Excellency has been conducting several outreaches throughout the length and breadth of Guyana. Our Ministers have been conducting similar outreaches, and many communities have made representations to be connected to the grid. This money is to be expended on connecting several such communities to the grid.

In Region 2, \$30 million will be spent to connect the David James Housing Scheme at Charity, Essequibo Coast, Mainstay/Whyaka, Essequibo Coast; these are two areas, and some 75 of our citizens will benefit from that.

In Region 3, \$6.379 million will be spent to bring electricity to the Washington, Parika area. Some 25 households will benefit.

In Region 4, we have the communities at Kairuni, Linden-Soesdyke Highway, Friendship, East Bank Demerara, Laluni – again on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway – network extension from *Seweyo* to *Moblissa* on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway, a community at Adventure on the Linden-Soesdyke Highway, Silver Hill, Cuffy Koker Dam at Friendship on the East Bank Demerara and No. 10 Village, Mahaica Creek, Little Baibu, and West Bank. Some 1,706 households in those nine areas mentioned will be connected. We will expend \$868,249,610.

In Region 5, Providence, Mahaicony, we will spend \$12 million and 25 households will benefit.

In Region 6, there is High Dam in New Amsterdam, No. 59 Village in Corentyne, No. 68 Village in Corentyne, No. 74

Village in Corentyne. Some 235 households will be benefiting from electricity for the first time, and we will spend \$21,357,802.

We have asked for \$738 million. The total that will be required for this project is \$937 million, and we previously had \$200 million approved for this project. So, now we are just asking for the \$737 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, before I take the next question, (*inaudible*) please join me in welcoming National Basketball Association (NBA) Hall of Famer, Mr. Hakeem Olajuwon, and Mr. Lutfi Hassan, our Consul General in Texas, to the National Assembly. Gentlemen and your delegation, thank you for visiting us. After we put this line item, we will take a short break and come back and complete the Financial Paper.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Sir. Sir, just let me say it is a pleasure to have *Hakeem the Dream* in our midst. I watched him on television lead the *Houston Rockets* to two National Basketball Association (NBA) Finals. It is an honour and a pleasure to have him here. Back to local news, Sir.

This line item, 2606700, is listed as Hinterland Electrification. Can I ask the Hon. Prime Minister, where are my brothers and sisters in the hinterland being served with this allocation? All the places you called are urban coastal regions, Sir. Is there anything catered for the hinterland communities?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, because of the budget architecture, this expenditure is properly placed under Hinterland Electrification Company Incorporated (HECI). Many of the areas are unserved. They do not have electricity. We are giving them electricity for the first time.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much for that explanation, Prime Minister. Can you tell me if any areas in Region 9, Region 1, or Region 7 are being served with this allocation?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, this paper is a simple paper. It is asking for money to bring electricity to areas that never had electricity before. They are unserved areas. They are not effectively part of the Demerara-Berbice Interconnected System. When they are connected, they will become part of the Demerara-Berbice Interconnected System. So, future maintenance-related work will not have to fall within that category of the DBIS and Guyana Power and Light or whatever could deal with it. There is nothing improper with dealing with this under HECI because it falls within the mission of HECI.

**Mr. Patterson:** Just a follow-up, Sir. Before the Prime Minister's very long explanation, GPL was responsible for bringing unserved areas onto the grid. Can I ask the Prime Minister, how many unserved areas has GPL brought onto the grid?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Well, you know, Mr. Chairman, in answering the question, you have to look at it over a time period. Every year, GPL and the Government of Guyana, by extension, seek to bring unserved areas onto the grid. If you are asking for 2024 alone, approximately 1,000 new households in 17 previously unserved areas received electricity service for the first time. That includes Crabwood Creek, Moleson Creek in Berbice, and Samville in Kuru Kuru. What we are doing now is an extension of what we have been doing from August, 2020 to now – every year bringing more and more unserved areas onto the grid, providing electricity to more and more households in Guyana.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I stepped out a bit, so I do not know whether this question was asked, but just to be on the safe side, I will nevertheless put it. Earlier in the year, on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, Mr. Prime Minister, this House approved \$941 million for the Hinterland Electrification Programme. Can you say, as of 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, what percentage of this \$941 million has been spent to date?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information because obviously, that falls under another code.

**Ms. Ferguson:** This same code, Sir.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am sorry, but I do not have the information. I will have to lay it over.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I cannot accept such an explanation. You are coming here for additional sums...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, the follow-up question. The Prime Minister has answered the question. He does not have...

**Ms. Ferguson:** Prime Minister, can you say to the Committee why it is that you did not come fully equipped to answer any questions that would have been put to you in this House?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the money that is provided under HECI, as you know, is utilised to maintain over seven utilities throughout the hinterland area. A sum of \$200 million was allocated to bring electricity to the unserved areas. We are now asking for the additional \$738 million because we want to increase the number of communities that will get electricity before December, 2025. We have identified 17 such communities.

The \$200 million cannot suffice to bring electricity to 17 communities, so based on the estimates done, we approached the House for the additional \$738 million needed for this activity – bringing electricity to 17 households in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6...

**Mr. Chairman:** You mean 17...

*5.15 p.m.*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Some 1,416 households will now be connected to the grid. A total of 1,416 families or more will have electricity as a result of this project.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you, very much. Mr. Chairman, three months after, the Hon. Prime Minister and his team realised that additional communities are to be serviced. Therefore, Mr. Prime Minister, would you agree with me that this is a lack of planning and full incompetence on your end?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** It is quite obvious I will disagree with you, Hon. Member. We are planning every day to bring improvement to the lives of the people of Guyana. If in December we had a number of communities that we wanted to bring electricity to, and now three or four months afterwards that figure has increased – there is a consequence of good planning. Every day, we are updating our information on the additional communities that need to be brought on the grid. In December, yes; we may have identified five communities but, today, we have reached to a point where there are 17 communities. We are asking this honourable House to provide the money so that we can have 17 communities, with 1,416 households who will get electricity before the end of this financial year.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Prime Minister, earlier, you stated that more than \$200 has been expended from the \$941,000. Could you say from the more than \$200 that was expended thus far, what percentage you have observed the entire sum for – expansion in electricity for these communities?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I never said we expended \$200 million. I said \$200 million was allocated and we are now approaching the Committee for an additional \$738 million because the project at hand will cost us some \$938 million. We already have \$200 and we are asking for \$738 more, so we could bring electricity to these 17 communities, which would benefit the 1,416 households.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister, the list that he provided, are all of these areas regularised areas or are unregularised areas in between? If so, would the Hon. Member be kind enough to name the unregularised areas?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the reason we have 17 communities only right now to deal with is that they had to go through a process of regularisation. These 17 are regularised. They are now ready for us to connect them. As more and more communities become regularised, we will have more and more demands for those communities to be connected to the grid. These 17 communities are regularised.

**Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Hinterland Electrification – \$737,987,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, let us take the suspension now. We will be back in 30 minutes to continue the consideration of this Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025. Let the House resume.

*Assembly resumed.*

*Sitting suspended at 5.22 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 6.22 p.m.*

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

**Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Gas to Power Project – \$28,785,172,000**

**Mr. Patterson:** Through you, Hon. Prime Minister, could you give us a disaggregation of the \$27 billion being sought? Thank you.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Sorry, Mr. Chairman. I did not hear the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Hon. Member is asking for the disaggregation of the sum being sought.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, in 2024, the Guyana Power and Light tendered for Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) plus finance for these

projects. However, it received only EPC bids, which now require Government financing. On 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, GPL, through the Government of Guyana, signed two contracts for major power system upgrade and expansion, totalling US\$422.2 million or \$90.9 billion. The projects included in these EPC contracts will deliver reliable, affordable and cleaner electricity services for the 300 megawatts natural gas power plant located in Wales. The requested sum of \$28.7 billion is to facilitate the mobilisation advance payment and interim payments projected to December, 2025, in accordance with the signed EPC contracts.

I will now offer the disaggregation. This project will be done in three lots. Lot one – Region 4; construction of an approximate total of 35.19 kilometre (km) of double-circuit 230 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line between Goedverwagting substation on the East Coast Demerara and the eastern bank of the Mahaica River; the construction of an approximate total of 84.7 km of double-circuit 69kV transmission line to interconnect with six substations located on the East of Demerara; a 69kV line bay, Good Hope substation; La Bonne Intention (LBI) 69/13.8kV substation; Enmore 69/13.8kV substation; upgrading of the Kingston substation capacity; supply and install a 15 Mega Volt-Ampere Reactive (MVAR) capacitor bank at New Sophia with substation expansion; supply and install of a 10MVAR complete capacitor bank at Edinburgh with substation expansion; distribution feeders at LBI, 69/13.8kV substation; and distribution feeders at Enmore and Victoria, 69/13.8kV substation. The contract was awarded to Power China and it is for US\$147,966,250 million.

Lot two, Region 5 – the construction of an approximate total of 78.395 km of double-circuit 230kV overhead transmission line between the eastern bank of the Mahaica River and the eastern bank of the Berbice River; construction of an approximate total of six km of double-circuit 69kV transmission line to interconnect with two substations located in the West Coast of Berbice; 69kV line bay, Columbia substation at Trafalgar, 230/69kV substation; and upgrade to Onverwagt substation with the capacity, the supply and installation of a 15 MVAR complete capacitor bank at Columbia with substation expansions to the tune of US\$156,538,545. The contract was awarded to Kalpataru Projects International Limited.

Lot three, Region 6 – the construction of an approximate total of 27.37km of double-circuit 230kV overhead transmission line between the eastern bank of the Berbice River and the Williamsburg's substation; construction of an approximate total of 67.16km of double-circuit 69kV



transmission line to interconnect with three substations located in Corentyne, Berbice; Williamsburg 230/69kV substation; Number 53 a 69/13.8kV substation; and supply and install a 15 MVAR complete capacitor bank at Number 53. The contract was awarded to Power China and it is for a total of US\$117,715,611. The sum, as mentioned earlier is US\$422,230,406. For this year, the total that we will be expending to Power China is \$18,218,474,796. Kalpataru is for US\$10,566,697,203 and that gives us a grand total of \$28,785,172,000.

**Mr. Patterson:** The amounts the Hon. Prime Minister mentioned is for three lots. When are these projects slated to be completed?

6.31 p.m.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** These projects are slated to be completed one year after the payment of the 15% advance. Once we pay that, the clock starts running.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you, Prime Minister (PM). Sir, you bring this under the Gas-to-Power Project. Let me just get it correct. You bring this under the gas-to-shore project, could I ask....?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** These are the new activities that were not programmed.

**Mr. Patterson:** That is very good, Sir. That is very good, Sir. Therefore, let us say one year from today will be 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. When will the gas-to-shore project be completed?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, this is separate and apart from this project.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, it is not. You said that it is separate and apart. You said that you have to – I wrote them down – connect these wires, connect the double circuit cables and those things such as that. All of that is to take the power.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Yes.

**Mr. Patterson:** If this is not finished then the power would not be able to be carried. I am asking – when is the gas-to-shore project slated to be completed since this money that you are coming for would not be finished until 26<sup>th</sup> May. You said that – a year after the 15% deposit.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The aim of this project is to enhance the transmission system going all the way to Corentyne.

**Mr. Patterson:** This is to transmit the power produced by the gas-to-shore project. I am asking once again, Sir – do you have a completion date for the gas-to-energy project?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The gas-to-energy project is slated for completion in the second quarter of 2026 – to be on the safe side.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, could I ask what is the current per cent completed of that project?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I will have to get that information for you. I am not going to guess. I will have to get that information.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you. I am moving on. Mr. Chairman, in the same project code for the same transmission and distribution line, you had \$6 billion for sub-sea location in your 2025 budget. One, where is that; and two, will it be connected to this project and where?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We went through the tendering process. We are at the stage now where a contractor was identified. The negotiation has started with that contractor.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, does the Hon. Prime Minister wish to say who is the contractor he has identified?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** We will overlay that information. We will not identify the name now.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, I noticed that lots one, two and three are in Regions 4, 5 and 6. Is that correct? The sub-sea cables are being relocated, could you tell us the location? Obviously, the gas-to-energy plant is in Region 3.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the sub-sea cable is a separate project from this. It is the Demerara River for the sub-sea cable. This is a totally separate project. We have three lots here and all are for the transmission as indicated. There is not anything written here which states, sub-sea cable.

