

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2008) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN Part I

40TH Sitting

14:00h

Thurs 14 February 2008

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

The Hon Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP

Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government (42)

People's Progressive Party/Civic (41)

The United Force (1)

The Hon Samuel A. A. Hinds MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Prime Minister and Minister of

Public Works and Communications

The Hon. Clement J Rohee MP

Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K Z Baksh MP

Minister of Education

The Hon. Dr Henry B Jeffrey MP

*Minister of Foreign Trade and International
Cooperation*

The Hon. Dr Leslie S Ramsammy MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Health

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The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Essequibo)

Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon. Dr Ashni Singh MP

Minister of Finance

The Hon. S Rudolph Insanally OR CCH, MP

Minister of Foreign Affairs *(AOL)*

The Hon. Harry Narine Nawbatt MP

Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon. Robert M Persaud MP

(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)

Minister of Agriculture

The Hon. Dr Jennifer R A Westford MP

(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Minister of the Public Service

The Hon. Kellawan Lall MP - *(Absent)*

*Minister of Local Government and Regional
Development*

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh SC, MP

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon. Dr Frank C S Anthony MP

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. B H Robeson Benn MP

Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir MP

Minister of Labour

The Hon. Priya D Manickchand MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon Dr Desrey Fox MP

Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon. Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Minister **Elected Member from TUF

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The Hon. Jennifer I Webster MP

Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon. Manniram Prashad MP

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Mr. Donald Ramotar MP

Ms. Gail Teixeira MP

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal MP, Chief Whip

Ms. Bibi S Shadick MP

(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr. Albert Atkinson JP, MP (AOL)

(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr. Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mr. Odinga N Lumumba MP - (AOL)

Mr. Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP

Mr Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr. Neendkumar JP, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

*** Mr Steve P Ninvalle MP

*Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture,
Youth and Sport*

Mr. Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

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Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

***Mrs. Pauline Sukhai, MP

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr. Norman A Whittaker MP

(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)

***Non-elected Member

Members of the Opposition (28)

(i) People's National Congress Reform 1-Guyana (22)

Mr. Robert HO Corbin

Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs. Clarissa S Riehl MP

Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr E Lance Carberry MP

Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr. Anthony Vieira

- *(Absent)*

Mr. Basil Williams MP

Dr. George A Norton MP

Mrs. Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr. Keith Scott MP

Ms. Amna Ally MP

Mr. Dave Danny MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C Norton MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Ernest B Elliot MP

- *(Absent)*

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

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(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams MP

(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)

Ms. Africo Selman, MP

Dr. John Austin, MP

(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms. Jennifer Wade, MP

(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, MP

(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes, MP

(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)

Mr. James K McAllister MP

- (AOL)

(ii) Alliance For Change (5)

Mr. Raphael G Trotman MP

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Mrs. Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms. Latchmin B Punalall, MP

(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson MP

(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild

(1)

Mr. Overall N Franklin MP

OFFICERS

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs

Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs. Lilawatie Coonjah

Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

14:43H

PRAYERS

[The Clerk reads the Prayer]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

1. **Death of Mr Deryck Bernard**

Honourable Members, on behalf of the Members of the National Assembly and myself I extend deepest sympathies to the family of Deryck MA Bernard, who passed away suddenly on 5 February 2008.

The late Deryck Bernard became a Member of the National Assembly on 28 December 1985 and served until 2 May 2006. He was the Minister of Education from 1985 to 1992. Deryck Bernard was a highly respected Member of the National Assembly and a firm friend of many Members of this House and of the last Parliament on both sides of the isle including myself even though I am not on either side of the isle as I speak.

As a mark of respect of the late Deryck MA Bernard, I ask you to rise and observe one minute of silence.

[Members stand in silence for one minute]

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1. Visit of Mr Shem Baldeosingh of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of UK

Honourable Members, we have with us today, and I would like to give recognition to Mr Shem Baldeosingh, Assistant Director of Reference Services of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association of the United Kingdom. Mr Singh is visiting the Parliament of Guyana with the preparation of a Strategic Plan for the Parliament Office among many other things. On behalf of Members of the National Assembly and myself I welcome Mr Baldeosingh to the National Assembly and wish him a fruitful and enjoyable stay in Guyana. *[Applause]*

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

By the Minister of Finance:

- (i) The Ministers, Members of the National Assembly and Special Offices (Emoluments) Order No. 3/2008*
- (ii) The Constructional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) Order No. 4/2008*

By the Prime Minister on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

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- (i) *Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and other related materials*

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

By the Speaker of the National Assembly (Chairman of the Committee of Selection):

Minutes of the Proceedings of the 7th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on Thursday, 27 December 2007

By Mrs Volda A Lawrence, MP (Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee):

The Report of the Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly on the Public Accounts of Guyana for the years 2002 and 2003

ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The Speaker: Mr Corbin you have three questions ... Could you please proceed with them one at a time?

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Yes, Sir ...

Mr Speaker under the relevant Standing Order I asked that the Prime Minister to whom I sent a copy of my question, whether

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he could inform us when and at what time the owners and occupiers of land in Buxton/Friendship area will be formally consulted on the clearing exercise to take place on their land without any permission from them?

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, this is a matter that is certainly one that applies within the mandate of the Minister of Agriculture. We know that he is working at it and I would like to beg that the question be directed to him.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. In relation to the prime Minister's request and the question from the Honourable Member to state that a process has been initiated and which is being coordinated by the Joint Services to identify, and provide information to those persons who may be affected as a result of the land-clearing exercise ... that process has started. It involves firstly the pastoral community there and religious leaders, and because there are several groups vying to represent the farmers, political and otherwise, the Joint Services have started working with the religious community in getting that information and interacting with those who may be affected by the land clearing exercise. I have a map should you request that, Mr Speaker.

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Mr Robert HO Corbin: I am not sure who will consult and who is responsible and that is why I asked the Prime Minister, because for the past week, I have been unable to get a clear answer. The Minister of Local Government informed the regional personnel that he is not responsible; that the Office of the President is not responsible and the Minister of Agriculture is not responsible; that this is solely in the hands of the Guyana Defence Force. The Prime Minister tells us that it is Minister Persaud. What I am trying to find out is what time will the owners and occupiers of the land be consulted? I am hearing about representatives. The owners and the occupiers cannot be vying for representation. They are identifiable and that is the question. I am hearing about religious leaders; are these religious leaders the owners of the land? I am asking when and at what time the owners and occupiers of the land; I am not asking if there is consultation with other people.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Hon Robert M Persaud: Just to repeat what I just said in summary; that process has started already, Mr Speaker. *[Interruption: ‘When?’ “It is ongoing”]*

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Corbin ...

Mr Robert HO Corbin: I would not ask any supplementary question, but maybe I should have asked who is responsible and see if I can get a formal answer in the National Assembly, but this is what we have been

getting out there. The farmers do not know who is really in charge.

The next question for the Prime Minister and this arises from the same question:

Could the Prime Minister state the level of compensation that will be paid to the farmers for the loss and damage to permanent crops in their cultivation, particularly coconut trees and mangoes and things like that ... What level of compensation and criteria are you using for these life-long trees?

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Again, this is very much a question for the Minister of Agriculture. I know that in other cases that the Ministry of Agriculture has some schedules of examination on crisis, but I defer to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture ...

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank Mr Speaker, again. The mechanism that is being used to determine compensation is one that has been tested and tried and has been utilised in the Essequibo road project and the Berbice River Bridge project. Based on those estimations by our crops and our agricultural economist and the market value various compensation costs have been attributed to permanent crops as well as vegetables and other crops

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which might be affected including livestock, and there is an entire schedule which will be utilised and made available. It covers nearly every crop activity in the affected area. This is available.

Hon Robert HO Corbin: Supplementary ...

Since it is available, would the Hon Minister be prepared to make available a copy of that document to the Leader of the Opposition immediately so that he can edify himself.

Hon Robert M Persaud: At an appropriate time this would be made available to the public including the Leader of the Opposition, but it is here.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Supplementary Sir ...

If this is a dried and tested record, something that has been used in the past or according to the Honourable Minister the Berbice Bridge; is this a secret document or is it a document that is handling the taxpayers money and compensation?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mr Speaker, out of courtesy I met with the Farmers' Committee representing the farmers there and I have undertaken to supply them with a copy of this document and I prefer to send this to them first, make it available to the Leader of the Opposition and then to the members of the public, but I think out of courtesy and

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respect for the farmers of Buxton, I intend to give them it first. *[Applause]*

Mr Robert HO Corbin: A Supplementary question ...

Could the Honourable Minister tell us who are the representatives of these Farmers' Committee - their names?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mr Speaker, as I indicated there are several groups that have come forward, but the Committee that I am referring to consist of Mr Corbin himself; another gentlemen Mr Fitzroy Miller; Mr Ernest Elliot, the Honourable Member of Parliament, Miss Dawn King and there are other members whom you are familiar with.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: So what is the secret ... if you give me, I am member of the Committee ... so what is the big fuss?

Hon Robert M Persaud: It will be sent to the Chairman of the Committee. Fortunately or unfortunately you are not the Chairman of the Committee; Mr Miller is.

The Speaker: Next question ...

Mr Robert HO Corbin: The next question for the Prime Minister ...

Could the Prime Minister state at what date, time and venue compensation will be paid to

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those farmers who have had their cash crop on Brushe Dam damaged by bulldozers operated by the Security Forces?

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Mr Speaker, I again defer to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Hon Robert M Persaud: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. I think this is a very relevant question, because some of the farmers are interested and they have already requested this information. At this point in time what I can say is that the mechanism is available for farmers to make their claims; there is a form here that has to be filled out; once those claims have been made, there is a verification process; at the end of that verification process there is an agreement between the claimant and the Government, this does not involve any groupings and they shall be so advised as to the time and place of the payment. I must also add that steps have been taken to appropriate the relevant funding - an approximate amount which will be required and those steps have started already.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Supplementary question ...

Would the Honourable Minister give us some indication as to the time span between the submission of that document and the payment of the actual compensation,

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because as you know while the grass is growing the horse is starving ... these are cash crops that people have been getting weekly stock from and earnings?

Hon Robert M Persaud: I understand and fully appreciate the need for these farmers who have been or may be affected to be compensated as early as possible, and the intention is to have this done very expeditiously. Based on the experience and with the need to appropriate the relevant funding, there is some time element that one would have to note. At this point in time I do not want to give a specific timeframe, because each claim is different from the other, so they may vary from claim to claim; some may take a shorter period; some may take a longer period depending on the required verification process.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Final Supplementary question ... I think I am entitled to three, Sir.

The Speaker: Go ahead, Mr Corbin ...

Mr Robert HO Corbin:

Could the Honourable Minister give us a rough estimate from his experience what the farmers can look forward to; those who after three weeks have not been able to get any earnings to take care of their families and I think you are aware; you spoke with them; I think you will know unlike your

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colleagues they think that I am making a joke here; you have met with them and I think you understand the gravity of the situation. So what they want to know what timeframe we are talking about two weeks, three weeks, four weeks, because this is all some people depend on. So do you have an idea of the timeframe?

Hon Robert M Persaud: Mr Speaker, the entire process starts with a claim being made and I have encouraged the farmers there to make claims very early, because the earlier the claims are put in, they allow the process to start. If the Ministry of Agriculture control all the variables, we would hope that these claims are dealt with the latest three or four weeks. There are several other factors, the verification has to be carried out by the Joint Services and the farmers' representatives and so forth. So there is a process that is entailed, but it is our intention as a Government to have these compensation claims to be dealt with expeditiously.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, with your leave, would the Honourable Minister be willing to treat this matter as a crisis and in similar manner where you made some interim payout pending the processing of this document as we have done in other flood situations and so on; once you have verified that these people have submitted claims whatever have you and I think it is not difficult to establish through the NDC and the groups;

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would it not be possible to make some interim payout as an emergency payment to help these people during this period pending this undetermined period of processing. Is that not possible?

Hon Robert M Persaud: The suggestion by the Leader of the Opposition has been noted.

Mr Winston S Murray: May I ask a supplementary question - Could the Honourable Minister confirm to the National Assembly that there is no pre-condition for the receipt of compensation by way demanding that income tax was paid the previous year?

The Speaker: Thank you. No supplementary will be allowed after this.

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture

Hon Robert M Persaud: According to the form that we have here, this is not a requirement at this point in time.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, Honourable Members; the next item

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Speaker: Honourable Members there are six questions on the Order Paper. Questions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 are for written replies and Question No. 1 is in the name

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of the Honourable Member Mr Trotman. Questions Nos. 2 and 3 are in the name of the Honourable Member Mrs Holder and these answers have been given in accordance with the Standing Orders.

1. GUYANA'S TOTAL NATIONAL DEBT AS OF 1 NOVEMBER 2007

Member Asking: Mr Raphael GC Trtoman MP

Minister Answering: The Minister of Finance

- (i) What is the total national debt of Guyana as of 1 November 2007?
- (ii) What is the itemized amount owed, to whom and the scheduled dates of repayment?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: This information is compiled on an annual basis and included in the consolidated financial statements that are prepared by Government and audited by the Auditor General.

2. VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT)

Member Asking: Mrs Sheila VA Holder MP

Minister Answering: The Minister of Finance

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- (i) What principles are employed by the Government in arriving at the list of companies granted exemption from VAT?
- (ii) Which Companies are receiving VAT exemptions?
- (iii) List all the tax exemptions - GT&T, BARAMA, OMAI, Digicel and other companies that are receiving apart from VAT.
- (iv) By which legal authority does the Minister of Finance get the authority to grant VAT concessions?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh:

- (i) Companies that had investment agreements that provided for exemption from consumption tax on identified inputs prior to the introduction of VAT would have had those agreements amended to provide for zero-rating of the said inputs for the purposes of VAT. Subsequently, investment agreements may provide for zero-rating of identified inputs for the purpose of VAT in accordance with applicable investment incentive regimes.
- (ii) Please see **APPENDIX A**.
- (iii) The Guyana Revenue Authority publishes all tax exemptions granted to companies on an

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annual basis. Exemptions for the year 2006 have already been published in the national media during 2007. Exemptions granted during 2007 will be published during 2008.

