

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2016) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

44TH Sitting

Thursday, 27th October, 2016

The Assembly convened at 2.32 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

OATH OF A NEW MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, following the resignation of Mr. Charles S. Ramson and a call upon the representative of the People's Progressive Party/Civic's list of candidates, I have been informed that the name of Mr. Vickram Outar Bharrat was extracted from the list and that Mr. Bharrat was, on the 26th October, 2016, declared to be an elected Member of the National Assembly.

Before Mr. Bharrat can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, he will have to make and subscribe the Oath before the Assembly, as required by article 167 of the Constitution. As Mr. Bharrat is present, he can now make and subscribe the Oath which shall be administered to him by the Clerk.

The Oath of Office was administered to and subscribed by the following Member:

Mr. Vickram Outar Bharrat

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Welcome of Mr. Vickram Bharrat

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would like, on behalf of the Members of the Assembly and myself, to congratulate Mr. Vickram Outar Bharrat on his becoming a Member of the National Assembly. I welcome Mr. Bharrat to the Assembly and I extend best wishes to him.

Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence to tell you about matters which occurred during your recess and have a bearing on our National Assembly.

Installation of Electronic Billboards

Mr. Speaker: During the period, we have continued the improvement of arrangements to make the National Assembly more accessible to our citizens. We have installed electronic billboards to which the proceedings in the Assembly are transmitted. It complements the service provided by the public address system and enables our citizens to further observe our proceedings.

Parliament Corner

Mr. Speaker: All Hon. Members would have seen, in our daily newspapers, the “Parliament Corner” which seeks to enable the citizens to better understand the work of the Assembly. We have received much favourable comment on this publication and suggestions for improvement have been made.

Visits to our National Assembly

Mr. Speaker: The National Assembly continues to be a preferred place for visits by our citizens who reside outside of the city. A goodly number of children from various schools have visited. On 5th October, 2016, we were privileged to receive a group of over 100 elderly persons who had visited the Assembly in celebration of welfare of the Month of the Elderly. The visit was, by all accounts, a very successful one and I have expressed my thanks to the Hon. Minister, Valarie Patterson, who initiated the visit.

Visits to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and the National Assembly of Suriname

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, between 18th September, 2016 and 25th September, 2016, I visited the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago where I was received by the Speaker of the House of

Assembly and by the President of the Senate. I was accompanied by the Clerk of our National Assembly and seven members of staff of the Parliament Office. The Speaker and the Clerk returned to Guyana at the end of two days while the officers of the Parliament Office benefitted from pre-arranged attachments to various departments of the Parliament Office of Trinidad and Tobago for one week. Both the visit of the Speaker and the attachments proved very beneficial.

I should let the Assembly know that, on 8th October, 2016, the Speaker, accompanied by two Members of Parliament, the Hon. Winston Felix, Minister of Citizenship, and the Hon. Member, Adrian Anamayah, together with the Clerk and two Members of staff, visited the National Assembly of Suriname to sign the Contact Plan signature of which was authorised by Resolution 39 of 2016 of the National Assembly. The delegation also participated in the first joint meeting after the Contact Plan was signed.

Workshop in Canada

Mr. Speaker: Members of Parliament also attended a workshop in Canada.

Work on the Inner and Outer Lobby

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you would have noticed some changes in the appointments of the Inner and Outer lobby. This is part of a continuing effort to improve the arrangements provided for the comfort of Hon. Members. I harbour the hope that, before long, the improvements would be completed.

50th Independence Anniversary

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the activities which are taking place on the grounds of our Assembly are in preparation for the contribution of Parliament on the 50th anniversary of our Independence by way of an Afternoon of Reflections and Celebrations scheduled to be presented on Friday, 28th October, 2016, at 3.00 p.m. The planning and arrangements took wings after the planning committee of the Parliament Office swung into action. It is our hope that all Hon. Members will find the presentation worthy.

Views of Citizens on Conduct of Members in the National Assembly

Mr. Speaker: Before the Speaker concludes in what he considers an obligatory practice of

reporting to you on events and occurrences which relate to the work of our National Assembly and have some bearing on it, Hon. Members, I feel obliged to draw a certain matter to your attention. During the recess, I have been paying close attention to our daily publications, especially the letter columns. In reading the relevant pieces, I have sought to pay attention more to the message than to the messenger. The messenger, of course, comes from that vast body of persons, our fellow citizens, our fellow Guyanese, on whose behalf we all swore to act in this House for a better Guyana.

In my announcements in this Assembly of 17th August, 2015, I pointed out to Hon. Members that we bear an obligation to conduct our business here in the sight of our citizens with dignity and decorum and with respect one for the other whether in debates or in other exchanges in the Assembly. Since that time, Hon. Members, I must tell you that many of our fellow citizens have been paying attention to all of our activities and, as I have indicated, some hold themselves in a position to comment on our proceedings. I must tell you that some comments made by our fellow citizens have been disapproving of the conduct of certain Hon. Members in this House. Some correspondents felt that our language of interaction is often times spoken in a tone which is lacking in politeness to one another, designed to embarrass, wanting in civility and, sometimes, tinged with acrimony. All of these views were expressed by different members of our fellow citizenry. Hon. Members, I regret speaking to you in these terms but, as your Speaker, I must bring to your attention the views of our citizens or of some of them when those views refer to us and to our conduct in this House. I place my findings and observations before Hon. Members. Our fellow citizens are our judges. I invite Hon. Members to work towards a change.

I thank you.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Paper and Report were laid:

- (i) The Constitutional Offices (Remuneration of Holders) Order 2016 – No. 13 of 2016. [*Minister of Finance*]
- (ii) Annual Reports of the Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc. for the years 2010 to 2015. [*Minister of Agriculture*]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTIONS

APPROVAL OF THE 2017 CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES OF CONSTITUTIONAL AGENCIES

In accordance with Article 222A of the Constitution, the Assembly to resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the Estimates of Expenditure of the Constitutional Agencies for the year 2017.

The Speaker to propose that the Estimates of the following Constitutional Agencies form part of the Estimates of the Public Sector for 2017:

- (i) Parliament Office – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,723,483,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (ii) Office of the Auditor General – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$771,215,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (iii) Public and Police Service Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$95,236,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (iv) Teaching Service Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$150,741,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (v) Guyana Elections Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$5,822,974,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (vi) Supreme Court – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,033,313,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (vii) Public Prosecutions – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$206,258,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (viii) Office of the Ombudsman – Current Estimate totalling \$50,311,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.

- (ix) Public Service Appellate Tribunal – Current Estimate totalling \$13,933,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (x) Ethnic Relations Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$141,204,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (xi) Judicial Service Commission – Current Estimate totalling \$15,020,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (xii) Indigenous People’s Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$33,162,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (xiii) Human Rights Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$74,995,000 for the period 31st December, 2017.
- (xiv) Rights of the Child Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$97,009,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (xv) Women and Gender Equality Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$62,916,000 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.
- (xvi) Public Procurement Commission – Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$0 for the period ending 31st December, 2017.”

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

2.47 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to report that the Business Subcommittee of the Committee of Supply met on Wednesday 26th October, 2016 and considered the following for consideration of the 2017 Budget Proposals of the Constitutional Agencies.

The following are the matters agreed on:

- “1. The Assembly will work with the time allotted to each Constitutional Agency as listed on the attached Schedule.

2. The Assembly would resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the budget proposals.
3. The Speaker (Chairman of the Committee of Supply) will propose the amounts, that is, the total recurrent and capital for each agency.
4. The Minister of Finance would then give his comments and/or recommendations.
5. Members would be permitted to ask questions/make comments strictly in relation to the Minister's proposals.
5. Thereafter, the Speaker [Chairman] would propose that the sum, current and capital, as recommended by the Minister of Finance, be approved for the agency.
7. There will be no debate on the budget proposals of the Constitutional Agencies.”

The Subcommittee passed a resolution on this matter and this resolution is now before the House for adoption.

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Chairman, I now move that this Committee doth agree with the Business Subcommittee in the said resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the Committee of Supply will now consider the Estimates of Expenditure of the Constitutional Agencies for the year 2017. I also propose that the Estimates of the following Constitutional Agencies form part of the Estimates of the Public Sector for the year 2017.

Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence for one minute.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk]

Hon. Members, we will now consider the sums requested by the Constitutional Agencies.

Current and Capital Estimates

Parliament Office – \$1,723,483,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, my recommendation, in keeping with the law, is that the proposed allocation for this agency, Parliament Office, should be Current - \$1,442,546,000, Capital - \$76,960,000, for a total lump sum allocation of \$1,519,506,000. My recommendation is based on our fiscal profile which we have been able to develop for 2017, and our assumptions that we are making for revenues, expenditure and borrowing.

Mr. Chairman, if you would permit me a couple of seconds by way of a general comment because this is going to be germane to almost all of the Constitutional Agencies' comments, I believe that proposals by any agency, be it constitutional or non-constitutional, are just that – proposals. They have to be subjected to scrutiny, whether that scrutiny is ultimately by the National Assembly, but before it gets here whether that scrutiny is by the agency itself in the case of the Constitutional Agencies, the Ministry of Finance in the case of the non-constitutional agencies. At the end of the day, when we put all of the proposals or requests that are being made by agencies, whether they are Constitutional or non-constitutional, that has to be matched against the revenue profile that we would have developed, and our capacity to borrow.

3.02 p.m.

It was an ex-Member of Parliament, an ex-President of the country, who had indicated that the debt was rising. That was found not to be so, but, be that as it may, debt is a major concern of any country so we have to be very prudent in how we borrow since our revenues cannot accommodate all of the expenditure we would like to undertake. At the end of the day, even the Minister's recommendation is just that. It is the National Assembly, as we have just constituted ourselves, which will determine and make the decision as to how much each of the Constitutional Agencies will ultimately get.

Finally on this point, I wish to remind Members that, once approved by this National Assembly, the budgets of Constitutional Agencies cannot be varied downwards. They could only be varied upwards, unlike non-constitutional agencies for which, if we were in a crisis, we could immediately move to vary those budgets downwards. If the new profile improves or if other considerations come into play, we will entertain requests for supplementary, as was done in 2016 in the case of the Parliament Office and the Supreme Court. Together, these two Constitutional Agencies received almost an additional \$250 million over and above that which was approved by

this House.

I just want to make those general comments. Any other comment will be ditto for almost every other agency, once my recommendations have been tabled. *[Applause]*

Opposition Chief Whip [Ms. Teixeira]: Mr. Chairman, I assume we would be able to respond to the Hon. Minister on the issue of the independence of the constitutional bodies and their access to resources or acquiring them to allow them to carry out their mandates as expressed in the Constitution. Obviously, finance is a critical component of whether a constitutional body can carry out its independence and its responsibilities. Therefore, we differ strongly with the Hon. Minister on his interpretation of what he can and cannot do with the constitutional bodies.

However, what is most alarming is that the budget of the highest body of this country in terms of lawmaking, no other than the Parliament, was cut in 2016 and the Minister's amendment was approved by this House, by the majority of one. Today, the Parliament Office, your Office, as Speaker, has presented \$1.7 billion, Current and Capital, and the Hon. Minister has cut the sum to \$1.5 billion. Could I ask the Hon. Minister to enlighten us as to what the considerations were within the national development priorities? What were the national priorities?

The Hon. Member talked about fiscal space but I could suggest to the Hon. Member where there is fiscal space if it was not dispensed with in a cavalier manner. That is, the \$1.7 billion agreement between the Government of Guyana and Mr. B.K. Tiwari International, the \$5 billion write-off to Demerara Distilleries Limited (DDL), and the \$16 million for Rudisa Beverages and Juices. The Hon. Member comes to this House and talks about fiscal space. Yet the US\$780 million is the fiscal space he has which the Government inherited. Now, 17 months later, he comes and says that this Parliament must be cut by \$200 million. The cut is from the office of all of us. The Capital budget requested, \$182 million, was cut to \$176 million by the Hon. Member.

In your opening remarks, Mr. Chairman, you spoke about the activities of the House, access, your billboards outside, visits, travel and training. If you look at the actual proposal of the constitutional body, the Parliament Office, you will see that, out of the \$200 million, \$100 million has been removed from the Capital budget and \$100 million from the Current budget. I assume that, when we, the Hon. Members, sit in committees and there is a shortage of this and that, no one would say a word because \$200 million is proposed to be cut by the Hon. Minister

from the highest lawmaking body of this country that is independent of the Executive.

I am not satisfied with the explanation of the Hon. Member and I hope he would enlighten us further. I know he does not have to but as you, Mr. Chairman, pointed out very eloquently at the beginning of this meeting, the citizens are watching us. Therefore, I am asking the Hon. Member to enlighten us, meaning not just us sitting here, us the citizens, as to why he would cut \$200 million from the Parliament Office of this country.

Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: Mr. Chairman, I am just trying to get a clarification as to exactly what part of the process we are involved in. I am aware that the House has some proposals before it, and, as we had agreed before, last year, the Minister of Finance would offer his comments. I am not aware that the House has before it cuts in the sense that the Hon. Member of the Opposition is making reference to. There is a proposal. There was no time in the past when Parliament Office or any of these Constitutional Agencies was able to call a figure and have it approved without consideration by any entity. It has never happened. What we have before us is a process we agreed on. An amount is request, the Subcommittee is supposed to look at it and be informed by the Minister of Finance, as we are here, as to the views of the Ministry. The Minister has given his views. I wish that we would not seek to be addressing the press by misleading the process that is before us. There is no cut before us. The request from an agency does not constitute any commitment to the House.

Mr. G. Persaud: You should not be speaking.

Mr. Greenidge: You should not even be in this House, my Friend, but I do not say anything about it.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, you gave a very passionate presentation, at the beginning, about language. I hope you have noted the Hon. Member's comments about my Colleague at the back.

Let me not be digressed by my Hon. Member on the other side. The issue of cut is a semantical word. If the agency comes here to request \$1.7 billion and the Hon. Member says that he is recommending \$1.5 billion... If you do not want the word "cut", we could use the word 'reduction'. We could use the word 'variation'. We could use the word 'amendment'. We could use the word 'differential'. It means the same thing. You have reduced the amount of money the

agency is asking for. I know the word “cut” hurts but I know the Hon. Minister Jordon well. He is used to, as a finance person, cutting and slashing all over. That is part of the job of the Ministry of Finance. I am asking the Hon. Minister if he could say, in his determination of fiscal space – he has mentioned it over and over in this document - how he came to the point of determining fiscal space. Is that assumption on revenue generation or on inflows, so that we could comprehend and appreciate his reasons for having varied or amended a constitutional body’s request?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister of Finance, in justifying his actions, made reference to a set of assumptions based on revenue projections. I understand that, based on the projections, the fiscal space is determined. I would like the Hon. Minister of Finance to explain or to educate us on the assumptions he would have used in relation to revenue generation for 2017 that would have caused him to come to the conclusion that there would not be enough space to accommodate the request by the Agency.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for his statement. Minister of Finance, would you like to add to the discussion?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, not really. I think, in conformity with the law, the Minister of Finance is required to present his recommendations and his comments. I have done so. I think we are actually grazing right now.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I agree that the Hon. Minister of Finance has the right to bring to this House his recommendations. But the House also has a right to examine the actions of the Minister, to ask questions which would ensure the Minister of Finance is acting in the best interest of the agency. It cannot be that we are just bringing these things here and the Minister of Finance has no responsibility to respond. [An Hon. Member: Walk out.] You want us to walk out but we would not do that. We will represent the people’s business.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you will address the Chair.

Mr. Ali: In this difficult environment, I will try to continue to do that. The Hon. Minister of Finance has a duty and a responsibility to respond to the questions by the Opposition. The questions are based on the statement by the Minister of Finance who said that his actions were

based on assumptions in relation to revenue projections. All we are asking is: what are those assumptions? That is a very simple question. He has already acted based on a set of assumptions. All we want is for the people of Guyana and the agencies to understand what the assumptions used are in coming to the actual data.

3.17 p.m.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence on a point of the Standing Order 71(5) that would not require, once the House has resolved itself into Committee of Supply, to have a debate on an issue to be put to the National Assembly. This is, for me, a repetition of what had happened earlier this year, where the issue of the constitutional agencies had been used as a *free for all* for political propaganda. To try to exploit a situation where, when the Opposition was in the Government, they had refused to name many of the agencies that we, on the Opposition side then, had wanted to make constitutional agencies. Today, the Opposition has come to this honourable House with this sanctimonious posture that it is defending the constitutional agencies.

The Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, in Article 222-223, provides for constitutional agencies bringing their requests to the National Assembly and the mechanism by which these requests are made. The Constitution does not say that there should be a debate on the request or the response to the request. It states that there shall be a review and that there shall be a recommendation by the Minister, who is the Minister of Finance in this case. While in the Opposition, we had to engineer the amendment to the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) to provide for the inclusion of the Schedule in the Constitution. This was for a number agencies whose votes were limited and circumscribed by the former Government that exploited section 79 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act to limit the amounts to those bodies that should be constitutional agencies. My point is that the question be put and that the Committee of Supply votes on the motion to vary the sum that was requested.

I want to say this...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Prime Minister, we are waiting for the question that you would wish to ask.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I asked, initially, Sir, that the question be put because the rules of our National Assembly, the Constitution or the Act to which I referred does not contemplate a debate at this stage. This is a total act of misleading the House to think that the issue could be politicised.

Finally, it must be within any serious politicians' purview that, if an agency requests \$200 billion, it does not necessarily mean a prudent Government making a recommendation that it was not within the possibility and the means of the Consolidated Fund to give one agency an entire national budget. It must be prudent of a Government to make recommendation that it cannot be so. I think that the Opposition, at this point, is highly irresponsible to be able to do something that is adventurous and reckless, something that it had not been capable or willing to do, when it was in the Government. The Opposition should be ashamed that it has taken this position in this House, today. I am prepared to deal with this issue... *[Inaudible]*... at any time. The Opposition should be ashamed, today, to be exploiting the constitutional agencies for propaganda.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Members, we really would have to look at ourselves. *[Interruption]*

The first rule, Hon. Members, is that we cannot all speak at the same time. If we have something to say then we should use the method available to do so because there is a method. Ms. Teixeira, you may have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, before we began, we went into Committee of Supply and the Business Sub-Committee Report was put to this House and approved, un-amended. I would ask the Government side of the House to please read it because the Resolution which was passed at about 3 o'clock or at quarter to three in this House states the following:

“RESOLVED,

That the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply recommend to the Committee of Supply that –

1. The Assembly will work with the time allotted to each Constitutional Agency as listed in the attached Schedule.

2. The Assembly would resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the budget proposals.
3. The Speaker (Chairman of the Committee of Supply) will propose the amounts, that is, the total recurrent and capital for each agency.
4. The Minister of Finance would then give his comments and/or recommendations.
5. Members would be permitted to ask questions/make comments strictly in relation to the Minister's proposals.
6. Thereafter, the Speaker would propose that the sum, current and capital, as recommended by the Minister of Finance, be approved for the agency.
7. There will be no debate on the budget proposals of the Constitutional Agencies”

This was approved less than half of an hour ago by this House. The Hon. Leader of the House appears not to be familiar with it; the Hon. Vice-President, number one, seems not to be familiar with it; and the Attorney General seems to not be aware of it. Nevertheless, this House has just passed it. Therefore, since it was approved by this House with no objection or no opposition, we should stick to the Resolution, which was passed less than half of an hour ago in this House, and proceed as we agreed.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I asked that the question be put Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon Members, in treating the question before us, I will now put the recommendation of the Minister of Finance to the House.

Parliament Office - \$1,723,483,000, as amended to \$1,519,506,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: May, I enquire whether all Hon. Members have copies of the document from which the Speaker is reading.

Office of the Auditor General - \$771,215,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Office of the Auditor General is for the Current Estimates \$722,068,000 and for the Capital Estimates \$32,842,000, together for a lump sum of \$754,910,000. My comment on this remains the same as the general comment I made earlier.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Hon. Minister of Finance might have jumped the gun. Mr. Chairman, as you would appreciate, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) would first propose the budget for the Office of the Auditor General, and then you Sir would wish to hear from the Minister of Finance on his recommendations.

In so doing and in presenting the budget, as proposed by the Office of the Auditor General, there were many things which were taken into consideration in proposing the amount of \$771,215,000, part of which includes the provisions for employment costs that would allow the Auditor General (AG) to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, have you not heard what was agreed here?

Mr. Ali: It was agreed, Mr. Chairman, in the report, that the Chairman of the PAC, as is required...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not have such a report. We met yesterday and we had agreed that the Speaker would present all of the requests of the constitutional agencies and that the Minister of Finance would answer such questions as are raised on the recommendations he propose. Hon. Mr. Ali, that was as of yesterday.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, would you be kind enough to allow me to draw the House's attention to page 3 of the Report of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we had a meeting yesterday and I will repeat that.

Mr. Ali: I was just quoting from the Minutes of that report which was laid in the National Assembly today. Are we not allowed to do that?

3.32 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, what are you defending?

Mr. Ali: What am I defending?

Mr. Chairman: I asked the question Hon. Member because I do not perceive that the particular constitutional agency is under question or inquiry in anything which constitutes the sum it is requesting. Indeed, the clear understanding of everyone yesterday afternoon was that there would be no... [*Interruption*] Hon. Member, you would allow the Speaker to speak alone. I do not perceive that there is any aspect of the work of the Auditor General...I am trying to get to the point that you want to make, Hon Member.

Mr. Ali: I could help you do that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, courtesy exists in this House too and we must all practice it.

Mr. Ali: I agree with...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, would one await the Chair's direction? What I am saying to you is that we run the risk of opening a discussion on the aspects of work of a constitutional agency which, we are all agreed, ought not to happen. If we enter into discussing elements of the work of the constitutional agency here, we almost invite other comments on that work. The Chairman is not prepared to go down that road, and I will tell you that. We agreed, yesterday, that we will not enter into any discussion about the projects of the constitutional agencies, their plans for the future or anything of that nature. It states:

“The Chairman of the PAC will defend...”

I presume after questions are asked of a nature which no one else can answer, but I have not heard such questions. So what I am saying to you is that, one needs to be very careful about what one is saying to this House on this matter. I repeat, if one enters into a discussion of the elements which one has put together or which one perceives were put together to arrive at the request of the Auditor General's Office, then one, almost by doing so, invites questions which, we are all agreed, ought not to occur.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I wish to concur with you that, at this point, I am not defending any aspect of what is here. All I am doing is in accordance with what is required of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and I am presenting, on behalf of the Office of Auditor

General's Office, for consideration, the sum of \$771,215,000 of which \$32,842,000 constitutes the capital estimates and \$738,373,000 constitutes the current estimates. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, the Hon. Member might want to give us the total. Is there a total?