**Mr. Patterson:** We are talking transmission and distribution so obviously the sub-sea cables have to come to one of the lots.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, we are discussing lots one, two and three. These are new projects. These are separate and apart from the sub-sea cable.

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, I am moving on.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** This is linked to the expansion of the network. We are building a new network. There are sub-sea cables but those are for a separate project. We already have money allocated for that. We are going through the process of identifying a contractor. That work will be done as a separate project from this. It has no financial linkage to this.

**Mr. Patterson:** There was one integrated circuit; that is why we are asking.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Yes, but we came to the Committee for money for a new project. I came prepared to discuss everything pertaining to this new project that amounts to \$28.7 billion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister. I can understand you coming prepared to defend what is before us. We can deal with the policy issues. Many of the questions pertain to the allocation passed before. Go ahead, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, please.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, it comes under one project code – Gas to Power Project. Sir, naturally, there are linkages.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is right. The linkages come under policy. The particulars of the expenditure that we passed earlier was dealt with. For this allocation, the Prime Minister has come to defend what is here. It is not [*inaudible*]. If the question comes outside of that remit, he will say he has to lay it over.

**Mr. Patterson:** It is not unexpected that we should ask, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am not saying that you cannot ask it. [*Inaudible*]... he does not have and make the smart comments about being inefficient and not prepared, please.

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Chairman, there is an arbitration process going on for the gas-to-energy project, could I ask... The Government of Guyana has nominated sole experts. Where will these sole experts be paid from? For the arbitration process, it is reported that the Government of Guyana has nominated sole experts to be chosen to carry forward the arbitration. Could I ask, where will the funding be from to pay the sole experts for the arbitration?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, in respect to the Hon. Member, I will not answer that question. I came prepared to answer all questions pertaining to the supplementary before the Committee.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister, let me just mention – I do not have a problem with the Hon. Member asking the question but in him doing so, it has to be – is that payment in this allocation? You would then have a simple yes or no answer. It is how you put the question. I can allow it and if it is not included, the Prime Minister is in his right to say, yes or no alone. Do you have any other questions, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson?

**Mr. Patterson:** Obviously, no, Mr. Chairman because you are answering for the Prime Minister. Obviously, he is under your very good tutelage.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, please. Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, I took a long time to painstakingly disaggregate this \$28.7 billion. At no time did I mention any payment for arbitration or anything about gas-to-energy.

**Mr. Patterson:** You did mention that it is to take the gas-to-shore.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** No. Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Patterson:** We can refer to the *Hansard*.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Lot one, Lot two and Lot three are all related to transmission. This is building out a transmission system with the necessary substation. There was nothing mentioned...

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Prime Minister. You were quite clear and comprehensive with respect to this allocation. Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence, you have the floor.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate if within the allocation for the three lots there is any money for consultancy? If there is any, could the Hon. Member kindly say how much for each lot?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the consultancy is all embedded in the amount here for the three lots. It amounts to US\$7 million. That is the sum for the consultancy associated with all three lots.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Could the Hon. Prime Minister indicate to the Committee which company was allocated this?

**Mr. Chairman:** He answered that earlier.

**Ms. Lawrence:** I am sorry; I did not hear that. That question was not asked.

**Mr. Chairman:** It was the consultancy – all right.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the name of the company who was allocated the consultancy contract is Method4 Engineering Incorporated. That is the name of the company. It is a Canadian company – Method4 Engineering Incorporated.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, under this very project code, could the Hon. Member clarify for me – did I hear in your listing of the activities to be done for this total cost you made mention of contracts being awarded or contracts signed by companies? Could you clarify that for me, please?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, the fact is – we have contracts which were signed by Power Construction Corporation of China (PowerChina) and Kalpataru Projects International Limited (KPIL) for these projects.

6.46 p.m.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I did not hear you clearly, Prime Minister. Could you repeat it for me, please?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I said we have signed contracts.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, if you look at what is recorded in the remarks, it speaks about:

“Provision of additional resources for expanded work programme.”

I think you stated that tenders will be out. If you are now coming to the House for moneys for new projects, how come you have existing contracts? I cannot understand that.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** The Guyana Power and Light Incorporated has an expansion plan and you are aware of that. Every year GPL would prepare an expansion plan for five years. Everything here is linked to GPL's overall expansion plan. We are identifying the work to be done in keeping with the expansion plan.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, PM. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, may I have a follow up from an answer?

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you. The Hon. Prime Minister in an earlier question indicated that the gas-to-energy project will be completed in the second quarter of 2026. May I ask the Hon. Prime Minister, when will this House be furnished with

the final investment plan and the heads of agreement that were signed on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2022?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I am now being made aware of such a request. Did you make that request earlier?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Chairman, may I remind the Hon. Prime Minister that two years ago when we considered the gas-to-energy project during the 2023 estimates, the Prime Minister did promise to make available the final investment plan and the Heads of Agreement (HOA). If I may refresh his memory, that was the same time when the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service got up and offered an answer also. The Prime Minister did say that he will make it available to the National Assembly. That is why I am asking, Sir.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** I pride myself with having the repetition of delivering on any promise that I made. If such a promise was made and I failed to deliver it, just remind me. I will deliver on the promise.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, may I just have a follow up? Could the Hon. Prime Minister put a timeline when he will deliver the final investment plan and the heads of agreement?

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, my memory is now refreshed. As I mentioned to the Hon. Member, I have a repetition of delivering on any promise that I make. Thank you, very much.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Let me just take the Hon. Prime Minister back to the information he provided on the consultancy form. Is it Meta or Method4 from Canada? Could you spell it for us, please? I just did my research but I am not finding that company.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Prime Minister, help us to spell it please.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, I said method – M-E-T-H-O-D F-O-U-R, Method4 Engineering Incorporated.