(iv) The Value Added Tax Act 2005.

3. COST OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLIED BY GUYANA POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY LTD

Member Asking: Mrs Sheila VA Holder, MP

Minister Answering: The Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications

With the world market price for fuel trading at over US \$95.00 a barrel (nine five dollars) and expected to rise to US \$100.00 (one hundred dollars) a barrel shortly, what action, if any, is the Government taking to ease the impact on the cost of electricity supplied by GPL?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: The increased oil price over 2007, which increased GPL's cost of fuel from G\$9.7 billion (US\$48.5 million) as budgeted to an actual of G\$14.39 billion (US\$72.0 million) was indeed a big blow to the hopes and efforts of this Minister, the entire Government and GPL to keep electricity prices constant and even reduce them. However, much we dislike this,

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however, much it pains, and it does pain, this cost had and has to be met.

The ways open to Government to ameliorate electricity prices are the same as we have been utilizing before:

- (i) Forego and defer payments due from GPL as much as we could - payments/dividends due to Government as owner; and as Government, the waiving of taxes on fuel and routing concessionary loans and other support to GPL

It should be noted that these do not lower the costs of producing the electricity, and we, the Government and all of us pay a price in the foregoing of other goods and services which would have been provided if Government had received these revenue inflows.

- (ii) This Minister and Government continue to demand of GPL, the Management and all employees that the utility be run steadily more efficiently and effectively, aiming always to attain the lowest possible sustainable costs. In this regard Board and Management have been pursuing the reorganization of GPL's total workforce, to attain significant reduction in employment costs, and are implementing programmes to reduce electricity losses. In both these areas this Minister asks for your kind understanding and support.

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- (iii) Reluctantly, inevitably, some greater or lesser portion of the increase has to be passed on to the consumers

This Minister and Government call on all consumers and the public at large to observe that with the increased fuel prices and the consequential higher cost of electricity, and the need for us to live within our means, we must conserve electricity, use it more carefully and sparingly - conserve, switch-off, unplug. In this regard this minister entreats the understanding and cooperation of all.

Once we live smarter, work harder, we will overcome all difficulties that the world may throw at us.

- (iv) For the longer term, the Government is pursuing local alternative energy sources which may now be less expensive than petroleum fuel and provide protection against expected further increases in petroleum prices. In this regard the Government's pursuit of the development of AMAILA's Fall is well known.

The Speaker: Question Nos. 4, 5 and 6 or for oral replies

...

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Mrs Holder, you have all three of those; could you proceed with the first one for the Minister of Finance.

5. NIS PENSIONERS

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Thank you Mrs Speaker.

- (i) Could the Honourable Minister reveal how many NIS pensioners have appeals pending, which challenge the institution's decisions on their NIS pensions?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, in response to the question asked I wish to indicate that the following numbers of benefits which can result in the award of either a pension or a grant or can be disallowed have attached to them as of 31 October 2007 an outstanding appeal and they are in the following categories the number that I will state after each category. In the case of:

• Old age benefit	-	910
• Invalidity	-	39
• Survivors	-	89
• Disablement	-	2
• Death	-	2
	Total	1,042

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Thank you Honourable Minister

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I will proceed to the second question and then go back to the first question.

Will the Honourable Minister say what percentage of appeals over the last five years has been approved and payments granted to pensioners?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, over the last five years as asked the question, the processing of appeals in relation to pensioners to benefits as resulted to the following percentage processed; as before I am going to take them category by category and in this case year by year also.

In the case of old age benefit for the years 2002 to 2006; the numbers concerned are

2002	49
2003	32
2004	49
2005	46 and
2006	36

that is percentages of course.

In the case of invalidity for the years 2002 to 2006 the percentages are

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2002	50
2003	7
2004	23
2005	38 and
2006	24

respectively.

In the case of survivors for the years 2002 to 2006 the percentages are

2002	62
2003	33
2004	55
2005	57 and
2006	57

respectively.

In the case of disablement benefits the percentage are

2002	33
2003	25
2004	34

2005 34 and

2006 4

And in the case of death the percentages are zero for all fives of the years concerned, 2002 to 2006.

I should clarify also that processed in this case of course means that the appeal could either been allowed or disallowed and in addition clarified that appeals are made for the following reasons:

The disallowing of a claim or secondly a claim resulting in the award of a grant or a claim resulting in the award of a pension rate that was not accepted.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: A supplementary question ...

The question is very specific to how many of these appeals have in fact been granted. You have not really indicated that. That is important.

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I provided the information that was at my disposal, which was indeed in relation to appeals that were processed.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder:

Honourable Member, would you be prepared to submit the data that you have there for further scrutiny?

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Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Had the question being asked was a written question, I would be happy to address it.

The Speaker: The transcript of what the Minister said is available.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: I trust the information is available, if you are able to give it to me.

I wish to ask the Hon Member since this is a problem that aggravates the social situation faced by a number of pensioners I trust that the Minister and the Government will be concerned to alleviate these problems expeditiously:

What promise can you make to pensioners that their appeals would be dealt with expeditiously?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I would hasten to assure the Honourable Member that we are indeed and this has come as no surprise to the Honourable Member, that we are indeed concerned to ensure that appeals and indeed all other transactions at the National Insurance Scheme are processed in the most expeditious manner possible and I can say to you that in this regard there is a number of initiatives in train at the National Insurance Scheme including those associated with initiatives such administrative improvements, computerisation, et etcetera, that should better enable the examination of contribution records and processing of these transactions. Mr Speaker,

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through you, I want to assure the Honourable Member that we (the Government and the Administration) of the National Insurance Scheme are certainly very concerned to ensure that all transactions are processed in a timely manner.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

Does that mean that the data processed and records have been completely updated so that pensioners can expect what you tell us to take place?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I can say that the process of updating is currently ongoing.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Well then the Honourable Member will be more specific to the final question that I have here:

Will he state how long it takes on average for NIS to make pension payments:

- *After a candidate reaches the pensionable age of 60 and*
- *After appeals have been investigated and approved?*

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, on average, a claim for a pension is processed within three months after

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submission of the claim provided that there are no queries. There are cases where claims are made before the insured person attains the age of sixty years and these would be processed to the point of determining the rate that will be placed on hold for the printing of vouchers. There are also cases where several years after attaining age sixty years an insured person would submit the claim for old age benefit. If the processing results in the award of a pension, then it is computed from the time that the insured person becomes sixty years.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: I will now go to the next question

Will the Honourable Minister say what percentage of the total NIS income is based on contributors who have migrated before making the required number of pensionable contributions?

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, I regret to say that it is not possible based on the data that we currently have what percentage of NIS income is based on contributors who have migrated before making the required number of contributions.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: A supplementary question ...

Therefore in the circumstances would the Minister say whether or not the administration is prepared to have a link

that other Caribbean countries that has similar NIS schemes so that our citizens who emigrate to those countries can begin to benefit or to receive some level of benefit ...

Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: Mr Speaker, as the Honourable Member evidently is aware of migration particularly to CARICOM countries does not restrict persons from qualifying for pensions due to the CARICOM reciprocal agreement on social security.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Honourable Member, I will go back to the first question which I omitted to start with.

1. RISING OIL PRICE

Given that the world price for a barrel of oil is now trading at over US\$ \$95 (ninety-five dollars) and projected to rise to US \$100.00 (one hundred dollars), is the Minister of Finance prepared to consider abolishing the tax on fuels to ease the effect on the cost of living?

The Speaker: Honourable Member, there is a limit to the number of supplementary questions.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: No, no, no, this is not a supplementary question; this is a specific question. This is question No. 4, it deals with oil not the NIS.

The Speaker: Very well.

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Hon Dr Ashni K Singh: In response to Question No. 4, I wish to report that Government is not currently considering the abolition of the tax on fuels. However, as the Honourable Member no doubt is aware we have over the course of last year progressively reduced the rate of tax applicable to gasoline and diesel so much so that the standard rate of fifty percent which applied to both of those products currently stands at seventeen percent in the case of gasoline and ten percent in the case of diesel.

To illustrate the extent to which Government's initiative in this regard to help to cushion the impact of world market price developments on domestic consumers, the following facts might be worthy of note:

- In January 2007, we imported gasoline at US \$58.83 per barrel;
- By November 2007, we imported gasoline at US \$101.96 per barrel an increase of 73.3 percent then at 5 January
- In February 2008 that is more recently, we imported gasoline at US \$98.10, an increase of 66.8 percent over the January 2007 price. However, over the period from January 2007 to February 2008, the price at the pump in Guyana at the petrol stations for gasoline moved \$755 to \$800 and increase of six percent. In other words, while over the period from January 2007 to February 2008, the FOB price that we were paying for imported

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gasoline increased by 66.8 percent, the consumer in Guyana only faced a six percent increase in the price at the domestic pump. This dramatic cushioning effect was made possible by Government's lowering of the excise tax rate on gasoline. And as I believe you are aware that a similar pattern will be observed if one were to examine the numbers with respect to diesel.

- Furthermore, Government continues to maintain its policy of charging no taxes on kerosene.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs [*Pause*] Minister Rohee do you want to make a statement by Minister? You indicated such to me. I do not know if you have changed your mind. You were not in the House when the matter was called.

Hon Clement J Rohee: I think the Prime Minister was indicating that there is another question to be answered.

The Speaker: I have no such indication.

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: There is another question - Question No. 6 to the Minister of Education. It is an oral question.

The Speaker: Yes, proceed Mrs Holder ...

6. CRITCHLOW LABOUR COLLEGE

Mrs Sheila VA Holder:

For what reason or reasons have portions of the subvention approved in the 2007 Estimates to the Critchlow Labour College been withheld?

Hon Shaik KZ Baksh: Mr Speaker, both the Critchlow Labour College and the Guyana Trades Union Congress are provided with subventions by the Government of Guyana. The provision of the subvention is not a right to be enjoyed under any circumstances nor is it a statutory obligation. Portions of the 2007 subvention for Critchlow Labour College have been withheld based on the following:

All engagements of the State (Government of Guyana) and the unionised labour have seen significantly affected by the reality of two federations of unions in Guyana. As such, all engagement will have to be renewed and reformulated to reflect the reality. This includes the management arrangements of the subvention. The administration continues to urge the two federations to present a comprehensive reformulation of existing arrangements of organised labour and the State's Government of Guyana.

The Speaker: Just a minute Mr Corbin ...

Mrs Holder ...

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Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Thank you. I would like to ask the Honourable Minister why after all these months of withholding the subvention and all the public's concern expressed, he did not think it necessary to supply this answer?

Hon Shaik KZ Baksh: Mr Speaker, a statement was already made by the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr Roger Luncheon on this matter.

Mr Aubrey C Norton: Mr Speaker, a follow-up question - Could the Honourable Minister state that why a government that state's policy is to educate children will withhold this grant or subvention when the students themselves have nothing to do with the existence of two trade unions organisations. [*Applause*]

Hon Shaik KZ Baksh: Mr Speaker, my reply has been very clear and I have stated very clearly here why the subvention has been withheld.

The Speaker: Hold on a minute; let me just find out from the Clerk if we can have this free-for-all questioning. Mr Clerk, could you? [*Pause*] Honourable Members, only two supplementary questions are allowable. I do not have time to go through the Standing Orders at this moment, but I believe that those questions are only allowable by the person asking the main question. I mean, I can use my discretion from time to time, but we cannot allow the situation to be (I do not want to use the word *abuse*), but we cannot allow the situation to get out of hand. I mean I

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see many persons are standing up. This is Mrs Holder's time. She took the time to ask the question and she should get priority. Mrs Holder!

Mrs Sheila VA Holder: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. I would like to ask the Honourable Minister what value is put to this august body when it approves an item and its subvention; does it mean that the Minister has overriding powers over the National Assembly.

Hon Shaik KZ Baksh: Mr Speaker, whenever a subvention is approved it is subject to certain conditions and the Ministry determines certain conditions, for example, some of the conditions relate to

- audited financial statements;
- a proper work programme;
- the previous year's report

and when these are reviewed from time to time - I am talking generally about subventions - then the subvention is released by the Ministry. It is not a free-for-all subvention.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS INCLUDING
POLICY STATEMENTS**

Series of Events Leading up to the Slaughter of eleven (11) people, including five children at Lusignan on 26 January 2008

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The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, between Monday 21 January and Friday 8 February 2008 a series of events occurred in our country that attracted the attention of the nation and international community.

These events began with a report of a missing girl Tenisha Morgan followed by a series of phone calls made to CID Headquarters. These calls were made by a person with a voice known to the ranks of the CID as Guyana's most wanted man Rondel Rawlins called Fineman. Following these calls the Joint Services mounted a series of actions in the interest of public safety and security.