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I did give the total which is \$771,215,000.

Mr. Jordan: I wish to repeat, for the Office of the Auditor General, the Minister's recommendation for the current estimates is \$722,068,000, for the capital estimates it is \$32,842,000, for a lump sum of \$754,910,000

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House, if one of the national development priorities, which have been indicated in this column, is to improve transparency, accountability and good governance. Also whether ensuring that the Audit Office of Guyana is properly and adequately financed in keeping with its request, is not considered as one of those national development priorities?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I have made my recommendations and comments. That is all I wish to say.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, it seems to me that, in the context of what we are trying to do here, it may be that you need to repeat whatever it is that was done before. So what the Chairman would say to the Hon. Minister is that he should endeavour to answer Bishop Edghill.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I wish to reiterate that the recommendations for the Office of the Auditor General were made in the context of the existing fiscal space and that the profile for revenue expenditure and borrowing that have been developed by the Executive for the fiscal year 2017.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, would the Hon. Minister be able to tell this House if the policy of his Government coincides with expanding the scrutiny of public expenditure of which the Auditor General is constitutionally mandated to do. We have bigger budgets, more expenditure, and more ministries now with more departments being created. The Audit Office was functioning with a particular level of staff and with an expanded Government and budgetary

expenditures. Could the Minister indicate to this House what is his considered impact, as it relates to scrutiny, by the reduction that is made to the Audit Office?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister of Finance wishes to stay with his recommendations and the comments that he has made in respect of the Office of the Auditor General.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we have a situation where an agency has made a proposal. The Minister has made a recommendation or has taken a position for an amendment. Does the Minister of Finance believe that he owes it to this honourable House to give an explanation to the Members and to the enquires that are being made. This is because we are not getting anything. We have asked a question about a national development priority as it relates to scrutiny and we are not getting an answer to the question. Does the Minister believe that he has to answer the question? [Ms. Ally: He does not have to answer.] Well, if he does not have to answer, then he should say so. Well then you do not want scrutiny.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Chairman of the PAC whether the budget that was presented by the Audit Office included the salary increases for the staff. Therefore, in terms of the Minister's amendment, how will the salary increases be accommodated for the Audit Office?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, you are venturing into elements of the proposal from the Audit Office which you know you ought not to, given our arrangements. It does not help the flow of the discussion if we are going to do that. Mr. Ali, I would not allow you to answer it if that is what you are doing.

Mr. Ali: I am not answering. I am going to ask a question Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

3.47 p.m.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I wish to draw to the Minister of Finance's attention the salary increases proposal for the constitutional agencies. It is a legitimate question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have before us the Auditor General's Office. That is what we are talking about. Mr. Ali, are you using a sleight of hand to go beyond this?

Mr. Ali: Not at all. I assure you, if you will allow me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Was your question to the Minister a proposed recommendation?

Mr. Ali: Yes. In accordance with the Minister's recommendation, there will be a further deduction from the \$16 million. This is because, out of the recommendation, if we were to calculate, \$37 million would have to be used to pay that increase out of the recommendation from 2017. So, taking that into consideration, it would be a reduction of \$37 million, plus \$16 million from the proposal of the Auditor General. I just want to know whether the Minister of Finance would have taken this into consideration when coming up with his recommendation.

[**Mr. Williams:** That is a line item] No, the Minister of Finance could answer that.

Office of the Auditor General – \$771,215,000, as amended to \$754,910,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Public and Police Service Commission - \$95,236,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Public and Police Service Commission is, for the Current Estimates \$87,377,000 and for the Capital Estimates \$4,226,000, for a lump sum of \$91,603,000. This recommendation is made in the context of our revenue expenditure and borrowing profile. I may wish to add at this stage too that, with the plausible explanation for the reduction in the Guyana Elections Commission's (GECOM's) submission, no other agency here has experienced a reduction. This will be unlike some non-constitutional agencies in 2017 that will be experiencing reductions in their budgets.

So, if there is any consideration or otherwise that we have been suggesting today, it is the fact that we do understand the importance of constitutional agencies, their mandates and their autonomy in the financial independence, to the extent that we have been able to increase their budgets, while some of the non-constitutional agencies will be experiencing reductions because of our outlook or fiscal profile for next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. G. Persaud: The agency requested \$95,236,000 and the Hon. Minister is proposing \$91,603,000, which is a difference of \$3,633,000. I want to ask the Hon. Minister the very question that was asked by the Hon. Member, Mr. Ali, which is whether he would have taken into consideration the increase that he has recommended here with regards to the constitutional agencies and whether it was factored into his final declaration of \$91,603,000. We have noted too that there has been an increase in the number of persons in this constitutional agency and so employment cost is something that needs to be addressed. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I gave my recommendations and my comments. We seem to be veering off-course ever so often with these questions that are being asked. If we look at what the Act states, it states that these budgets will be submitted here with the exception of the one for the Auditor General's Office, which goes to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and that these budgets will also be sent to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance cannot enquire into the line items of these budgets and cannot interrogate these agencies. Therefore, to be asking me questions which Members could probably ask me if it were one of the regions or one of the non-constitutional agencies, I could answer those because we interrogate those agencies. Here, we could only address the lump sums, and these lump sums I addressed are within the context of our fiscal profile. That has been my standard comment and the law requires me to make my recommendations and comments, thereon, and I have done so in keeping with the law.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, we have an Order that has been circulated today dated 14th October, 2016, regarding the increase in salaries for constitutional post holders and it was signed by the Minister on 13th October, 2016. Most of the constitutional bodies had to get their budgets in 19th August or somewhere around then. So, the question that is being asked is, has the Minister, in his considered opinion, taken into consideration when he had made variations or amendments to the constitutional bodies, whether these include the increases that are of October? This is because these agencies would have submitted their budgets, prior to, the announcement by the Government that they were increasing the salaries. So are we to assume, therefore, that, when we look at our constitutional agencies such as the one we are dealing with now, when the Minister of Finance did his reduction, he did it knowing that it would not impact on the salary increases for the constitutional bodies? Is that correct?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, are we not going down the road that you were trying to avoid just now? My answer is that I have made my recommendations and comments on this item and if it is short of anything that is stopping you, Sir I request that this be put to the vote.

Ms. Teixeira: It is a reasonable question. It had nothing to do with the detail. Has the Minister taken into consideration that the salary increases came after the agencies submitted their budgets and would have probably taken place sometime when he was making the reductions. Did he take that into consideration? It is a simple question. I am not asking for the details. The Minister is being obtuse and this is unacceptable.

Mr Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira...

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You will withdraw that word.

Ms. Teixeira: Is obtuse a bad word Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Ms. Teixeira: Okay, I withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: I will not permit personal references or any kinds of descriptive words that tend to a person's person, if I could say that.

Ms. Teixeira: I accept Mr. Chairman and I hope that that will be the rule for everyone in this House. This is because we are hearing from this gentleman across the floor, the Hon. Vice-President of this country, accusations of us that are very personal. I, therefore, plead with you that you are able to listen to all who are accusing people, not just some. I said it on the floor, on my feet, in public knowledge.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have so far managed to complete two of the constitutional agencies. There are quite a number of them. You would have counted, perhaps, 17 or 18 agencies and we have had half of an hour or 20 to 30 minutes for each and for different numbers.

Public and Police Service Commission – \$95,236,000, as amended to \$91,603,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Teaching Service Commission - \$150,741,000

Mr. Jordan: The Minister of Finance's recommendations for the Teaching Service Commission is for the Current Estimates \$108,771,000 and for the Capital Estimates \$15,181,000, which gives a lump sum of \$123,952,000. The comment is in keeping with our fiscal space, revenue expenditure and debt profile for next year.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, we are going through an exercise here that I am a little concerned about. This is because if we have questions being asked and the Minister is not answering those questions, should we not conclude that the law is being violated. The purpose of this exercise is to scrutinise the Minister's actions, and in scrutinising the Minister's actions, questions have to be asked of the Minister. What were the considerations when he took this action and what is the impact that his action will be taking? So, if we continue like this, it is better that the Minister sends out an Order to every constitutional body, saying this is the amount he is giving and that they should *cut their suit to fit the cloth*. That is what is happening and Sir, the law does not allow for that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking a question?

Bishop Edghill: I am asking the Minister whether the approach of non-response and non-disclosure is an approach that is in keeping with the law and suits the level of scrutiny that should take place in this National Assembly.

4.02 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: I am not sure that I understand the comment, because I do not know if it was a question that was being made. All I wish to state, again, is I have complied with what is required of me, which is to make the recommendation and provide the comment and it is to let the National Assembly decide.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I would like to pursue it further. Is the Minister aware that in keeping with the law, his recommendations,...

[**Hon. Member (Government):** Which law are you

talking about?] I am talking about the same law he is acting on. His actions are subject to the scrutiny of the National Assembly before the vote. Does he have a sense of responsibility that he feels he needs to answer the questions of the Members of the National Assembly?

Mr. Jordan: I have no further comments, Sir.

Ms. Teixeira: Could you guide me on a Point of Order, not to with the vote?

Mr. Chairman: Would you allow me to complete this procedure?

Ms. Teixeira: I thought that you were finished, my apologies.

Teaching Service Commission – \$150,741,000, as amended to \$123,952,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, one of the fundamental issues in the Assembly at the point is an understanding of what laws states of “enabling” and “consideration” of the National Assembly. The Fiscal Management and Accountability (Amendment) Act 2015, signed August 5th 2015 by His Excellency President Granger, section 3 (2):

“The Minister of Finance shall submit to the National Assembly the Minister’s comments on the annual budget of a Constitutional Agency, including recommendations in sufficient time to enable consideration by the Assembly, and those recommendations shall be limited to the overall request rather than line items.”

When we use the phrase in this Assembly “enable consideration” it generally refers to when we are going to debate something. It is open. It is open for consideration. The phrase “to enable consideration”, which is in the Standing Orders, and in many parts of the law to do with when we are examining something, allows for questions, answers and debate. The Hon. Minister is basically refusing to answer. Obviously, we cannot force him to answer, but it is not a legal issue. It is a political issue and if the Hon. Member does not wish to answer the citizens will take note of that. The point that is being raised about “enabling consideration”, the Hon. Members are saying that all he has to do is to come here and lay it, and that is it. It is not so; the law states different.

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira, if the Speaker is addressing the Assembly, however strong the point an Hon. Member wishes to make, the Member will give way to the Speaker. It is not correct to say the Hon. Minister was not answering the question. You could say the answer he has given is inadequate, not applicable or many other things, because you are very adept at finding those descriptive adjectives, but you cannot say that he was not answering, because that would not be accurate.

Guyana Elections Commission - \$5,822,974,000

Mr. Jordan: The Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) for budget year 2017 is for current of \$1,909,932,000, capital \$120 million for a lump sum of \$2,029,932,000. At first blush this appears to be a reduced allocation relative to the budget of 2016, but it would be recalled that both years, 2015 and 2016, were election years when heavy expenditure, in relation to the holding of those elections, had to be incurred. As far as we know, and as far as the executive understands, there will be no general elections and local government elections are not due in 2017.

Mr. G. Persaud: Based on what the Hon. Minister proposed, he is proposing to allocate to this constitutional agency 34.8% of what the agency requested in its budget for 2017. This agency, I beg to differ with the Hon. Minister's statement that the executive is unaware of any elections for 2017. It means that the Hon. Minister has not been talking closely with his colleague, the Hon. Minister of Communities, because my understanding is that the Guyana Elections Commission ought to be prepared for elections at any time, given the nature of local government elections that we would have just held in this year. There are by-elections and all sorts of things. The Minister may need to withdraw his statement about the executive preparation for elections. I believe that the Minister needs to give us, here in this National Assembly, much more information with regard to how he arrived at such a drastic reduction in his allocation to this agency, 34.8% of what the agency requested for next year.

Mr. Chairman: I know in there, somewhere is the question. Somewhere in what you said there is a question.

Mr. G. Persaud: There are two questions, Sir. What consideration influenced the Minister's decision to arrive at the allocation he is proposing for the Guyana Elections Commission? The

Minister should rethink his statement that the Guyana Election Commission - that is a definitive statement - would not be having any elections in 2017. I do not think that is correct. There are a number of by-elections...

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member should know... I know he knows when a question is being asked and when it is not being asked.

Mr. Jordan: I am sure the *Hansard* will show that what I said was that the executive is unaware of the holding of any national or local government elections of the kind that we had this year.

Mr. G. Persaud: You did not say that.

Mr. Jordan: That part I did not say, but just to clarify the words "of the kind that we had this year." By-elections, and so on, the expenditure cannot compare with national elections or local government elections.

The first substantive question, I have answered that question and it is explained in the Minister of Finance's comments.

Ms. Teixeira: Is the Hon. Minister and Cabinet aware, and I assume that there will be aware through their Ministers, that the house-to-house registration 2017 was approved by the commission. It has been ten years since the last one. The commission agreed in August, this year, and it was announced to have a house-to-house registration in 2017. Is he aware of that, because that is part of why their figures were the way they were for GECOM? **[Mr. Ramjattan:** It was an operational matter.] It is not an operational matter. House-to-house registration is a major decision made by the commission and the powers that the commission has.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, a reference to house-to-house registration, I believe, refers to the Guyana Elections Commission. Am I right?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is it some one of the line items that is there and you are inviting the Minister...?

Ms. Teixeira: I am not asking about a line item. I am asking: Is the Minister aware that the commission made a decision, which was publicly stated in the press, that it will be having a house-to-house registration in 2017? That is all I am asking. I did not ask about any line item.

4.17 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, on this very important constitutional body, in which almost \$3 billion has been reduced by the Minister, could the Minister explain to this Assembly if he understood the impact that his reduction would have on the overall programme of GECOM in the year 2017? If he considers a removal of \$3 billion from a proposal that was put by the Guyana Elections Commission, I am sure it is aware that it would not be expecting a national election or local government elections of the nature that we had this year. GECOM must have had a programme that requires this request of \$5 billion. If GECOM's programme submitted to the Clerk of the National Assembly and copied to the Minister of Finance asking for \$5 billion and the Minister have not looked at those figures,...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you getting to a question?

Bishop Edghill: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are taking up some time.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I am seeking clarification.

Mr. Chairman: I thought there was a question that you had.

Bishop Edghill: The issue, at hand here, is that when this submission, which we all has as Hon. Members of Parliament...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, we are here to ask questions, could you put your question please?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, if you look at the business report of Sub-Committee, it states "comments and clarifications", not just questions. I am allowed to make a comment, Sir, based upon our agreement.

Mr. Chairman: Could you address your clarifications, please?

Bishop Edghill: I am making a comment and asking my question, Sir. The submission was made based on decisions made by GECOM. GECOM's financial officers would have had to make a proposal to the Clerk of the National Assembly and they took into place certain considerations and that is how they arrived at their figure of \$5 billion plus. If the Minister would cut it by \$3 billion, I am asking the Minister: Does he realise that this all-important constitutional body, to ensure the continual operation of democracy and good governance in Guyana, is being stymied by this reduction? That is my question, if the Hon. Member recognises that.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the answer is no.

Mr. Mustapha: Based on the Minister's explanation, we have seen the budget, that was submitted to the Clerk of the National Assembly, cut by almost 65%. It is public knowledge now that the Guyana Elections Commission is saying that it wants to modernise the system next year. It is talking about electronic registration, electronic voting, electronic identification and electronic tabulation.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you talking about the programme of GECOM?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I do not believe that you could do that here. You are to address questions on the cut.

Mr. Mustapha: This is a comment before the question. I am just asking the question...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we would not go under the coverage... I see that a number of Members are suggesting an approach, but you cannot enter into details of the programme of a constitutional agency. You are to ask the question which you have in mind.

Mr. Mustapha: Could I ask the Hon. Member what category of the budget was cut and if there will be any funds would be available to modernise the Guyana Elections Commission?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if that is a proper question, but I will put it to the Minister, because we agreed not to enter into questions which touch the work of the agencies, and that is what a number of Hon. Members, under the guise of introduction of issues, have been attempting to do. I will put the question to the Minister.

Mr. Jordan: I would like to reiterate that I have made the recommendation, the Minister comments are decided and I explained a bit further and on this matter. That is all I wish to say.

Mrs. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, would you be prepared to bring a supplementary in order to allow the house-to-house registration to take place in 2017?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member, but we are back to line items in this programme of the Guyana Elections Commission.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Minister said an hour ago that it is not to worry, that he could come back with a supplementary. He came back. I am asking him if he would be prepared to bring a supplementary. That is all I am asking.

Mr. Jordan: The Hon. Member is definitely misquoting me. I said at the very beginning that if the outlook of the fiscal profile improves, then we may consider additional requests from constitutional and non-constitutional agencies and referred to the fact that the Parliament Office and the Supreme Court benefited this year from additional provisions of the order of \$250 million.

Guyana Elections Commission – \$5,822,974,000, as amended to \$2,029,932,000, agreed to and ordered to start part of the Estimate.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we can take our suspension at this time. We will reassembly 25 minutes after 5 o'clock.

Sitting suspended at 4.26 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 5.32 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Supreme Court – \$2,033,313,000

Mr. Jordan: The Minister of Finance recommendation for the Supreme Court for the budget year 2017 current expenditure is \$1,517,279,000 and capital expenditure is \$248,800,000 for a total of \$1,766,079,000. The Minister's commentary is two. One, our general comment that this

lump sum is being made in the context of our fiscal profile for 2017 and, two, as we indicated, if the outlook improves as we progress into 2017, and these agencies, constitutional and non-constitutional, if they were to make additional request and we do have the room, then we would accommodate as we had done in the case of the Supreme Court for this year when we give it an additional \$180 million in supplementary provision.

Mr. Nandlall: I may enquire of the Hon. Minister whether he attempted any form of consultation with the officials of the Supreme Court in relation to how this suggested reduction of \$267-odd million would affect the work of the Supreme Court, or judiciary as a whole.

Mr. Jordan: As the Hon. Member is aware the Minister of Finance cannot do any such thing. The law requires that the budget of constitutional agencies comes directly to the House, through the Speaker, and a copy send to the Minister of Finance. There is no room between there for consultation or otherwise.

Mr. Nandlall: Could the Minister help us to understand how he arrives at the particular figure? Did he capriciously arrive at it? How did he arrive at a reduction that would be a total of \$267,000,234? Why that precise figure? All I am asking is how did he arrive at this particular figure.

Mr. Jordan: May I reiterate that in keeping with the provision of the law, I have made the recommendation and I have made the comment. I am not sure as to the following as to how I arrive, and so. I did say that this sum takes account of our fiscal space and our realities for next year.

Mr. Anamayah: On a clarification Hon. Minister, does the constitutional office, Remuneration of Holders Act, that was laid before us include judges and magistrates?

5.38 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: What we expect of Hon. Members is to ask questions on the recommendation made by the Hon. Minister. The question you asked, it does not sound to me as if it reflects a question on the recommendation of the Minister.

Mr. Anamayah: Well, it is a clarification I am seeking, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, the Minister is the wrong person in light of the fact that the Minister of Finance ought not to be too knowledgeable about the constitutional agencies as regards their budgets.

Mr. Anamayah: Very well.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you give a clarification?

Mr. Jordan: I could only give lump sum answers, but I cannot enquire into the line items.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you.

Mr. Anamayah: Hon. Minister, does this sum approved cater for any increases to the salaries of the judges and magistrates?

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps Hon. Member, you mean the word “recommended.” No sum is approved yet.

Mr. Anamayah: It is “recommended” by the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Jordan: May I remind the Hon. Member that in voting as a lump sum, it is the agencies that determine how they apportion that lump sum.

Mr. Anamayah: Is the Hon. Member aware then if there are any such increases for the judiciary?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Minister of Finance, can you address the question put?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think we are going a bit off track. I have answered these questions in the best way and within the context of the law. It is a lump sum. I am answering strictly to the lump sum. My answers and comments have been based on a lump sum as opposed to delving in to the specifics of the constitutional agencies.

Mr. Anamayah: Mr. Chairman, if you will permit me. I am asking the Hon. Member, in his considered view, does it seem discriminatory for the executive branch to have awarded itself an increase, a 50% increase?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Anamayah, the question is not allowed. If you are unable to ask a question relevant to the recommendations of the Minister of Finance, then I would ask you to take your seat. A question that relates to some matter that is not before this Assembly, at this time, is not going to be allowed.

Mr. Anamayah: Mr. Chairman, the later part of the question was that ...

Mr. Chairman: Just simply ask the question of the Minister.

Mr. Anamayah: Yes. Is it not discriminatory to give executive branch an increase?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the question is not allowed.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Minister, is your recommendation, which reduces the request or the proposal emanating from the judiciary, not in conflict with and in violation of the very autonomy which the new system was intended to invest these constitutional agencies with? That is my question to the Minister.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, you will note carefully in my opening remarks that I did indicate that a budget or a proposal to spend money is just that, until it is approved. Now as Hon. Prime Minister had indicated, it must be wishful thinking to think that some agencies can put up a budget for \$200 billion which probably is the total sum that we might be able to collect and expect that they will get a budget of \$200 billion. I mean, that is carrying it to absurdity. In reality, anyhow, it is going to be a rare occurrence where in the absence of consultations and deep discussions that a budget, which is directly sent to the House for approval, and which there is no prior consultation as accords with the law, can be in consonance with the Minister of Finance's recommendation. I think this will be the case in almost all cases.

Earlier this year we had some cases where there were agreement in, I think, three or four areas where it directly matched the Minister of Finance. In this case in which we are seeing the profile for next year, in terms of the fiscal space, and so on, it is a bit less generous than earlier this year. We have committed these sums as proposals and hope that they will be passed. Let me again repeat that with the exception of the Guyana Elections Commission that every one of the constitutional agencies budgets, relative to their budget of 2016, has been increased which may not be the case of the non-constitutional agencies.

Mr. Nandlall: I am happy that the Hon. Minister appreciates the desirability to have consultation, and he alluded to that just now, to ensure that there is a coincidence between the constitutional agencies and what the Ministry can afford. Having recognised that and expressly alluding to that just now, why did the Minister not have set consultations with the judiciary prior to this exercise?

Mr. Jordan: It is not allowed.

Mr. Chairman: What are we talking about here?

Mr. Jordan: Sir, I think I answered the question already. There is no need to answer it again.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I wonder if I may be accused of controlling questions, but I am a bit uncomfortable when questions are asked, the answer to which are not permitted in the circumstances. Please proceed Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: Why are you looking at me, Mr. Chairman, but I did not open my mouth as yet. It is premature. I apologise.

Mr. Chairman: I must say I cannot help looking at you, Ms. Teixeira. Please let us proceed now.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, you are trying to derail me today. It is not going to work.

