

# National Assembly Debates

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

**Part I of**

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68<sup>th</sup> Sitting

14:00h

Mon 22nd December 2008

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**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)**

***Speaker (1)***

**The Hon. Hari N Ramkarran SC, MP**

*Speaker of the National Assembly*

**Members of the Government (40)**

**People's Progressive Party/Civic (39)**

**The United Force (1)**

The Hon. Samuel A A Hinds MP

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

*Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and  
Communications*

The Hon. Clement J Rohee MP

*Minister of Home Affairs*

The Hon. Shaik K Z Baksh MP

*Minister of Education*

The Hon. Dr. Henry B Jeffrey MP

*Minister of Foreign Trade and International  
Cooperation*

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S Ramsammy MP

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE 22 DECEMBER 2008**

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Health*

The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett MP

*(R# 9 - U Takutu/U Esseq)*

*Minister of Amerindian Affairs*

\*The Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh MP

*Minister of Finance*

The Hon. Robert M Persaud MP

*(R# 6 - E Berbice/Corentyne)*

*Minister of Agriculture*

The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R A Westford MP

*(R#7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

*Minister of the Public Service*

The Hon. Kellawan Lall MP

*Minister of Local Government and Regional  
Development*

\*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh SC, MP (AOL)

*Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*

The Hon. Dr. Frank C S Anthony MP

*Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport*

The Hon. B H Robeson Benn MP (Absent)

*Minister of Transport and Hydraulics*

†The Hon. Manzoor Nadir MP

*Minister of Labour*

The Hon. Priya D Manickchand MP

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

*Minister of Human Services and Social Security*

The Hon. Dr. Desrey Fox MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Education*

The Hon. Bheri S Ramsaran MD, MP

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\* Non-elected Minister

† Elected Member from The United Force

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE 22 DECEMBER 2008**

*Minister in the Ministry of Health*

The Hon. Jennifer I Webster MP

*Minister in the Ministry of Finance*

The Hon. Manniram Prashad MP

*Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce*

\*Mrs. Pauline R Sukhai MP

*Minister of Amerindian Affairs*

Mr. Donald Ramotar MP

The Hon. Gail Teixeira MP

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta MP

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal MP, Chief Whip

Ms. Bibi S Shadick MP

*(R# 3 – Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali MP

Mr. Albert Atkinson JP, MP

*(R# 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)*

Mr. Komal Chand CCH, JP, MP

*(R# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Mr. Bernard C DeSantos SC, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mrs. Shirley V Edwards JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr. Mohamed F Khan JP, MP

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mr. Odinga N Lumumba MP

Mr. Moses V Nagamootoo JP, MP - (AOL)

Mr. Mohabir A Nandlall MP

Mr. Neendkumar JP, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE 22 DECEMBER 2008**

‡Mr. Steve P Ninvalle MP

*Parl'y Sect'ry in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport*

Mr. Parmanand P Persaud JP, MP

*(R# 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)*

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury CCH, JP, MP

*Parl'y Sect'ry in the Ministry of Housing and Water*

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj MP

Mr. Norman A Whittaker MP

*(R# 1 - Barima/Waini)*

**Members of the Opposition (28)**

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

Mr. Robert HO Corbin

*Leader of the Opposition*

Mr. Winston S Murray CCH, MP

Mrs. Clarissa S Riehl MP

*Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly*

Mr. E Lance Carberry MP

*Chief Whip*

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer MP

Mr. Anthony Vieira - (AOL)

Mr. Basil Williams MP

Dr. George A Norton MP

Mrs. Volda A Lawrence MP

Mr. Keith Scott MP - (Absent)

Miss Amna Ally MP

Mr. Dave Danny MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

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\* Non-elected Minister

‡ Non-elected Member

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEBATE 22 DECEMBER 2008**

Mr. Aubrey C Norton MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr. Ernest B Elliot MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Miss Judith David-Blair MP

*(R# 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)*

Mr. Mervyn Williams MP

*(Re# 3 - Essequibo Is/W Demerara)*

Ms. Africo Selman MP

Dr. John Austin MP

*(R# 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)*

Ms. Jennifer Wade MP

*(R# 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)*

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon MP

*(R# 10 - U Demerara/U Berbice)*

Mr. Desmond Fernandes MP

*(Absent)*

*(Region No 1 – Barima/Waini)*

**(ii) Alliance For Change (5)**

Mr. Raphael G Trotman MP

*(AOL)*

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan MP

Mrs. Sheila VA Holder MP

Ms. Latchmin B Punalall, MP

*(R# 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)*

Mr. David Patterson MP

**(iii) Guyana Action Party/Rise Organise and Rebuild**

**(1)**

Mr. Everall N Franklin MP

**OFFICERS**

Mr. Sherlock E Isaacs

*Clerk of the National Assembly*

Mrs. Lilawtie Coonjah,

*Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly*

**2:23 H**

## **PRAYERS**

[**The Clerk** reads the **Prayer**]

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

Honourable Members, as part of the Public Relations Program of the National Assembly, Guyenterprise Ltd is in the process of preparing a booklet on the profile of all the Members of Parliament. The photographs of all Members of Parliament will be included in the booklet.