- On Wednesday, 23 January 2008 a GDF patrol was attacked at the Buxton Railway embankment by bandits resulting in the death of Corporal Ivor Williams and injury and privatisation of Private Carrington, both of the Guyana Defence Force.
- On Friday, 25 January 2008, about 22:20h armed gunmen in motor car discharged several rounds at the ranks at the guardroom at Force Headquarters Eve Leary injuring Constable 17781 Scott and Special Constable 13079 Mc Almont.
- Between 01:55h and 02:30h on Saturday, 26 January 2008 at Track A Lusignan Pasture on the East Coast, groups of unidentified armed men numbered between ten and fifteen invaded five

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homes murdered eleven persons and wounded three. Murdered were:

- Shazam Mohamed - male East Indian - twenty-two years of age;
- Clarence Thomas - male Amerindian - forty-eight years of age;
- Rohan Thomas - male mixed race - eleven years of age;
- Vidya Thomas - female mixed race - twelve years of age;
- Mohandai Gooradat - female East Indian - twenty-two years of age;
- Seegopaul Harilall - male East Indian -ten years of age;
- Seegobin Harilall also known as Ray - male East Indian - four years of age;
- Dhanrajie Ramsingh - female East Indian - fifty-two years of age;
- Raywattie Singh - female East Indian - eleven years of age;
- Seecharran Rooplall - male East Indian - fifty-six years of age;

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- Shalim Baksh - male East Indian - fifty-two years of age.
- Two years later on 28 January 2008, post mortem examination with dissections were performed with the bodies of the deceased and the cause of death was established as gunshot injuries.
- Apart from those who were murdered the following persons were injured as a result of the attack:
 - Howard Thomas - male mixed race - nineteen years of age;
 - Robert Thomas - male mixed race - nine years of age;
 - Nadir Mohamed - male East Indian - forty years of age.

Mr Speaker, in an expression of anger, pain and dissatisfaction may the response of ranks of the Guyana Police Force, residents of Lusignan, Mon Repos and Good Hope including the neighbouring villages as well as Bath Settlement on the West Coast of Berbice took to the streets in protest. Their message was loud and clear and could not be ignored. A number of Government Ministers as well as the Prime Minister and His Excellency the President met with the disgruntled protestors, heard their criticisms, their expressions of anger and frustrations.

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On Sunday, 27 January 2008, the President held three community meetings with residents of Mon Repos, Good Hope and Lusignan. A number of recommendations were made at these meetings. After showing maximum restraint over the three days of protest on Monday, 28 January, the police were forced to take action to clear the roadways to allow for the free movement of traffic. Several persons were arrested charged and placed before the Courts. The cases of those arrested at Bath Settlement have been dismissed.

On Thursday, 31 January 2008, an armed confrontation took place between the Joint Services and armed gunmen at the back lands at Buxton. As a result two men were killed; they were subsequently identified as Vibert Leroy Harris called Bolo and Troy St John called John Haige. St John is reported to be the No. 2 member of the Rondel Rawlins called Fineman gang. An AK47 rifle was recovered following the confrontation. Ballistic tests conducted on the spent shells found that -

- (a) the armed confrontation between the Joint Services and the Buxton gang involving Harris and St John;
- (b) the shooting of the guardroom at Force Headquarters; and
- (c) the Lusignan massacre

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matched with shells that were found at the scenes of the armed robbery murder at Mon Repos, East Coast Demerara on 12 December 2007, where two persons were killed; the armed murder robbery and the PGS security van at Agricola; the armed murder robbery where two MMC personnel at Sherebana were killed and the Canal No. 2 armed robbery murder in 2006 where one person was killed as well as Minister's Sash Sawh's murder. In all eight cases, it appears that the same criminal elements linked to the Buxton gang were involved. Mr Speaker, Rawlins has since admitted to the slaying of the persons at Lusignan.

On 27 January 2008, the Joint Services launched Operation Restore Order. During the period under review, the country's state of national security came under stress as a result of these criminal activities. Operations by the Joint Services targeted against the criminal gangs have thus far yielded some success in interdiction. However, these operations are ongoing. In this regard a special Joint Services operation group was launched to seek out and to find the notorious bandit Rawlins and his crew. As a result of information gathered over twenty persons were arrested from the Buxton/Friendship area; they were all arrested as suspects involved in murders and association with notorious Buxton criminal gang. The suspects were all escorted to CID Headquarters for intensive interrogation. Eventually they were released and sent away.

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Mr Speaker, in the course of Operation Restore Order, several homes and abandoned houses in Buxton/Friendship were searched by the Joint Services. In the course of these searches the following materials were found:

- (a) Copies of political theories and principles of ancient African Constitutional law and the fundamental rights of the African people;
- (b) Handouts on police questioning and interrogation survival lessons;
- (c) Handouts and skills of a soldier;
- (d) Handouts on combat standing orders;
- (e) Handouts on ways of the military and professional war ethics;
- (f) Book on rules of engagement ;
- (g) A Holy Bible;
- (h) Several cell phones; and
- (i) Marijuana.

Mr Speaker, Operation De-bush commenced on 4 February 2008. In statement issued by the Office of the President, citizens were informed that the operation is aimed at:

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Clearing the back lands on the lower East Coast, where existing vegetation are being used by criminals to hide and escape assaults on East Coast communities and resident. The operation entails the removal of all vegetation identified area at the back of the villages on the East Coast so as to provide a clear land of sight for villagers and security forces. The relevant State and Government Agencies will be engaging concerned landowners and others concerned with the back lands with a view to providing compensation as this Operation progresses.

The opposition political community have attacked and condemned the project to de-bush sections of Buxton/Friendship area despite arrangement by the Government to provide compensation to the affected farmers. Efforts are being made by the opposition community to criminalised and denigrate the Joint Services as they work to alter the terrain of the Buxton back lands with the view to making it advantageous to the Joint Services.

Mr Speaker, the attack on GDF patrol and the Headquarters on the Guyana Police Force must be seen as attacks on the State and official State agencies. Such attacks require and appropriate response by the State and its agencies. Consequently the current de-bushing operations must be seen in this context despite the rhetoric

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of discrimination and stigmatisation being levelled at the ongoing operations.

Mr Speaker, astute political leadership and management of the extant period as well as that ahead of us is crucial for healing and moving the nation forward unitedly. Appropriate and effective security measures coupled with socio economic progress for the affected areas and other communities are just as critical if progress is to be made unaltered. In this regard implementation of the Citizens' Security Programme and the Security Reform Action Plan combine with Government funding security related programmes will not be torpedoed without being given a chance to work. Now is not the time to be scrambling to hastily put together a plan to fight crime. On the contrary, now is the time for action based on the plan that is already in place. *[Applause]* Now is not the time to resolve to acts of desperation such as calling on the United Nations for help. Guyana must not and will not become another Darfur, Bosnia or Rwanda. This must be our rallying call; this is what we should commit ourselves to. This National Assembly must come together as one and issue a united national condemnation on these brutal killings that has tarnished the good image of our country. We must support the joint services in their effort to hunt down the criminal gang wherever they may be hold up either in Buxton or elsewhere, safe haven or no safe haven. We must as one people condemn any statement encouraging mediation and/or dialogue with the perpetrators of this and other dastardly acts. There must be no political space for

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such persons or their satraps in the body politics or the political mainstream of our country. Thank you.
[Applause]

Mr Robert HO Corbin: I seek your guidance, Sir. I am not aware of ... *[Interruption]*

The Speaker: There is no provision for this.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: I am aware of that and I wondering whether a member has a right at some point to reply to erroneous statements. So when Ministers capitalise on that right in the Standing Order.

The Speaker: Yes, you do have a right by way of Motion, Mr Corbin. That is the only right you have.

Honourable Members, both the Clerk and I wish to tender our apologies in relation to my indication about oral notice. There is a lot of rules in relation to these oral questions and supplementaries and I wish members would remember these things so when we ourselves go wrong we can be properly corrected.

There are two types of oral questions. The type that Mr Corbin asked and then there are oral questions which are published on the Notice and intend to be ask as oral questions that Mrs Holder asked. I am not sure about the type of question Mr Corbin asked whether persons other than Mr Corbin can ask supplementaries, but in Mr Corbin

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type of questions only two supplementaries are allowed per question. There is no provision in the rules and I refer to them 22 (6) that appear to limit supplementaries either to Mrs Holder or to limit the number of supplementaries. So I apologise to both Mr Norton and Mr Trotman who had indicated that they wanted, and that comes from the Clerk and myself. Thank you very much.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

(1) Brutal and Horrific Killings of eleven (11) Guyana Citizens

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Corbin

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Mr Speaker, you will recall that I wrote you earlier today indicating that I would have moved that the National Assembly stands adjourn under Standing Order No. 11 (2) to discuss a matter of urgent public importance to with the tragedy of the killings of those people at Lusignan. I was under the misapprehension (I must now say) that the Motion which I had originally submitted since the 2 February would have been the motion to be considered by this Honourable Parliament, because I think by way of background , members may not be aware of this, but I did write you on

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the 2 February asking that a special sitting of this National Assembly be called to discuss the motion in my name, which would have called for this National Assembly to convey its sympathy to the families of the eleven citizens and the Corporal of the Guyana Defence Force who were all murdered as well as calling on this National Assembly to condemn this brutal and horrific killings of our eleven citizens and also calling on the Government to implement a definite plan of action to arrest the downward spiralling of our country's security situation.

Following my receipt of a reply from you dated the 5th promptly, I got the clear impression that the Prime Minister had signified that this House will meet on Monday and that we would have had an opportunity to address that motion, but unfortunately I think that we are all aware you have already announce that the late Mr Deryck Bernard died and we agreed that we will meet today. I assume that whatever mechanism we use that that motion would have been before this House and so out of abundant caution I still last evening or the evening before sought to have the Government agreed to suspend the Standing Orders to permit that motion that I submitted since the 2nd February to be debated and approved by this House. Late last night I received an interesting response from the Prime Minister which I would not burden the Parliament about, but in effect it said that he got the letter a little late and that it will take several days for us to agree on an agreed motion having regard to the track record of the motion on Dr Jagan and that they were not inclined to

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move the motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders to deal with my substantive motion of giving sympathy. I therefore resorted to Standing Order No. 11(2) which is used on several occasions. I think, somehow I am regular at that at times of crisis. It is not the first time ... I brought one during the flood and on a number of other occasions and I had assumed that having regard to the expressed concern on this matter that this motion would have been tabled. But speaking to you prior to the commencement of this House I understood that the motion of sympathy that we would really like to pass, which is the germane issue for discussion, the security situation, cannot be put, but has to be discussed at another debate generally on the situation at Lusignan ending up in no specific resolve clause. So we will have an exercise similar to what has been going on at NCN for the last three weeks, at the end of which the Parliament is not able because of this formality to convey a formal motion of sympathy.

In that context, I again consulted with the Standing Orders and would like to therefore withdraw my request to adjourn this House on matters of urgent public importance, because of the limitations and the futility of the exercise we have been engaging in for after debating this matter we would not have an opportunity to convey that motion of sympathy, but to engage in perhaps other kinds of exchanges here, which may not be helpful to the families. But I have consulted and I think that there is Standing Orders Nos. 31 and 111 which permits any

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member of this Parliament to move for its suspension of the relevant Standing Orders to permit motions to be put and I am withdrawing my request to adjourn this National Assembly to discuss this matter, to seek a request for leave from you at the relevant time to move a suspension of the Standing Orders to have my substantive motion debated in the Parliament. So I withdraw, Sir.

The Speaker: Thank you Mr Corbin.

Request withdrawn

2. Series of Events Leading up to the Slaughter of eleven (11) people, including five children at Lusignan on 26 January 2008

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, under Standing Order Nos. 12 (1) and (2), I hereby seek leave to move adjournment of today's Sitting to discuss a matter of definite urgent and public importance to which the events together with the surrounding circumstances, which occurred on the 26 January 2008 at Lusignan, East Coast Demerara.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, may I inquire only whether the Honourable Minister has met all the

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requirements of that Standing Order by submitting written notice prior to the commencement of this Sitting.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I find that question extraordinary.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: Mr Speaker, I just asked as a Member of this House.

The Speaker: I find that question rather extraordinary.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: It is not an objection I just asked as a Member of this House, am I not entitled to.

The Speaker: No, Sir.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: I am not entitled to know whether or not ...

The Speaker: Honourable Member, not all questions are allowable.

Mr Rapheal GC Trotman: I see, thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I think you should have learnt by now that I rule according to the Standing Orders, I do not rule on any other basis. That is the basis on which I rule - Standing Orders, nothing else.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: You have made the wrong ruling just now.

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The Speaker: Because I interpret the Standing Orders incorrectly and I apologised to you Honourable Member.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: *[Noisy Interruption]*

The Speaker: No, you did not ask me for ... you ask me if the Honourable Member has satisfied the requirements and I find that to be an improper question. Thank you very much. *[Pause]*

I was duly informed in sufficient time as required by a ruling made by Mr Sasenarine many years ago about the intention of the Honourable Member Mr Clement Rohee as well as by Honourable Member Mr Corbin.

I find and indicated long ago to Mr Corbin when he initially made the application that I would favour such and application. So that was made to Mr Corbin and I do favour the application, I need now to put it.

Question -

That the Honourable House be adjourned on a Matter of Urgent Public Importance

Put and agreed to

Motion carried

The Adjournment Motion shall stand down until 16:30 H when the debate on it shall commence. I refer Members to Standing Order No. 12 (3) for the other particulars in relation to how the matter should proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First Readings

By the *Minister of Finance*

***INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL
2008 - Bill No 1/2008***

By *Mr Harripersaud Nokta*

***GUYANA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ACT 1974 (AMENDMENT) BILL 2007 -
Bill No. 30/2007***

PRIVATE MEMBERS BUSINESS

The Speaker: The Honourable Member Mr Corbin.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Your Honour, I seek leave of you to move a Motion for the suspension of the Standing Orders and I read it as Standing Order 71 or Standing Order 111 which ever you may deem applicable for this Honourable House to dispense with any required notice to

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consider and debate the Motion standing in my name that was submitted to this Parliament as I mentioned earlier by letter dated 2 February, when I at that time called for a Special Sitting of the Parliament to discuss the situation of the horrific killings. The Motion is a very simple one and I trust that I will persuade my colleagues to support the Motion. It says:

WHEREAS Eleven Guyanese citizens including five children all from the village of Lusignan, East Coast Demerara were brutally and horrifically killed by gunmen in their homes in the wee hours of the morning of Saturday, 26 January, 2008 ...[Interruption]

The Speaker: The Motion has been circulated so there is no need to read it out.