Mr. Chairman: I would not do that, Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Minister sent out I understand, a Budget 2017 circular to all the statutory bodies and constitutional bodies. Is that correct? Yes. In that circular you gave guidelines of how the budget is to be prepared, and so. Correct? Yes. Forgive me, because my brain sometimes goes in funny directions. The total number of request is \$11 billion and what is being proposed to this House is a total of \$6 billion odd. I am trying to understand, having read our circular, what was the thrust of your budget preparation, in terms of percentages increases? You were in the Office of the Budget long years ago where you used to send out circulars saying do not increase

more than 5%, 7%. Remember those days. This does not have it. How do the agencies know, the constitutional bodies in this case, that they are working within a perimeter based on fiscal space and all sorts of issues?

How then do you as the Minister...? Please forgive me for a bit of levity. I am trying to imagine you, Sir, sitting with all these numbers in front of you and trying to decide which agency gets cut by 5%, 10%, 100%, 50%. Somehow you look like a juggler in my brain. I am wondering, how do you do this? How do you decide to do this? You do not meet with the agencies; you do not look at the budget. You have said that here. Is it by *eeny, meeny miny moe*? Or is it by some card trick? Is it by some chess move? Is it that you are sitting having a nice 'relaxing drink' in the evening and saying, "Hmmm, I think I am only going to give the Rights Commission a \$20 million". Is it that or all of the absurd? I am trying to understand how this takes place - how?

Mr. Jordan: The bit of levity was fine, but I think also it puts our hard-working technical staff in a bit of a not so good light. I could assure Hon. Member, as the Hon. Member well knows, that detailed assessment goes into every one of the budgets. It is any lump sum, in the case of constitutional agencies, that is made against the fiscal space, which we have estimated, that we can accommodate. I keep hearing the word "cut". Again, let us reiterate, how can you cut what you did not have? You cannot cut what you did not have. There is a proposal that has been made. There is a counter proposal being made by the Minister of Finance and it is for the National Assembly, meeting as a Committee of Supply, which will determine, and that is what we have been doing this afternoon. I do not understand what they mean by the word "cut". The Minister of Finance has done no such thing. He has made a recommendation in keeping with the law. It is for the National Assembly to determine at the end of the day what each constitutional agency will get. Unfortunately, so far, every one of my recommendations has met with the approval of the National Assembly. That is the way sometimes it happens.

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: Mr. Chairman, I hope you will permit me to seek this clarification from the Minister of Finance. He just mentioned the word "fiscal space". The word "fiscal space", in my understanding, is assumption based. It connotes a particular assumption of revenue; it connotes a particular assumption of levels of expenditure, and therefore when the two are combined there is a position, a fiscal deficit or a fiscal surplus, and then that fits into another notion that is capriciously or determined, or rationally, as the Minister of Public Security said, of

what is sustainable over time. If the deficit is 3%, then the Minister needs to say that this deficit is the only level of deficit that we can have that is consistent with a particular growth level or monetary framework.

I would like to know: What assumptions were made on revenue? What assumptions were made on expenditure? What is the sustainable framework to come up with this notion, the Minister's notion?

5.53 p.m.

It is only his notion of fiscal space, because if I had to do it, my notion, as it regarded fiscal space, would have been different. If Mr. Greenidge had to do it, his notion would probably have been different too. Thank you.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think that we have strayed. I do not know whether you are permitting us to go down this road. I am sure that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition would have his chance, during the general budget debates, to ask those questions, when he is rightly going to get answers. This is because they would be in the documents which we would present.

For the benefit of the Hon. Member, this is not the Minister of Finance's fiscal space; this is the Executive's fiscal space. The Minister of Finance is one member of the Executive. I agree with the Member of the Opposition that he could have one notion and x person could have another.

[An. Hon. Member: He could have two.] He could have three, if he wants. In accordance with Justice Chang, if my unlearned knowledge makes me correct, he had said that it is the Executive's budget. Am I correct? Therefore, the fiscal space that counts is the Executive's fiscal space.

I would love to hear the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's notion of fiscal space but that is only for our *gaff*. It cannot be, essentially, in the context of what we are dealing with here today.

Mr. Jagdeo: I am not challenging the notion that this is the Executive's proposal to the National Assembly and that it is the Executive's budget. The Minister said that the fiscal space was the determining factor in him exercising these cuts. All I am asking for is how the Executive came up with this particular fiscal space. I am not challenging that it is the Executive's. This is used as the main justification for cutting the budget. Therefore, he needs to explain to us... **[Mr.**

Greenidge: He did not cut the budget] Well not to cut, but to adjust the budgets of the constitutional agencies. We could play around with words. The Minister of Finance mentioned the concept of fiscal space as the reason. I am asking that he tells us and the country how the Executive came up with the notion of fiscal space and that particular fiscal space.

Mr. Jordan: I think that I have elaborated a lot on this and I do not need to go it over again.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would just like to follow-up on the question which was asked by the Hon. Leader of the Opposition. The Hon. Minister, indeed, keeps referring to fiscal space as one of the challenges which he consulted to have the proposals of the Executive before us this evening. Is the Minister, also, now saying that, because the fiscal space does not allow for his recommendation to meet the proposal of the constitutional agencies, the Executive is acknowledging that there are economic and financial worries in our country?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is the question that you are asking in relation to the cut? “Cut” is the word that is being bandied about. The Minister rightly said that there has been no cut as yet.

Mr. Dharamlall: I did not say “cut”.

Mr. Chairman: I am asking: What is the question that you are addressing to the Minister in relation to his recommendations?

Mr. Dharamlall: I am asking the Minister: In relation to the Executive’s recommendations, *vis-à-vis* the proposals of the constitutional agencies, and the Minister’s fiscal space as one of the determining factors of the Executive’s recommendation, is that an acknowledgment that the economy is in worries?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do not know what it is that you require me to answer. It is because I do not know by what method of deductive reasoning the Hon. Member would have been able to come to such a conclusion. I am not prepared to answer.

Supreme Court - \$2,033,313,000, as amended to \$1,766,079,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions - \$206,258,000

Mr. Jordan: The Minister of Finance's recommendation for Public Prosecutions, for fiscal year 2017 is, for the Current Estimates \$153,972,000 and for the Capital Estimates \$14,385,000, for a lump sum of \$168,357,000. The comment here is as before. It is in keeping with our outlook for our fiscal profile and our fiscal space for the budget year 2017.

Mr. Nandlall: Again, the Minister's recommendation is a very unique figure. The total reduction is by \$37,000,901. I am asking the Hon. Minister how he arrived at that particular figure. There must be a formula that was used, which the National Assembly is entitled to be acquainted with. I understand the fiscal space. I understand the Minister's refusal to disclose the mechanism and criteria by which he arrived at that fiscal space, but he came up with some very unique figures by which he is recommending a downward reduction for these agencies. In this instance, he is recommending that budget of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) be reduced by \$37,000,901. All I am asking, respectfully, is for him to share with us and the country how he arrived at this very unique and novel figure.

Mr. Jordan: I thank the Hon. Member for the question and my answer is as before. The recommendation is for the lump sum \$168,357,000 and the comments are attached thereto.

Mr. Nandlall: The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, as is public knowledge, is the institution charged with the prosecution of all criminal...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, are you asking a question?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Let us see how we could hurry this up.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir. I just want to put on record that the Office of the DPP is the constitutional agency which is charged with the responsibility of prosecuting all criminal charges in the country. Crime is a serious problem in this country.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could you address the question please?

Mr. Nandlall: I am getting there, Sir. The DPP came up with a budget and decided that the sum of money which was needed to prosecute criminal offences in Guyana. The Minister is reducing the DPP's budget by \$37,000,901. Is it that this country cannot afford to spend \$37,000,901 more to address the crime situation in Guyana? That is the question that I want to ask.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Hon. Member was merely making a commentary as opposed to asking a question.

Mr. Nandlall: I am sorry, Sir. I did not hear the answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Hon. Member did not hear the answer.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I did not hear the question.

Mr. Nandlall: I am going to repeat it. Is the Minister saying that Guyana does not have the fiscal space to spend \$37,000,901 to enhance the capabilities of the Office of the DPP to prosecute criminal offences, when the Government is spending moneys at the Ministry of the Presidency and the D'urban Park Development Project? I will stop there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you cannot do that. Could you resume your seat, please? Hon. Minister, is there an answer that you wish to give to this question?

Mr. Jordan: No, Mr. Chairman. Sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, would you attempt to answer the question?

Mr. Jordan: The Hon. Member put the question, Mr. Chairman, you asked me if I could attempt an answer and I said no.

Mr. Chairman: Would the Hon. Minister attempt to answer the Hon. Member's question?

Mr. Nandlall: Are you refusing to answer my question?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Nandlall, you have to address your questions to the Chairman.

Mr. Jordan: The question which was posed is, again, suggesting that we, as the Executive, are reducing and varying downwards the proposals. Again, I repeat that in every case, except in the case of the Guyana Elections Commission, the budgets of the constitutional agencies have been

increased; in one other case, it remained the same. I do not see where the reduction that we keep hearing about is. The proposals of the constitutional agencies are just that. They are before the Committee of Supply of the House. They are being considered by the Committee of Supply of the House. *[Interruption]*

The Minister's recommendation is also being considered by the Committee of Supply of the House. At the end of this exercise, it is the National Assembly that would be voting. I think it is worthy of note that, so far, the entire Assembly has met together and has collectively agreed on these recommendations. There have been no "no" votes.

6.08 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that \$37.9 million be restored to the proposed budget of the Director of Public Prosecutions Office. I am asking that it goes to the House; that the Minister adjusts his recommendations and/or my motion that the \$37.9 million that has been adjusted by the Minister be restored into the DPP's office.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I rise to second that motion.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think that we have strayed a great deal from what was originally intended and, under the guise of many things, we are walking away. I seem to recall much the same happened last year. We have an excuse for last year because we were in unchartered waters; we were first entering unchartered waters. We are still there. We have made some progress and there is still more to be made. What we are doing in all kinds of ways is not respecting what we sat and agreed to. It does not matter how we twist it and turn it, that is what we are doing. Hon. Members have to commit themselves to a particular course of action and, when we get to the House, remain committed to that course. It is not evident to me that that is the case this evening. I think that we need to examine what it is that we are doing. If you allow me a few minutes, we will return to this.

[Mr. Chairman in aside with the Clerk]

Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I wonder if I can direct your attention to Standing Order 76(1) and I then wonder whether you would still wish to have that motion stand.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, are you saying that no amendment should be moved?

Mr. Chairman: No. I do not say that. The Standing Order under which you purport to act, unless there is another one...

Ms. Teixeira: I tell you the truth: I did not quote the Standing Order.

Mr. Chairman: I know you did not but you must act apropos of some authority. All Members must do that.

Ms. Teixeira: There is a little technicality, Mr. Chairman. Could I explain why I did not put the Standing Order?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, no; thank you. What we are trying to do here is to know whether you want me to disallow the motion or whether you will withdraw it. That is what we are doing here right now.

Ms. Teixeira: There is a motion on the floor of the proposals of the constitutional bodies. There is an amendment being put by the Minister to adjust downwards. I am saying that I am calling on the Minister to restore. Therefore, I am saying that his amendment should not be held.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: I am not actually bringing an amendment. I am actually saying that the requested budget of the agencies should be the ones put to the House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Standing Order 76(1) reads:

“No amendment shall be moved in the Committee of Supply under this Standing Order until one day after that on which it was published in the Notice Paper.”

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, I am not making an amendment though.

Mr. Chairman: I am not sure what the import of your motion is if it is not to achieve the same end.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I try to explain a little better? There is a motion that is before the House...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I follow that. I am sorry to interrupt you but this is not getting us anywhere. You are either withdrawing it or I disallow it. That is where we are right now. You have the option to withdraw it.

Ms. Teixeira: I think my request is very pertinent. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: It is disallowed, Ma'am.

Mr. Jagdeo: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of this matter...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member...

Mr. Jagdeo: I am seeking your clarification on the issue.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Mr. Jagdeo: The Minister of Finance just interpreted...we heard him in this House say that we all collectively, the House, agreed to these proposals. We, on this side, do not agree with them, particularly the proposal that is discussed now to reduce downwards the budget of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Chairman, if we cannot express that disagreement or that dissent through a motion, we need your guidance as to how we can express the dissent here in the House so that it will not be interpreted that we agree with what the Minister just interpreted, that we agree with this proposal. We need your guidance as to how we can express that dissent here, if not by a motion, by what other mechanism.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I thank you. Before I answer the question, let me say this: we are not embarking on another discourse away from the object of our exercise here this afternoon. I will answer the question. I will say this to you: Hon. Members are always entitled to express their dissent and disagreements through the vote. It is always here for us all. The Speaker cannot engage the luxury of allowing an action to be taken which does not confirm with the Standing Orders by which we are guided. That is what we have right now. I think the Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, knows that. I am puzzled that she would even attempt that. But then it has been done. It is of no import now.

Mr. Jagdeo: I am not challenging your ruling, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: That was my next point.

Mr. Jagdeo: Okay. All I am doing is seeking your guidance as to how, in this House, we can express this dissent that we do not agree with their reduction that is being proposed by the Minister. We are craving your guidance on this matter, lest it be interpreted as it was done by the Minister of Finance that there is unanimous support for this motion to reduce the DPP's office.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe that I will answer the question by simply saying that the time-honoured way in this House is that one votes "no" if one is not in agreement and votes "yes" if one is in agreement. That must be the way in which we can go. This is the clear way in which we can proceed. You have my guidance on that.

Bishop Edghill: I have a question for the Minister, Sir. Under "Public Prosecutions", the Minister of Finance's comment in the legend states:

"...consideration of the Agency's request within national development priorities."

My question to the Minister is if the reduction of crime and the prosecuting of crime is a national development priority and if he believes that the reduction would enhance that priority.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, you have tried, I have tried, several others over here have tried but it seems that we are not getting through that there is no reduction in these numbers. A proposal has been put to the House; a recommendation has been made by the Minister of Finance and at the time of the voting then we will determine. If compared to earlier, this year's Budget 2016, again I reflect none of these agencies have reduced with the exception of the Guyana Elections Commission.

Secondly, Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let the Minister answer the question. I do not believe that we do justice to the questions that we ask if, when the answer is being given, we do not listen to the answer.

Mr. Jordan: It is not for the Minister of Finance to determine the priorities of the Constitutional Agencies. That is why we are voting a lump sum. When they get the lump sum, it is for them to determine their priorities. I do not know why they are asking me about crime and so on. It is for the DPP to determine the order of significance which will be given to whatever she sets up as her priorities. She has a lump sum to deal with those issues. It is not for the Minister of Finance to do that.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up, Mr. Chairman: Simply put, the priority of the DPP's office is the prosecuting of crime. My question to the Minister is: if the reduction and prosecuting of crime is the Executive's national development priority, why not give the DPP the moneys requested so that she can enhance her work?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, once again, the lump sum provision is given to the DPP and all the other Constitutional Agencies for them to determine their priorities and seek to allocate the resources as they see fit.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very disappointed here because, if there is one area that we could find common ground with, it is the reduction of crime.

Mr. Chairman: Are you addressing a question, Mr. Gill?

Mr. Gill: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please help us with the question.

Mr. Gill: If there is one area that we could all find common ground with, it is the reduction of crime in this country. I am appalled that we cannot find an additional \$37.9 million for the DPP to do its work.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you are close to abusing the Chairman's reasonableness. You have not asked your question as yet. There is still a speech. Let us have the question, please.

Mr. Gill: I would like to urge the Minister of Finance to find \$37.9 million more to restore the amount that the DPP has requested.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please resume your seat.

Chambers of the Director of Public Prosecutions - \$206,258,000, as amended to \$168,357,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

6.23 p.m.

Office of the Ombudsman – \$50,311,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Office of the Ombudsman for Budget Year 2017 is a lump sum of \$48,311,000.

Mr. Gill: Since the recent passing of the Ombudsman, can the Hon. Minister advise how soon he will be replaced?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I do not know whether the Hon. Minister knows that or not but that is not our understanding of the purpose of our being here. The question must be directed to the Minister's recommendation. I will give you the floor to do that if you wish to do that. If not, we pass on. Thank you.

Office of the Ombudsman – \$50,311,000, as amended to \$48,311,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$13,933,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Public Service Appellate Tribunal for budget year 2017 is \$12,499,000 as lump sum. Mr. Chairman, this agency is known as not having a head or commissioner for a while and we are not sure again. I could give this House a commitment that we can review this budget again next year in the context of the fiscal space if this agency is properly reconstituted and a proper budget is prepared and presented.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, this agency, the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, does not really exist. Yet, there is an increase in the budget put forward by whom no one knows, and then it is retained at the same figure of 2016. So it is a little bit confusing. Could the Minister say, as this is an executive proposal, when the Executive anticipates that the Public Service Appellate Tribunal would be appointed, as this was one of the Elections promises?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think you will agree that it is the wrong person being asked that question.

Ms. Teixeira: You said that it is an Executive fiscal space.

Bishop Edghill: In keeping with his legend that states that this allocation is in keeping with the agency's request within national development priorities, is the establishment of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal a national priority and how soon will that be established?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think, again, we are varying from the reason behind this. It is the wrong person but let me say that I am not the one who submitted a budget to the National Assembly. As you can see, the request there is \$13,933,000. So, obviously, somebody submitted a budget to the National Assembly through you, Mr. Chairman, and, similarly, it was submitted to me. And we, in the context of our fiscal space, put this here and I have already given a commitment that, whenever this Service Appellate Tribunal is constituted and a proper budget is presented that includes the members of the Service Appellate Tribunal and so on, we will relook at this during 2017 by way of supplementary or so on.

So, at this stage, I do not know why we are going over this. I think it is pretty straight forward. Let us leave the hard ones for the questioning.

Public Service Appellate Tribunal – \$13,933,000, as amended to \$12,499,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Ethnic Relations Commission – \$141,204,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) for budget year 2017 is Current - \$83,482,000, Capital - \$1,500,000, for a lump sum of \$84,982,000. Mr. Chairman, I am aware that this Commission, like the Public Service Appellate Tribunal, has not been fully constituted. And again, I can give the House a commitment that, once it is fully constituted and a proper budget for the fully constituted agency is presented, it can be brought again for reconsideration for supplementary.

Ms. Chandarpal: I have heard the Minister. However, Sir, you are recommending a reduction of the ERC's proposed budget by \$56,222,000. As you know, the ERC's budget is \$141,204,000.

My question to you, Hon. Minister, is whether an important Commission such as this one, which is critical to social cohesion, is not being shortchanged by your action.

Ethnic Relations Commission – \$141,204,000, as amended to \$84,982,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Judicial Service Commission – \$15,020,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance’s recommendation for the Judicial Service Commission for budget year 2017 is a lump sum of \$10,020,000.

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Chairman, the Minister’s recommendation proposes to reduce the figure proposed by one-third. It is a small figure – \$15,020,000 - and the Minister is reducing it by \$5 million. Do we not have the fiscal space in Guyana to give the Judicial Service Commission, the body that disciplines judges and magistrates, \$5 million? I am just confirming that that is what the Minister is saying.

6.38 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the lump sum recommendation for the Judicial Service Commission is consistent with the comments I have been giving throughout that it is considered within our fiscal space.

Judicial Service Commission - \$15,020,000, as amended to \$10,020,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Indigenous Peoples’ Commission - \$33,162,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the recommendation of the Minister of Finance for the Indigenous Peoples’ Commission (IPC) for budget year 2017 is Current - \$24,144,000, Capital - \$280,000, for a total lump sum of \$24,424,000.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I have three questions for the Minister.

Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if he is comfortable with the recommendations of the Ministry of Finance which does not include funding to establish mechanisms to enhance the status of Indigenous peoples and to respond to their legitimate demands and needs in keeping

with the mandate as contained in the Constitution on page 218, Indigenous Peoples' Commission, article 212S?

Secondly, could the Minister say whether he is satisfied that the current recommendation made by the Ministry of Finance, which encompasses mainly funding for administrative expenses, meals, transportation and subsistence, is enough for the IPC to implement the stated mandate?

Finally, could the Minister share with this House whether the cut to the proposed budget of the IPC of \$33,162,000 to the recommendation of the Ministry of Finance of \$24,424,000 had to do with the stripping away of the funding earmarked for an implementation strategy which catered for the IPC to execute its mandate in keeping with the Constitution to promote and conduct awareness of the contribution of and the problems facing the Indigenous peoples, to promote the empowerment of Indigenous peoples, to promote consultation and cooperation of the Indigenous peoples with regard to participation in national decisionmaking and decisions which affect their lives, and to monitor the need to make recommendation where appropriation for the establishment of mechanism to provide counselling for Indigenous peoples in keeping with the constitutional mandate conferred upon the IPC?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the three questions and would like to assure the Hon. Member that the lump sum allocation recommended by the Minister of Finance is satisfactory and adequate to pursue the mandate as elaborated in her commentary. Thank you.

Ms. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, I have a supplementary question. I am not assured that the Hon. Minister's response is in keeping with what is here. Even though we are not allowed to discuss the line items, all that I see in this report is that there is funding for transportation and subsistence, funding for administrative costs, and funding for educational grants. There is nothing for establishing the mechanisms for the IPC to operationalise its mandate.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Mr. Chairman, the IPC is a fully constituted body. I notice, in the proposed budget, the IPC requested \$33,162,000 and recommended is \$24,424,000, which tells me that it is less by \$8,738,000. My question to the Hon. Minister of Finance: is it too much to give the Indigenous peoples \$8,738,000? Are we asking for too much? I listened to his words a little while ago which were that the recommended budget is adequate. I wish to say that consideration must be given to the many challenges and issues faced by our Indigenous peoples.

Consideration must be taken of our geographic situation, where we live. It is not cheap to get there.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we have to stick to the understanding that you must ask a question.

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks: Sorry, Sir. My question again to the Hon. Minister is: is it too much to adjust the budget so that we can have the full sum requested? Thank you.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think I have answered the question before which is the same as this one. The lump sum is adequate to pursue the task that is expected.