**Mr. Chairman:** It is Method4. Thank you, Prime Minister.

*Item 1: 02-023 Office of the Prime Minister – Power Generation – Gas to Power Project – \$28,785,172,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, very much, Hon. Prime Minister, your staff, Permanent Secretary (PS). and the

management team from the Guyana Power and Light Incorporated. I now invite the Hon. Minister of Public Works and his team to join us and take us through Agency 31-312.

### Capital Expenditure

#### Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Hinterland Roads – \$1,500,000,000

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, if I could turn the Hon. Member's attention to project code 14052005, Hinterland Roads, we know that on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2025, we approved \$9 billion. You are now seeking a supplementary sum of \$1.5 billion. My first question to you, Hon. Member, could you say to this Committee, from the initial sums approved, what percentage has been spent as at 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025?

**Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]:** Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman and I thank the Hon. Member for the question. The only reason we are here seeking additional funds is because of the expanded work programme of the Ministry. Yes; we approved a sum in *Budget 2025* and, since then, having gone out to bids and contracts that have been executed, there are additional things to be done. As of today's date, based upon contractual obligations, what has been expended represents 40.99% of the sum that was approved at the time of the Budget.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you, very much, Minister and thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. The Hon. Minister just provided us with a percentage sum spent to date from the initial sums approved. Then again Hon. Minister, if you only spent 40.99% of \$9 billion, why is it you are coming back less than three months later for an additional sum of some \$1.5 billion with an explanation for the provision of additional resources to facilitate an expanded work programme? Could you explain what these expanded work programmes are?

**Bishop Edghill:** The Hon. Member who served as a Minister, would know that when a person commits to a contract, he/she has to ensure that the sums are available. As a matter of fact, the Integrated Financial Management and Accounting System (IFMAS) that is set up, a cheque cannot be cut for a contract if the money has not been appropriated. At the time of the appropriation, that money falls into that heading. When a cheque is going to be cut the money must be under that heading. It means that while we have paid 40.99% or have expended \$3.689 billion out of the \$9 billion. The entire sum has already been committed. I will

tell you what we are going to do with the \$1.5 billion that we are asking for so that the people would be able to hear.

In Region 9, there are several things that must be addressed now. Once we get out there on the ground, we will start executing and see what else has to be done. We have to do some upgrades to the roads and structures – that would be about \$120 million. We have to help, I should say, emergency repairs to damaged structures as a result of the rainfall which is estimated to be about \$50 million; emergency repairs to flood damage at Kumaka and Kwebanna in Region 1 – \$150 million; emergency repairs to flood damage at Lethem to Aishalton in Region 9 – \$200 million; emergency repairs to flood drainage Mile 35 Mabura, which is the Mabura Trail – \$150 million; emergency repairs to flood damage at Lethem to Karasabai in Region 9 – \$150 million; emergency repairs to flood damage at Karasabai to Monkey Mountain in Region 9 – \$180 million; emergency repairs to flood damage at Linden to Kwakwani in Region 10 – \$70 million; rehabilitation and construction of flood control structures at Matthews Ridge – \$100 million; emergency relocation of utilities along major corridors and under rehabilitation because, oftentimes, when we go to execute projects, there are water mains and electricity lines that need to be removed – \$50 million; rehabilitation and construction of Mabura/Barabina Access Road – \$130 million; the removal of boulders at Tiger Hill along Mahdia's main Access Road – \$50 million; and emergency repairs to hinterland corridors to support what is happening in terms of our security of the nation – \$100 million. When you put the figures together, it is \$1.5 billion. Let me say from the onset, this allocation we are seeking nowhere satisfies the total of what needs to be done. This is what we will be going after at this particular time. Thank you.

**Ms. Ferguson:** While I appreciate the Hon. Member for sharing what the \$1.5 billion will take care of, my only concern is – I put the question to the Hon. Member. – if we are in a deficit, could you say exactly where these moneys are coming from to take care of these extra projects that are to be undertaken?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member would like to replace me at the Ministry of Finance where I used to be. Every money that is appropriated in this House comes from the Consolidated Fund. That is the only place we could get it from. Whether by way of a supplementary or a contingency advance, it must come from the Consolidated Fund. This money that we are seeking is in the Consolidated

Fund or will be in the Consolidated Fund so we can draw on it. Thank you, very much.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his response, but I trust that he had an opportunity to read the last letter published by Mr. Goolsarran, the former Auditor General. That being said, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member state why the Ministry is doing these new expanded projects when we are heading to elections? Secondly, would these new projects be tendered? What method of tendering the Ministry intends to utilise? Thank you, very much.

7.01 p.m.

**Bishop Edghill:** I think the Hon. Member, while we considered *Budget 2025* in the Committee of Supply, heard me loud and clear when I explained to this House that we had already fulfilled every manifesto promise that we have made in regard to this programme. Every manifesto project has been completed. As a matter of fact, we have also listed what we have done beyond. The fact that we are able to do more is to the advantage of the people of Guyana. Mr. Chairman, it is very interesting that the Hon. Member would ask a question...

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, do you want to sit and we could hear you better?

**Bishop Edghill:** No, I like standing and speaking, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** I know, but you are challenged with respect to the microphone.

**Bishop Edghill:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** You may have to bend.

**Bishop Edghill:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member asking this question at this time is very interesting. Two hundred and forty-five plus Toshaos, leaders of Amerindian villages, spent five days in the city engaging the Government, the President, the Prime Minister, the Vice-President, and all of the Ministers. If they had paid attention, the requests and the demands that exist for the development of hinterland communities, they would have been arguing this afternoon why only \$1.5 billion and not an additional \$9 billion. What is important, and the Hon. Member needs to know, is that one of the things we have advanced significantly on is internal roads in Amerindian communities. Let me tell the nation why the internal roads became important. With the increase of traffic, the dust

pollution with vehicles passing through villages has become so pronounced that even some of the village kitchens, where they cook the hot meals through the education programme for the children, have been affected. You could see the dust.