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Oh, I was not aware that it was circulated as yet. Well the Notice as circulated, Your Honour, I trust that you will give leave for this Motion to be put and that we debate this Motion this afternoon, which will give full meaning to what was our original intention.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Mr Winston S Murray: I rise to second that application.

The Speaker: Thank you, you want to say something

Honourable Prime Minister.

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Yes Mr Speaker, the Government has been in discussion with the ...
[Interruption]

The Speaker: Are we engaging ... I am going to put the Motion, you can vote against it if you wish.

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: Okay, thank you.

The Speaker: You can vote against it if you wish or in favour of it, either one

Hon Samuel AA Hinds: I wanted to make and explanation.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, this is not a debate. The Honourable Member has moved a suspension of a Standing Order and the question before the House is whether to suspend the Standing Order or not. Mr Corbin, what are the Standing Orders?

Mr Robert HO Corbin: 111 and 31

The Speaker: Honourable Members, Mr Corbin has move the suspension of Standing Orders 111 and 31 ... Honourable Members allow me to proceed with business please. Mr Corbin has move the suspension of the Standing Orders Nos. 111 and 31 in order to reduce the time to present a Motion.

Question put

Mr Robert HO Corbin: Division!

The Speaker: Mr Clerk, please take the Division

FOR

AGAINST

Mr Fanklin

Mr Whittaker

Mr Patterson

Mr Seeraj

Mrs Budhan

Mrs Sahoye-Shury

Mrs Holder

Mr Parmanand Persaud

Mr Ramjattan

Mr Neendkumar

Mr Trotman

Mr Nandlall

Mr Fernandes

Mr Nagamootoo

Ms Kissoon

Mr Khan

Ms Wade

Mrs Edwards

Dr Austin

Mr De Santos

Ms Selman

Mr Chand

Mr Mervyn Williams

Mr Ali

Mrs David-Blair

Ms Shadick

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Mr Elliot	Mrs Chandarpal
Mr Norton	Mr Nokta
Mr Danny	Ms Teixeira
Miss Ally	Mr Ramotar
Mr Scott	Mr Prashad
Mrs Lawrence	Ms Webster
Dr Norton	Dr Ramsaran
Mr Basil Williams	Dr Fox
Mrs Backer	Ms Manickchand
Mr Carberry	Mr Nadir
Mrs Riehl	Mr Benn
Mr Murray	Dr Anthony
Mr Corbin	Dr Westford
Mr Robert Persaud	Mr Nawbatt
Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett	Dr Ramsammy
Dr Jeffrey	Mr Baksh

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The Speaker: Honourable Members, there are twenty-six (26) Members for the Motion and thirty-four (34) against. We were uncertain at one point where Honourable Member Mrs Rodrigues was going to vote, I think that has been clarified. Thank you very much.

The Motion has been **Negatived**.

Honourable Members, we are just at the point of four o'clock, I apologised for the very unusually late start this midday, but as Members were aware there were several discussions going on as to how we are to proceed this afternoon.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTIONS

We have still on the Order Paper:

- The Motion by Honourable Member Mr Trotman on the Guyana Power & Light [*Pause*]

and we have another ...

- Motion on Limit on the Aggregate Amount of Debt Obligations by Winston Murray;

and we have:

- A Motion by Mrs Backer on the Law Reform Commission.

So those three are pending, perhaps over the tea interval Members could contemplate how we should proceed.

The debate on the Adjournment Motion will go until nine o'clock subject to the usual adjournments.

Mr Trotman ...

1. GUYANA POWER AND LIGHT

WHEREAS citizens continue to register dissatisfaction with the Guyana Power and Light Co.'s inefficient service and constant blackouts; the practice of estimating electricity bills at rates far above normal monthly billing amounts, back billing for suspected meter tampering and imposing pay-back arrangements that are burdensome to the consumer;

AND WHEREAS the Public Utilities Commission has had cause to inquire into the Guyana Power and Light's service, billing practices, disconnection practices and motives and procedures with respect to making arrangements for customers to repay amounts charged for back billing, but

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such inquiries have not led to a reduction of complaints and concerns pertaining to GPL's service;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That a Special Select Committee be established to inquire into and to investigate the services being provided by the Guyana Power and Light Co. and to make recommendations for its improvement;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Special Select Committee be permitted to receive evidence from Members of the public and organisations, including consumers, the Public Utilities Commission, Consumer Associations, the Private Sector and civil society organisations working with affected groups;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Special Select Committee report to this National

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Assembly within three months and the National Assembly communicates the findings and recommendations to the Guyana Power and Light Co. for their adoption.

Mr Raphael GC Trotman: If it pleases you Mr Speaker, in light of recent events and with the Motion to be moved by the Honourable Member of Home Affairs, could I ask your permission to defer my Motion on GPL to a date to which I will indicate to the Clerk. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member

Motion Deferred

2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LAW REFORM COMMISSION

WHEREAS the British Guiana Legislature enacted hundreds of Acts of Parliament and subsidiary legislation many of which remain in force more than 100 years after their enactments;

AND WHEREAS since Guyana attained its independence on the 26th Day of May 1966, the Parliament of Guyana also enacted hundreds of Acts of parliament and subsidiary legislations;

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AND WHEREAS an ongoing and systematic review of all of these Acts of Parliament together with their subsidiary legislation is required to ensure that they are update, amended and where necessary repealed;

AND WHEREAS it is desirable to have an ongoing and continuing process for the review, updating and modernization of the law of Guyana, including the enactment of new legislation, which respond to and reflect the present and future needs and aspiration of the people of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS it is accepted in many Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries that the most efficient and institutional mechanism to systematically review and modernise the laws of their respective countries and plan for future legislation is a permanent Law Reform Commission;

AND WHEREAS many Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries have established permanent law Reform Commission;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly urges the Government to establish an independent permanent Law Reform Commission with the mandate, which shall include, but not be limited to the following:

1. To keep under continuous review all of the laws of Guyana, with the view to their systematic development and reform including the modification of any branch of the law; the elimination of anomalies; the repeal of obsolete and unnecessary enactments; the reduction of the number of separate enactments; and generally, the modernization of the law;

2. To receive and consider suggestions for the reform of the law which may be forwarded to it by Ministers of the Government; public officials; associations of lawyers and members of the public;

3. To obtain such information in regard to the laws and legal system of other countries as in the opinion of the Commission, is likely to facilitate the effective performance of any of its functions;

4. To make recommendation to the Ministry of Legal Affairs for the modification, repeal and generally, for the modernisation of the Law of Guyana

The Speaker: Yes Mrs Backer.

Mrs Deborah J Backer: I rise to make a similar application to the Motion standing in my name.

The Speaker: Very well.

Motion Deferred

3. LIMIT ON THE AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF DEBT OBLIGATIONS

WHEREAS the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act was assented to by His Excellency the President of Guyana on the 16th October 2003;

AND WHEREAS the said Act is intended, inter alia to improve accountability in fiscal management;

AND WHEREAS Section 81 of the said Act makes provision for the forgiveness postponement or reduction of debts by the Minister of Finance;

AND WHEREAS Section 81 (3) of the said Act provides that the National Assembly may set a limit on the aggregate amount of debt obligations that may be forgiven, postpones or reduced by the Minister of Finance without the approval of the National Assembly in an fiscal year;

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BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly hereby sets a limit of \$10 million (ten million dollars) as the aggregate amount of debt obligation that may be forgiven, postponed or reduced without the approval of the National Assembly;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this limit takes effect from fiscal year 2007.

Mr Winston S Murray: I also make an application for my Motion to be deferred.

The Speaker: Oh! so we might have an early night tonight. Thank you very much.

Motion Deferred

Honourable Members, this is an appropriate time for us to suspend for the usual half an hour. We will resume at 16:30 H .

16:00H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

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16:50H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

[All Members of the PNCR-IG, Mr Trotman and Mr Ramjattan who were present at the Sitting before the suspension were not seated in the Chamber]

**REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE
ADJOURNMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY ON
DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE**

**Series of Events Leading up to the Slaughter of eleven
(11) people, including five children at Lusignan on 26th
January, 2008**

The Speaker: I am trying to think of an appropriate comment, I cannot find any?

The Honourable Minister of Home Affairs

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker I think that I am also entitled to a comment. If you do not want to make a comment I think, I will.

The Speaker: You have a little bit more liberty in that matter than I have.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Yes. To say, Mr Speaker and I hope that I am not being too anticipatory here, but the display that we are currently witnessing in respect of the absence of the PNCR-IG not being properly seated in this House or being absent from this House, I think it is not

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only disrespectful to the memories of those whom we spoke about earlier this afternoon, but it lacks the statesman like approach that politicians especially those on the opposition side should be taken on this matter. I think we must be true to our own selves. There is saying to thine own self be true. When the opposition accuses the Government of many things - legion of things - they are hard pressed to set an example as to what course people who want to follow opposition should follow and I hope that the media especially those that have cameras not only focus on the Government benches, but focus on the opposition benches for a while so that the nation could see the carelessness, the disrespect and the dishonour that the opposition especially the PNCR-1G has brought on the memories of those who died in the Lusignan massacre. I believe my colleagues who will follow me will probably be much more eloquent on this matter. Save and except to say that we felt that it was important to request that this matter be discussed as a matter of urgent importance, because of the fact that the whole nation was riveted to their TV screens, to the radio and the newspapers. Total attention was given to this matter that affected our nation; the hurt, the anger, the fear by many particularly those live in that area where the massacre was perpetrated. Therefore we felt that this being the first Sitting of this Honourable House since that massacre, it was important if not necessary for this House to engage in a debate of substance on this matter.

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Mr Speaker, I want to start out by saying that the People's National Congress Reform-One G issued two press statements on the question of the Lusignan massacre. One was issued on 2 February; the other was issued on 7 February in rapid succession. And then on 4 February, the Leader of the Opposition wrote the President a letter in which he raised this whole question of compensation and removing the vegetation and requested some details, which I think, my colleague the Honourable Minister of Agriculture sought to give answers to in the questions that were raised earlier this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition.

What is the basis for the arguments that are raised by those who seek to put the Government on the defensive on this matter? There are basically two arguments:

- (i) Is that the security situation in the country (to use their words) has either deteriorated rapidly or a spiral out of control or as the Leader of the Opposition in his Motion spoke about the downward spiral or spiralling of the security situation in our country.
- (ii) The other platform on which they seek to put this baseless argument is that the Government has no plan.

These are the two platforms on which the community or the opposition community seek to build a case in order to advance their political fortunes in this matter.

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Mr Speaker I think for us to objectively assess where we are now it is necessary that we look at the facts as to where we were before the Lusignan massacre because not only the opposition community but also the media (I will deal with this as I go along) particularly certain sections of the media have played a very important role in ratcheting up the perception that the crime situation in this country is out of control without resorting to facts. The question of perception versus reality is where the context is in today's discussion on this matter.

Mr Speaker, what was the situation before the Lusignan massacre? If we look at serious crimes, when I say serious crimes, I refer to:

- Murder;
- Robbery;
- Robbery under arms;
- Robbery with violence;
- Robbery with aggravation;
- Larceny from the person;
- Rape;
- Burglary;
- Break and enter and larceny; and

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- Kidnapping.

These are according to international convention are recognised as the serious crimes in any country.

We did some research and that is to say over the past five years and our research found that there was a general downward trend over the last five years in the crime situation in Guyana. In fact, it reflected a reduction of 31.5 percent in 2007 relative to 2003 and a reduction of twenty-three percent in 2007 relative to 2006. That is where we were up to midnight up to the 26 January 2007.

Mr Speaker, the eleven murders at Lusignan, we admit contributed to an already steep increase in the number of murders committed in January alone which was twenty-seven and incidentally most of these twenty-seven murders were domestic murders or murders of passion. In January 2007 alone there were six murders. Mr Speaker, these eleven murders that were perpetrated by the Buxton gang represented 73.3 percent of the murders in 'C' Division, that is on the East Coast, and forty percent of the total murders in January 2008. It also represented fifty-two percent of serious crimes committed in the 'C' Division. I am focussing on 'C' Division that is to say the East Coast corridor, because that is precisely where these crimes were committed.

Mr Speaker, if we look at these serious crimes in 2003 there were 206 murders; in 2004 there were 131; in 2005 there were 142; in 2006 there were 153 and in 2007 there

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were 115. So from 206 murders in 2006, we are down to 115 murders in 2007. When we add up all the statistics of these serious crimes what we find is that the grand total of these offences in 2003 was 4,535 for all these serious crimes; in 2004 there were 4,614 serious crimes; in 2005 there were 4,567 serious crimes; in 2006 there were 4,010 serious crimes and in 2007 there were 3,116 serious crimes.

The Speaker: I do not know how what all of these have to do with the Motion.

Hon Clement J Rohee: I am telling you, Mr Speaker, what all of these have to do, as I said before is the reality versus the facts, because there are some people who keep saying that the Ministry or the Government can talk as much as they want about statistics, but we can only go on the basis of statistics if we are to understand what was the situation before the Lusignan massacre.

The Speaker: But what that exactly that has to do with the Lusignan events? I do not want to restrict you unduly, but I mean we have to pay some kind of obeisance to that.

Hon Clement J Rohee: There is a view and in fact the Leader of the Opposition and the AFC are saying that we must arrest the downward spiralling of our security in the country.