Indigenous Peoples' Commission - \$33,162,000, as amended to \$24,424,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Human Rights Commission - \$74,995,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Human Rights Commission for budget 2017 is Current - \$30,000,000, Capital - \$4,110,000, for a total of \$34,110,000. Again, I am aware that the Human Rights Commission has not been fully constituted and I am giving the House notice that, should this Commission be properly constituted and a proper budget is put before us at the Ministry of Finance and this House, we would be prepared to entertain a request for supplementary at that time.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Minister said that this Commission is not fully constituted. It is actually a secretariat and not a Commission. However, its allocation of \$34,000,000 is higher than that for the Indigenous Peoples' Commission of \$24,000,000. How can one justify that there is fiscal space for a commission that does not exist but there is a very mean, frugal approach to the Indigenous Peoples' Commission? I would like an explanation. There is \$34,000,000 for a commission which does not exist, a secretariat, and \$24,000,000 for the Indigenous Peoples' Commission. What kind of fiscal space were you sorting out at that time?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, you would appreciate that the question is a bit unfair because it does not speak to the proposal directly. It is asking me to compare proposals, one against the other, which I do not think is something I wish to do at the moment.

Human Rights Commission - \$74,995,000, as amended to \$34,110,000, agreed to and ordered stand part of the Estimates.

Rights of the Child Commission - \$97,009,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Rights of the Child Commission in respect of budget year 2017 is Current - \$41,156,000, Capital - \$425,000, for a lump sum of \$41,581,000, nearly a 33% increase on the Budget for 2016.

6.53 p.m.

Dr. Anthony: Can the Minister say why there is a reduction of \$55,428,000 from what was proposed to what is now before us?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, had we the fiscal space to entertain a 300% and more increase in the budget of the Rights of the Child Commission, we would have certainly done so given the noble work being done by the Commission. However, we believe that the nearly 33% increase that we have been able to garner for this Commission, taking it to a lump sum of \$41,581,000, is adequate in the context of our fiscal space.

Bishop Edghill: In keeping with the law that indicates that these commissions are autonomous and independent, does the Minister believe that, by the reduction by this significant sum, he is interfering with the independence and the proposed work programme of this constitutional commission.

Mr. Jordan: The answer is no.

Bishop Edghill: Follow up: I heard the Minister's answer but, if a duly constituted commission proposes a programme that is cost and the Executive reduces it by \$50 million, is the Executive not saying to that commission that it is not allowed to do A, B and C?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, was that question addressed to the Minister of Finance?

Bishop Edghill: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Member repeat the question?

Bishop Edghill: My question is that this is a duly constituted commission where the commissioners would have sat, developed its work programme for 2017, cost it, submitted copies of it to the Clerk of the National Assembly and to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance has then recommended a reduction of \$50 million. Is that reduction not an interference with the operational independence of that constitutional commission?

Mr. Jordan: The answer is no.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member and I believe that the Hon. Minister of Finance has answered the question.

Rights of the Child Commission - \$97,009,000, as amended to \$41,581,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Women and Gender Equality Commission - \$62,916,000

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendation for the Women and Gender Equality Commission for budget year 2017 is, for the Current Estimates \$40,820,000 and for the Capital Estimates \$1,180,000, for a lump sum of \$42,000,000.

Ms. Persaud: Hon. Minister, based on your knowledge of the constitutional mandate and the extensive programmes that are a part of the strategic plan of the Women and Gender Equality Commission, can you say whether the recommended sum of \$42 million, as against the agency's proposed sum of \$62,916,000, which is a difference of \$20,916,000, a realistic sum for this agency to work with, taking into account its mandate, its work plan and the expectancy of those it represent?

Mr. Jordan: To the Hon. Member, yes, it is a workable sum with which the commission can utilise, within its own priorities, to achieve objectives that it may set for itself.

Ms. Persaud: Hon. Minister, could you say whether your recommendation for the sum of \$42 million is based on your dissatisfaction that some of the agency's requests were not within the national development priority's framework?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do not know how to answer that question. The \$42 million is in the context of the fiscal space that the Executive has envisaged for next year.

Ms. Veerasammy: Mr. Chairman, women make up more than 50% of this population. Against this backdrop, Sir, the Women and Gender Equality Commission was established to represent women by promoting equality and gender rights. I want to read four lines...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you will get to the question.

Ms. Veerasammy: Yes, Sir, I will.

“Women and Gender Equality Commission is committed to upholding the full rights of women, advocating for women's improved status in all spheres as well as monitoring the compliance with the convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, which is enshrined in Guyana's Constitution, and which, therefore, forms the fundamental platform for the strategic focus and, indeed, the mandate of the Commission.”

Sir, this commission has the responsibility to ensure that gender justice becomes a norm in our society, which is sorely missing almost in every sphere. Can the Minister of Finance justify why he would reduce the proposed amount of money that would make this commission do its work across the length and breadth of Guyana, which includes work in the rural, urban and hinterland communities?

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, you would appreciate by now that I have not reduced anything. My recommendation is for a lump sum of \$42 million for the Women and Gender Equality Commission for budget year 2017, for all of the reasons outlined there before and before that.

Ms. Veerasammy: Follow up: I am very passionate about the Women and Gender Equality Commission. The reason being, I was one who had volunteered a lot of my time when this commission was being established and prior to that, I sat on the National Commission on

Women. I do not see the justification for the reduction of the proposed sum. I am kindly beseeching this House to ask the Minister of Finance to use the office that he holds to request the Cabinet or the Executive office that he is representing to reconsider and replace that amount of money that is required to ensure that gender equality and gender justice prevail in this land.

Mr. Jordan: I can assure the Hon. Member that Cabinet considered this paper and approved the lump sum allocations which are before the House as the Minister's recommendation. Thank you.

Ms. Persaud: Hon. Minister, can I ask that, based on the *wished-away* sum of \$20 million and more... [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: *Wished-away* sum?] Yes, the *wished-away* sum because the Hon. Minister is saying that he did not cut anything, but that a sum was proposed and he counter-proposed and so I will put another spin to say that it was a sum of \$20 million and more. In doing that Hon. Minister, did you ever have a look at the strategic plan of the Women and Gender Equality Commission when making that recommendation?

Mr. Jordan: I wish to reassure the Hon. Member that nothing has been *wished-away*. It has been carefully considered in the context of the fiscal space that is available and our priorities. It is for the Women and Gender Equality Commission to use the \$42 million which had been recommended here, if approved, for their priority areas in achieving their objectives.

Ms. Veerasammy: One of the things that I could never understand and could never appreciate is why the question of women has to always go on the backburner and every other thing takes...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we must have a question.

Ms. Veerasammy: Yes, Sir. I would like the Minister of Finance to clarify why this House feels that the question of women should be pushed on the backburner and not on the front?

7.08 p.m.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do not know that the question has to do with the proposal that I have before me. I do not think that it was meant for me to answer and I cannot answer it at this stage. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members must control their desire to speak across the aisle. When the Chairman is attempting to do the work that he must do here, it is not helpful for Members to try to...we could always leave the room. That is an option that is available to all Hon. Members.

Women and Gender Equality Commission - \$62,916,000, as amended to \$42,000,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall, I must ask you to temper your speech.

Mr. Nandlall: I am sorry, Sir. I was having an engagement with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: I must ask you to temper your speech.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir. I will.

Mr. Chairman: I do not need the reason why but just simply temper your speech.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Public Procurement Commission - \$ 0

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Finance's recommendations for the Public Procurement Commission for budget year 2017 is \$56,200,000 for the Current Estimates and \$20,000,000 for the Capital Estimates, for a lump sum of \$76,200,000. Mr. Chairman, let me say that, at the time of the budget preparation for 2017, the budget that is to be presented in this House shortly, the commission was not operational. Therefore, no budget was put to the House, and, obviously, not sent to us.

However, in recognition of the fact that the commission will be in place, during next year, it is advisable that some reasonable sum be set aside, upfront, so that it could start immediately. Since we do not have the luxury of coming easily for supplementary, the commission will have this sum and they will put together a budget which will then come before the House that we could approve. At such time we could indicate the additional sums to be voted later in the year, if additional funds are needed for this commission.

It is a provisional sum, as it is stated here, and whenever the commission is constituted and a proper budget is put before the House, we could always vote for the difference.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to ask the Hon. Minister, who he would have consulted with in arriving with the provisional sum. The Hon. Minister must be aware that the entity that was engaged primarily...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, have you asked the question or you are making a speech?

Mr. Ali: I am putting the question in the context of the comment to wrap up another question. The Hon. Minister would be aware that the PAC was examining this matter and is the entity that was responsible for the setting up of the Commission. The Hon. Minister would have at least had the courtesy of consulting with the PAC on this matter. Even if not the PAC, the Parliament Office, because this is an independent body and I would not like the Minister of Finance to...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, what is your question?

Mr. Ali: The question is who did the Minister of Finance consult with in arriving at this provisional figure? Thank you very much Sir.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think that the Hon. Member complains too much in this regard. It is a provisional allocation. When the budget is finalised, and agreed to in this House, we would vote the additional sum. I do not know how hard that is to understand.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, whenever the Minister of Finance endeavour to try he does a good job. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister whether he foresees any problem in relation to the fiscal space that might affect the functioning of this Commission. [Mr. Harmon: What fiscal space?] The Minister could answer.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I do not know what the final budget of this agency is and, therefore, I cannot comment at this stage on it.

Public Procurement Commission - \$76,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members,

Question:

“That the sums approved for these constitutional agencies stated form part of the Estimates of Income and Expenditure for the Public Sector for 2017.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think that we can take the suspension now.

Sitting suspended at 7.18 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 8.00 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 3/2016 – CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 3/2016 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) –totalling \$9,518,122,347 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016.”

Assembly in Committee of Supply.

Mr. Chairman: We would consider Financial Paper No.3 of 2016. Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, in accordance Article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3/2016 - Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$9,515,122,347 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016 and I now move the motion.

Ms. Teixeira: We would like to ask Hon. Minister Greenidge, in paying all sums for 2009–2016, what was the advantage that we gained as a country with being in Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and whether a cost–benefit or cost–based analysis was done to warrant us paying all the moneys owed from 2009–2016 for IMPACS?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, maybe I should explain that, whilst a number of these provisions are paid by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the IMPACS is the responsibility of Ministry of Public Security.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, a point of procedure, I think that the motion was put but you did not ask for those who were in favour or for those who were against.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask what the Minister of Finance just said.

Mr. Jordan: I said and I now move the motion. Is that okay?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member. Hon. Members, one moment please.

8.06 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I apologise for this delay in dealing with this matter. We will now proceed.

Motion proposed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Ms. Teixeira, I remember you had asked a question. Was it a question you had asked or was it a comment you had made?

Ms. Teixeira: Maybe I was precipitous in not waiting for you to put the question, but it was a question to do with the Head, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Chart of Account 6322. So, should I proceed to ask the question again or should I wait for you to put it?

Mr. Chairman: If you would allow me to ask the question and you could then name the item.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Development of Foreign Policy – \$124,897,338

Ms. Teixeira: I want to say, on behalf of the other side, that the \$10,500,000 that is allocated as financial assistance for Haiti, we support and, of course, our concerns are with the Haitian people. In whatever way Guyana could assist the Haitian people at this time, we would be willing to support. Particularly, I know that during the earthquake Guyana had sent containers of

rice and other support timber to help the Haitian people. So, we just want to go on record in relation to that.

The second issue deals with the payment of outstanding amounts to do with the IMPACS. It is a regional body and it has here the payments of moneys from 2009 to 2016. I am not challenging that we must pay our debts, but was there a cost-based assessment done by the Government? So, I am not specifically dealing with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but it is the conduit through which these payments are made, although it falls under the Ministry of Public Security. Was there a cost-based assessment done to advise Guyana on what benefits it was accruing from belonging to IMPACS?

Secondly, in terms of the statements made in the earlier session regarding the fiscal space, would it not have been more prudent for us to pay off a number of years from 2009 to 2011 and 2012 and keep some of that other money for some of the fiscal space we are looking for, in relation to the Indigenous Peoples' Commission and other commissions? Thank you.

Mr. Greenidge: May I start at the end of the question posed by saying that, I utterly reject the suggestion being made by the Member on the other side that, somehow a trade-off has been made as regards the resources that have been made available to the Indigenous people, and that somehow this is to their disadvantage. The issue before us, in all of these submissions, as it regards the constitutional agencies is a different one and I am not going to react, other than to say that, the suggestion that is being made as to the trade-off is erroneous.

As regards, the question of arrears, the current Administration has inherited a situation in which a large number of agencies were owed significant amounts. What we are in the process of trying to do is to pay them off, in a manner that is fiscally effective and which does not leave us with a situation where we just deal with one and not take into account facts such as this one. For example, there is a deadline by which the debts has to be paid and the obligation has to be met, otherwise there would be a financial penalty and that is what is informing some of us here.

Could I just also remind the House that there are amounts within the agencies, where we owe arrears, and these are substantial and what we have been trying to reduce, in time, is the United Nations (UN) Local Office, the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC), the United States Capital Master Plan, the United Nations Capital Master Plan and the United Nations Industrial

Development Organisation (UNIDO), just to give examples. So, there is a process here of trying to ensure that we manage the liquidation of the indebtedness in a manner that is not going to do us undue damage.

As regards IMPACS, which the distinguished Colleague asked about specifically, the Caribbean Heads of Government considered and discussed, quite extensively, the situation of the IMPACS programme. It is my understanding, and I did sit in on those discussions, that the Heads agreed that this is a worthwhile venture that they are all benefiting from. It is in fact a public good and for one country to attempt to assess whether it is worth its while by looking at its own benefits. It is like taking a sea wall of 300 miles and having, as we did at some stage, 200 plantations along the sea wall and allowing one or two of them not to contribute because they feel that they are not getting any benefits. From the time one fails to keep the entire wall maintained, altogether at any point in time, everybody's position is undermined. The question of crime and all of these things is critical. We have to fight it together. So, we cannot do a cost-benefit on our own that is going to be meaningful.

The answer to that is that the examination of the utility of IMPACS was done collectively by the Heads. I believe that they also had looked at it in Belize. At the meeting in Georgetown, there was I heard, as far as I could remember, no dissenting voice. They called in their senior officials and technicians and grilled them quite extensively on how they worked amongst themselves, how they collaborated with the regional agencies, including the agencies in the north and, I think, of all the discussions that the Heads had, this was probably the most satisfactory of all. At the end of cricket and other things they had all sorts of queries and acrimonies and, clearly, sometimes people did not necessarily agree at the end. In this one, however, I did not sense that there was any problem. So the question of the benefits versus the cost is that the group felt that the benefit cost was greater than one.

As regards, the mention of the contribution to Haiti, I think that we are all happy to hear that the Members on the other side support it so fulsomely. If I could be allowed, at this stage, to alert the House to the fact that the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in looking at the plight of Haiti and of the other Caribbean states, of which the Bahamas in particular was badly affected, did recommend that contributions be made in packages of US\$100,000 each. Given the plight of the two, although they are not exactly on *par*, we have agreed and we will have to do the necessary

because this paper came before we were informed of CARICOM's and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency's (CDEMA's) recommendation, it is that we would like to make a contribution of US\$100,000 in keeping with CARICOM's recommendation - US \$100,000 to Haiti and US\$100,000 to the Bahamas. This is the minimum amount, but it is preferable at this stage to give them cash because of the plight in which many of the countries find themselves and the ease with which they could use the money to get resources to the places that are most desperate, rather than to try to arrange the provision of food or materials at this early stage.

So, that is what I would like to bring to the attention of the House in relation to the item before us, Mr. Chairman. I hope that is an answer that meets with the satisfaction of the House and the distinguished Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, regarding the cash support to Haiti, has our Government decide on the modality and specifically, is it going to be a transfer to the Government of Haiti? Would it be given to a third party, for example, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)? When it is given to the Government of Haiti would it be targeting a specific group or groups of people, whether it is children or single mothers? Has the Government placed all those considerations into place or is it just the lump sum transfer to the Government of Haiti?

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and I thank the distinguished Member for raising this matter. First of all, as regards modality, it is a cash provision for the reason I gave just now. Secondly, as regards the mechanisms, the nature of the contributions and agencies which might best benefit, all of these are normally and, in the first instance, taken on the advice of a regional body called CDEMA, which deals with these specific natural disasters and crisis.

The process, just in case the Member is not aware, is that rather than each country respond to calls from the disaster zones and then make its own decision, the region has, and this is part of the arrangement, for example, the CDEMA, Disaster preparedness and relief, which is a process by which we are rendered assistance by many regional and international agencies. For example Chile, contributes to CDEMA. CDEMA makes an assessment based upon a variety of factors and it interfacing with the agencies on the ground, in this case Haiti. In the light of that, the CARICOM, within the disaster response, acts.

In this particular case CDEMA was the one that had recommended that money be paid rather than anything else. It is the case that CDEMA also would identify how best the money should go to the country, having discussed it with the Government of Haiti and the other relief agencies. They gave us a bank account number to which moneys are sent by the Governments of the region. The question of monitoring and all of that is also done by that body. So, that is the mechanism. It is not a process by which one sits at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Georgetown or in Bridgetown and identifies an NGO or a hospital. With such a major disaster, it is not a practical means of dealing with the problem.

So, they then, with the resources available, will decide what the most urgent needs are. For example, the most urgent need may simply be to transport to a specific area from which relief material may be broken down and redistributed, or it may be for drugs at a specific point in time because that is the most urgent threat before them.

8.21 p.m.

It is on that basis that we act. It is on that basis the entire region acts and provides support whether it is financial or man power for example.

Mr. Dharamlall: Firstly, would Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) be extracting an administrative fee to it? I would be hopeful that it does not. Secondly, would it be a one tranche payment or is it being transferred in tranches? If so, have we already started?

Mr. Greenidge: The payment has not yet been effected, no part of it. Of course, we are here to have approval for that payment. Of course, it is if the crisis worsen, or if after further review, and that is a constant process undertaken by CDEMA. If it is realised that enough have not been provided, CDEMA will come back to the Caribbean states and inform them. It is then left to each government to decide whether it would make another payment.

As I indicated the packages that they recommended were \$100,000, \$200,000 and \$400,000 in the first instance. It is clear that one payment by Guyana undoubtedly would not be sufficient to bring complete relief to Haiti or in Bahamas. Down the road, doubtless there will remain the need for additional amount and we will then have to decide whether that is available.

As regards CDEMA's role, as far as I am aware, it is one of those regional agencies which is founded both by the countries and by donor assistance. It does not need to be paid a fee, but in any case you would realise, in a way, it is out of the same pockets that it is coming because the disaster relief comes from member state and donors. The simple answer to your question is as far as I am aware, there will not be any deduction of fees for services provided by CDEMA.

Mr. Jordan: In light of Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge explanation as it relates to Haiti and Bahamas, I would like to vary the supplemental provision being sought to \$156,397,338 representing US\$100,000 for Haiti and US\$100,000 for Bahamas.

Item 1 04 -041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Development of Foreign Policy - \$124,897,338, as amended to \$156,397,338, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 2 04-042 Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Foreign Policy Promotion – \$33,600,000

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister advise us which of the overseas missions would be benefiting from the purchase for the three vehicles? Are the three vehicles for ambassadors and high commissioners? What level of staff are they for?

Mr. Greenidge: There are three vehicles which are to be purchased for missions in China, Brazil and South Africa. There was one vehicle to be purchased for the embassy in Beijing and the vehicle, in that case, is to replace the official car which is 11 years old and which the Chinese authorities has... They have indicated that they are in the process of considering whether to issue a certificate of fitness. There is certain urgency there.

The one in Boa Vista, which is in Brazil, is for the office and there are 10 staff there. The vehicle, which is there, is over seven years old. It cannot meet the needs. I do not know if you have been to Boa Vista recently. Whilst it does have well paved roads, it also has a lot of tough roads, so an appropriate vehicle is needed there.

Pretoria is the other place which has nine staff. We had originally scheduled a vehicle for Pretoria, but, as a matter of urgency, had to redirect it for the embassy in Geneva which was established this year. An ambassador was accredited but he had no vehicle.

Item 2 04-042 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Foreign Policy Promotion – \$33,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 2 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry Administration - \$2,034,006,000

Mr. Seeraj: I notice \$12.4 billion, this is our third financial paper for this year, and previous sought was \$72,000,000, as you so noted, Mr. Chairman, but there was also another \$200 plus million that was sought before. Currently we are looking at \$2.043 billion. I am happy that the Minister was kind enough to provide a breakdown of \$34 million. Sir, for the Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), employment and cost associated with employment are routine expenditures. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, why is it now, in this third financial paper, cost associated \$8.5 million is being sought for employment related cost? Is this not poor planning and would have been catered for, because, as I mentioned, these are routine cost?

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: This is an unfortunate situation where there were 87 staff who were on pension scheme at the school. The pension scheme collapsed for various reasons. The provider found that it was not favourable to continue with the scheme and the moneys were paid back to the people. A number of staff opted then to go on contract for paid salary plus and 22% gratuity. The remaining staff opted not to go on contract, at that point in time, hoping that some arrangement would come about with regard to a new pension scheme. That was over a year ago. However, at this point in time, they realise that probably there is no chance for a new pension scheme, so the Guyana School of Agriculture had to pay them the gratuity backdated, 22%, to put them in line with those who have opted the other way. It is being fair to everyone, hence the additional cost.

8.36 p.m.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon Minister tell us how many persons would be benefiting from gratuity?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I did not hear the question.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Neendkumar, could you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Neendkumar: I am asking as to how many persons would be benefiting from this amount of gratuity.

Mr. Holder: It will be 28 persons out of 87 who would be benefiting from this gratuity.

Mr. Neendkumar: A follow-up question to this. In respect to gratuity, gratuity is being paid every six months. How come is there this big accumulation for 28 persons to receive such a substantial sum of money?

Mr. Holder: This was explained before. They did not opt to take gratuity. They were hoping that there would be some success arrangement to the pension and that did not come about, so now they have to be paid their gratuity. The remainder were getting their gratuity, but these persons were not. It was the same pay, these persons were getting gratuities, these persons were not, now it is to pay these gratuities backdated.

Mr. Neendkumar: I see you have a substantial sum here “caters for internet connections for the female students dorms, GuySuCo (\$2 billion)”. Could you give a breakdown as to what...?

Mr. Holder: The biggest part of that is basically the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) \$2 billion, I mean, this is an additional subsidy that require to assist in meeting routine expenditure relating to second crop production due to the shortfall in the first crop of 2016 targeted by 23,000 tons because of the *El Nino* effect. These sums are required to pay wages \$1.2 billion, fuels \$160 million, fertilisers \$464 million and creditors \$176 million. I hope that answer your question.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell me how much would be spent for the internet connection for the female students’ dorms?

Mr. Holder: I am trying to locate this internet connection. Could you point me to the internet connection that he is talking about?

Mr. Neendkumar: It is the last line.

Mr. Holder: Yes. It is for the female students’ dormitory. That dormitory did not have an internet connection. The male dormitory had internet connection. We do not quite have it offhand, but I could provide it to you in 24 hours. Would that be okay? It is exactly the cost for the female dormitory internet connection.