I am therefore seeking the cooperation of Members to have their photographs taken by Guyenterprise during this sitting. The camera is set up in the MPs lounge for the convenience of Members. Members are therefore asked to go to the MPs lounge at a time convenient to them to have their photographs taken. Members who do not take advantage of this effort which we are making will not have their photographs included. In other words, we will not chase behind

## **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

Honourable Members, I present to the Assembly

*Minutes of the Proceedings of the 8th  
Meeting of the Committee of Selection  
of the National Assembly, held on  
Wednesday, 3 December 2008*

## **ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

Mr. Corbin ...

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, I submitted to you earlier today a letter seeking your permission to raise under this item five questions to the relevant Ministers, more specifically the Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Health, and the Hon Prime Minister, all relating to the flood situation. The first one having to do with the inundation, and asking the Minister:

- 1. Why most of these villages are inundated when assurances were given to the nation that huge expenditure was utilised to prepare the infrastructure to avoid any adverse effects of the anticipated rainfall?*

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The second one has to do with the very Minister of Agriculture stating:

2. *Why after two weeks of flooding in the village of Dochfour, that attempts are only now being made to fix the silted-up koker at Hope?*
3. *Whether the Minister of Agriculture will inform this National Assembly when relief efforts will begin to aid the residents of the inundated villages along the East Coast of Demerara/West Coast Berbice and Corentyne, and could he state how much will be paid now, and when the total compensation will be paid?*

I had asked you:

4. *Mr. Speaker could I have permission to ask the Minister of Health to explain to this National Assembly when a major health initiative will begin in the badly affected flood areas along the coast?*



And finally,

5. *Could the Prime Minister inform this National Assembly why the Civil Defence Commission has not yet begun a major relief initiative to the flood-hit areas along the coast of Guyana and in Pomeroon?*

I do not know what is your disposition on this matter? I did have a word with you, but you were still contemplating this matter.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Corbin. Now that you have got all your questions in the record ... You made two applications to me. One is for permission to ask the questions, and the other is an application which you will make shortly in relation to raising the matters, seeking an adjournment of the National Assembly on a matter of urgent public importance.

I am still contemplating ... but I am inclined to allow your motion, if and when made. That being my inclination, my inclination is not to allow the questions but because the questions can be raised in the debate and the Minister will have an opportunity then to answer them. Now that you have given him advance notice, I am sure that he has taken note of it, and will seek, himself and his colleagues, or him or his colleagues through him, will seek to answer the

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questions. And I would urge him to do so, because this is a matter of so much importance.

The Minister had also sought my permission this morning to make a statement which was subsequently submitted to me, and which I agreed to, so that will come in a moment.

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Honourable Members, there are 24 questions on the Order Paper. Numbers 1 to 9 are for written replies.

- Numbers 1, 3 and 4 are in the name of the Honourable Member Mr. Raphael Trotman.
- Question Number 2 is in the name of Honourable Member Mrs. Deborah Backer.
- Question Number 5 is in the name of the Honourable Member Dr. John Austin.
- Questions Number 6, 7, 8 and 9 are in the name of Honourable Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence.
- Only answers to Questions Number 3 and 9 were received, and these have therefore been circulated in accordance with our standing orders.

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- Answer to Question Number 1 in the name of the Attorney General, and Number 2, in the name of the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, have not been received.

**For Written Replies:**

**CORONER'S INQUEST**

Member Asking: **Mr. Raphael (G. C. Trotman, M.P.)**

Minister Answering: **Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs**

*Can the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs state the current number of Coroner's Inquest pending in Guyana?*

*(Notice Paper No. 295 (Q21 1 Opp 206) published on 2008-10-27)*

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs did not pass copies of the answer to the above question to the Clerk of the National Assembly for circulation to Members as required by Standing Order No. 22(4).