The Speaker: There is a difference between the security situation and Lusignan. These are two separate events.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, with due respect ...
[Interruption]

The Speaker: If we want to debate the security situation in Guyana, we put a motion, the Government has the majority of seats in the Parliament, it can debate the security situation tomorrow if it wants. If it wants to debate the security situation, I do not think that anybody has a problem with that, but we must separate the security situation from the Lusignan events. The security situation in relation to the Lusignan events; on the night immediately after the event, surrounding circumstances of Lusignan; that is why I recommend the use of the word *surrounding* are all relevant, but with due respect, I do not know how relevant is how many murders took place last year in comparison to this year, how that is relevant in relation to Lusignan.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, I beg to disagree.

The Speaker: Well you can disagree, but my view is the one that rules the day.

Hon Clement J Rohee: I have no difficulty with you expressing a view, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no, no.

Hon Clement J Rohee: What I am simply saying ...
[Interruption]

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The Speaker: I am not expressing a view; I am making a ruling, Honourable Member.

Hon Clement J Rohee: What are you ruling, Sir?

The Speaker: I am saying that what you are saying is not relevant to the topic.

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, the Lusignan massacre cannot be divorced from the security situation.

The Speaker: I am saying that it cannot and I am ruling that the security situation in Guyana last year is not relevant to what happened in Lusignan. Would you proceed, Honourable Member?

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, Lusignan is part of a trend where a gang of criminals based at Buxton have engaged in a series of criminal activities such as murders to create a situation of insecurity, a situation of terror in our country and therefore Lusignan must be seen as a turning point so to speak in assessing where we are now as regards the way forward.

Many have said that the massacre at Lusignan requires a certain response by the Security Forces, by the Police, by the Government. What should be that response? For example, the response has been:

- (i) To clear the back lands at Buxton in order to address a situation that was not helping the Joint Services in this country to rid not only

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Buxton, but the country of these criminal elements.

- (ii) In addition to clearing the back lands, which has generated some opposition from political parties in the opposition, the Administration has seen it necessary to establish a special group brought together from the Joint Services that is to say the Police and the military to flush out these criminal elements.

The people who suffered losses of families at Lusignan ... it is their expectation, it is the expectation of the communities not only of the families and the relatives and residents but also it is the expectation of the communities surrounding Lusignan to have those who perpetrated this massacre to be brought to justice. But this can only happen, Mr Speaker, if concerted action is taken at various levels of society and the Government has already initiated activities aimed at healing, creating some psychological comfort for persons resident in Lusignan, the elderly, the children and so forth. The inter-religious organisation has also taken certain initiatives to address some of the matters that have arisen within these societies; within these communities and they have been engaging in a number of meetings as well.

In addition to that the Government in order to attenuate the concerns of farmers who have suffered losses as a

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result, and we have made it abundantly clear that the Joint Services in clearing the back lands, would as a result of this activity bring about some degree of collateral damage, but that collateral damage could be addressed as a result of compensatory mechanisms that have been established by the administration.

Mr Speaker, I believe and I firmly to do so, to say that the Government has no plan to deal with the situation before Lusignan and after Lusignan and again we rest our case on the concerns, on the expectations of the citizens of Lusignan. The citizens of Lusignan want to see Government and the forces which the State controls deliver; they want to see the Joint Services deliver, because they are the constitutionally and the legally authorised entities to engage in actions that they see fit to bring these criminals to justice. But when we find that these forces seek to engage in order to root out the criminals and we hear and we see postures being adopted, statements being made to create confusion, so to speak, in the minds of people that what these people are doing is not going after the criminals, they are destroying people's property; they are destroying people's land and therefore the question arises: Do such statements help? Do such postures help the Joint Services in their quest to go after those who perpetrated the massacre?

I feel that ... and this came out very abundantly in the consultations that were held with the communities; that among others that the back lands need to be cleared and

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we need to get action done for that to happen. So the clearing of the back lands is taking place. The Joint Services are engage in this, but some people who pretend to support going after the criminals crying crocodile tears about those who would have died; like tongue and cheek used sections of the media or make statements to condemn these actions. So it is very difficult to understand and to accept why these positions would be adopted by such persons.

Mr Speaker, the request to adjourn in order to have this matter discussed, I believe, is timely and as I said, it would have been remiss of us not to take the opportunity at this first Sitting of this House since the Lusignan massacre to have this matter debated in this Honourable House.

I would close my intervention at this time by saying that I still maintain the point notwithstanding your ruling, but I would not go against it, I will comment on it somewhere else probably outside of the Parliament, because we believe in Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary ways of working and while you have control in the Parliament, you certainly do not have control of us outside of the Parliament.

The Speaker: I think you are intimidating me, Honourable Member.

Hon Clement J Rohee: No, I am not intimidating you, Sir.

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The Speaker: Are you trying to intimidate me Honourable Member?

Hon Clement J Rohee: No, I am not intimidating you, Sir. I am just telling you what my rights are as a citizen.

The Speaker: I have little understanding of what is going on here this afternoon. Honourable Member, let me read a sentence from a text here.

Debate on a motion (talking about adjournment motion) when admitted should be strictly restricted to the specific matter mentioned in the Motion.

Honourable Member, despite my injunction to you, you proceeded to range and roam all over the place and not in relation to the events at Lusignan; and when I made my ruling you tell me that I can have a view on that and that is up to me; and now you are telling me that you will deal with me outside of the Parliament.

Honourable Members we will adjourn for five minutes.

Hon Prime Minister, I would like to have a word with you, please.

17:15H - SUSPENSION OF SITTING

17:38H - RESUMPTION OF SITTING

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The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of the Public Service [*Pause*]

Before you start Honourable Member, I want to read one sentence from Parliamentary Procedure from Kashyap, Indian Reference Book on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure. I am reading from Page 786 Paragraph 22 (2): It says and it is speaking about an adjournment motion:

Debate on the motion when admitted should be strictly restricted to the specific matter mentioned in the motion.

The matter mentioned in the motion is the events together with the surrounding circumstances, which give you some flexibility, I connection with events at Lusignan on 26 January.

You can proceed Honourable Member [*Pause*] I see you have not listened to a word that I have said. Thank you very much.

Hon Dr Jennifer RA Westford: I did, I did, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I would like to join my colleague that preceded me [*Laughter*] not in being disrespectful to you in any way, Sir, but I would like to echo the sentiments of my colleague who preceded me in relation to the absent seats on the opposite of this House and wish to also say that it is a sign of disrespect especially since we are here

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speaking about those eleven persons from Lusignan and the GDF Officer who were murdered by the bandits. nm

I, myself would like to voice my condemnation of that dastardly act of the murder of that young Guyana Defence Force soldier in Buxton and the massacre of the eleven innocent citizens in Lusignan that were perpetrated by those criminal elements.

Mr Speaker, in the first instance that soldier was performing his duty of protection of the citizens of this country, when his life was snuffed out by bandits in the vicinity of the Railway Embankment and Company Road, Buxton. Mr Speaker, this young man who pledged to protect this country and its people did not die as a result of active engagement in a fire fight; no Sir, he was murdered, because the driver of his patrol vehicle dared to pass through the aforementioned Buxton area where the band of criminals were having their regular drinks and listening to music. Little did our brave soldiers know that the men seeing lounging in front of a few identified shops were murderers not law abiding citizens until heavy fire power was directed at them from the said lounging men and others who were within the confines of one particular shop.

Mr Speaker, those soldiers were made to walk a gauntlet, which was described by one of the young soldiers as:

*Going through a passage with bullets like
rain coming down on them*

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It may surprise you that in the aftermath of that attack not one of the residents saw anything. Some of them residing in the close proximity to the gauntlet area even had the audacity to say that they did not hear anything because their TVs or radios were playing loudly. Mr Speaker, this has not been the first time that members of the Disciplined Forces had come under fire in Buxton from bandits, who were safely secured in buildings known to be legitimate dwelling houses or business places. It is therefore, obvious and even a severely mentally retarded person can deduce that specified areas in Buxton are safe havens for the bandits. It is therefore mind boggling as to why the esteemed Leader of the Opposition refused to publicly admit that Buxton is a safe haven for bandits. It must be noted that I use the words *publicly admit*, because it is my belief that somewhere deep down within the Honourable Leader of the Opposition knows that Buxton is a safe haven for bandits. Come on, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, exhale and release from deep down within you the words *Buxton is a safe haven for bandits*.

Mr Speaker, we have heard out-pourings of condemnation and sympathies as it relates to the eleven Lusignan victims. We have heard the Leaders of the Opposition Parties describe the incident as brutal and horrific. Was this merely a horrific or brutal attack on the eleven citizens by the bandits, no Sir, it was a *massacre* - a word that the opposition has refused to use when talking about this issue. Mr Speaker, Honourable colleagues of this House, I beg your indulgence to justify my contention that

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the words brutal and horrific does not capture the magnitude of the Lusignan murders. Brutal and horrific acts are synonymous with acts that are beastly, brutish, sub-human, awful, dreadful, atrocious, vile and appalling. Tell me, Mr Speaker and Honourable colleagues, does any of these words which all have the same meaning aptly describes the events that took place on Saturday, 26 January. I think not.

Let me now look at acts that are synonymous with the act of massacre. These are decimate, butcher, slaughter, mass-murder, carnage and blood bath. These words aptly describe what occurred in Lusignan on that memorable Saturday, when a marauding gang of bandits invaded the village. Eleven peaceful, law abiding citizens some of them children, innocent children who were peacefully asleep in the humble abodes that their parents struggled to provide for them were murdered. What did they do to deserve this? Why then? These answers are not yet available, but I know that some day the truth will come out.

On this note, Mr Speaker, let me mention that a famous former talk show host, who has been known to advocate the overthrow of this Government and is known to his ties to criminal gangs in Buxton and elsewhere, went to Lusignan and visited a home adjacent to the massacre victims, who between Christmas and New Year's Day to distribute toys to the children of the area. It is very

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strange that the house which this talk show host visited during the holiday season was spared of any attack.

It is even stranger that someone who had cared so much for the children and even distributed gifts to them including some of those who were murdered never even once condemned the massacre or has even revisited the area after that incident to give condolences to the relatives. Mr Speaker one wonders if his visit a mere month before the massacre was an act of good deed for the residents, or whether it was a collaborative effort to give logistical support to the criminals. I say to these wolves in sheep's clothing beware, as the saying goes, *if you have glass windows do not throw stones*. These innocent children did no one any harm.

Mr Speaker the fact is that eleven persons were massacred and it is my hope that the Opposition Members in this House will start using the word *massacre* to describe what was inflicted on the eleven Lusignan victims, because that is what it was, *a massacre*.

Mr Speaker, some Honourable Members in the Opposition benches of this Honourable House have argued that it is the Government's responsibility to solve the crime situation, I could not agree with them more. Mr Speaker, every time a concerted effort is made to go after criminals and insurgents these persons ceremoniously jump to the defence of every criminal claiming human rights violation. When criminals are caught in a shoot-out with

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security forces and are killed, the first thing they say is oh, he was a good church man, not a bandit. On the other hand, you never hear encouraging support for our armed forces when any of them is killed during confrontation with bandits. Often times there is a lukewarm message of sympathy to the relatives of the fallen law officers, but never an out-right condemnation of the criminal activities and the bandits. Mr Speaker, instead of open condemnation, these politicians along with some newspapers, television and social commentators always articulate a case in favour of the criminals. Sir, while the Government and security forces have been strategising and fighting the criminals with insurrectionists, a number of persons who called themselves human rights advocates as well as politicians are aiding and abetting them to commit more dastardly acts, which are aimed at destabilising this country.

Mr Speaker, this same main opposition party whose leader is hesitant in deeming Buxton a safe haven for criminals and using the word *massacre* to describe the Lusignan murderers were the ones who conferred the honorary title of freedom fighters on the bandits. I do not know, but I would surely like to know whose freedom they have been fighting for. What is certain is that these bandits have been killing, robbing, and maiming persons of all ages and races during their marauding exploits. Sir, it is but a shame when Members of the Opposition who were elected by a section of the people to protect their interest were seen attending the funerals of bandits, whose friends and

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associates were brazen enough to give them a grand send off with their bodies draped in the sacred national flag of this country - What sacrilege! What a disgrace!

Mr Speaker it is obvious to everyone that the time has come for political grand-standing to stop and for the opposition parties to stop their ambivalence on the issue of national security.

Mr Speaker, let us never forget that criminals have no allegiance to anyone. Once they cannot get things done their way you will be the next victim. Let us turn a new page and put our hands and hearts together and fight to rid this dear land of ours of these murderous and inhumane bandits. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

The Honourable Minister of Labour ...

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise to make a contribution to this issue the Lusignan massacre especially on behalf of the executives and members of The United Force. Like the over whelming majority of Guyanese, we in The United Force condemn this massacre and have no hesitation whatsoever in calling it what it is - *a massacre*.

We have heard many trying to justify what has happened in Lusignan and those many I put in the category of a few, and perhaps a few too many who had said so. What has

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happened in Lusignan is apt today as it was two weeks ago and I want to commend you Sir for allowing to have this contribution on the issue this afternoon in the National Assembly, because it is still a matter of Urgent Public National Business.

That threat is still with us, the overwhelming majority of Guyanese still have great concerns about when another strike will happen. The overwhelming majority of Guyanese want to join in the efforts to ensure that their community remains peaceful; the overwhelming majority of our people want to join in efforts to ensure that the massacre in Lusignan does not escalate into other forms of divisiveness in our society. It is sad that this afternoon, while you allowed this important issue to be addressed in the National Assembly so that all of the representatives of the people of Guyana who sit here today can have an opportunity to put on record their feelings, the feelings of the group, the parties and the list they were elected on and let the entire nation, let the Caribbean, let the World know that this particular act will be condoned with one voice, the voice of the elected representatives of the people of Guyana. That unified voice will be sent not only to our own people, but also it will be sent around the region and the world.

Mr Speaker, when one perused the periodicals that appear on every Continent, be it:

- The BBC;

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- In Pakistan;
- In New Zealand;
- The Economist Magazine.