Mr. Neendkumar: Okay.

Mr. Chand: Comrade Chairman, could the Minister provide a copy of the breakdown that he has just given? Two, he said that the \$2 billion arises from the effect of the *El Nino* weather situation in the first crop. GuySuCo had requested \$12 billion this year, \$9 billion was provided. Could the Minister advise whether the \$3 billion, which was not supported yet, would follow?

It is if I could repeat the question. Two billion dollars now is as a result of the *El Nino* weather phenomena and the experience in the first crop. GuySuCo had ordinarily asked for \$12 billion this year, which mean that you short provided to it \$3 billion. Would the \$3 billion, which was not provided yet, would not be provided later on in this year?

Mr. Holder: GuySuCo requested in the budget last year \$12 billion. GuySuCo was allocated \$9 billion, which I thought it would have tried to make do. However, GuySuCo was struck by the effect of the *El Nino*, which was carried over into the early part of this year, which gave it a shortfall of 23,443 tons of sugar. The income provision, of course, is no longer available, so that requires us, reluctantly, to go back to the treasury and ask for an additional \$2 billion, not \$3 billion, to carry us through for the rest of the year. Did that answer the Hon. Member's question?

Mr. Chand: GuySuCo, in communication to the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU), informed the union that it was requesting...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the rule is that questions, which are asked, still exist.

Mr. Chand: I follow.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Chand: Is it \$2 billion that is requested by the Government arising from the *El Nino* situation or is it three and half billion dollars?

Mr. Holder: I am getting more and more confused. GuySuCo made a request for \$12 billion. It was not accommodated because of perhaps a fiscal space problem. It was allocated to \$9 billion. Therefore GuySuCo is forced to try to work within the \$9 million. However, unfortunately it was stuck by this *El Nino* situation which was not predictable. Notwithstanding our effect to cut and

contrive and try to make the \$9 billion works, there is a shortfall now with two months to go and we ask for \$2 billion. I give a breakdown on how that would be spent.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say, after the first supplementary provision for GuySuCo, if there were any reassessments for the target for GuySuCo because at that time *El Nino* was given as the factor that necessitated the supplementary. This is a problem the Minister of Finance normally faces. It is whether a reassessment of target was done and that reassessment would have taken the *El Nino* period into accounts. In that reassessment, what steps would be taken to ensure that, if a revised target was not given, management would be held accountable, in terms of the achievement of the targets? That is the first thing.

The second question: What percentage of this supplementary, if any, would go towards payment to the workers for increases and annual incentive? If no provision is made here, where the annual incentives for the workers come from?

Mr. Holder: Subsequently to the effects of the *El Nino* phenomenon, the target for GuySuCo was reduced, accordingly, and came down to about 194,000 tons, which it is still hoping to achieve, pending the disruptions by GAWU. I gather GAWU, I am advised, is making every effort to ensure that the target is not met. I really could not hold anyone.

Mr. Ali: This led us into a very interesting direction. The Hon. Minister just told us that after the first supplementary a reassessment of the target was made downwards because of the *El Nino* situation, taking that situation into consideration. With the supplementary that was given to GuySuCo, at that point, the revised target was supposed to be achieved. Here it is the Hon. Minister who is saying to us that we still did not reach that target, but we want another supplementary and the reason given for this second supplementary is the *El Nino* situation again. Would the Hon. Minister agreed that there must be some more inherent problem, in relation to the management of GuySuCo and the board of GuySuCo, that needs to be examined, in terms of the accomplishment of these targets?

Mr. Holder: Was there a formal supplementary? I got the impression that this is the supplementary. I think there is some confusion going on here, so I cannot fairly answer the question.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, you mentioned \$1.2 billion going towards labour. Could the Hon. Minister please state how much of that is going to management, how much is going to factory operations and how is going to field operations?

The second part of the question: Could the Hon. Minister also provide, as per estate and the head office, what is the allocation, in terms of the \$1.2 billion?

Mr. Holder: The \$1.2 billion does not cover monthly salaries. It covers factory and field. Does that answer his question?

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please provide the breakdown, in terms of how much goes to the factory, cane cutters, for example, field operations? I am from a cane cutting family, so I would like to know how much the sugar workers are actually going to be paid as compared to the management of the estate.

Mr. Holder: I would undertake to provide that information to him within a week from GuySuCo.

Mr. Chairman: Grateful Hon. Minister. Hon. Member, Nigel Dharamlall, the Hon. Minister undertakes to provide the information you requested.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you.

Mr. Anamayah: Could the Hon. Minister say if in this sum any provision is made for private cane farmers for subsidies for assistance, particularly for those in the upper Corentyne?

Mr. Holder: Thirty million dollars per a week is catered in this sum out of, I think the creditors, \$176 million.

8.51 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Anamayah, are you through with your question?

Mr. Anamayah: I seek some clarification. I did not quite hear the Hon. Minister's answer.

Mr. Holder: Thirty million dollars per week is catered for that in the creditors, as for private cane farmers.

Mr. Anamayah: It is just for my edification and clarification. Is the Minister saying that the sum of \$30 million has been budgeted by for cane farmers, per week?

Mr. Seeraj: I have two questions. It is not on the matter of GuySuCo's issue. I notice here that \$22,842,000 being catered for and it is stated here "Replacement of stock for the Livestock Farm". Could the Hon. Minister inform this Assembly as to what kind of replacement this is and why there is a need for replacement? I might have a follow-up on that. Secondly, I know that a substantial amount was put aside under GuySuCo, \$2 billion, for fuel. Is any of this fuel being used to convert the cane lands to suit rice cultivation over in Region 3?

Mr. Holder: None of this fuel is going towards conversion of cane lands to rice. That is a different arrangement. With regard to the aspect of livestock, every two weeks 'baby' chicks are brought in for the farm. It has to do with the enrolment of students, how many chickens are required, and this is really, for that, an additional sum towards that.

Mr. Chand: The Minister referred to the release to GuySuCo of \$9 billion dollars this year. Could he provide how that sum was spent, the components that make up that \$9 billion?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that is a fair question, bearing in mind what we discussed, but that notwithstanding, I will attempt to answer it. Wages and salaries - \$5,704,069, 860, National Insurance Scheme - \$862,088,637, Pay As You Earn (PAYE) - \$448,054,148. Union and credit union dues, that is to GAWU and the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (*NAACIE*), I believe, - \$119,791,832, pension payments, Hand-in-Hand Trust - \$358,148,115, Fuel - \$356,251,017 and other creditors and payments - \$1,151,601,391. The total is \$9 billion.

Mr. Chand: Comrade Chairman a supplementary question. Could the Minister be kind enough to give me, as a request, a copy of those figures? Two, is the Minister saying that credit union savings and union dues are part of GuySuCo's expenditure? Are those sums of money not collected and transmitted? How could it be part of GuySuCo's expenditure? Please for an explanation.

Mr. Holder: There are some outstanding amounts due to the credit union and the union had to be paid.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, regarding the \$22,842,000 that goes to livestock production at the GSA. Could the Hon. Minister please state the amount of birds that are going to be procured? Two, what is the mortality rate at the school on the livestock farm? Three, what is the cost of production on the farm versus commercial production? Fourthly, is the farm producing just for local consumption or is it also selling commercially?

Mr. Holder: I am going to take the last one first. The farm produces for its internal use, cafeteria for students, and the surplus goes elsewhere. It does a fair amount of agro-processing, there are courses on that, and those are sold. However, with regard to a detailed breakdown of a farm analysis and income expenditure, there is no way I can give this Assembly that now. I can undertake to make that available for a period for this year and last year. I am not sure what year or what period he is asking for, but I am sure if he lets us know, I can have that information made available.

Mr. Dharamlall: I would just like to say thanks, that the Hon. Minister will lay over that information to the National Assembly.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Hon. Minister was wondering what period you are interested in.

Mr. Dharamlall: The year 2016 is fine.

Item 2 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry Administration – \$2,034,006,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture - Crops & Livestock Support Services - \$207,914,000

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members must give the Speaker a chance so he can be heard at the outer ends of the room. I am hearing the voice of... It appears to be one voice. I do not put a name to the voice, but it would be good if I did not hear that voice so loudly or at all, in the context of what I am doing.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, through you, could I ask the Hon. Minister if these are partially funded projects? Are they are experiencing delays from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in executing these projects? It is if he can be kind enough to provide us now with a status report on

the completion or non-completion of the two roads identified, that is at Ruby and Parika? Could we have a status report on those two projects?

Mr. Holder: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This is part of the CARICOM Development Fund/Government of Guyana (CDF/GoG) funding specific budget provision for supplementary provisions for access roads and the dams improvement project. Indeed, and, in fact, we are going so well on this project that sums that would be available next year we would like to drawn down this year so that we could continue to complete the project. The project is well on target. In fact, in a sense, it is ahead of target. We would like the promise to have this \$207,914,000 provision, which we will get back, of course, from the CDF, right now, rather than halting work and waiting until then.

Bishop Edghill: I just learned that the Minister is indicating to the Assembly that sums that were available for next year, he is seeking to draw down this year. Is this to replenish the revolving fund or is this to make advance payments?

Mr. Holder: I may need to seek advice from the Ministry. The total loan is \$2,471,019 available. In 2014 \$251,217,000 was spent; in 2015 \$1,059,021 was spent; in 2016 \$490,000 was spent, bringing a total of \$1,801,000 out of a total loan of \$2,471,019. There are sums left to the tune of \$670,019.

Let it be available to us. We want to get it now to continue the work rather than stalling it and waiting for next year to continue. I do not think they are actually going to object to that. Let us move ahead, finish the project, advance the money now and get it back.

Bishop Edghill: The financial paper, which we are considering, is an expenditure that is to be incurred as of the 31st December, 2016. My direct question to the Minister: Is the work, which is being accelerated at such a pace, with this expenditure which was supposed to be next year, has already been done for payment this year?

Mr. Holder: I cannot say that the work has already been done, but the work will be done before the end of the year. Or do you want the money now to ensure that we do it by the end of the year?

Item 3 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$207,914,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

9.06 p.m.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 3 53-531 Guyana Defence Force - \$20,000,000, \$10,000,000, \$45,000,000, \$75,000,000 & \$45,000,000

Maintenance of Buildings

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state, under line item 6242, what necessitated \$20 million for urgent repairs, in addition to the \$95 million which was already voted?

Secondly, how much of that \$20 million would go towards repairs at Base Camp Ayanganna? The second part of the question, if there are any repairs, which are being done at Base Camp Ayanganna, are those repairs being done to facilitate the hosting of Cabinet meetings?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: I can assure this honourable Assembly that none of the sum would be spent at Base Camp Ayanganna. Even if it were spent there, it would be money well spent in the Guyana Defence Force (GDF).

The sums of money spent are for the Jungle and Amphibious Training School (JATS) at Makouria, the accommodation of troops at Base Camp Stephenson and the rehabilitation of the medical centre at Base Camp Stephenson.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state what procurement procedures were pursued in relation to this expenditure? If it was done internally, how is the procurement board internally constituted?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I can say that the GDF follows all of the provisions of the procurement legislation and that all of these sums, which are spent, are spent in accordance with the procurement legislation.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, could I just ask for some clarification from the Hon. Member? Minister, these are requests on the Consolidated Fund. Therefore the money has not been released as yet. Did I hear you incorrectly? It appeared as if you said that the money is being

spent according to the procurement legislation. You used the present tense. The money has not been released as yet, so you cannot be spending it as yet.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: You are quite correct, Hon. Member. What I was basically saying is that the procedure which the GDF follows is consistent with that of the public procurement legislation.

Ms. Teixeira: I was making reference to the sentence before that.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, in the legend it is stated that the GDF's pavilion was affected by strong winds. Regarding the infamous arms store at Base Camp Seweyo, could the Hon. Minister please state the type of damage and the cause of damage and how much would be spent on repairs at Base Camp Seweyo?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, there is nothing infamous about a military base and nothing infamous at Base Camp Seweyo.

Ms. Teixeira: He said the arms store.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: "Infamous", that is the word which he used.

Ms. Teixeira: It is the arms store that he was talking about.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, let the Hon. Minister answer. I think it would be good for all Hon. Members to try to avoid references which are likely to evoke answers that are unhelpful in our efforts here. I did not interrupt Mr. Dharamlall, but I sincerely hope that I do not have to on any other occasion. Please proceed, Minister Harmon.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The roof of the All Ranks Sports Complex at Base Camp Ayanganna was damaged by high winds on 16th August, 2016. The roof of the arms store at Base Camp Seweyo is a sealed roof with concrete and the weight actually caused part of the roof to cave in. The amount of money to be spent on that is \$5,706,000.

Ms. Teixeira: In light of the Hon. Minister's explanation about the roof of the arms store, I assume that precautionary measures have been taken to make sure that the contents are not in the

same place as to where the roof is now vulnerable to entry. I assume that precautionary measures have been properly put in place.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: That is correct, Hon. Member. I know that, as a former Minister of Home Affairs and a member of the GDF Commission's Board, you are well aware. In fact, we have taken steps to ensure that the arms in that arms store are protected.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, this supplementary provision is an 18% increase on the voted provision. Could the Hon. Minister give us a breakdown of, maybe the Hon. Minister can lay it over, of the cost of repairs per vehicle, who evaluates the type of repairs that needs to be done on the vehicles? It is whether these repairs are outsourced or done internally and whether repairs would be done to the Chopper as well as to the MS Essequibo.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I can provide that information on the spares that are required for these vehicles. What I can say is that every six months there is usually a full administration inspection. Over the last month or so, there was a change of command in the GDF where one Chief of Staff took over from the other. Usually, at the time of change of command, there would be a full inspection of everything, including vehicles, and it was at that point in time that it was recognised what else was needed to be done to take the GDF through to the end of the year. This is an assessment of what is required to keep the fleet running up to the end of the year. This is a fleet that is over 100 vehicles. I can provide that information for you, Hon. Member.

Mr. Dharamlall: Who does the evaluation and the procurement of the services for repairs? It is whether it is outsourced, it is done internally or both.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is both. Primarily, most of the work is done within the GDF. Once it is outsourced, the GDF firstly utilises the services of the Ministry of Public Infrastructure before going further.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please state how much of this figure would be used for outsourcing? Could you also, please state, Hon. Minister, in terms of transportation to re-supply, what is the cost per kilometre?

9.21 p.m.

Thirdly, could the Hon. Minister please state the number of flights and the cost per flight? Have these flights incurred passengers who are non-military?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: What I can say is that these are aircrafts used for the changeover of troops on the border. It is also used for the reconnaissance of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) patrols. There are also patrols done in support of the anti-piracy operations at sea. I cannot precisely give you the actual cost per kilometre. We usually use that by kilograms. It is difficult to say to you what the cost per kilometre of flight is.

Mr. Dharamlall: The land transport...

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This primarily has to do with the flights.

For the land transport/troupe transport of vehicles which have to be four-wheel drive vehicles, I can provide that information to you as well. You will also recognise that matters of deployment and troupe strengths on our borders are matters of national security. I can provide the Hon. Member with the information, in writing, subsequently.

Mr. Dharamlall: On the matter of non-military personnel, had any of these flights non-military personnel on them?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This has not happened as yet. This is projection.

Other

Mr. Dharamlall: I notice that part of the sum will go towards expenditure which have already incurred, for example, Independence and Republic anniversaries. Could the Hon. Minister please state how much was spent on the Independence anniversary and how much was spent on the Republic anniversary? How much of this \$45 million will go towards Independence and how much of this \$45 million will go towards the Republic anniversary?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These were shortfalls in the projections which we made for 2016, in particular for these parades – the independence parade as well as the other parades that are noted here in the column. I can provide you again with specific details of that information that you have requested. We can do so before the House meets again.

Mr. Dharamlall: A quick third question: The Hon. Minister, in the Legend, stated that there has been a change in mandate from 100 officers to 600 officers. Could the Hon. Minister please state when that change of mandate occurred?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: This has to do with the quality and sizes of the parades which we had for Independence. Prior to 2016, the parades were no larger than 100 soldiers, that is, officers and ranks. You would recognise that, for Independence, because this was a special time in the life of Guyana, we needed to do something special. That is why the numbers were actually increased to cater for the spectacle which was the 50th anniversary parade. That is what it was.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister state whether that mandate will change once again and revert to the original mandate?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The situation will determine. As we assess and we analyse things, we will make changes. The military is not a very static occupation. You assess things; you analyse the trend differently. As you assess it, you respond to it. I cannot say whether it will remain this way. We keep assessing things all the time and we respond to the assessments which we make.

Mr. Dharamlall: Finally, in terms of veterans, could the Hon. Minister state whether veterans benefit from funerals, surgeries and other types of services?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The veterans have a foundation which is called the Veterans Foundation which they subscribe to. They are taken care of in that way. Insofar as the GDF is concerned, they make a contribution to the Veterans Foundation on an annual basis. They utilise that to assist veterans who are in need of funeral expenses. They are also part of credit unions that provide burial services and they also utilise those services out of this sum which is basically for soldiers who are on active duty.

Bishop Edghill: A quick clarification: The Hon. Minister did indicate that some of the expenditure being sought had to do with the parades for Independence and Republic anniversaries. To clarify, I think that, in the previous Financial Paper that was passed in this House not so long, this expenditure was approved to deal with that very same matter. I am just wondering if this is an additional expenditure to what already had an addition. Is this an addition to the addition?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: I indicated earlier that this was to cater for a shortfall in the expenditure.

Bishop Edghill: The clarification that I am seeking is that there was a voted provision and we had a Financial Paper that came to us not so long ago where the explanation that was given was that this was to deal with the shortfall because of the nature of the celebration and the extent to which we went. I am seeking to find out if this is an addition to the addition that was already approved for the same thing.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, I do not know about an addition to an addition. It is here on the Paper that states Supplementary Provision under this Head was \$1.5 million. We are basically saying that this is a shortfall to make up for all the extra number of soldiers that had to be brought on for the parades.

Item 3 53-531 Guyana Defence Force - \$20,000,000, \$10,000,000, \$45,000,000, \$75,000,000 & \$45,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 54-543 Ministry of Public Security - Prison Services - \$22,000,000

Mr. Gill: The Legend states that this \$22 million being sought is based on recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Camp Street Prison riot last March. We are not opposed to any measures that would improve the wellbeing of those incarcerated, even though we condemn the increase in criminal activities nationwide.

Could the Hon. Minister advise how soon he would provide copies of the Commissioner's Report referred to in the Legend to the Members of this honourable House?

Vice-President and Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: I do not know if that is very much relevant as regards to the item number. I will be advised as to when I will make that Report public to the Parliamentarians.

Mr. Chairman: Are you requesting a Report?

Mr. Gill: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Is that under the discussion on the Supplementary Estimates?

Mr. Gill: The Minister referred to it in the Legend, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: He mentioned it in the Legend, Hon. Member, but I am sure that, if you examine the Legend, you might find other things being mentioned there also. We have to be careful about not giving the impression that we are, in common parlance, “trying a thing”. I think that we need to respect what we are doing and stick to it, if I may say that, Hon. Member.

Please proceed.

Mr. Gill: A follow-up question: Could the Hon. Minister say whether consideration is given to acquiring land for the purpose of establishing prison farms that can be cultivated by non-violent inmates in Georgetown and in New Amsterdam?

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, in relation to the acquiring of land for further agricultural purposes for the prisons, we have not, excepting the lands at Mazaruni which have been under-utilised and will now be utilised, done any further acquisition of lands.

Dr. Mahadeo: I see what will be bought listed here in great detail. All I see here are carbohydrates and fats. Would this be the only thing that would be additionally given to the inmates? Are they having enough protein as is?

9.36 p.m.

Second question: There has been an increase by 178 persons to an already crowded prison system. I know it is dietary but again it refers to the riots. How are we managing that? Will the moneys here be going to all the sites or is it for Camp Street because you only refer to the report here? And what is the procurement process that will be used?

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, the moneys here, the additional \$22,000,000, are going for all the prisons - Mazaruni, Camp Street, Lusignan. And, indeed, the expenses are for those that have been stated there. There is enough protein in chickens, pork and the other meats and beans that are available. But this is just for what is mentioned here and the legend is very much self-evident as to what. As to the increase, yes, there has been an increase to 2,189 which is about 170 more, and we have to cater for those.

Mr. Chairman: Dr. Mahadeo, do you have another question?

Dr. Mahadeo: Yes. I had asked an additional question on procurement.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. That is also through the public procurement processes. People have to tender for these items and we generally have a number of people bidding for them.

Mr. Dharamlall: The Hon. Minister mentioned, in the legend, that the incarceration of inmates has increased from 2011 in January to 2,189 in September. Is the Hon. Minister therefore confirming that crime has increase or there has been an escalation in crime over the first nine months?

Mr. Ramjattan: There are more convictions and more remands and those are what constitute the increased inmates.

Mr. Dharamlall: Mr. Chairman, avoiding the semantics, for all intents and purposes, crime has increased.

Mr. Ramjattan: It has decreased by 21% as compared to last year's figures.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, are we still in the mode of scoring points or are we trying to get through this? I do wish, Hon. Members, that we will stick to the one about getting through this.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister if he could give us a breakdown of the crime that these 178 persons have committed because he is selling us that crime has reduced and we are seeing crime all the time and are seriously concerned about the increase in crime; we are not accepting the position that there is a decrease in crime. He is telling us that there are 178 more inmates; tell us what categories they are.

Mr. Ramjattan: I do not think that is relevant in relation to this.

Ms. Manickchand: You cannot say that is not relevant.

Mr. Ramjattan: Please, well I would not answer that question. It is in relation to an increase of spending for that which is more people in the prisons.

Ms. Manickchand: No. We are asking you about...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Ramjattan: I have nothing further to add.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Manickchand, I would remind Members that we cannot continue where Members express their disagreement with someone by disrupting the House. That will not be accepted.

Mr. Neendkumar, please proceed.

Mr. Neendkumar: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a follow-up, I would like to seriously know that what we are seeing on the front pages of the daily newspapers about crime – people being murdered and everything... I might be suspicious, Hon. Minister, that these 178 persons that you are saying here are not really criminals but you are buying things for someone else and supplying somewhere else. If you do not tell me, then you are leaving me to be suspicious of you that you are supporting some party group or some other activity.

Mr. Ramjattan: Well I will continue to leave you suspicious about that. Thank you.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, in all fairness, crime is on the increase. The place is becoming very dangerous...

Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.

Mr. Chairman: I have not named any Member of this House and I am hoping that I do not have to do that. But I am being pressed so deeply in regard to this.