**2. NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR 72 HOURS OR MORE**

Member Asking: **Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P.**

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Minister Answering: **Minister of Home Affairs**

*Could the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs provide this National Assembly with a list of the number of persons detained for the year 2007, at each Police Station listed below, for 72 hours or more, who were subsequently released without any charges being preferred against them:*

- (i) Sparendam Police Station
- (ii) Beterverwagting Police Station
- (iii) Vigilance Police Station
- (iv) Cove and John Police Station
- (v) Brickdam Police Station
- (vi) Providence Police Station

**(Notice Paper No. 309 (Q225 Opp220) published on 2008-11-05)**

The Minister of Home Affairs did not pass copies of the answer to the above question to the Clerk of the National Assembly for circulation to Members at that sitting as required by Standing

### **3. ENTITLEMENTS OF FORMER PRESIDENTS**

Member Asking: **Mr. Raphael Trotman**

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

*What benefits are former Presidents of  
the Republic of Guyana entitled to?*

**(Notice Paper No. 311 (Q227 Opp222) published on 2008-  
11-20)**

Answer:

Former Presidents of Guyana are entitled by statute  
to:

- (i) A Presidential Pension
- (ii) A Housing Allowance

By Cabinet decision and custom and practice the  
following may also be provided according to the  
circumstances:

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- (i) Security
- (ii) Household support
- (iii) Overseas travel
- (iv) Transportation
- (v) Utilities.

**4. BENEFITS RECEIVED BY WIDOW OF MR. HUGH DESMOND HOYTE**

Member Asking: **Mr. Raphael GC Trotman**

Minister Answering: **The Hon. Prime Minister and  
Minister of Public Works and  
Communications**

*What benefits has the widow of the third President of the Republic of Guyana, Mr.. Hugh Desmond Hoyte, received since his death in December 2002?*

*(Notice Paper No. 312 (Q228 Opp223) published on 2008-11-20)*

**Answer:**

Mrs. Hoyte has received:

- The Statutorily authorized widow's pension and by Cabinet decision:

**5. CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NURSERY SCHOOL AT NUMBER 79 VILLAGE, CORENTYNE**

Member Asking: **Dr. John Austin**

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Education**

- (i) *Would the Honourable Minister of Education explain to this National Assembly why a new Nursery School is being constructed in Number 79 Village, Corentyne where there is an existing Nursery School rather than in Scottsburg Village, Corentyne or Number 77 New Scheme, Corentyne, where there are no Nursery Schools?*
- (ii) *Could the Honourable Minister of Education tell this National Assembly what will the existing building be used for after the new Nursery School building is completed?*

**(Notice Paper No. 319 (Q 235 Opp 230) published on 2008-11-20)**

**Answer:**

The No. 79 Municipal Market has been extended and now encroaches on the present building that houses the No. 79 Municipal Nursery School. The dust, stench and noise nuisance emanating from the market into the Nursery School is not conducive to learning.

His Worship the Mayor of Corriverton, Mr. Roy Baijnauth, Councillors of the Municipality, parents and teachers have continuously lobbied for relocation of the existing school since 2005. A new building was budgeted for in the 2008 current budget and executed by the Works Department of Region 6, this year at a cost of \$7.6 million.

The land for the new building was provided by the Corriverton municipality and is in close proximity to the existing school. The present structure which is made of concrete cannot be moved to the new location.

Relocation of the existing school in January, 2009 will afford better utilization of the current resources. The old concrete structure presently used in the property of the Corriverton Town Council and will be re-possessed in January, 2009.

Following demographic change in Scottsburg and No. 77 New Scheme a school mapping exercise was conducted during the first quarter of the year using



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distance matrix and location of existing schools in order to level off any existing spatial disparities in the provision of the education facilities,

Scottsburg is located between Princetown Nursery School (less than half mile to the east) and

No. 72 Nursery School (half mile to the west).

Children from the No. 77 New Scheme attend the Princetown Nursery School.

**6. COMMISSION OF THE ELDERLY**

Member Asking: **Mrs. Volda Lawrence**

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Human  
Services and Social Security**

*Would the Hon. Minister of Human  
Services and Social Security inform this  
Honourable House whether:*

- (i) *The commission of the Elderly is in force. If yes, who is the chairperson and who are the commissioners?*

*How many meetings did the commission hold for the period January 2008 to August 2008?*

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- (ii) *Is there a program of activities for 2008? If yes, what are some of the activities completed and what other activities are on the agenda for 2008?*

**(Notice Paper No. 326 (Q241 Opp231) published on 2008-11-28)**

**Answer:**

- (a) Yes it is in force.

The Chairperson is Justice D Trotman

The Commissioners are:

Winston Emanuel, Sarjoo Rajpat, Ann Greene, John DaSilva, Lucille Chabrol, Adunauth Bhola, Deendyal Singh and Volda Lawrence.