What we have done in the populated areas, where there is a concentration of homes, health centres, and hospitals, we have done whether it is a kilometre, two kilometres, or three kilometres of roads in the village. Thus, while the vehicles are passing through and all the movements, that area will be protected from the dust, and then we could come back and connect village by village eventually. [**Ms. Ferguson:** I did not ask you all of that.] I have to explain to you and the people of Guyana who need to know where the money is going. That is why I am saying, Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member should have been asking me why only \$1.5 billion, because even this sum cannot satisfy every need in those 240-something-plus villages and satellites. This is what we could do now, based upon the fiscal space that is available, and we will execute this; and yes, the Procurement Act is being followed.

There are various methods of procurement – public tender, restrictive tender. We have used community engagement. Different projects require different interventions. When it is emergency repairs or emergency interventions, when you cannot pass at Mabura Hill, do you go to a public tender for three weeks, and then go to the evaluation? No, the people have to pass tomorrow. You have to get a contract to mobilise the emergency. There are different methods of procurement that are being engaged depending on the situation. For the avoidance of doubt, in a lot of these projects, something that was never done before is being done. Fifty, 60, 40, members of various communities are employed to work on these projects. While the roads are being built, economic advancement is being made in the communities, and the people are earning real wealth because of the policy direction of the PPP/C. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

*Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Hinterland Roads – \$1,500,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Farm Access Roads – \$1,400,000,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister, could you say as of 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, what is the overall percentage of the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) of the Ministry of Public Works?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Member tell me the line item that they are seeking to examine?

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Minister. That question does not pertain to this line item, but perhaps your whole PSIP. Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Hon. Member. Line item 146000, Farm Access Roads: I noted, Mr. Minister, you had an approved sum of \$3 billion. Could you inform the House what percentage of this sum was expended as of 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025? Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, at this stage, we would have expended about 60%, but all the moneys that were appropriated have already been committed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Ms. Ferguson? Hon. Members, no more questions...?

**Ms. Ferguson:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Member, you are now seeking a supplementary sum of some \$1.4 billion. Could you inform the House which new projects will benefit from this allocation?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, for clarity to the Member and for the nation, the sums that were sought at *Budget 2025* and the supplementary that is being sought now are being spent in key areas. Let us start with the east side, from Moleson Creek to El Dorado. We have discussed that project here, and – the Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, who seems not to want to think about what the promises we made were – we are opening up tens of thousands of acres of land by pushing that road from Moleson Creek to El Dorado.

The Minister of Agriculture is very important and very happy. We are also, based... [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]

If you go back and read the PPP/C's Manifesto, the road from Parika to Goshen, some people call it the Del Conte Road. Right now, there is major work that is being done, including the construction of the bridge at the Makouria Creek, and in the Sand Hills to Falmouth project, the construction of the bridge at the Bonasika Creek.

[Mr. Mahipaul: I am going tomorrow to check.] Go ahead and check. You will enjoy it. The moneys that are being sought, we have done the clearing of the land and the construction of the bridges. We now have to upgrade the service. They are doing them phases at a time.

This will not take care of everything because access in those areas is limited. If it were not, we would have done it in

various lots like we have been doing and complete this swiftly, but we have to be able to get in, work, and continue working. This is to advance to another phase in some of these projects. At the same time, while I am here, I would also like to remind you that we did tell the country that we will build a road from Orealla to Kwakwani, which is a reality. We also have to get a road from the Moleson Creek area into Orella as well. All of that is being examined, and some of the interventions are to ensure that our farm-to-market access, opening up new lands, and bringing connectivity to the agricultural sector are part of what we are doing. Thank you.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Hon. Member for his explanation. However, that being said, Hon. Minister, my question to you is, why the rush? After three months, when a budget was passed in February, 2025, you are now coming back to this House. Could not these projects be deferred after the 2025 General and Regional Elections, when a new government would have taken office?

**Mr. Chairman:** A new PPP Government.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman...

**Ms. Ferguson:** A new Coalition Government.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Chairman, on a Friday evening, I am intrigued. I would like to assure the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, that a new government will be a second term for President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, and the PPP/C. That is the new Government that will take office. Then, secondly, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if sometimes, when Members are asking questions, they think about the consequences. To ask me, why the rush, is to tell the people of Guyana, put a pause on development until you get your way at an election. That is not how you build a country. That is not what you do to build a country. You deliver to people what can be delivered in the fastest possible manner. When I became Minister of Public Works, communities were in the mud. Senior citizens had to be carried on the back. There are now people with wheelchairs who can come out and go to the clinic. They could now get out on the road and get to a hospital. Our highways were not only congested and deplorable, but people were really under pressure. We are accelerating development.

Mr. Chairman, every time we come to this House and ask for additional sums or for moneys to be appropriated, it is to answer the desires of the population, the interests of the

people, and ensure that they are satisfied in the conditions in which the Government is bringing benefits to them. Not because there is an election year, we sit and do nothing. I do not know which part of the world, in an election year, a government stops implementing because there is an election. That is a time when you need to ensure that everything you promise people is fulfilled. However, the problem here tonight, Mr. Chairman, is not that we are trying to fulfil; we have already fulfilled. The fact that we are doing more is what is making some people nervous, hence such a question of why not wait until the next election. We will work every day, right down to the last day of this Administration, and when President Irfaan Ali takes the oath for the second term, the same day we will start working to bring development to the people of Guyana. Thank you very much, Sir.

7.16 p.m.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I just want the Hon. Member to know...

**Mr. Chairman:** Do not let him know. Ask him a question.

**Ms. Ferguson:** ...that we on...

**Mr. Chairman:** Do not let him know. If you have to let him know, I will cut you off. Hon. Members, I now put the question.

*Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Farm Access Roads – \$1,400,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Sea and River Defence Works – \$2,052,000,000**

*Item 2: 31-312 Ministry of Public Works – Public Works – Sea and River Defence Works – \$2,052,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I now invite us to look at agency 39, Ministry of Human Services and Social Security. The Hon. Minister is online to take your questions. Hon. Minister Vindhya Persaud, are you there with us? [Pause] I saw her online. Hon. Member, Dr. Persaud. She needs to put on her microphone.

**Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]:** I am sorry about that, Mr. Chairman. I am here.

**Current Expenditure**

**Item 3: 39-391 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Policy Development and Administration – Other – \$10,749,344**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister is asking for almost a 100% increase from the voted provision – more than 100%, just three months ago. Could the Minister tell us what the additional resources to facilitate the expanded work programme will be used for?

**Dr. Persaud:** Would she be referring to everything or just this line item? This one speaks specifically to...

**Mr. Chairman:** Line item 6284, under Policy.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Yes.

**Dr. Persaud:** This is to do with the Microsoft Licence. Are you hearing me?

**Mr. Chairman:** You have to repeat.

**Dr. Persaud:** This is to do with the Microsoft fees for line one, Policy Development and Administration. We are asking for the cost of licences for 300 computer systems within the Ministry. These licence fees were funded under the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) project. At that time, we were able to have that funding go to part of the year. For the remainder of the year, we will be without that funding, because we are doing expansion and full digitisation of all the systems; we have a new beneficiary Registry Data Management Register. To make that whole system work, we would have had to add a number of pieces of equipment. So this is the cost of the licence to run all of the above. It would not have been in the previous allocation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum stated under agency...

**Ms. Lawrence:** No, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member Ms. Lawrence.

**Ms. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, if I heard her correctly, she said that there was an allocation in an IDB grant or loan. I did not hear.

**Dr. Persaud:** There was an allocation in the IDB loan. Are you hearing?

**Ms. Lawrence:** Yes, I heard you. Thank you, through the Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, the IDB loan would have specified the amount that was allocated. You would know when that loan comes to an end and so on. This was not

prudent planning. Did they miss this expenditure? It is a programme.

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, but this was not included in the budget at that time. We were still working out when it would finally come to an end within this year. We knew it would have come to an end this year but did not know when the project itself would have concluded, to have it up and running.

*Item 3: 39-391 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Policy Development and Administration – Other – \$10,749,344 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 3: 39-392 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Other – \$35,559,415**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Could the Hon. Minister disaggregate the sums that she is seeking under line item 6284?

**Dr. Persaud:** Thank you, Hon. Member, for your question. I can. It goes like this: \$1.8 million caters for the dignified burial of residents at our state care institution. The average cost per burial would be somewhere between \$200,000 to \$250,000. Then there is \$1,993,750. As you would recognise, we need to amplify and escalate our awareness campaign, our public awareness campaign, when it comes to gender based violence, trafficking in persons, empowerment of vulnerable populations, including the hinterland, rural and remote communities. This is to ensure that more persons are aware of and utilise our services so they can have access quickly.

Then there is \$28.8 million, and this falls under the Difficult Circumstances Unit. This is where we have been helping our vulnerable populations in various ways. We have seen a significant influx of persons recently. This is a necessity based on our expenditure at this point. We are looking at programmes including funeral assistance, medical assistance, assistive aid, food hampers, pampers, rental for fire victims and domestic violence victims, eye care support, and any additional demand that we will have for emergency support and funding. Whenever there is need, this will cater for it. We expect to cover roughly 2,500 more beneficiaries. We have already almost covered 5,000 beneficiaries to date.

Continuing, there is \$2.465 million, and this goes specifically to the elderly community and directly to the centenarian programme. This is a special line. We have seen more centenarians last year and this year. We are directly contributing to the programme that goes towards hampers,

care packages, and any kind of intervention that they would require. We currently cater for 144 centenarians. This is to cover the remaining.

Finally, the last: \$500,000 is for the probation support youth groups. This is a programme that we are amplifying because we are working with youth at risk, youths in trouble with the law, and we are having two more of these youth support groups in Regions 2 and 6. There are groups that we have right now in Regions 4, 5 and 10. That brings it to an end, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Hon. Members, I now put the question that the sum...

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Mr. Chairman, just one question. Did the explanation provided...

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Hon. Member.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** ...cater for line item 6294 too?

**Mr. Chairman:** Let me put line item 6284 first.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Sorry, I thought you had put both, together.

**Dr. Persaud:** It was line item 6284 that was asked for.

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Okay.

**Dr. Persaud:** No, they are two separate lines.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, I now put the question...

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Sir, one follow-up, please. With reference to the sum allocated for domestic violence cases, could the Hon. Minister say what kind of services are offered to these domestic violence cases, especially the one in Leguan that I know she is outraged about, and rightly so all of us should be. Is there a support mechanism in place to assist the victim?

**Dr. Persaud:** There are several elements to the support provided. Notably, we would provide rental. If, in instances, persons do not want to reside at our shelters, and we do have an expanded shelter capacity as well, we provide food hampers, we provide socio-economic support, more or less in that way, and we also provide post-trauma counselling. We provide legal support through our legal *pro bono* system. We provide our survivor advocacy services, and we also work with children. This would not fall entirely under this line item alone. It would also fall under Programme 3. Both programmes will provide for the family in totality. I would



like to show you, Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul, that the young woman in Leguan benefitted from most of our services. At present, we are still working with her, and we will continue to work with her.

*Item 3: 39-392 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Other – \$35,559,415 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule*

**Item 3: 39-392 – Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Other – \$36,647,516**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** For the record, could the Hon. Minister please disaggregate the sum stated there?

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes, I can. This speaks directly to training. The Ministry would have done extensive training from 2021 to current. What we would have seen is an increased demand for this training with...

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Mr. Chairman, she is answering about training.

**Mr. Chairman:** Give me a chance to bring her back online.

**Dr. Persaud:** It is at Agency Code 392.

**Mr. Chairman:** It is line item 6294, Hon. Minister; the disaggregation of line item 6294. It is a sum of \$36,647,516.

**Dr. Persaud:** Is this line item 6302? Am I missing something? I have some difficulty opening this... Here we are. Sorry about that. My apology. Yes, line item 6294. Is that right, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

7.31 p.m.