Mr. Neendkumar, please proceed.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I want to say that I am seriously concerned about the increase of crime in this country – murder, in particular, ‘choke and rob’ and all these things are going on - and I am hoping that my good Friend over there, Mr. Ramjattan, could tell us something because I am interested in the security of the people of this country, the students in particular.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Chairman, I will tell him at the budget debate that is coming up.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, it is really a sad situation that, when crime is on the increase and in the interest of the people of this country, the Hon. Minister has no good answer.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Neendkumar, you did not have a question just now; you wanted to make a comment.

Mr. Neendkumar: Yes. I wanted to make a comment of which I am entitled.

Item 4 54-543 Ministry of Public Security - Prison Services - \$22,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5 73-734 Region 3 - Educational Delivery - \$12,400,000

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say to us whether this request that is before this House as a supplementary request, whether the Regional Democratic Council (RDC)/ Region 3 and the Education Subcommittee of the RDC approved this request that is now in front of this House?

Minister of Communities [Mr. Bulkan]: Mr. Chairman, this is a request from the Regional Administration and it includes consultation with the Regional Democratic Council. As to the extent of the participation of the Regional Education, I am not in a position to give that particular information but this is a request from the Regional Administration, including the RDC.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question: The Regional Chairman, who chairs the RDC, is unaware of this request and so is the Chairman of the Education Subcommittee. This request is not a request of the Regional Democratic Council. And so, the Minister really needs to get that clarified because what was just said is not accurate, Sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for the comments which will be taken into account but this is a request from the RDC and the Regional Administration to take care of 11 schools that are in urgent need of repairs, particularly the sanitary facilities, in the interest of the students of those particular schools.

Mr. Damon: Can the Hon. Minister produce the RDC's minutes that this discussion took place and reached him. Can you produce those minutes and when will you be presenting it to this Parliament?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I have noted their request but I am not in a position to give a definitive answer to that.

Mr. Damon: I have a follow-up question. Is the Hon. Minister saying that he has no concern about my request? Is it so, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, the Chairman cannot answer a question you addressed to him. You will have to address the question in relation to the matter before us and then the Minister will answer. I cannot answer.

Mr. Damon: Mr. Chairman, with due respect to you, Sir, the Hon. Minister is saying that the RDC is aware of what is in the Supplementary Estimate. But we are saying no. As such, we are asking the Minister to produce the minutes of the meeting when this was discussed.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the request before the honourable House is for the sum of \$12,400,000 to allow for the urgent repairs to 11 schools which I can name quite quickly: Blake Primary, Saraswat Primary, Uitvlugt Secondary, Leonora Primary, Stewartville Secondary, Leonora Secondary, Cornelia Ida Primary, McGillivray Primary, Wales Primary, Kawall Primary and Morasi Primary. These are the 11 schools, repairs to sanitary facilities for the total sum of \$12,400,000.

Mr. Neendkumar: Can the Hon. Minister tell us when he will be putting out the tender for the construction and doing these repair works?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, if approved, the regular procurement process would apply.

9.51 p.m.

There is nothing in the request here that would speak to the method of procurement. There are 11 schools and the average sum is \$1million, which is below the regional limit, but the tender procedures, in any instance where that is required, would of course apply.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, I could see that one school would be \$2.5 million, another school would be \$1.5 million and another would be \$1.6 million. This means that the sums will have to go through the tender process.

The other question is: did the Hon. Minister take these requests from the RDC or the Regional Executive Officer (REO)?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, as I said, it is from the regional administration.

Mr. Ali: Could the Hon. Minister say whether the sum requested, the \$12.4 million, will be warranted to the region or will be implemented from the central Ministry?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this is a supplementary provision being requested that will be provided by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the Hon. Minister of Finance would be willing to help the Minister. The question is whether the \$12.4 million would be warranted to the regional administration to implement the projects or whether it would be implemented from the central level.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it would be via the region.

Mr. Ali: Mr. Chairman, I am very happy that the Hon. Minister was able to tell us that it would be warranted to the region. Could the Hon. Minister then tell us what the status is of implementation of the current budget programme for the region in light of an early budget, coming in December for 2017, having regards to the books being closed at the end of December? Is the Minister confident that warranting this money to the region would ensure that it is expended within the time to ensure the closure of the books?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification, the sum, if approved, would not be warranted but, rather, it would be provided directly to the regional administration.

With regards to the rate of implementation and expenditure for that line item 6242, of the 2016 voted provision of \$65 million, approximately \$51 million or 91% has been spent to date.

Item 5 73-734 Region 3 - Educational Delivery - \$12,400,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 7 73-735 Region 3 - Health Services - \$5,153,413

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister tell us how the \$32,500,000 was broken down and for what services?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, that was a voted provision, the details of which we are not required to provide at this activity. But, if the Hon. Member is desirous, the details could always be provided at a later stage. We are dealing with a request for supplementary provision, the details of which are provided in the documentation.

Dr. Anthony: I thank the Minister for his answer. But I would like to know, of the \$5,153,413 now being requested, how much of this are for contracts previously awarded from the \$32,500,000. I want to know what the original contracts were and if there are variations to those contracts and that is why the Minister is here for this \$5,153,413.

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you, Hon. Member. Mr. Chairman, the sum being requested now is solely for emergency works, as a result of faulty electrical installation to the theatre of the West Demerara Regional Hospital. Following inspection by the Government Chief Electrical Inspector and the recommendations from that investigation, the works were identified to a total cost of what is stated here for the rehabilitation of the electrical installation to enable the operations of the theatre at this particular Hospital.

Dr Anthony: Mr. Chairman, my question was, how many contracts were awarded previously for the \$32,500,000 and what are the variations now being sought with the \$5,153,413? That was the original question which the Minister did not answer.

The \$3,481,700 for the electrical works for the theatre is just part of the more than \$5 million that is requested. While we are on the theatre, could the Minister say why the theatre was down since May and how much money was spent in the repairs of that theatre, because the \$3,481,700 is just for wiring? Other works done on the theatre are incomplete and the theatre is still not working. I would like to know when the theatre would be operational.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10 (1)

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, before you rise, may I receive a request for suspension and continuation of our work.

Mr. Nagamootoo: As it pleases Your Honour, I move that this House continues its sitting until the exhaustion of debate and consideration of the supplementary provision before the House at this time.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the information I have is that these theatres have not been in use since July and not the month stated by the Hon. Member. Also, the works that are necessary and the sum being requested is to allow for rehabilitation, namely the repairs stated here as well as to the electrical installation to allow for the theatre to be made functional and be put to use.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister tell us whether this contract for the repairs of the theatre at the West Demerara Regional Hospital was by competitive bidding?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there is no contract in place. This is a sum that is being requested but quotations have been invited and, as a result of that, the sum indicated here was the basis of the Estimates. There is no contract at this point in time.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, my information is that the theatre has been out of operation since May but the Minister is saying it was since July. Whether it was May or July, I would like to know what provisions have been made by the regional authorities in Region 3 for emergency surgeries for the people of Region 3.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, those surgeries would be done at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, what about the elective surgeries. There are a number of persons who go to that Hospital for elective surgeries and, over the last few months, persons have been going to clinics and cannot get the service. What provisions have been put in place for those patients who need elective surgeries but cannot get such surgeries at the West Demerara Regional Hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer to that would be the same, the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation.

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, there is a difference. I can understand that some of them would go to the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation and the doctors would operate on an emergency basis.

10.06 p.m.

However, these are people who require planned operations and, therefore, they would go to the clinic, they would then be sent as a patient of the hospital, be admitted and operated upon. For the last couple of months, there has been a backlog. What plans have the regional administration put in place to address this issue knowing that the two theatres would be out of commission for several months? That is what I want to hear from the Minister.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the answer I will provide to that is self-evident. That is why the sum that is being requested to allow for the repairs and rehabilitation is of urgent necessity to allow for surgeries to resume at that particular facility.

Dr. Anthony: I do not think that the Minister has answered my question. The question is, what are the plans for the patients who need medical services at the West Demerara Regional Hospital. The Minister has a surgical team(s) in place at the hospital but the team cannot operate because there is no theatre. What plans does the regional administration have in place to treat with the backup of patients?

Mr. Bulkan: With all due respect to the Hon. Member and Members of this honourable House, I believe that question goes outside the scope of the provision that is now being sought, which is for the rehabilitation of the theatres at this health facility. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Anthony: Mr. Chairman, I think that my question is perfectly in order because the patients that utilise the services of the West Demerara Regional Hospital would like to know when they would be able to receive surgical treatment at that hospital. If the hospital cannot provide it then what alternative arrangements have been put in place for them to get those surgeries done at other health institutions? If the service is not being provided at that facility then some alternative should have been put in place and I am asking what those alternatives are.

Mr. Bulkan: The main alternative would be the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC).

Dr. Anthony: Could I then ask the Minister, how many elective surgeries from the West Demerara Regional Hospital, over the last six months, were done at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation?

Mr. Bulkan: That information is not available at this moment but I can seek to investigate and inform the Hon. Member, at a later stage.

Dr. Anthony: If the Minister could lay over that information I would very happy. Can the Minister tell us now when the theatre would be completed so that the services can resume at the hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: The execution and completion of the works is first dependent on the availability of the financing and a speedy execution thereafter. As to when the theatre would be operational, again, I can undertake to provide that information to the Hon. Member at a subsequent stage, once the information is known.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister tell us whether the works that he is now seeking funds for were the only set of works that were done on the two theatres at the West Demerara Regional Hospital?

Mr. Bulkan: I think that it has been established, quite clearly, in the enquiry or interrogation, that the works have not been executed and that these are proposed works.

Dr. Anthony: Is the Minister able to assure us that, when he gets this money to be used for the electrical wiring of the theatre, it would be fully operational?

Mr. Bulkan: That is the information that is available at this point in time; that this sum would provide for the re-commissioning of the two theatres at this facility.

Dr. Anthony: The \$32,500,000 that was voted for maintenance, is the Minister telling us that none of that money was used for the repairs of these theatres?

Mr. Bulkan: I did not provide an answer to that particular question.

Dr. Anthony: The Minister just said that he did not provide an answer would he then care to answer?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that the question was asked, earlier, as to the details of the expenditure of the \$32.5 million and my answer was that those details were not available now, but that they could be provided, subsequently.

Dr. Anthony: I would assume that since we are debating this particular line item that the Minister would have come prepared to deal with these things. My information is that, for the two theatres, works were done to the roof, walls and also electrical works were done, so this is additional money being sought. Apparently, there were previous contracts, but we cannot interrogate that because the Minister is not providing the information about what previous contracts were there and whether these are variations to those contracts. We are getting partial information and, therefore, we are not getting the holistic picture of what is happening with the theatres at that facility.

Mr. Chairman, I would really like to get that information from the Minister.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, nothing that I would have said could indicate that of the \$32.5 million, none of it was spent on this particular facility. What we are debating is that the sum that is being requested of \$5.153 million is to allow for the rehabilitation and the re-commissioning of the theatres of this particular facility.

Dr. Ramsaran: Minister, during the interrogation, as you call it, it turns out that Dr. Anthony referred to two theatres. Does this sum cater for repairs to two theatres or one because the legend states one and the discussion has been about two theatres. If so, has both theatres been down for the few months, simultaneously?

Mr. Bulkan: The sum that is being requested is for the rehabilitation of one theatre.

Dr. Ramsaran: Does that mean that the second theatre is functional?

Mr. Bulkan: We come back to the sum that is being requested and for the purpose for which it is being requested, the information has been provided.

Dr. Ramsaran: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does the Minister recall that a few minutes ago he had indicated to us that planned or elective surgeries are being done at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation? If the Minister is being adamant in saying that this figure refers to one theatre, why then are those surgeries being referred to the GPHC and are not being done in that theatre?

Mr. Bulkan: I believe that these two theatres are adjacent to each other. If electrical works are being done, then I believe that it stands to reason that it would have an impact on both of the theatres.

Dr. Ramsaran: Noting that the Hon. Minister is supported by his Permanent Secretary (PS) and by the Minister of Public Health, could the Minister then accept that believing is not an option and that it is about moneys to be spent for a definite project?

Is it one theatre or two theatres? The theatres being adjacent, works on one does not automatically affect another theatre, so the question still stands.

Secondly, if it is one theatre, why has he said, in the presence of his two senior officers, that there are referrals of planned or elective cases to the GPHC?

Mr. Bulkan: I will repeat and rely on what I just said moments go. My understanding is that, and I will repeat the use of the word “believe” that the proposed works would impact on both of the theatres. There are electrical repairs as well as repairs to the roof. Subject to correction, at this point in time, I would say that it would impact on both theatres.

Dr. Ramsaran: I would like to thank the Minister for his honesty in recognising that his answer might have been based on belief. What I do note is that he has two of his senior officers with him – a Minister and a PS – and probably they could give some assistance to this National Assembly, and *via* the National Assembly to the public, on how the moneys will be spent. Is it one or two theatres, but I will rest on that.

Further, does the Minister recognise, along with the support of his two Colleagues - the Minister of Public Health and the Permanent Secretary, that an expensive surgical team is standing idle at the West Demerara Regional Hospital?

10.21 p.m.

Further, does he recognises that there is another regional hospital called the East Demerara Regional Hospital, which is well-equipped and could be pressed into service, if there was proper thinking and planning. Is there still the twinning between the East Demerara Regional Hospital or the Diamond Hospital and the West Demerara Regional Hospital, where resources and teams

could be shared? Has that been thrown out of the window? Do the Ministers of Public Health and Communities know that there are powerful teams, at both institutions, that could be shared?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the hour is getting late, but that is no reason why we should not allow ourselves to hear Hon. Members when they are making an intervention. Let us try to allow that to happen without the Chairman having to remind Members.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, what I would say is that the question reinforces the need for the urgency of the sum being requested to allow for the rehabilitation and the re-commissioning of the two theatres at the West Demerara Regional Hospital so that they could be put back into use. With regards to the twinning, I am not in a position to offer any particular details in relation to that.

Dr. Ramsaran: Final question with your indulgence. Minister, we will support any effort to improve the services, especially the theatres. I would like to ask two final questions. Would the policy of one of the theatres continue to be dedicated to safe motherhood?

Secondly, would the Minister, with all his support mechanisms, consider pressing into service the reserves at the well-appointed and well-functional East Demerara Regional Hospital or Diamond Hospital to provide services to the planned elective or cold cases that are allegedly or apparently, from his legend/interrogation, accumulating in the West Demerara Region? Thank you.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, now that these particular questions have been posed and they have been placed here in the National Assembly, they would have drawn the attention of all of the relevant personnel, both at the Ministry of Public Health and at the level of the respective RDC's. I believe that they will be very helpful in addressing the health needs of residents and citizens. So I thank the Hon. Member for raising these questions.

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, would the Minister agreed that the sum sought for must be approved by the Regional Democratic Council (RDC)? If the sum was not approved by the Regional Democratic Council, then it is improperly before this Committee?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this request is properly before this house.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Komal. Chand, are you going to repeat the same question?

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, a supplementary question. The Minister is then assuring us that the sum was approved by the Regional Democratic Council?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Chand, are you through with the question?

Mr. Chand: I would like to repeat the question as requested, Cde. Chairman. In respect to the Minister's answer, he is assuring this House that the sum now being requested had been approved by the Regional Democratic Council.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I will repeat what I said earlier to Members of this honourable House. This request for this sum and for this purpose is properly before this honourable House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Chand, are you going to ask the same question again?

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, would the Minister answer the question of whether the sum requested had been approved by the Regional Democratic Council? The answer that was given is not satisfactory. It is vague in the view of the specific and clear question.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this provision is being requested by the Regional Administration of Region 3, Regional Democratic Council.

Item 7 73-735 Region 3 - Health Services - \$5,153,413, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8 78-781 Region 8 - Regional Administration and Finance - \$ 3,400,000

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, this year's allocation under this line item represents a \$5 million increase from last year. There is now a request of a 13% increase in the supplementary provision, now, as expenses specific to the agency. First of all, could the Hon. Minister indicate how many meetings of the RDC have been held this year because one of the explanations is that the sum is for an additionally meeting? Secondly, before I ask some other questions, what and for whom is the stipend for and the duration - for which period - is the stipend being requested for?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there have been four meetings of the RDC to date and the period for the payment of the stipends would be from current to December at the end of the year. It would be for the Councillors, Toshaos, Vice-Toshaos, and the Senior and Regional Councillors.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, the allocation for stipend to Councillors, whether it is for Toshaos and the RDC Councillors – I am making the point here - the number of meetings to be held is known before the year starts, when the budgetary allocation would have been made. So, for the Hon. Minister to now indicate that the region is requesting funds for additional expenses for a final meeting, when there have only been three meetings for this year, one statutory and two special meetings. So therefore, we would like the Hon. Minister to indicate to the House what the \$25,000,000 has been spent on to date and then I will come with the further break.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the original request for Chart of Account 6211 was a little in excess of \$29 million. At the time of the budget, the Ministry of Finance was not prepared to provide a sum greater than what was allocated, the \$25 million. The Ministry, of course, was not averse that if there was justification and if it had the ability, later in the year, it would provide supplementary sums and that is the point at which we are now. Hence, the request for the supplementary of \$3,400,000 to fund the activities that have been identified here.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, while we were in the Committee of Supply for the previous budget, we were told, explicitly, in one sentence.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, did you say one sentence or one statement?

Mr. Croal: One statement. We were told, explicitly, that the allocation for expenses, specific to the agency was sufficient and, therefore, for the Minister to come here to indicate that the region is asking for a short supply does not add up. This is because there has been only one statutory meeting, two special meetings and there is an allocation for four statutory meetings for the year 2016.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the sum being requested is to fund the activities that have been identified and is stated in the document before us.

Mr. Croal: My final question on this item. Could the Hon. Minister, therefore, confirm that the 2016 allocation that had been made by the Ministry of Finance was made with an indication that

they knew in advance that there was going to be a shortfall in the allocation for the stipends of councillors?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, there was a presupposition that the sum that was originally requested at the time of the budget consultation, which was in excess of the \$25 million, that the Ministry was not averse to, later in the year, if there was justification and if the Ministry had the capacity to provide the additional resources requested, that it would consider such a request. As I said, that is the point where we are and this is why the sum of \$3,400,000 is being requested at this point in time.

10.36 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, just as a follow-up to my Colleague. The sum of \$25,598,000 was budgeted for four statutory meetings to pay stipends and to satisfy a particular request in keeping with this Chart of Account. The information before this House suggests that, those activities were not held which were one statutory meeting and two special meetings. The moneys have been expended to the point where the Minister is now asking for a supplementary provision. Could the Minister, explicitly, state to this House what the \$25,598,000 was spent on?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the details on the expenditure of the 2016 allocation are not available at this point in time, but could certainly be provided to the Hon. Member. Some of the amounts of the contingency expenditure that were accommodated during the course of this year were to provide for travelling for the Regional Chairman and the Vice-Chairman to conduct meetings in the region, relating to the Plan of Action for Regional Development (PARD), for which the RDC provided the sum of \$1,500,000 out of the 2016 allocation to facilitate those consultations by the Regional Chairman and the Vice-Chairman.

Bishop Edghill: A follow-up Mr. Chairman. I believe that it is still the practice that the Hon. Minister needs to sign the supplementary before it is sent to the Minister of Finance. If the Hon. Minister has signed that supplementary, the Minister cannot stand here tonight to say that that information is not available to him. This is because, in order for him to sign that supplementary, the Accounting Officer would have had to provide him with all of the details to justify the request for the additional expenditure. I am asking the Minister to explicitly provide that information to the House, not to me personally.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I undertook to provide that requested information to the Hon. Member and Members of the honourable House.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister is there a time to which you are committing yourself to supplying this information?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, by the time the House meets again for its next Sitting.

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, our last question on this chart of account. Is the Hon. Minister aware, as is customary for all line item expenses for chart of account 6211, whereby, the Accounting Officer has to have the no-objection of the Regional Chairman that acts on behalf of the RDC for expenses under chart of account 6211? Is the Hon. Minister aware that the Regional Chairman has been asking for the expenses that have been incurred to date under chart of account 6211 and that he has not been provided same?

Secondly, is the Hon. Minister aware that the Regional Executive Officer has not been providing those bills, prior to the expenditure, for prior approval?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, I am not in a position to offer a definitive answer to those particular questions, but I could investigate and I will inform the Hon. Member.

Item 8 78-781 Region 8 - Regional Administration and Finance – \$3,400,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Capital Estimates

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance - Policy and Administration - \$47,117,578 and \$50,000,000

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House whether this is a variation in the contract or if this will be a new contract?

Mr. Jordan: It is for additional works on the civil and electrical works on the contract. The breakdown of this amount is the installation of an intrusion alarm system for \$6.3 million; installation of a fire alarm system \$7.3 million; termite treatment \$1.7 million; replacement of the entire ceiling \$3.3 million; installation of an elevator \$6.5 million; and other works that

include tiling, changing of rotten walls, rehabilitation of the roof and painting \$12.3 million. The additional works on the building are electrical, which are the installation of a load centre, 630 amps \$1.5 million; automatic transfer switch \$1.5 million; and cables, breakers, trunking, *et cetera* \$6.8 million, for a total of \$47,117,578.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Hon. Minister for the breakdown, but the specific question is whether there would be additional works?

Mr. Jordan: They would be additional works.

Bishop Edghill: Yes, they are additional works. The question is, would the works be undertaken by the contractor that is on-site or would they be tendered out to other contractors?

Mr. Jordan: The contractor on-site.

Bishop Edghill: So, then this is a variation of the contract?

Mr. Jordan: You asked me if there would be additional works and I have said they are.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister whether there is approval from the National Procurement and Tender Administrative Board (NPTAB) for this activity to take place.

Mr. Jordan: The answer is, yes.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, it therefore means that we are indicating that a variation that is way beyond 20% of a contract is being executed without going back out to tender.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I think people who know the old Customs Building, which was abandoned for a good while, would know that it has deteriorated considerably by the time the first estimate of works had been made. As they proceeded to do the works, more of the building became... Sometimes when one moves a beam and thinks that it is only a beam that one has to change, sometimes the entire roof or the whole wall comes crashing in. Therefore, this is what happened. Also wood ants have taken over the building and so there was part variation and part additional works.

In addition to that, the building is situated in a high risk area and despite guards being there, it initially suffered from pilfering and other stealing of materials that had been installed. So, that is why some of these variations, that we are seeing, in terms of alarm systems, *et cetera*, are being put in place. I had indicated earlier that the \$33 million out of the \$47 million is really variations and \$14 million is for additional works.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I want to draw a matter to Your Honour's attention. I know that it is not related to these proceedings but...

Mr. Chairman: It is not related to these proceedings?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Could it possibly await our conclusion of this and then you could bring it to our attention?