Mr Speaker, every single article I was privileged to read, described what happened in Lusignan as a massacre and it so shocked the world as it shocked us that it appeared in almost every major country.

In North America, it has such an impact that investors, who have been on their way here, had calls from their security people. Investors! And I am raising this not because of the economics Sir, I am raising this to show the impact that this particular massacre had around the world. Eleven persons, that one magazine, I think that it was the New York Times, at the end of describing what had happened linked it to Jonestown and while we may be divided here on whether we should have had a Motion expressing our sympathies on the tragedy.

We cannot, but call this what it is a massacre and this supposed tragedy of someone to make it out it is almost an insult for those who died, the residents who continued to suffer; those family members who were injured certainly a great insult to them.

When I stood on the Thursday at the final Muslim prayers for Shalim, Shaik Moen Ali Hack said that these eleven

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persons death, their slaughter, their massacre should been seen as a sacrifice so that Guyanese can live together.

It is as if these eleven persons had to pay the price for all of us and we know that in all of our holy books, we have had prophets paying dearly so that the rest of the world can live better and it looked as if as he spoke that we had as he called it eleven martyrs.

In our Muslim religion, if an innocent person is slaughtered the way those eleven persons were, we believed they are martyred and in that context I am very, very sad that today, apparently the elected representatives of the people will speak only from one side and the message that will go today is a message that the House is divided. That the people of Guyana, we remain divided on the motive behind this attack that is the message we have sent today by the PNCR-1G team walking out and by other members of the National Assembly not speaking in unison on the condemnation.

What it might continue to do and I know I might be digressing a bit, it to send those mixed signals to these criminals, that somehow there are some people, who are very important but who are supporting them.

The security of our people at this moment is a grave national public concern, and that security can only be cemented if we have total unity of condemnation of this massacre, if our policing, our crime fighting is going to be effective it will rest on community support, community

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policing. We recognized that community policing is not only about forming a few groups, but it is giving communities and the people in the areas ownership of their own security and assisting them with the technical knowledge and the resources to work hand in hand with the security forces. Those able bodied men and women, who make up our Joint Services not only the soldiers, police officers or the prison officers, and if you pass this evening by the Camp Street jail, you will see them dedicated as ever keeping careful watch as to what is happening there.

The Fire Service, our joint Security Forces at this time also need us speaking out in unison with respect to the efforts they are putting in over the many weeks, before that they have been tested over the many, many years, especially since the jail break and this is not a time for mixed signals especially to them.

So I want to urge those members on the other side who still remain here and I want to urge those who walked out if it is not too late to join in the call for condemnation in unity of what happened and calling this massacre what it was and committing themselves to finding these criminals and giving them the fullest extent of the Law once they are convicted.

Mr Speaker, my party and I, we are fully in support of the efforts of the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, all

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the security forces and the National efforts to rid our country of this scourge. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member

The Honourable Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

Hon BH Robeson Benn: Mr Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak on the horrific incidence at Lusignan. The massacre of the innocent at Lusignan and linked with that the ambushing and killing of a Guyana Defence Force soldier.

It is regrettable indeed that we are on this Valentine's day seeing displays of petulance on what is certainly a very critical issue and when we would expect elected Members of the Assembly to show the kind of responsibility, to rise above ego on this issue, not to take the position that they that their down play the finish work, really on the matter of semantics and ego as I said with respect to this issue.

We, in Guyana have to draw a line in the sand or rather draw a line in this Guyanese mud with the respect to the killing of children. We in Guyana have to draw a line around ourselves separating ourselves completely from those who would in the night butcher children and all Guyanese have to be on the side against that type of activity and separate themselves clearly from those who would do that kind activity and those who would facilitate that kind of activity. We have to be very clear about this issue, because we have on future in the country if we

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accept the butchering of children in the night, because I have said whose children next. We cannot survive as a country if we butcher our own.

It is indeed Valentine's Day and there is some social analyst, I think Maslow speaks of hierarchy of man's needs to society and I think much of what he has done in his examinations has been reinforced by Desmond Morris who is a social anthropologist and who speaks about food, shelter, the need to copulate; to have sex to procreate..

Fundamentally everything that we do here in this country with the respect to the development of our society, with respect to passing the torch on to the next generation has to do with our children. And this is why I am saying that we have to unequivocally and unreservedly condemn and abhor this action, this activity which led to the killing and the butchering of these children.

We would be killing our hopes and aspirations in this country with respect to this, our hopes and the hopes of the families of those if the families remain behind, and entire families were wiped out.

We are killing our hopes and aspirations if the country goes on with this trend if this activity is allowed to continue and so the butchery in Lusignan is an attack on every Guyanese community; home; family; mother; father; and on every Guyanese child.

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I would like to say too, there is this story un-clarified, confusion with respect to maybe now a child; a pregnant mother; a Tenisha Morgan and her child and I would like to say here on our side the Government would like to see the safety and security of Miss Tenisha Morgan and her child that she find supper for herself and her child and she is rescued.; that she finds the comfort and safety provided by the wider society in spite of the crimes committed by the person who is the about father. That in spite of the crimes admitted to by this about father, every person on this side of the House would like to see that child of Tenisha Morgan and that mother find safety, supper and support and that he child is brought up with all the help of the Government of the State and of every reasonably Guyanese person. *[Applause]*

The slaughter and butchery at Lusignan has been a gross provocation and Guyanese in all walks of life are to be commended for not falling prey to this provocation I think in spite of all what people might be saying you have a lot of talking heads on the television, you have a lot of people talking a lot of outrageous things. That in spite of all of this and in spite too of having to face the enraged populace on the East Coast, the communities of Lusignan and Mon Repos and the wider community, the people, that the Guyanese people as a whole has not descended into madness. In fact it is really a madding act in trying to respond in what is a madding, a craze act.

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National Development Crime and Security is everybody's business in Guyana and the safety and welfare of all children is everybody's business. The Government alone cannot secure every person or every family in the society. We all have to watch out for each other, in the current situation in which we are, where we have a situation where people have AK 47 military weapons, rapid fire, weapons designed to kill soldiers in battle and are using these on innocent is a situation where we are all at risk and I was hopeful that with this Motion and with the opportunity which presented to discuss the Lusignan massacre that Right Honourable Member Mr Corbin would have had the opportunity to reset the clock with respect to his position on banditry in Buxton, because I have a recall that when he acceded to the leadership of the PNCR-1G hat he did say that he that he does not want to have anything to do with those people they are criminals. We do not have want to have anything to do with criminals and I believed that if he does say, because he appears to be among some people who are able to go into Buxton and particularly South Buxton if the people there are his constituency and he says he is going there to prevent the slaughter of innocent young men, then perhaps he knows who are the innocent and who are the guilty and maybe he can help the State, the police, the army and the Government to sort out those who have to be dealt with, that he should help us and help to deliver it up to justice those who have perpetrate crimes.

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I believed there has been a clear direction from the level of the Government, from the Presidency with respect of these problems of these guns in our society. His Excellency the President Bharrat Jagdeo has stated clearly to his Armed Forces that they have to get back these guns - these AK47s. His Excellency the President Bharrat Jagdeo also was very upset and made some demands with respect to two-hundred odd missing weapons, which apparently were delivered to Ministry of National Development some years ago and which turned up in the hands of bandits prepared to commit crimes in the Mahaica Creek a few months ago, a few weeks before this activity at Lusignan.

And certainly the experience through the world whether it is Liberia or Rwanda or East Timor, where we just had a particular man-nerving experience to that Government there too, where people, who in other circumstances maybe were just merely criminals have high powered weapons; they endanger everyone, they endanger the State, they endanger the wider society and nothing happens until you are able to deal with these people. We are aware that Buxton - South Buxton, particularly - is a haven for criminals, every school child in Buxton knows it. The Army knows it, a young man who volunteer for Army to provide National Service on our borders to protect the country's sovereignty, who was brought in to help to deal with the issue of rampant crime was ambush on the embankment in Buxton and the type of weaponry which killed him was weaponry which he would have

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anticipated on the borders of the country in defending this country; a young man who volunteered to defend this country with his life. So there is no mystery about what is going on in Buxton with respect it being a haven. The true of the matter too is that while you have certain persons who are committed to a life of crime and who has been using Buxton as a safe haven, that these persons have the community hostage, that no one is safe in the community, that many of the attitudes and postures that you see on the television is a response out of fear. Fear is the key in Buxton and fear is the key to the response of the Army and the police there, and when you have a situation where political leaders go out there, while Buxton really is appealing for help from all sectors of the society, whether is the Army, the police, Government, but also the Opposition. My colleague Mr Nadir pointed to the issue of the mixed signals, which are being sent out there with respect to which side of the line we are on. That Buxton is indeed a safe haven and anything we do, which appears do to give help or to prevent the Army and police from dealing with these persons would only make the situation worse as it continue to have the people there enthralled and these bandits and these gangsters continue their free way and will with the community.

We have had the problem in Liberia and Liberia would not probably recover for another two or more generations including Rwanda and some other places.

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We even had the situation in Liberia and I will quote where you had an election where they put up Mr Taylor's party put up:

He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him in the 1997 Liberian Elections.

We all know where Mr Taylor is now and those of his ilk are now. This is a matter that is pretty serious; fear stalks the land in Buxton. There are all complaints, certainly there is discomfiture when the police and the army go and cordon off and search operation to find bandits. What does a soldier or a policeman do when he has his rifle in his hand, he is being fired upon, grenades are being thrown at him, he is being taunted, but he has to go too to try to recover the situation, to so his job. Is anybody opening the door for him there? Does he have to kick open the door and to search and find all these grenades, bullets and wicked things that they are finding? Does he have to survive fire fights where his life is on the line? Is it that the lives of our police and soldiers are expendable?

In fact, I believed that the PNCR-1G may be dispense with our policemen since the crime wave. They were expendable, twenty-three or more of them died in the year of the crime wave, they are expendable, we moved on, now we are starting it up with the soldiers, maybe they are expendable too.

We need unreserved support for our armed forces for the Joint Services in this action on the East Coast and if we

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have bulldoze the coconut trees and mangoes trees, so be it.

If we have to clear the land to find the skeletons and we are finding them already, so be it, we have to clear the land.

Mr Ramjattan I believe something I saw in the newspapers was about the skeletons in the PPP/C's closet. He was a skeleton in the PPP/C's closet and he had all opportunities over election campaigns, weekly writing up in the newspapers, talking head in the media, as for all the things he could say and expose with respect to the PPP/C and its activity to have this country free and safe and unify for all Guyanese people. He can expose everything and he has had every opportunity to do so. I want him to be a real life talking skeleton and maybe Mr Trotman too can also be a real life talking skeleton about all the things he knows with respect to the PNCR-1G on these matters.

Mr Speaker, the safety of all our children, the future of our Guyana, the safety of the State, the safety, honour and happiness of the President of which we spoke about and the President too is justifiability unhappy with respect to the weapons, the lack of progress and recovery of the weapons, all of it is tied up with how we treat with our children.

Before this was happening we were paying some attention to the Honourable Minister Priya Manickchand dealing with issues with Stamping-It-Out with respect to domestic

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violence, the treatment of children and the President himself had mandated for this year's budget, I do not know if there are changes, but there were issues with respect to paying attention to single parents and mothers, single parents with families particularly women.

And it is true that now days; we as a society; we having families now days, maybe we do not have the resort to all the tools which the generation of our parents may have had with respect to raising our children. You cannot give licks too much anymore they will say it is abuse of children, I think I benefited quite a bit from some of the licks I had. You cannot go and show them to fork the yard, plant the pac-choy, grow tomatoes and so on, you will accuse of child labour. I use to sell tomatoes and Pac Choy in Bourda Market and I learnt a lot about selling and doing things there and we have a situation too given the Geography of our country, we have absent men. They are timber men, porkknocker, miner, bauxite man, all kind of men spread all over the country so you have a situation where men are out of the homes, and in light of all of these things, it is indeed more difficult for women and families to come up given certain circumstances.

There is the pressure that we that have, violence on the television, violence in the music, disorder in the general society, which we have been working at, general instability, men suffering hubris now that women have come in to their own with respect of earning and looking after themselves and raising families.

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And so it is certainly more difficult now to raise families given all of these things, but we cannot go down to the appealing to the basic instincts of children. We cannot go to anarchistic self-destructive methods in our society. We cannot have crime being misused for base political purposes. We cannot have criminals with AK47s carrying out a proxy war on the Government, on the State, on the PPP/C, on the Guyanese population and on children.

There is indeed, it seems, a synergistic coupling between some agendas in some political quarters and the activities of these criminals, and certainly they are some extremist persons out there who would like to see things change, but on what basis?

It could not be on the head and the blood of our children. It could not be, we would not stand for it. I want to call on all right-minded Guyanese; I want to call on the right Honourable Member Mr Robert Corbin, the Leader of the Opposition and his party and representatives. I want to have us summon all our efforts towards capturing and bringing to justice these child butchers. I want to say too to these child butchers to give themselves up, so that we will have justice for our children that they must give themselves up so that we can have peace in this land that Guyanese people who has been working very hard and very successfully at having unity and inclusivity in all walks of life will succeed.

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You see when the twenty/twenty is on and when our the flags flies along the banks, all along the banks our flags are flying that our children must raise their flag high and we must have justice for our children, for our soldiers and for our policemen so that we can live in peace and have a future for all Guyanese. I thank you. Mr Speaker.
[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member. You have amply demonstrated the availability of material which can enable a person to speak directly and succinctly to the Motion. Thank you.