**Dr. Persaud:** The first allocation within would be toward the provision of kits for childcare, care for the elderly, construction, décor, electronic tablets, sewing machines and laptops. When we train persons as a part of the Women's Innovation and Investment Network (WIIN) programme, we tend to provide start-up kits, and these start-up kits would help them especially if they are in entrepreneurial areas. We focus heavily on the care system in general, and we are equipping persons who pass through the system with all the kits that they would require for the start-up. We are hoping to cater for 500 women. They would have successfully completed level three or higher in terms of the training programmes. This would enhance their abilities to become financially independent.

Secondly, \$2.5 million would have been allocated to the alleged victims and survivors of human trafficking, and this is a continuation of the invaluable support we have been giving to survivors. It would have helped us to maintain Guyana's tier one ranking. So, this is to support those persons in all the ways they need, specifically care packs and other personal effects and support services.

Then we speak to \$8,105,000, and this is a programme that commenced work with juveniles at risk. This programme was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); it is called the Youth Resilience, Inclusion, and Empowerment (Y-RIE) programme. However, because the funding has been truncated for that programme – it is a programme that is transformational and impactful in helping young people to regain stability and to target specifically delinquency, and for them to have more purposeful and driven lives – we are putting this allocation to this programme in particular, and we are supporting them through mentorship, counselling, direct intervention, and we are doing this in vulnerable communities. We currently have 65 young people and their families who are a part of this programme.

*Item 3: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security - Social Services – Other – \$36,647,516 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 3: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Training (including Scholarships) – \$134,500,000**

**Ms. Singh-Lewis:** Mr. Chairman, the only question that I would like to ask the Minister is if there are any scholarships catered for here.

**Dr. Persaud:** Yes, Hon. Member Ms. Singh-Lewis, this includes all programmes. One of the key programmes that would fall under this would be our training. We did on grief and trauma, and you know because you were one of the successful graduates. So, we are going to look at more of that. We are also looking at a brand-new programme to ensure that our hinterland, remote and rural communities have the opportunity for more social workers. This is a paraprofessional training programme that will enable us to offer to hinterland, remote and rural students the opportunity to begin their work in the social work discipline. This will be done through the University of Guyana as a special scholarship programme. There are many others; if you would like, I can go through.

*Item 3: 39-392 Ministry of Human Services and Social Security – Social Services – Training (including Scholarships) – \$134,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, let us invite the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water and his staff to join us.

*Assembly resumed.*

### **Suspension of Standing Order No. 10**

#### **BE IT RESOLVED:**

“That Standing Order No. 10 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 8.00 p.m.”

*[Prime Minister]*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I ask that we suspend the Standing Orders to resume the work of the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Standing Order suspended.*

*Assembly in Committee of Supply.*

### **Capital Expenditure**

#### **Item 4: 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development – Infrastructural Development and Buildings – \$12,000,000,000**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Member, may I turn your attention to line item 193100, Infrastructural and Development and Buildings. You had a voted provision of some \$101 billion. My first question to you, Hon. Member, is, could you say what percentage of this sum has been expended as at 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025? It is just under two months since the Budget passed.

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]:** Mr. Chairman, rounded would be 44%, 43.76% to be exact.

**Ms. Ferguson:** The Hon. Member is now seeking an additional sum of some \$12 billion. My second question to the Hon. Member is, why is it that this sum was not taken from the housing fund?

**Mr. Croal:** We are here to seek additional funding to allow us to conduct infrastructure work on a number of new areas,

and so we are coming here through the appropriate means of seeking the necessary sum.

**Ms. Ferguson:** A follow-up. Whilst I understand you are seeking an additional sum, Hon. Minister, I am quite aware that there is a housing fund that is available. So, my simple question to you, rather than coming to the House to burden the Consolidated Funds, why is it that this \$12 billion could not have been chartered against the housing funds?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, the housing funds are utilised from time to time for various community activities, for example, community roads, *et cetera*. It is because of the magnitude of the work, of what we are seeking here, that is why we are seeking from the national budget.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Member: could you inform the House as at 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2025, what is the balance in the housing fund?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, I am here to answer under the line item for Housing Development. The housing fund is not a part of what we are here for, the remit.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Moving on, based on the description legend here, the Hon. Member is seeking an additional sum of \$12 billion for infrastructural development and buildings. Could you provide a disaggregation of what will take care of infrastructural development from this \$12 billion, likewise what will go to buildings?

**Mr. Croal:** Absolutely. The line item is called Infrastructural Development and Buildings, but we are not here to seek any funding in relation to buildings; we are here for infrastructure development. These are for the development of the new housing scheme in two areas in Region 1, this is in Port Kaituma as well as for an extension at Mabaruma. Likewise, in Region 3 at Anna Catherina, Cornelia Ida (CI) and Edinburg, that is Phase 2. In Region 6, for the new areas of Providence and Glasgow; in Region 7, the new area for Bartica, that is called Track Bar, Bartica. In Region 9, there are two new areas, the Phase 2 of what is commonly called Pork Bridge in Lethem, and likewise Phase 3 of Culvert City, Lethem.

**Ms. Ferguson:** I thank the Hon. Member for providing his response. However, Hon. Member, you have failed to provide the sum associated with each area that will make up the \$12 billion. So, could you provide the disaggregation for each area? Thank you.

**Mr. Croal:** Port Kaituma, the design caters for 138 lots, \$405 million; Mabaruma, the design caters for 373 lots, \$810 million; Anna Catherina, CI and Edinburg, Phase 2, the design caters for 275 residential lots – these are all residential lots I am referring to – \$1,080,000,000; Providence and Glasgow, the design caters for 1,993 residential lots, \$7, 491,000,000; the Track Bar, Bartica, for 335 lots, \$990,000,000; Pork Bridge, Phase 2, Lethem, 203 lots, \$504,000,000; the Culvert City, Phase 3, 402 lots, \$720,000,000.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I am worried that in this sum that you are requesting that nothing is being asked for Region 4, more so Golden Grove, East Bank area. I have been receiving complaints that persons who have been allocated lands some three years now, in that particular area, they are yet to see their lands, that is one. Secondly, the area is inaccessible because the roads and infrastructure are not there. So, could you say how the Ministry intends to address these concerns? Thank you.