Mr. Nandlall: No, Sir I want to draw it quickly to your attention. I know that Your Honour, on some occasion ago, had made a very firm ruling that we should not take photographs in Parliament of each other or of the proceedings.

Mr. Chairman: I have a suspicion that the Hon. Members know they should not.

Mr. Nandlall: On the Attorney General's Facebook page there is a photograph of me taken 47 minutes ago, as I am sitting here.

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General gave you his cellular phone? I do not wish to see. My question is, is it that you have gotten hold of the Attorney General's cellular phone.

Mr. Nandlall: It is on his Facebook page. This Sir is in violation of your ruling.

Mr. Chairman: This is in violation of what we all know should not take place here. I do not know that the ruling of the Speaker added anything to what the Hon. Members knew before.

Mr. Nandlall: I am asking Sir for you to intervene and to take such remedial action that you may see necessary.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am sure that you have a suggestion, unless you do not have a suggestion to do it now.

Mr. Nandlall: I am leaving it up to you Sir. You are in charge of the sanctity of the Parliament. I leave it in your competent hands to do as you see fit. All I am doing is drawing to your attention this violation because we are going to do it back, openly, and nobody will be able to say anything.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you addressed me a moment ago to say what?

Mr. Nandlall: I just want to draw it to your attention so that, if it is reciprocated from this side, we must know that there is no prohibition.

Mr. Chairman: If the Hon. Member would know he cannot reciprocate a wrong without consequences, even if the first...

10.51 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: I am drawing it to your attention so you can determine whether it is wrong.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you for what you have done, but I must tell you that there is no excuse in the wrong of others for you to do wrong. The fact that they may not have received punishment does not excuse you from receiving punishment and that applies to everyone in this Assembly. We are not dealing with that in the manner in which you are presenting it.

Mr. Nandlall: Are we dealing with it at all?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, if you want to bring a matter to the floor then we will put...

Mr. Nandlall: All I want to do, Sir, is to draw it to your attention. It is okay. I will deal with it in my own way. It is all right. I just want to know what the Speaker's position is on that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, the Speaker did not understand your last remark.

Mr. Nandlall: It was not made to the Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is it that you are making what one might think is a veiled threat to the Speaker.

Mr. Nandlall: No. I just want clarity on what really is the position.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, clarity of what position?

Mr. Nandlall: The clarity of whether we can photograph each other in the House.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member knows that in spite of whatever may have occurred before today... I believe that there is another Hon. Member around who does not wish the Speaker to speak. The Speaker will have to have that person removed from the House if he cannot speak. What I am saying is that you have interrupted the proceedings, except something of great urgency has not...

Mr. Nandlall: I consider it of great urgency.

Mr. Chairman: It is what the Speaker considers as urgent.

Mr. Nandlall: I know.

Mr. Chairman: It is not you. The Speaker would be prepared to attend to that after we are through with the work of tonight.

Mr. Nandlall: That is very well, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are free to bring it to the attention of the Speaker after we have concluded our business of tonight.

Mr. Nandlall: No Sir. I have done it already. I am not going to bring it again. I have brought it to the Speaker's attention. I have discharged what I think is my responsibility.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I must tell you that we must not take advantage of the Speaker's kindness. We should not interrupt the Speaker's business to bring to the attention of the House matters of this nature. Shall we proceed? Hon. Member, please take your seat.

We are now at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, capital estimates.

Bishop Edghill: We have not yet completed the Ministry of Finance and I still have questions. I think that it would be good for the Hon. Minister to know that we are in agreement with Statistical Bureau having a home. In no way are we challenging the fact that work is being done

to provide a home for Statistical Bureau. With the Minister indicating to this Assembly that \$33 million is variation and \$14 million is for additional works. Would the Minister respond if this could be considered an unfair advantage to have such a huge variation on a contract when other contractors would have bid and their final price would have been lower than the additional sum that is being sought here? It would appear that the contractor would have come in low while you are on the job, there is the variation, additional work and then the contract sum is still higher than the next competitive person.

Mr. Jordan: It calls for a judgement that I do not want to exercise at this stage. I am not an engineer, building contractor, or such. All I could report is essentially that there was a contract for works that we thought were based on the engineer's estimate, works to be done and a contract was tendered for. As they went on site and they started doing the works, additional problems such as termites came up. That was not envisaged at that time and, hence, there are some of the variations which we see here. Some of the additional works were due to the security issues that are plagued in that area where the building is situated. As I said, it calls for a judgement that I am not qualified at this stage to make.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Minister for his explanation. Contracts of this nature, all the contractors who are bidding are invited to a site visit. The contractor, before he puts in his sum, has an opportunity to inspect and see what needs to be done. There is always a sum in that contract for contingencies. I would anticipate that in this \$125,380,000 there was already a contingency amount which was already utilised and now we are having additional. All I am bringing to the Minister is that we support getting the Statistical Bureau housed properly. Thanks for going ahead with that, but we are talking about procurement process. This matter should have really gone back to the additional works to tender because it is a sum above \$15 million.

Mr. Jordan: I think in one respect the Hon. Member may be mistaken. I am advised that this contract have no contingencies in it.

Secondly, I am advised that these works are not necessarily new works. There were unforeseen works that the people went into the building and started doing the works.

Thirdly, in between the time when the engineer did the estimate and the time when the contract was awarded additional items were stolen. The electrical fittings, I understand, were removed

from the building at an unguarded moment, so to speak, because even though there were guards, there are the unguarded moments. Those, which would have not appeared originally in the engineer's estimate, subsequently had to have been replaced, such as the fittings. As a matter of fact, in doing the estimate for that, at some time, they looked... It is an old building, and some of the wiring was exposed. I think with modern electrical works, it is that the wires should be put in conduit.

I think any contractor, who bid and won this contract, would have encountered the same issues, so to speak. It was not the works that were actually hidden or the contractor was playing us. These were additional work which genuinely came about as a result of some of the reasons that I put forward.

Bishop Edghill: The additional \$50 million, which is being sought for the Linden Enterprise Network (LEN), is for the revolving fund for lending of money to the people who would benefit from this. Could the Minister indicate that this \$50 million is as a result that he has found additional fiscal space to provide money for the Linden Enterprise Network?

Mr. Jordan: I am happy that the Assembly is now aware of FS, not only being the Finance Secretary but also fiscal space. Fiscal space, as was used tonight, was meant in respect to the Budget 2017. Fiscal space, as it relates to 2016, as you know, Mr. Speaker, is that there are some fiscal space and that is why we have a supplementary here.

If I may back up a bit, just for the edification of the Assembly, it would recall that in Budget 2015 \$115 million was given to LEN, of which \$100 million was set aside for Linden itself and \$15 million for operating expenses. In the Budget 2016, as stated, we budgeted for \$50 million. The \$50 million was used as \$33 million for operating expenses, \$17 million for capital works. The hundred million dollars was more or less exhausted. In fact, I understand there are needs in excess of \$400 million. This extra \$50 million, in the context of the space, which we have found in the rest of the year 2016, is to replenish the fund and to help with some of the pressing demand for a borrowing for entrepreneurial purposes by the Linden folks. This is as a token. We understand the demands there, but at least it will help with the situation there. We are not saying fully but it will help.

Bishop Edghill: We are happy that the people of Linden are having access to money for investment, and that is a good thing. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly what is taking place as it relates to the repayment of loans? What is the state of the revolving fund that we are adding \$50 million to?

Mr. Jordan: As I indicated so far the revolving fund is more or less exhausted, as I said, because it is \$100,000 million.

11.06 p.m.

Of the \$100,000 million so far \$97,209,604 on 215 loans in four categories and about seven to eight sectors, so to speak. This extra \$50 million would leave the fund with about \$53 million for lending purposes. As I indicated here, the demand is almost about \$400 million. This fund would not start revolving maybe until sometime next year when the first set of repayments come in and even then, it would not revolve in a true sense in the word, because the repayment are going to be very small. We would have to keep replenishing this fund until it reaches a certain level, just as the student revolving loan fund where it took a while before it could have revolved, right and that was after many years before it actually replenished.

Bishop Edghill: As I said, we are happy that the moneys are going for the people to benefit. It is just to ask the Minister a direct question, before the \$100 million was put in last year for the revolving fund there was money in the LEN. There is a list of those who owe the fund. We have that list. Would you be kind enough, Sir, to publish the list in the manner that you published the Student Loan Agency's list? What steps are being taken to recoup the money from those who owe this fund?

Mr. Jordan: I am not sure whether the question is germane to the \$50 million that I have here. I cannot begin to answer the question simply because I do not have a list of these borrowers the Hon. Member has. Perhaps, he might want to make that available and then we could proceed to ask LEN to... As a matter of fact, I am learning. It was under Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP) as opposed to LEN. They are two different organisations, so to speak. Mr. Chairman, I do not know if you are with me here, but we deviated from the \$50 million, for which I have given extensive explanations on and the question is whether we accept the supplementary and vote for it.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, we are putting taxpayers money into a revolving fund. I think the people of Guyana wants to know if those who have already received moneys, which they have not repaid, if they are going to beneficiaries of a debt write-off or it is a revolving fund. Are they required to repay or is this money given and it does not have to be repaid?

Mr. Jordan: I could assume Hon. Member that LEN is required to account for this money and the institution would be audited annually and that report would be made available in the Assembly if needs be. That is the most I could say at this stage.

Mr. Neendkumar: The forerunner of LEN was LEAP. Under President Bharat Jagdeo a substantial amount of money, over a \$1 billion, was given to this fund. We start to give out money, the Government of Guyana. This is a revolving fund, so it is supposed to be revolving and we are supposed to get some among of accountability. I would like to know whether it has further reduced into our slush fund to give only certain people or whether we are going to have proper accountability for this money.

Mr. Jordan: I am not sure whether it is a proper question as to ask whether it was a slush fund, or so on. I did indicate that the funds would have to be accounted for and they would be audited and a report would be made available to the House. I do not know anything about LEAP. This is LEN that we are dealing with here, Mr. Chairman. I think that we should stick to LEN. So far we have given LEN \$200 million. This \$50 million would make it \$250 million that has used for various activities for which I have accounted for to the Assembly at the moment.

Item 1 03-031 Ministry of Finance – Policy and Administration – \$47,117,578, \$50,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$150,000,000, \$77,000,000, \$17,999,920, \$400,000,000, \$93,800,000, \$200,000,000

Dredging

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly, Sir, what are the vessels to be rehabilitated with this sum?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: The vessels are the Steve-N, Moruka, MV Setta, Allan Young and MV Thompson. There are five vessels.

Bishop Edghill: This is maintenance of existing vessels that we are talking about here, but it is coming under the acquisition of spares under as capital item. Three hundred and fifty million dollars was sought previously and expended. Could the Minister indicate to us what this was spent on, as it relates to your overall expectation for the year? If \$350 million was sought, there was a projection that this was necessary for the maintenance of these vessels to get the capital items. What was done with the \$350 million that we would require an additional \$150 million?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you Hon. Member for the question. Out of the three hundred fifty million provided in the 2016 allocation, \$25 million was paid towards the docking of the Allan Young and that vessel is currently in the dockyard. The MV Setta is \$37,380,586. The MV Steve-N was docked, one hundred per cent. That project was completed. We acquired spares for a \$150 million in 2015 and then, of course, making of the balance is the fuel cost for the dredging of the Demerara River and Essequibo River which is \$25.5 million.

Bishop Edghill: I appreciate the Minister have his information available if a supplementary is being sought. Could the Minister tell us when the issues with these five vessels are going to be addressed?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the supplementary being sought is exactly as the legend is stating, the “acquisition of spares to facilitate the rehabilitation of the vessels.” Obviously, as everybody would know, spares have a late time. What is being sought is actually to acquire these spare parts or parts to have the vessels rehabilitated when they are docked, and so forth. It is normal that vessels of these natures are docked every 18 to 24 months because of their usage. Obviously, these are the vessels that would have to be docked during that period of time. What we are doing Hon. Member Bishop Edghill is that with the spares we will acquire a turnaround time which we will be anticipating will be far shorter in 2017, for us to have the spare and docked them immediately and have them back in services as to the shortest space of time.

Bishop Edghill: Thanks to the Minister for his explanation. These vessels are not really going into the drive off. These are accusation for spares for the stores.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, yes and no. This is the parts for them, Sir. Obviously, to put the parts in we may have to dock them. Some of the parts, obviously it all depends on which part,... If you are replacing the engine or the propulsion system the vessel would have to be put in dry dock. If an air conditioner is being replaced - I am just using a very general example - it could actually be replaced without dry docking them, if you understand.

11.21 p.m.

Highway Improvement East Bank Demerara

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this Assembly what are the items that this \$77 million is going to be expended on? While he is explaining that, it would be a good opportunity for him to give us an update on all three lots of this project and when is the expected date of its completion.

Mr. Patterson: I will answer all of them. Let me start off by saying this: The specific figure of \$77 million.... Sir, I hear this puppy yapping. Can I get some protection?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, why are we having this kind of language - puppy, now Sir?

Mr. Patterson: Can I get some protection now Sir?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, do we have a puppy yapping in the Assembly?

Mr. Patterson: Can I get some protection, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it seems that from what Hon. Members have said that you have used language which is not acceptable in this Assembly. I would request that you withdraw them and start again.

Mr. Patterson: If it pleases you, Sir, I withdraw the 'puppy' statement unequivocally.

Mr. Chairman: I think we can all try to resist the temptation to make comments which are bound to evoke responses unacceptable to this Assembly.

Mr. Patterson: Once again, Sir, I beg your protection, but my apologies Hon. Member Edghill. The specific sum sought is for Lot 1 as you are aware. I know for sure. It is the lot in which the

contract with Dipcon Engineering Service Ltd. was terminated. For the \$77 million, it is site clearance and grubbing for the project area which is 1.2 kilometres, earth work to excavate the clay areas, milling of the existing carriageway, construction of 1,577 metres of concrete drains, paving of 1.2 kilometres of road, installation of 26 highway lights, construction of bridges and culvert. They are all part of the \$77 million. Sir, that is it.

The second part of the question, Sir, is a status on the works there. This month end obviously will be the practical completion for that project. Obviously, Lot 1 was completed, Lot 2 is completed and Lot 3 is completed. There are all substantively completed. Before the Member, I do note that he would have a follow-up question on what additional works are left in that corridor. There would be the safety barriers and activation of the street lights in Greenfield and the Mocha junction.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, a follow-up. The works on Lot 1 in which the contract was terminated, could you tell the Assembly how we were able to get a contractor working on lot one? What process was used? Secondly, I noticed that you indicated that there was a practical completion date by this month end. Is it October month end or November that we are talking about?

Mr. Patterson: Sorry. It is this month, Sir, which will be October.

Bishop Edghill: Practical completion in my understanding is still 95% complete. When could we expect all works to be completed on this highway where the only thing remaining is the retention accounts?

Mr. Patterson: Let me answer then last one. At the end of the practical completion, which he said is this month end, it is the end of October, and then we go into the defect liability period which is one year after that, from November going. As I stated, when I previously stood, there are two issues, the safety barriers and the activation of the street lights which obviously has to be done, and which will be done expeditiously. I do hope that that was the full part of your question. On the first part of the question, the contract was terminated. There was a balance of funding. At the point of termination, the contract sum was not exhausted. We sought funding by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as you are well aware. We sought the IDB no objections to go to selective tendering because there was an existing contract in place at the moment. We sought the IDB no objection to allow two contractors at the moment to split the work remaining

with Dipcon Engineering Service Ltd. IDB gave no objections so that was how Lot 1 was completed by the two existing contractors from Lot 1 through Lot 2 and Lot 3.

Bishop Edghill: I would suppose with the two contractors who were in Lot 3 and Lot 3 doing then work in Lot 1, it was at the same rate.

Mr. Patterson: Of course yes, you are absolutely correct.

Bishop Edghill: If this sum, which is being sought, is the final payment and the payment of retention, why was it not budgeted for in the first instance when we budgeted for 2016?

Mr. Patterson: That is an extremely good question. The total contract was a \$179 million and it was completed in March 2016. What was included in the 2016 allocation was the completion of the works when the budget was passed. In error - I will name it - that we did not include the retention which obviously would be coming due.

It is a good observation and we do admit that we should be more diligent in recognising that the contract would be finished and that the defects and liability period and everything would have expired before the end of this year. That why we are now seeking to get this retention money to liquidate our liabilities.

Equipment

Bishop Edghill: This is a very interesting one and I hope that my engagement with the Minister would help this Assembly, because under this line item Sir, \$231,700,000 was sought and allocated. It would appear that they have now found fiscal space for another \$400 million in 2016 for the purchase of equipment. We are starting a Special Projects Unit, or we are expanding the Special Projects Unit in the last six weeks or so of a budget here. We are seeking to buy equipping for \$400 million. I would like the Minister to itemise what is the equipment that is being procured? What process of procurement is being used? When is the expected date of delivery of these items?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this. Yes Hon. Member, it is an interesting line item. First let me say that we are not establishing a Special Projects Unit. It has been there for quite a while. It was previously called the Force Accounts Unit, but obviously

the genesis and whatever the reason behind the name Force Accounts Unit, it did not fit with the Ministry's vision.

11.36 p.m.

It is because there was a fresh approach and because we have expanded the role. You are correct. We are seeking to expand the capacity of the Special Projects Unit. Right now, as we speak, we only have the capacity for two single units. One unit, as we speak, is in Leguan. Probably, for the first time in the history of Leguan, all of the roads have been done in asphalted concrete. What that means is that, for the work we are doing in Georgetown, we are limited to the use of one unit.

I have been receiving, on a daily basis, requests for repairs, upgrade and enhancement from both sides of the House and I have accommodated both sides of the House. We thought it fit to expand. **[Mr. Lumumba: *Inaudible.*]** Thank you very much, Hon. Member Lumumba. I could recall your road being done in 2015 through the same Special Projects Unit. Thank you for reminding me.

We are expanding the work of the Unit and so we want to move from two to three units. Obviously, if we move from two to three, we would need more equipment and manpower so that we could respond to the needs of the country since we address matters on a needs basis. That is why we are seeking this.

With a budget being passed in six weeks' time, the Special Projects Unit wants to *hit the road running*, no pun intended. We want to be able to fix as many roads as possible, with the advent of a very early budget, which I must commend the Minister of Finance for bringing. Just as the spares which I mentioned, and which the House gracefully approved a little while ago, we are trying to front end our procurement procedure. When we looked at it, there was, as the Minister of Finance indicated, a bit of fiscal space, but, when we looked at the benefits from what we could do, the Minister of Finance was gracious enough to provide the money.

The list of what we are buying – and I will provide this to you – includes an asphalt paver, \$80 million. An asphalt paver will complement the second crew.

There would be the procurement of laboratory equipment for monitoring and quality control of all roads. That is self-explanatory. There would be no more defective roads. Even though it is the Special Projects Unit, we have to monitor ourselves as well as assist the rest of the country.

We are hoping to procure road weighing scales, fixed scales, with this allocation. The fixed scales are to prevent overweight on our road. As the Hon. Member would know quite well, every time a road is fixed, heavy vehicles use them even more frequently when they are not supposed to use them. What that contributes to is deterioration of the road. There are certain areas where we are putting scales. It was mentioned by His Excellency when he made his presentation here about a month ago. That is one of the legislation that we would be amending so that overweight vehicles should not be traversing our roads. The scales are at a cost of \$75 million.

Sir, the list includes two 15-cubic dump trucks, \$48 million; one hydraulic excavator - \$32 million; one backhoe loader - \$19 million; tower lights - \$2.5 million. The tower lights are needed because the persons in the Special Projects Unit are quite adept at working at nights because they never leave a job undone. There are two rotavators - \$5 million; skid steer loader - \$19 million; two pick-ups - \$15 million. There would be an increased crew and additional transportation would be needed. There are bitumen distributor - \$26.5 million; vibratory roller compactor - \$13 million; and painting machines - \$2 million.

Sir, I must say that you probably know all of the roads that have been done. If you go down Middle Street, it is completely asphalted and marked out. If you go down Brickdam or Dennis Street, Sophia – we are proud of that – they are marked out. If you go down Thomas Street, for the first time in years, it is done and marked out. Therefore, we need the painting machine. There is a pneumatic roller - \$15 million; and four small canter trucks - \$20 million. That brings it to a total of \$400 million. The procurement would be done through the national procurement regulations. Did I miss anything?

Bishop Edghill: What is the date of delivery?

Mr. Patterson: These are new equipment and I am advised that most of them...we have put in the order. What are not here would be delivered early next year.

Bishop Edghill: May I further enquire of the Minister if this is just one way of loading expenditure on the capital side to enhance performance? All of this is good and is needed but rightfully belong in the 2017 budget and not in a supplementary provision. This issue that we are dealing with, while it looks like a small one, it is not. The Government is capitalising, in the last six weeks, a Ministry's Unit and none of these items would be available in 2016. What the Government would do is go out to tender and, sometime in December, advance payments would be made and it would not be completed in 2016. Why is the Government starting it now and not properly placing it in the early budget that is coming?

Mr. Patterson: Mr. Chairman, first off, let me debunk the first point about frontloading. I do not know what transpired in the past, but this is planning. If we know that we have certain things to do, we could plan for it. If the Hon. Member considers planning frontloading, I could see why the country was in the state which it was. I am told that companies such as Machine Corporation of Guyana Ltd. (MACORP) have 80% of the equipment, brand new, in the country already.

Ms. Teixeira: Has the Ministry gone out to tender already?

Mr. Patterson: No, Madam. I am talking about what is available. There are several suppliers who have the equipment.

Ms. Teixeira: You have already determined who you would be buying it from.

Mr. Patterson: No, Ma'am. There is equipment in the country, I have heard.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement.

Ms. Teixeira: There are two months left in the year...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, do you wish the floor?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Please. I know that we want to suddenly move very quickly, but let us still follow the rules. Let us do it in the way we should do it. I see Hon. Members getting up. Please proceed.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. There are two months left in the year, of which there are several weekends and holidays. If one calculates those, there are approximately 19 to 20 days of the 60 days, which are not working days. We assume that the Ministry has to go out to tender, evaluate, order and have the items delivered by 31st December, 2016, which, we assume, is the date that the Minister is closing the books. The issue of bringing all of this in before the end of the year is a highly improbable issue, unless the procurement regulations are going to be flexed in a variety of ways so that the normal procurement arrangements are not gone through.

There are less than 41 working days left in the year for the tendering process, evaluation, awarding, ordering, delivering, offloading at the Customs and Trade Administration and getting them into the Special Projects Unit. Therefore, the issue raised by the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, is a correct one. Unless you have already pre-determined who you are buying it from, this is a highly improper request at this time.