The Honourable Member Mr Donald Ramotar

Mr Donald R Ramotar: Mr Speaker, I want to begin also by saying that the tragedy that took place, the massacre that took place at Lusignan demands from all of us Members of Parliament, a united stand against the perpetrators against such a terrible crime. And that is why I am terribly disappointed that the Opposition benches are almost empty, when we speak on this issue today. It is very clear to me, that they seem to want to try to get some type of political mileage from this incident that today they have walked out. If they are the ones who had first a Motion to debate this incident as an urgent matter and they withdrew it and now we have taken the same line to discuss this issue as an urgent matter and they have walked out today, they are demonstrating that they are

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trying to take a partisan position on an issue that we should have maximum unity in this country on.

The incident at Lusignan was not an ordinary crime; it was not designed to enrich anyone's pockets, because those of us who had the opportunity of visiting the grieving relatives and the grieving community would see that these were people of very modest means, and the way that these acts were carried out conveys very, very clearly that the intention was to drive fear and terror into our society; and if we are all committed to the development of our country we must be committed, all of us, to fighting crime in our society. I want to quote from an article of 17 March 2007 in the Stabroek News in which there was an interview, a reported speech by the UK High Commissioner at a Rotary Dinner and he made the point that there can be no prosperity without security.

*It is not possible to reduce poverty, without
for example containing crime*

And these crimes that have been committed here seem to be designed to perpetuate poverty and that is why more than anything else we needed today to have a national front against the criminal activities that occurred in our society.

It is important to note that for many, many years now through the return of democracy in our country and the hard work of many, many forces in Guyana towards improving ethnic relations and other relations within

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society. Our society have been developing more and more into a more cohesive unit where more and more we are developing a stronger and stronger national consciousness and it appears to me that this crime was design to rupture that developing unity within our society and more so that is why again we needed very, very badly that have a united front against crime.

We cannot have a hold-me/loose-me type of position on this issue; we cannot on the one hand express sympathy to the families and to the communities where this dastardly act took place and at the same time doing our best to demoralized the forces that we expect to carry a fight against these criminals and bring them to justice in Guyana.

It is impossible for us to do so, but we see, Sir a pattern that has been taken place particularly since the prison escape of 2002. What was very clear that we saw a sustained campaign to put an end to the target special squad that was trained specifically to fight criminals of this nature?

I am not saying that everything is wonderful in the police force, but at times like these they need the support from every corner of our society. *[Applause]*

We have seen many, many whispering taking place when policemen were being gunned down, slaughtered on the road. Whispering campaign coming from seemingly political direction saying that these policemen were dirty,

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all of these do not help, it does not help us in order to try to bring the criminal elements in our country to justice.

Sir, I could not agree more with my colleague Mr Robeson Benn when he said that probably the people in this country who are suffering the most from the escalating crime situation in Guyana are the ordinary working people of Buxton itself. Many of us do not know and maybe we will not know for a long time the extent of the suffering of Buxtonians, because of the occupation of their village by these criminal elements that have imposed themselves on them.

How may Buxtonians have left their village, because of violence, we also know some Buxtonians had their houses destroyed, burnt down, because of criminal activities. How many of them cannot say anything when their wives and daughters are raped by these criminal bandits that have occupied their society. Many were killed and many fears stalk the land - fear is the key that reigns at this point in time at Buxton according to my friend Minister Benn. Therefore, it baffles me why a political party has changed its position not now to want to say that Buxton has been a haven for criminals, who have occupied that village and are doing tremendous harm to the village.

Let me point out to you an article that appeared in the Kaieteur News of the 6 November 2005; it was a PNCR-1 G column and then they had a different position, they said the:

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The crime situation in Buxton presents two immediate and interwoven problems, the use of the community as a safe haven for criminals.

What has changed from 2005 when they recognized that the Buxton is a haven for these criminals to today, when they refuse to call Buxton a haven for criminals? We see when the security forces are trying to reduce the areas of operation of the criminals, when they try to remove the areas of operation, like clearing Buxton, we heard today our Ministers being subjected to questions about compensation. We made a statement already that people would be compensated, but I say Sir the vegetation had overgrown in the back lands of Buxton, because the genuine farmers of the society could not practice agriculture in that area.

That is why you had dense bush and we have now Operation De-bushing at the Buxton back lands, because the farmers could not have carried out their activities there, because of the presence of criminal elements in the society, but the first obstructionist position is to try to come and make ... we have said openly that we are ready to pay compensation for things that have been damaged, but very, very clear from all the situations there that a great amount of farming could not have been taken place, because of what have been happening there.

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I agree that we have a lot of problems in the society right now, the security forces has to deal with many, many issues. So many thing have changed the very nature of time has changed in our society; it is not what it used to be, it is no longer. There are links also to all kinds of other crimes like narco-crimes within the society linked with some of these activities that are taking place in the Buxton area. We also have other problems that we need our security forces to take a grip of; issues like criminal deportees coming back into our society. These are issues that we need maximum cooperation and when we take positions like we have seen here today, it is very obvious that this will send signals to criminals that they are getting some level of political protection.

Mr Speaker, I do not think it is too late, I think that all of us:

- The ruling party;
- The Opposition party;
- National organizations;
- Trade unions;
- Private sector organizations;

Must all come out in one voice to condemn this massacre that took place in Lusignan and at the same time, I think, we must stop this practice of demonizing and this goes for

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the press as well. Stop this practice of demonizing our security forces, because they do so they create conditions for Lusignan to re-occur again.

Once I want to express our total condemnation of all forms of terrorism. Our total condemnation of what took place - the massacre that took place at Lusignan and to call on all the leaders of this country, all the national leaders of this country to stand up and issue a statement with one voice and unity against the criminal elements in our society. I thank you for your time.

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member.

Honourable Member Ms Teixeira ...

Ms Gail Teixeira: Mr Speaker, as a woman, a mother, a grandmother, a sister, an aunt, a politician and a Member of Parliament I wish to record my deepest sympathy to the families of the Lusignan eleven victims and the family of Ivor Williams, the young GDF Officer who was shot.

I believe that as women of this House, as Members of Parliament that maybe we have felt some deep core in us that has been touched and hurt by this terrible event that took place on 26 January. This is not to say that men do not feel the same way, but we are the ones who have this umbilical cord with our children and therefore it is as if a part of you gets ripped out. It is extremely painful and as we heard the Lusignan eleven, I think in the history books it will go down as the litmus test for Guyana and the

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Guyanese society as to how we deal with such a horrible, horrible, horrible slaughter which really challenged our ability to understand how something like this could have happened in our midst.

It is a litmus test for the politicians and the political parties on how we will treat with crime in our society and whether we will play games with it for political purposes. Since the massacre of the eleven people and more so the children the media and the political politicians, the many spokespersons for our society and civil society have made a number of comments that are extremely disconcerting , worrying about where we are as a society. There are those who try to portray the persons who are behind these monstrous acts almost as saying that they have a right, there is a cause why they are doing this and we therefore there should be some negotiations going on with them.

We have seen the media in the past have on television a man holding an AK47, called a freedom fighter and talking. We have seen those, the former deceased Mr Ronald Waddle and the present persons such as, Oliver Hinckson, Gibson, Massay who were charged for a number of crimes including the loss of AK 47s, who are still walking in the streets and are actually given prominence by the Mayor of Georgetown in terms of Mr Hinckson. And there are persons in our society, who have turned what I believe was a criminal gang or what began as a criminal gang, invading a village Buxton from which they carried out raids into other communities and robbed;

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injured and killed many people including members of the Buxton community between 2002 and now.

But this group has metamorphosed into extremely sophisticated criminal gang with a network of satellite cells in different villages and who challenged the security forces. They challenge the actual core of our society; they challenge public safety and national security and while there are those who are talking about they are someone to negotiate with, one of the challenges to the security forces is the identity of all the persons involved. And the misrepresentation helped by the press that every body that we may be looking for in relation to this gang are somehow located only in one geographic location.

I think if we do not appreciate the difference between what is a criminal gang and what has become popularly known as the Buxton gang, that this is a special group that has resorted to the use terroristic tactics on and I say that, because Lusignan is a perfect example of a terrorist attack. They have used it with political objectives and motivated by racial prejudices and I believe that when we look over the years of the Agricola incident; the Eccles incident; the terrible, cold blooded murder of the Kaieteur News Pressmen; of the murders in Canal and the murder of nine year old Christine Sukra in Coldingen; of the Berbice robbery that showed us that many of the gang members came from various parts of Guyana and in fact were of different ethnic origins.

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The murders in Buxton and Lusignan and all these persons who are telling us to negotiate; to talk; are they somehow portraying that this seems to be some kind of group that has a cause.

- Where is the cause?
- What is the cause?

What cause could possibly be justifiable no matter how alienated or marginalized people may believe and that is what is being portrayed by some of these spokespersons. But what would justify the murder of children in their beds. The cold blooded murder of tiny, little children sleeping; there was one child who actually was shot standing up.

- But what kind of monsters are we dealing?
- What kind of diabolical mind and master mind are we dealing with?

This is not a birthday party, it is not a game. We are not dealing with little things and little issues. We are dealing with an enormous network that has gained support and support, financial and otherwise from very persons in our society and person from outside our society.

What kind of cause could have led to the cold blooded, calculated, gorilla-type assassination of Minister Sash Shaw and his relatives, because it was a military type of

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operation? So where is the cause? Is someone trying to say to us that they are the equivalent of the HAMASES and the Falks of Colombia that one negotiates with? I do not believe that anybody, a decent minded Guyanese, could come to that conclusion.

There are persons who have been: led; cajoled; controlled; off-guided by some other forces and they pose a threat to the national security and public safety to this country. They pose a threat to every one of us sitting in this House regardless of our political affiliation. Unless we get that straight, we are not going to appreciate the enormity of what we are dealing with at the crime and security level of this country.

Buxton has been a community under siege and as has been under siege for six years and it time for Buxton and the people of Buxton to return to normalcy. But in order to do this extraordinary efforts will have to be exerted to flush this group of murderers, rapist out of their safe haven. The reason why I believe we need to talk in this House about the issue of Buxton being a safe haven is that the Opposition has twisted the call of the Government and made into a racial and political issue.

It must be said that any study of gang culture and the sociology of gangs will show that they will set up a safe haven in a community irrespective of whether that community had any track record of crime or not. What they are looking for is the geography, location, easy

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access in and out to where they want to hit; easy access for supply lines; easy access for cover. This is not an issue to do with condemnation of the people of Buxton and I believe that this House must also say and recognize the number of people who have been murdered and raped in Buxton by these criminals over the last few years.

Peoples' houses were burnt; peoples heads were chopped off; people who were shot because they were thought to be co-operating with the police. And if we do not remember these things, we will not understand how complex and difficult it is to deal with the Buxton situation where terror has been used and fear has been used to bring subjugation; and the number of people who have had to run out of Buxton and live in temporary houses elsewhere in order to just be safe, and to have their children being safe ...

I want to remain this House that two years ago, young men were walking along the streets of Buxton with weapons in daylight. Yet when Operation Stiletto started 2005, the Leader of the Opposition Mr Corbin wrote the then Commissioner of Police Mr Felix advising that he wished to have and to help in healing the relations between the police and the community and that the army's presence in Buxton was preventing the farmers from going to the back lands to farm.

This was then and still is a disingenuous argument, because the people of Buxton have not been able to go far

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back into their lands to do the kind of farming that historically Buxton did.

Also when Operation Restore Order began on I believe, on the 1st and 2 February, Mr Corbin, Leader of the Opposition again put out a press statement saying that he did not wish to see young African men being sacrificed. Again why?

We do not want to see any of our young men being sacrificed ... of any race; we do not want to see young women and children, we do not want to see young women like Miss Morgan who we do not know where she is, gave birth to a baby and to be connected to a person of such repute as Mr Rawlins - Fineman. But why is it that the Opposition, in particular the PNCR-1G, every time the army and the police go to their jobs and try to restore normalcy, try to get Buxton under control, to stop it from being the supply line and the safe haven for the gangsters, there is second-guessing and the requirement of, *do not do this; do not go into the back lards and so on ...*

The third issue I want to speak on has to do with the aftermath of Lusignan, the call for a definite security plan of action in relation to security.

Mr Speaker, you would well remember just a few months ago we tabled in this House the Security Sector Reform Plan - eleven points which over the four years to be addressed and I challenged anyone in this Opposition and

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hopefully we have all read that plan that they can tell us what in the plan is not there that we need to be doing.

Members of this House, the important thing that we need to go full steam ahead in implementing the plan and that is what has started already. So we do not need to sit down and design other plan, we need to implement the plan that was passed in this House unanimously I believe and to move forward with it. If there are issues arising that challenged the original thought of how this all came about in that plan we can obviously and the Minister of Home Affairs; the Joint Services and the Defence Board can all rethink and revise. But tell us what is wrong in the eleven point plan that was brought to this House.

The PNCR-1G in a 2005 statement in the press said that you cannot deal with the issue of Buxton and crime with one pounce. [*Interruption: 'With one ...?'*] I question that word too Mr Franklin but anyway I am quoting, I must be faithful. But the Security Sector Reform Plan so when our dear friends on the other side, we are very grateful that they are here but we are very disappointed and I am personally disappointed with the AFC/GAP for not participating in this in this discussion on a matter of public urgent importance.

May I say, that I am not surprised that the PNCR-1G behaviour, but I am surprised at the AFC/GAP. But you know we need the holistic approach to public safety and security and I am sure that Minister Rohee will speak at

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the end about the issues of citizen's security plan, the justice sector plan; the same security reform plan that we brought here. The plan with the UNDP and the donors to do in restoring confidence and trust with a lot of community interventions to do with domestic violence, gang culture, non-violent behaviour within the communities and so on.

There is a plan, it is a holistic combination about five pillars that are able to deal in relation to the social and economic issues, the issues of crime fighting; the issue of the security policy and issues to do with communities and how we are able to get communities to work together and erode this thing that our people keep doing all the time of trying to use ethnic differences to trigger violence in our country. It is a battle that we have been fighting since the 1960s, it is now 2008 and we are still battling it.