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member, when we started, reminded us that we were here in February, and in February we received an allocation of \$101 billion for this line item. Therefore, the East Bank area, for those blocs that you are referring to, are catered for on the national Budget. So, I would not have to come back to ask for it. Specifically, in the bloc that you are asking about, persons on the East Bank, by and large, have been accessing their lots. There are two areas within two blocs for which the infrastructure work is ongoing, and as soon as infrastructure work is complete persons will have access to their blocs. Block 13 and all of those areas have access.

7.46 p.m.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his response. Though the question is slightly not relevant to the allocation being asked, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, could the Hon. Member say...

**Mr. Chairman:** I cannot allow irrelevant questions. Continue. She said it is not relevant, so it is irrelevant. Please.

**Ms. Ferguson:** All right, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Remember, I am not tolerant.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Could I proceed, Sir? Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the Hon. Minister, could he inform this honourable House, why is it that lots measuring sixty-one by

one hundred are being sold for \$3.3 million in an oil economy?

**Mr. Croal:** Mr. Chairman, all we need to do is to go to the *Hansard* and pull up my 2025 budgetary speech, where I explained, in terms of the cost of lots, *et cetera*, and also to say that the costs that are charged for lots, for the allottees, what they pay, it is even heavily subsidised. The average cost...

[**Mr. Mahipaul:** I paid \$500,000.] I am coming to you. The average cost to develop a lot, Mr. Chairman, is about \$5 million. That is a minimum.

In terms of the cost of lots and the size, *et cetera*, we have a design. Designs are done based on the area in which that new development is happening – their zone – whether it is for low income, whether it is for moderate, whether it is for middle, whether it is for high. It varies. A lot in Region 4 will be considered higher than a lot somewhere further in the country. There are a whole host of variables that go into consideration when they are pricing. The example that has been asked about, the \$3.3 million, that is on the higher end, and that is the minor cost in terms of the amount of lots that we are allocating. I can go through it in terms of allocation, happily, if you want.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, while I thank the Hon. Member for his explanation, though he stated that the higher income lots would attract some degree of high cost, why would a middle-income lot cost \$3.3 million?

**Mr. Croal:** Again, Mr. Chairman, there are... I will give you another example.

[**Mr. Nandlall:** (*Inaudible*)]  
Hon. Attorney General.

[**Mr. Nandlall:** (*Inaudible*)]  
Actually, they did. I was listening just now. In the run-up to the 2020 Elections, in the last three months, they allocated 2,000, and they were talking just now about election years, for which no infrastructure work was done during their period of time.

Mr. Chairman, though you can have what is... in the design of an area when you are designing, sometimes when you are dividing equally, you can have what is an oversized lot, meaning it is higher, it is bigger than the average size because that is what remains. Then you have to apportion that. I cannot give a one-answer to the question because I will have to know the specifics, but I am giving you a general parameter of how we determine costs, *et cetera*. For example, let us go closer. If you were allocating a high-income lot in – we have completed that area – the Cummings Lodge area, that is even higher than the three-point-whatever per cent that is the asking.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions for the Hon. Member. I thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Hon. Minister, for declaring that you have exhausted all your questions and you were given sufficient time to so do.

*Item 4: 45-452 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing Development – Infrastructural Development and Buildings – \$12,000,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, this completes our consideration of all the items.

#### *Question*

“That the Committee of Supply approve of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025, Supplementary Estimates, Current and Capital Expenditure totalling \$57,492,615,275, for the period ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2025.”

*put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister of Housing and Water and your staff for taking us through your line item.

*Assembly resumed.*

**Dr. Singh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish, Sir, to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025. I now move, that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution. Thank you very much, Sir.

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** This completes our consideration of **Financial Paper No. 1 of 2025**. Hon. Members, I now call on the Hon. Prime Minister to move the suspension of Standing Orders 13(n) and 54.

#### **Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54**

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Orders Nos. 13(n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025, Bill No. 10 of 2025 to be introduced at this stage.

[Prime Minister]

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that we move the suspension of the mentioned Standing Orders.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Standing Orders suspended.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I wish now to signify that in accordance with paragraph 2 of article 171 of the Constitution, the Cabinet has recommended that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025, Bill No. 10 of 2025, be considered by the National Assembly, and I now have the honour of presenting the Bill to this honourable House, and I move that it be read the first time.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING**

**The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:**

#### **Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025 – Bill No. 10 of 2025**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2025, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]

*Question put and carried.*

*Bill read the first time.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Speaker, I now move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025, Bill No. 10 of 2025, be read a second time.

#### **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

#### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **Bills – Second and Third Readings**

#### **Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025 – Bill No. 10 of 2025**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2025, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.”

*[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance and the Public Service]*

*Motion put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Assembly now stands adjourned to a date to be fixed.

*Adjourned accordingly at 7.59 p.m.*

*Question put and carried.*

*Bill read the second time.*

**Dr. Singh:** I now move, Mr. Speaker, that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 1 of 2025) Bill 2025, Bill No. 10 of 2025 be read the third time and be passed as printed. Thank you very much.

*Question put and carried.*

*Bill read the third time and passed as printed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Government Chief Whip has indicated to me that we will not proceed at this sitting with the two remaining Bills on today's Order Paper. I wish to make three announcements before I call on the Hon. Prime Minister. First, Hon. Members, join me in extending condolences to Mr. Ronald Harry Balgobin, whose mother passed away; he is one of our staff. Secondly, we have the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union visiting from this weekend for a few days. Third, let me take this opportunity on behalf of the Parliament, and on my own behalf, to wish everyone a Happy Independence 2025.

## ADJOURNMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do stand adjourned to a date and time to be fixed.”

*[Prime Minister]*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I join you in wishing all Members of the House and staff, the National Assembly, yourself and the Clerk, Happy 59<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Independence of Guyana. Secondly, I ask that we adjourn the sitting of the House of Assembly to a date and time to be fixed.