Mr. Patterson: I have the pleasure of representing the Ministry and I do not want anyone to impugn the character of employees of my Ministry. So, I would give the Hon. Member of this House this undertaking: we are going to public tender and I would have a newspaper clipping of it delivered here so that Hon. Members could see that there was a public tender. I would also undertake to give my opposite Colleague, the shadow minister, a copy of the report so that they could be absolutely clear that there is no *hanky-panky* on our part. Therefore, the idea or the perception of anything untoward could be alleviated. We are as concerned as the Hon. Member Teixeira about the transparency and accountability of public funds. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Hon. Member for his undertakings. I would just like to bring to your attention, Sir, that there were a number of such undertakings, which were made by the Hon. Minister, that have not yet been fulfilled.

The Minister spoke about proper planning. The issue that I would like to put to the Minister is this: if proper planning took place and allowed us to have a 2016 Budget of 231,700,000 and, sometime along the year, a decision was taken to have a second Force Account Unit, which would cost \$400 million, I am respectfully putting to this House, for the Minister to explain, that that rightfully belongs in the next budget cycle and not in a supplementary provision. [Ms.

Charles-Broomes: You said that already. Take your seat. You are only repeating yourself.]
This is where the wickedness is.

Mr. Patterson: The Hon. Member was going correctly, and I was agreeing with him, until he strayed at the end. There was an allocation for 2016. Fortunately or unfortunately, we have been the victim of our own success. That has been the problem. We started and the volume of work has increased exponentially. Sir, I would not slow down the work of the people. At the time, we had anticipated that we would have done 10 miles. The request has been for 40. We did not realise how deplorable certain areas were. We have been a victim of our own success and I want to address that. That is why we are coming for the additional money. I would hope that the Hon. Member would support us. If we are as successful as we have been and come for more moneys in 2017 to increase, even further, the Special Projects Unit, he would join and support us and try to assist us in executing our work.

11.51 p.m.

Reconditioning of Ferry Vessels

Bishop Edghill: Sir, just to remind, in Financial Paper No. 2, a provision was sought for this very same item. Having had a voted provision of \$593 million, we are now asking for an additional \$200 million which will carry us to almost \$1 billion for this year on this particular item.

I would like to ask the Minister, what is the additional \$200 million for? I will start there.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, with your leave, Hon. Minister Ferguson has direct responsibility over these Agencies and can respond most aptly.

Minister within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure [Ms. Ferguson]: To answer the Hon. Member's question, I would like to say that, in 2015, we had a rollover of \$198,080,724 and, in 2016, we had an approval of \$395 million, giving a total \$593,083,000. The \$194,292,000, which was previously sought, takes care of Kimbia which is currently in dock. We are currently rebuilding the two engines at this point in time.

The provisions being sought at this moment – the \$200 million - will take care of additional spares for the various vessels that the Transport and Harbours Department has in its fleet.

Bishop Edghill: That is a very interesting explanation. The Hon. Minister is indicating to this House that we have the fiscal space that we can stockpile \$200 million worth of spares in the last six weeks of this year. Is this not to accelerate spending because of a shortfall in Capital Expenditure and underperformance? That is what is taking place here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, is there a comment or an answer that you wish to provide?

Ms. Ferguson: Mr. Chairman, I am being advised that the organisation has the capacity to spend the \$200 million within the remainder of the year. Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, if you look at what is taking place with this particular Ministry under every item and you do the total, this is in excess of \$1 billion that is being utilised under various heads to accelerate spending to produce a report that states that there is a good performance. Two hundred million dollars coming in a Supplementary Paper cannot be proper planning under this item for “Ferry Vessels” just for the acquisition of spares, especially when the Hon. Minister just told this House that \$198 million was not spent in 2015 and was rolled over into 2016. It is unbelievable. I would like the Hon. Minister to explain to this House why, at the beginning of the year, when we had Budget 2016, this acquisition of spares to the end of the year was not taken into consideration. It would appear that moneys are available so let us spend.

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much. Let me just make my case clear. In 2015, we had a rollover of \$198 million plus which would have taken care of docking of several vessels. In 2016, we had docking of vessels plus the acquisition of spares. The provision that is currently being sought is to procure additional spares for the fleet of vessels that we have in stock at this point in time. It is more or less replenishing of our spares for the various vessels.

Mr. Neendkumar: Could the Hon. Minister tell us if they have a list of the spares that they have at present?

Ms. Ferguson: Yes, Sir. We do.

Mr. Neendkumar: Mr. Chairman, could we have a copy of the list of inventory so that we can compare it and see what they are buying? Earlier, Hon. Member Bishop Edghill did say to them that they had \$400 million that they were spending on these vessels and now they are coming and telling us about a further \$200 million. It is not sounding too good.

Ms. Ferguson: I will have the list laid over in the Assembly.

Item 4 32-322 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Public Works – \$150,000,000, \$77,000,000, \$17,999,920, \$400,000,000, \$93,800,000, \$200,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Transport – \$102,100,800, \$4,486,284,710, \$656,502,922

Civil Aviation

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House if this sum is to be expended on a new project that was not originally budgeted for?

Ms. Ferguson: To the Hon. Member's question, yes.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, this is exactly the point that I made earlier. A supplementary is not for a new project. It is for a project that is ongoing where you need additional moneys. There is a total of \$1.6 billion under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure where moneys are being uploaded, so to speak.

The next question to the Minister is, when will the equipment be delivered to Port Georgetown?

Ms. Ferguson: To answer the Hon. Member's question, I would just like to advise him that the equipment can only be delivered when we have it customised. We are actually seeking the approval of this sum of money that will go towards the acquisition of the new equipment.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, just to make it clear, we, on this side of the House, would support the acquisition of the equipment because it is of benefit to Guyana. This proposal rightfully belongs in Budget 2017. This *sleight of hand* that we are having here by the coming by

way of a Supplementary is an attempt to accelerate expenditure to make a report look good because this will not happen before 31st of December, 2016.

12.06 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe that the term *sleight of hand* is not...

Bishop Edghill: I apologise, Sir; I withdraw that. I meant no offense to anyone.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another word you wish to use?

Bishop Edghill: This approach is an unusual approach.

CJIA Modernisation Project

Bishop Edghill: Sir, the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) Modernisation Project is one that we are in agreement with. Recently, the Project Manager made it public that this Project is behind schedule and it is underperforming. And if \$4,450,000,000 is budgeted for 2016 and the project is underperforming, how could we be receiving an additional inflow? What is it for – \$4,486,284,710 plus \$656,502,922 on the local side? The question is, what will we be paying for between now and 31st December, 2016?

Mr. Patterson: That is one of those strange questions that threw me to the end, Sir. The Hon. Member should probably know that this is Export-Import (Exim) Bank of China funded. The work is progressing and what has happened is that the work has progressed further than we would have budgeted for 2016. They have done much more work and that is why we have to pay. You probably would know that a lot of the works have been completed already. We have to get the money to pay them in the next valuation coming up. And so what exactly we are going to do with it is what threw me because I thought that the Member knew it was a runway and a terminal building.

On the question that he brought about the progress of the work, the progress has accelerated tremendously, and we have a completion date. The Project has to be completed by the end of November, 2017. Our issue with the contractor is that we would like them to know that all encumbrances have been removed. No longer do we have to move 505 Guyanese from around the area. All the persons have been removed. We do think that, for us to finish, they should be

doing more. We have freed up more areas and we have moved the generator. The new arrival area is free for them to work. Therefore, there is no excuse that we can find that they should not be putting additional resources on the site. And that was the genesis of the letter. It was not a question that they were not making the progress but we would like it to finish before. So we would like them to accelerate even further. I hope that would have cleared up the issues for the Hon. Gentleman.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is giving some answers but I would like him to give us the full answers. I would like him to indicate to us, out of the voted provision of \$4,450,000,000, when it was paid. You have to have an interim certificate for payment. Is he in possession of another interim certificate for payment and for what works?

Mr. Patterson: The \$4,450,000,000 was paid up to the end of June. We have two payments pending for September and October and that is why it is...

Bishop Edghill: Could we get the totals?

Mr. Patterson: The pending payments add up to US\$6.2 million. Unfortunately, we will have to do some calculations.

Bishop Edghill: I would just like the Minister to help me out here, Sir. If we have interim certificates for payment for US\$6.2 million, that would be about \$1.25 billion. Between our local contributions and moneys coming from the China Exim Bank, you are asking for a total of \$5 billion plus when your interim certificates are only for \$1.2 billion. Where would the \$3 billion be utilised between now and the 31st December, 2016?

Mr. Patterson: I think I should have completed the whole conversation.

The pending payments that we do have at the moment are for July and August. Therefore, the certifications there for September, October, November and December make the balance of the moneys. The pending payments in hand with the certifications are there. The review on the September one is being done at the moment. At the end of October, the payment for that month would be at the end of November. As you know, that is how we do applications for payments. So, therefore, the pending is US\$6.2 million or the \$1.2 billion. Of course, the payments will be for September, October, November and December.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you for that.

So, on average, we are spending about US\$600,000 per month at the rate work is being done.

Mr. Patterson: Before we go down the wrong road, Sir, for the last two, June and July, we spent about US\$3.1 million per month. It is US\$6.2 million for two months.

Bishop Edghill: Okay. You are correct.

Mr. Patterson: Thank you.

Mr. Rutherford: Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Minister state if the revised terminal building will be smaller, of the same size or larger than the terminal building in the original contract?

Mr. Patterson: Thank you very much, Sir. I do thank you for the opportunity so I could put these matters on the record.

Sir, the final design which is being done - because there have been statements in the press requesting of me to state the sizes of the new building - I can say for sure that our last design of the new arrival section and the renovated departure section is 13,431 square metres, which is the same or larger than what was initially designed. This design caters for the International Air Transport Association (IATA) requirement which demands for an average of 548 passengers per hour, our projection of passengers that would traverse the airport in any particular hour.

I would also like to take the opportunity now, Sir, to actually lay over with you - if someone can collect it - the actual schematics between the original design size and what is done right now so that it can be enshrined here so that the issue that has been bandied around in the public that we have reduced the size of the intended airport... That is not true at all and, from the schematics, one can actually see the enhancements that we would have made.

I want to thank the Member for the opportunity that we can put this on record so I can officially answer that query directed to me via the press.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Bishop Edghill: I thank the Minister for his explanation

12.21 p.m.

Could the Minister confirm for this House that we are not having a brand new terminal but a renovated terminal?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, once again, there are certain things which have to be on record. We are to have a brand new arrival section, far bigger than what was anticipated, far bigger than what was previously conceived. The entire existing Airport would be renovated. Therefore, we would have a new, enhanced and larger Airport. I do thank the Member for allowing me to put these things back on record.

Bishop Edghill: My final question, Sir: If it is as the Minister explained to us, in the reworked contract, what is the price per square metre since this is a fixed price contract?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the total project cost remains unchanged. It took my Ministry – some of the staff are here and some are not here but are probably still working right now – a lot of hard work to be able to deliver a new and enhanced Airport, with all the runways and so on, for the same Project price that was left with us. We had 25 months delay. You know the history so I do not want to go over it. If you want, I can place it on the record. In addition, I want to say that there would be enhancement, not just for the Airport or the terminal but to the environment, for the people of northern Timahri. So for the exact same price at which the Member left the Project, we would be able to do everything we would like to do.

Mr. Seeraj: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister the same question because it was not answered. Whilst the Minister answered the question about the cost, the question has to do specifically with the cost per square meter. Whilst the overall cost might be the same, we want to have an idea of whether the overall size is also the same. I am certain if the Minister has his staff working up to now, at this late hour, we would be able to get that answer.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, of course, I think the information is in the public domain. I do think that my Colleague shadow minister would have been given the exact breakdown. But, if I can get to a printer, I would give the Hon. Member the full cost before the end of the evening. As always, I try to be as open and transparent as possible - nothing opaque. I have brought some clarity to this Project since it has been under my purview.

Thank you.

Item 4 32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure – Transport – \$102,100,800, \$4,486,284,710, \$656,502,922 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 5 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$411,000,000

Item 5 40-406 Ministry of Education – Post Secondary/Tertiary Education - \$411,000,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 6 42-423 Ministry of Communities – Sustainable Communities Development – \$88,526,000, \$20,448,321

Georgetown Sanitation Improvement Programme

Mr. Croal: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister indicate what the project activities to be completed are, identify the equipment and briefly state what aspects of institutional strengthening he envisages?

Mr. Bulkan: For clarification, Mr. Chairman, are we speaking about the supplementary or are we speaking about the original loan?

Mr. Croal: I am speaking about the supplementary.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, it is the supplementary, \$88,526,000.

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, the components are project management for a sum of approximately \$19 million; institutional strengthening for a sum of \$9,259,000; energy efficiency component for approximately \$5.3 million; activities under water borne diseases relating to Zika for \$47.86 million; and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) component of \$6.6 million.

In relation to the Zika related activities, those are laboratory equipment - \$8.4 million; spray cans - \$4.2 million; health promotion - \$1 million; treatment for Guillain-Barré - \$10 million; training of an etymologist - \$1.3 million; containerised insectary - \$11 million; and treated bed nets - \$4.3 million; those are a total of approximately \$48 million.

Mr. Croal: Thank you very much. Could the Hon. Minister indicate when this Project is expected to come to an end?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, it is expected that all of the activities would be completed before the end of this year.

Water Supply Rehabilitation – Linden

Mr. Croal: Could the Hon. Minister indicate if this \$20,448,321 million will bring a conclusion to the programme and if it will be completed this year?

Mr. Bulkan: Mr. Chairman, this project was completed in July of this year and the sums being sought are for the final payments to the contractor and the consultants attached to the project.

Item 6 42-423 Ministry of Communities – Sustainable Communities Development – \$88,526,000, \$20,448,321 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

12.36 p.m.

Item 7 43-432 Ministry of Public Health – Disease Control - \$35,747,345

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister of Public Health disaggregate the sum of the \$35,747,345 to tell us how much of it is for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), how much is for tuberculosis (TB) and how much is for malaria?

Minister of Public Health [Dr. Norton]: There is no provision for malaria. For HIV, \$29.9 million is allocated and for TB, \$5.8 million is allocated.

Dr. Anthony: Could the Minister say why there is no provision for malaria since there is an active Global Fund to fight malaria? As far as I am aware, there was a disbursement from the Global Fund for this year. Why is that not reflected?

Dr. Norton: All the needs for malaria are being met through the voted sum.

Dr. Anthony: This provision that we are considering allows for HIV, TB and malaria. There is an active malaria grant and there was a disbursement this year, so why is that not reflected in the amounts stated here?

Dr. Norton: This is a supplementary. The sum for malaria is in the original budget.

Dr. Anthony: I would like to know whether this would be the final disbursement and whether the malaria grant would come to an end and if there would be no further Global Fund grants for Malaria.

Dr. Norton: We are here discussing the current budget for the current year.

Dr. Anthony: Again, the line item deals with \$280 million and the supplementary being sought is for \$35,747,345. As I am aware, there are three grants from the Global Fund, one of which is for Malaria. I am asking why is that not being reflected in what is provided here. Anyway, I will move on.

In the remarks column \$35,747,345 is provided for equipment and drugs, can the Minister state how much of the amounts allocated for HIV would be spent on medications and how much would be spent on equipment. Could the Minister provide a list of the drugs to be purchased, the quantities and the types of equipment and the same for TB?

Dr. Norton: The drugs necessary for TB are in the second line and include the multidrug-resistant tuberculosis which is for ten patients. I could offer the Hon. Member the amount that we are spending, which would be \$5,889,200. We could also provide the list of the drugs for HIV, as well as the equipment. For example, 280 test kits, including both the Uni-Gold and the STAT-PAK. We could provide that list for the Hon. Member.

Dr. Anthony: I am very happy that the Minister has told us about what he is buying for TB. Has the Ministry bought the drugs already or is it going to buy the drugs?

Dr. Norton: I can assure the Hon. Member that all drugs have been ordered.

Dr. Anthony: For TB, as far as I understand, there have been two disbursements from the Global Fund. The first being for the amount of \$151,000 and the other was where there was a shortfall because the Global Fund did not disburse the full sum of money. One of the reasons it withheld that money was because it did not give the money to buy medication since, at that time, the project did not submit a procurement plan to the Global Fund. I am surprised that TB drugs

are being ordered, when the Global Fund has not disbursed any money for the purchase of TB drugs. How can the Minister order what there is no money for?

Dr. Norton: Everything is paid for by the Fund.

Dr. Anthony: Again, there were two disbursements this year for the TB grant and... [Ms.

Lawrence: Do you have proof of that?] Yes, I have proof.

There were two disbursements for the TB grant and the Global Fund specifically withheld moneys for health products. How is it that the Ministry is ordering health products for TB, when the Global Fund did not disburse any money for them to purchase TB drugs? Furthermore, could the Minister state what the status of the procurement plan is that is supposed to be given to the Global Fund? Also, for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, a plan had to be presented to the Global Fund. My question is whether that plan is ready and if it has been presented to the Global Fund?

Dr. Norton: Once again, the Fund pays for the medication.

Dr. Anthony: Again, we know that the Fund is paying for the medication. However, the Ministry must receive funds from the Global Fund before payments could be made for the medication. The Global Fund withheld those funds, specifically, because the Ministry did not submit to them a procurement plan and a plan for the expansion of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. If the Ministry did not submit the plan, then the Fund would not release the money.

Earlier, the Minister told us that the Ministry has ordered the drugs, however, to date, the Ministry has not received moneys from the Global Fund to buy the drugs. There is a discrepancy.

Dr. Norton: We do not have to receive funds from the grant. Global Fund pays for the medication.

Item 7 43-432 Ministry of Public Health – Disease Control - \$35,747,345, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 8 52-521 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Main Office - \$40,319,000

Item 8 52-521 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Main Office - \$40,319,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

12.51 p.m.

52-522 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Ministry Administration - \$2,905,000

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, you did not allow for questions.

Mr. Chairman: I allowed for questions, but perhaps Hon. Members were not ready to ask questions. I will recall my decision of a moment ago, but the Chairman finds himself in some difficulty when Hon. Members appear not to pay attention to what the proceedings are and then suddenly realise that a decision is taken, and wish to speak. Hon. Mr. Nandlall, do you wish to speak on this matter?

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I wanted to ask a question.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed please.

Mr. Nandlall: The remarks speak of the purchase and installation of a surveillance system, could the Hon. Minister explain where this surveillance system is going to be installed?

Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: If it pleases you Mr. Chairman, the system is for both inside and outside of the Ministry's building at Lot 95 Carmichael Street.

Item 8 52 – 522 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Ministry Administration – \$2,905,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this completes the consideration of all the items. Hon. Members, there has to be a change in that figure given that there was an increase in the Capital Estimates. Perhaps, the Minister of Finance would give us the new figure.

Mr. Jordan: Yes. It is \$9,549,622, 347.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister for his assistance in that regard.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes. Mr. Chairman, Standing Order 76 (2) states that the sum may only be increase by a Minister who shall signify to the Committee the recommendations or the consent of the Cabinet to the increase, in order just to dot an I and to cross a T. Could the Minister, just for

the record of the House, say whether the amendment that he has brought to increase the supplementary is with the consent or the recommendation of the Cabinet?

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for her intervention.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Chairman, I signify that the increase in the supplementary estimates has the approval of the Cabinet.

Question:

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 3 of 2016 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$9,549,622,347 for the period 1st January, 2016 to 31st December, 2016.”

put, and agreed to.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial No. 3 of 2016 – Schedule of supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$9, 549,622,347, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NO. 13 (N) & (54)

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders No. 13(N) & (54) be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation Bill No. 3 of 2016 – Bill No. 20 of 2016 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with paragraph 2, of Article 171 of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended a Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No. 20 of 2016 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly, and move that it be read for the first time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read the first time:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3 FOR 2016) BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 20 OF 2016

A Bill intituled:

“An ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Question put and carried.

Bill read for the first time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS

BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO. 3 FOR 2016) BILL 2016 – BILL NO. 20 OF 2016

A Bill intituled:

“An ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the

Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2016, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2016), Bill 2016, Bill No. 20 of 2016 be read the second time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the second time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 3 for 2016) Bill 2016, Bill No. 20 of 2016 be read the third time and passed as amended.

Bill read a third time and passed as amended.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I thank you for your assistance in enabling us to complete our work to this point this evening.

1.06 p.m.

Hon. Members, it seems to me that we have reached or, perhaps, passed the point of saturation. It is now one hour short the time when we were to have met here yesterday afternoon. I will suggest that we adjourn at this time. I invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I beg that this House be adjourned until 4th November, 2016 at 2.00 pm.

Sir if I may, in concluding our business, I would like to, on behalf of the Government benches and the Government of Guyana, wish Your Honour, the Clerk of the National Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition and all Members of the Opposition benches a Happy Diwali and also to extend Diwali greetings to the staff who would have been working beyond the call of duty in these late night sessions. Not intending to make any lengthy speech at this occasion, we all know that Diwali is a National Festival, a National Holiday and a National Event of symbolising the

triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. In expressing these wishes to my Colleagues of this National Assembly, I hope that Diwali, this year, would introduce some changes to our own lives and that we will find the type of enlightenment that will help us to work together for the national good and for the good life for all of our people.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition, I want to take this opportunity to join with the Hon. Prime Minister in wishing all of Guyana, more particularly, our Hindu brothers and sisters, a Happy Diwali. I want to extend Diwali greetings also to the staff of this Parliament, as well as the hardworking media core that is normally here with us.

Diwali is a time in the year where Hindus celebrate the victory of good over evil, the removal of darkness and the replacement of it with light. I wish that the spirit of Diwali will prevail, to borrow the words of my friend, and will envelope us over the next few days. I hope also, that that light that will illuminate our country over the next two days will assist us in having a reconciliation of that dispute as to when Diwali actually is in our country. We need to put that to rest as quickly as possible but, nevertheless, Diwali is upon us either on Saturday or Sunday and I join with all of Guyana in wishing all of us a Happy Diwali.

Thank you. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: I would only say this as Speaker, as I understand it, light diffuses darkness on everyone, be it Government or Opposition. Your wishes tonight to us would not be any less powerful and well meant, if you had simply said that you were wishing all on behalf of all. It is like light and sun. It just seems to me that what we should have said was that we offer to all of the Government. *[Interruption]*

I want to wish everyone, first of all, a restful night after our labours today and to wish everyone that the spirit of Diwali, the disappearance of darkness and the diffusion of light and all the glories it brings with it to all of us.

I thank you. *[Applause]*

Adjourned accordingly at 1.21 a.m.