The Government has also started and it is now waiting on a plan, it is also as I said in the paper and I will repeat it in this House that the immediate action, the issue of the back lands has been asked for years now and every time the Joint Services begin to do something, they are undermined by those who wish to say we are destroying people's lands and farms and so on.

Why is it that certain elements of the Opposition, I am not talking about BV to Enmore which is where the clearing is going on. Why, why, why would they not ask, are they not farmers at the back of BV, are there farmers back

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there too? Do they not need the same representation if I was in the Opposition, they are not saying that and yet ... [*Interruption: 'I will represent them.'*] Minister Robert Persaud said he would represent those. But the back lands issue has to do with security and while we know and I will give you an example when Operation Restore Order began, they went into a number of areas over two, three hundred houses were searched not only in Buxton, in other parts of this country and I ask the Opposition to read the articles on Agricola, where people were quote in the papers as saying we understand why the Joint Services have to do this and their comment was why break the old lady door and the army when and fixed it back. These things do happened in a kind of situation like this with Joint Services, you cannot tell me that in the United States and all these big countries that talk about human rights that when they are looking for Al Qaeda in Nottingham, Brixton and wherever else in England and when they go after sometimes the Muslims mainly because they are Muslims and not because they are Al Qaeda that some of the same hiccups and problems we have here, where houses get tumble up and sometimes things get damaged that is not happening in these countries too.

Unfortunately, it is probably the collateral damage, what is important to note is that nobody has been killed by any policeman being slack-happy or trigger happy or anything in relation to the post-Lusignan issue. They have being doing their work professionally and we need to give them that muster and moral support. How can you expect men

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and mostly men in the Joint Services to be going out to deal with these criminals with AK47s, Baretts and all sorts of rapid fired guns with policemen and soldiers, who are better equipped than in 2002, 2003 and 2004, but still you want to say you want to find out what kind of machines; if I was in the army, I do not think I want to.

Backlands, street lights, when we did do the street lights, you have this petty comment in one of the Newspapers is that, this is all you give them. The people asked for certain interventions and we lived up to what we promised them. Certainly the issues to do with the Community Policing Groups, the Minister, I am sure will referred to as well, but with the British support, the intelligence gathering which is one of our weak areas in the security forces.

The issue of rapid response where people are talking about SWAT teams; this is an equivalent on a slightly different level that will be able to handle some of these situations.

The issue of the 911system, where people have complain and rightly so, I was a Minister then and I know when I tried to bring in the 911 system and improve it, what a headache it was. When we wanted to put 911 in every single one of the divisions of the police, GT&T could not hook up the system in such a way, that if I called from Canje I would get New Amsterdam, if I called from Agricola. I would get Georgetown, and if I called from Anna Regina I would get Anna Regina Police Station,

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instead when you called 911 you used to get everywhere, you used to get Georgetown, which use to bug up the lines. I am not saying a bad word Mr Speaker, and therefore would make calls difficult and this is a very, very important issue in relation to restoring confidence and allowing the police to respond quickly. And, therefore we are not sitting on our fannies, waiting for someone to write a plan, to have a conference again or another talk shop, we do not need another talk shop.

We have the National Commission on Law and Order, I believe the Parliamentary Political parties are there ... use that forum; we have the IRO, the Interfaith Organisation, let us use that forum; we have the Private Sector, Trade Unions ... let us use all these forums to be able to strengthen the crime fighting capacity and to have safe neighbours in our country.

Honourable Members of the House, the issue was raised in the Newspapers too, about Hoyte's \$250 million investment into Buxton as if nothing was done. There was between the two parties the Joint Group on the depress areas community. I believed Honourable Member Mrs Philomena Sahoye-Shury and former Minister Mr. Collymore, Mr Vincent Alexander, Mr. Odinga Lumumba and all those people were part of that and there were interventions that went on in Buxton, but I remind this House that when some of the road works had to go on and when some of the lights had to be fixed, and when telephone phone poles had to be fixed, the men from

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- The Ministry of Public Works;
- Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Company; and
- Guyana Power & Light Company

were chased out with men with guns and therefore at a certain point, how could you make public servant go into an area that they could get shot, they are afraid to do that. We must not forget in our desire to be so expedient that we forget how we reach where we got to. This crime problem is a big issue, but the reason why the criminals and I will say it here, have had muster and embolden is because the ambivalence of many of the political parties of this country and many of the so-called (*what you call them*) brokers, influence makers and so forth including the media in many cases.

Mr. Speaker, I want to record for this House my deep disappointment with the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana, because whilst their Motion, the request have a dispensing of the Notice for a Motion No. 31 was defeated, we had made it clear all the time to the PNCR-1G and to the House that since the Motion did not have the twelve days, the best thing was to let us go to a matter of Public Urgent Matter, this was something of national interest, all the parties could speak on it and we went through all the issues.

The deferment based on Deryck Bernard's funeral today, and the request of the PNCR-1G for us as a Government suspend the orders to allow their Motion to go on, we

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advised them that that was not necessary, they could bring that Motion themselves, but that we made it clear it in a letter and the letter is here Mr Speaker, from the Prime Minister to Honourable Member Mr Corbin and Mr Corbin's letter to the Honourable Prime Minister and I really do believe for the record of this House it may be we need to include that in the records of the Parliament. But the Honourable Prime Minister indicated last night to the Honourable Member Mr. Corbin that we were prepared to debate the Motion, but because of the time factor, we felt that the adjournment on a public, urgent matter was the best way to go and that we were deferring what we had a Motion of our own based on their indication since 2 February and so forth, and that we would be willing and more than glad to participate were they to move that.

However, if they will not that do we will then proceed and bring that ourselves. We also pointed out to Honourable Member Mr Corbin that base on the experience that when we tried to get unanimous support and certainly on this Motion you needed to get unanimous support and this we did. We did this in this House when we dealt with the Cheddi Jagan Motion. As soon as we tabled it; it was clear that some elements in the Opposition had problems with it and we sat for three days over hours and spliced and amended, quarrelled and agreed but we came to a Motion which was tabled and had unanimous support in the House.

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This Motion would need to be debated and amended, because as we say in the last BE IT RESOLVED CLAUSE, it talks to implement a defined plan of action, we are saying there is a definite plan of action - the Security Sector Reform Plan, but more than that, is that what I find very worrying not that they are not here. What I find very worrying is that although their Motion, the request to dispense with notice in order to allow their Motion to be tabled, was not won. What stopped the PNCR-1G Members of Parliament in this House from getting up in this same debate under the adjournment, which they withdrew by the way I remind you, and which Honourable Member Minister Clement Rohee then brought his request for an adjournment and which the Speaker approved, but that what stopped the PNCR-1G being present in this House and according to the wrong Motion:

- Condolences to the families of those who died;
- Condolences to the Lusignan eleven;
- Condolences to the young Guyana Defence Force soldier.

Because the Motion did not get tabled that stopped you from saying that in this House.

- What stopped the PNCR-1G from condemning these killings which is part of their Motion?

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- What stopped them from condemning these horrible killings, which can only be described to a Massacre?
- What stop them from staying in the House and saying that?
- What stop them from saying in this House that we need to have security plans and whatever else they wished to say?
- What stop them?

And I which to record, that nothing under this discussion could have prevented the PNCR-1G from taking part in this adjournment and making it known to the Nation that while they may not even agree with some of the things the Government is doing that they had the ethics, the conscience to stand here and at least for the people of this country and the people who elected them to be able to say we condemn this wholeheartedly.

I find the whole thing very worrying and disturbing, and I would believe also for those of us who are politicians that it would be highly suspect and my appeal to the AFC/GAP is that I think you kind of got influenced as my friend Mr Luncheon says without looking at the big picture; you looked at the little picture.

There is no magic wand to wish away the issues in relation to this criminal gang except the following -

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- That we keep on plugging ahead, consistently in implementing the Security Sector Reform Plan, which has a Parliamentary Oversight Path and it is believed that in the first few interventions which we are doing, there should be reports before the Select Committee in the next few months.
- That we need to signal unitedly so as to leave no area for these criminals to feel that they can walk and use and become emboldened that some of the voices out there that are excusing them, apologising for them and trying to find some rationale for why they are doing what they are doing.

Mr Speaker, this is not the time for ambivalence and that all the Speakers before me has said that I wish to remind this House that the Honourable Minister Mr Rohee brought a Bill here to do with those who hide and what you call harboured criminals, and it is a very serious piece of Legislation. So, when we talked about the criminals and this particular gang which I am holding firmly to uses terrorist tactics and is holding firmly to that their master minds are there who have their own political agenda. That we must remember that there people also in our society who give them support, supply them with

- Food
- Fuel

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- Cover
- Shelter
- Cell phones
- Money
- Women
- Ganja and
- Everything else that goes with the operation.

Therefore we have to smoke all of them out as far as I am concern, flush them all out and the media has stop romanticising this whole issue and creating myths. There must never be another day in this country, where a criminal is buried with the Guyana flag on the coffin, this was first done by the People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana at the funeral of Blackie and it has been repeated with other criminals, who were caught in engaging with the police and otherwise who also had the Guyana flag.

This is a denigration of our flag of who we are as a people and as a country and therefore we must say to those who support them, if they are supporting them out of terror, we are willing to give them assistance and to try to protect them. We also have to say to those who are engaging with them and giving them support, and embolden them, because Lusignan eleven is not over and therefore we

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must have an unequivocal position and to say all those who hide and give them support that they must stop so that we can bring our society back to normal.

We can say to our children when they go to sleep and we tell them stories and we sing them songs before they go to sleep that they will be fine in the morning. And so I call on this House that we are clear that although we were quite prepared to discuss the PNCR-1G Motion that we were unprepared to have a waiver of all the required proceedings under the Standing Order, and the PNCR-1G is quite free if it wishes to bring back this Motion on the Order Paper, it can so do it according to the Standing Orders.

But that we wish at this level to make it very, very clear that Lusignan eleven was a sad day in our history, a very tragic and painful day and unfortunately this country has too many days like that.

We can call the names of days of the rigged elections of 16 July 1973.

We can call all of those going from between 1968 to 1992, when the army took over and everything else.

We can call on days in November 1978, when nine-hundred people lost their lives in this country not because of Guyanese, but because of a fanatic and madman such as Reverend Jim Jones. Therefore we have an experience with the fringe element and the extremist in our society

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even though in the case of Jonestown they were foreigners.

Mr Speaker 26 January preceded by 25 January the attack on the Police Headquarters and the day before that on the Buxton soldier Lance Corporal Williams that these are three days that must not go without attention and without us recognizing that Guyana now faces the litmus test; the litmus test is whether we have the courage as a people to stand united against criminal elements that will take away our safety; take away our children lives and undermine the state and levels of public security. Thank you. *[Applause]*

The Speaker: Thank you Honourable Members. This Motion does not carry a right of reply. It is an Adjournment Motion, only Substantive Motions have a right of reply.

Therefore this brings us to end of our business for today.

The Hon Prime Minister

Hon Samuel A A Hinds: Mr Speaker, I move that this House be adjourned until Monday, 18 March at 2:00 pm when the Budget for 2008 will be read.

The Speaker: The House is so adjourned. Thank you very much.

Adjourned Accordingly at 19:18H

APPENDIX A

COMPANIES WHICH CURRENTLY RECEIVE VAT EXEMPTIONS

1. Interior Forest Industries
2. Barama Buckhall
3. Barama Co. Ltd.
4. Buddy's International Hotel
5. Caribbean Container Inc
6. GT&T
7. GUYSUCO
8. NAMILCO
9. National Hardware
10. Guyana Power and Light
11. B Bhaichandeen Ltd/Hotel Penthouse
12. Bakewell
13. Brandsville Apartments/Hotel
14. Caribbean Resources Limited

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15. Cel*Star Guyana Inc.
16. Demerara Timbers Limited
17. Grand Coastal Hotels
18. Guyana Lottery Company
19. Oldendorff Carriers (Guyana) Ltd
20. OMAI Services Inc
21. TCL Guyana Ltd
22. Variety Woods & Greenheart
23. Zoom In Hotel
24. LINMINE
25. Sleepin Guest House
26. BK International
27. Cara Hotels
28. Crown Agents
29. DeSinco Trading Ltd
30. Toolsie Persaud Ltd
31. Qualfon
32. CB & R Mining Enterprise

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33. Conservation International
34. Guyana Ranch
35. Imataka Hotel
36. Bounty Farm
37. CARICOM Rice Mills
38. Cacique Palace Suites
39. CDC Mining & Consultancy
40. Compare Bread Inc
41. Densu Ventures
42. Durable Hardwoods Establishment
43. Eldorado Enterprises Inc.
44. Edward B. Beharry and Company
45. E-Networks
46. Guyana Machine Works Ltd
47. Guyenterprise
48. Haurauni Agricultural Development
49. Jaling Forest Industries Inc.
50. Linden Quarries Inc.

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51. North American Resources Inc
52. Ocean View International Hotel
53. Ogle Airport Inc.
54. Pomeroon Oil Mill
55. Saj Rice Group
56. Sanmik Civil Works Ltd
57. Shakoor's Trading

**MINING COMPANIES WHICH CURRENTLY
RECEIVE VAT EXEMPTIONS**

1. JP Knight (Int'l) B.V.
2. Ontario Inc.
3. Bauxite Company of Guyana
4. Baracara Quarries Inc
5. Alfro Alphonso & Sons
6. Aroaima Mining Company
7. Correia Mining Company Ltd
8. ETK Inc
9. GoldPort Resources

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10. Goldstone Resources
11. OMAI Bauxite Company Inc
12. OMAI Gold Mines Ltd
13. Prometheus Resources
14. StrataGold Guyana Inc
15. Guyana Shields Resources