No meetings were held for the period January to August, 2008.

- (b) No.

While the Commission was inactive in 2008, departments of the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security conducted many activities year round in the ten Regions for the elderly. These activities were intensified across Guyana during the month of the elderly.

**7. SALARIES AND BENEFITS PAID TO  
PUBLIC SERVANTS**

Member Asking: **Mrs. Volda Lawrence**

Minister Answering: *The Minister of Finance*

*Would the Hon. Minister of Finance inform this Honourable House:*

- (a) *How many public servants have benefited from the \$4,000 cost of living allowance?*
- (b) *How many government workers are receiving a salary of less than \$50,000 monthly?*
- (c) *What provision has this Government made to assist those government workers receiving a salary below \$50,000 monthly with the increase in the cost of living?*
- (d) *If provision has been made, could the Hon. Minister indicate under*

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*which line item the provision has been made and what is the amount allocated?*

**(Notice Paper No. 327 (Q242 Opp232) published on 2008-11-28)**

Answer:

- (a) Approximately 16,000 employees (public servants, teachers, nurses, members of the disciplined services) are eligible for and have been receiving the temporary cost of living adjustment.
- (b) As indicated in Answer (a) above.
- (c) A number of interventions, including:
- (i) Actions aimed at containing the pass-through of global price increases to the domestic consumer, such as:
    - Zero-rating for the purposes of the value-added tax on an extensive list of basic necessities, including an extension to this list announced in Budget 2008;

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- Reducing the excise tax on fuel in times of increasing fuel prices;
  - Providing a substantial cash subsidy to the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) to contain the increase in electricity tariffs (provided for in Agency 02, Programme 021, Line Item 6321), and financing a very substantial investment programme in GPL;
  - Containing the increase in fees and tolls charged by Government entities for services such as water, ferry and bridge crossings, etc.;
  - Providing a cash subsidy for the sale of flour to bakeries and for the sale of small packets of flour directly to the consumer (provided for in Agency 21, Programme 212, Line Item 6321) and
- (ii) Actions aimed at increasing disposable income:
- Increase in the income tax threshold from \$28,000 to \$35,000 per month with effect from 1 January 2008;
  - Payment of a temporary cost of living adjustment of \$4,000 monthly free of taxes from May 2008 to all public servants, teachers,

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nurses, and members of the disciplined services whose gross pay does not exceed \$50,000 per month (met from the various employment cost allocations provided in the national budget) and

- Payment of a 5 percent across-the-board increase with effect from 1 January 2008 following a 9 percent across-the-board increase from 1 January 2007 (met from the various employment cost allocations provided in the national budget).

(d) As indicated in (c) above.

**8. CARIFESTA X**

Member Asking: **Mrs. Volda Lawrence**

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Culture,  
Youth and Sport**

*Could the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport inform this Honourable*

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*House:*

*(a) How many tickets were printed for the various activities during CARIFESTA X?*

*(b) What was the cost incurred for the printing of these tickets?*

*(c) What was the budgeted revenue to be garnered from the sale of these tickets?*

*(d) What percentage of the expenditure for CARIFESTA X was the revenue garnered from ticket sales budgeted to cover?*

*(e) How was the shortfall met?*

*(Notice Paper No. 328 (Q243 Opp 233) published on 2008-11-28)*

**Answers:**

- (a) There were some events that required tickets, for these events 330,706 tickets were printed by Ticket Masters, Canada.

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- (b) The tickets cost \$4,092,920 Guyana dollars  
(Approximately \$12 per ticket).

Questions c, d and e are invalid because it assumes that tickets were used to generate income. On the contrary the tickets were free.

**9. NATIONAL PROCUREMENT COMMISSION**

Member Asking: **Mrs. Volda Lawrence**

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

*Could the Honourable Prime Minister tell this Honourable House when his Government will honour its commitment made to the National Stakeholders and the Guyanese people to provide their nominees for the National Procurement Commission?*

*(Notice Paper No. 329 (Q244 Opp234) published on 2008-11-28)*

**Answer:**

The Procurement Act and Regulations of 2003 (8 of 2003) sets out in Section 16 subsections 2 to S the creation and membership of the National Procurement and Tender Administration. Subsections



2 and 3 state:

- 2: The Administration shall be managed by the National Board which shall consist of seven *members*, appointed by the Minister from among persons of unquestioned integrity who have shown capacity in business, the professions, law, audit, finance and administration.
- 3: The members of the National Board to be appointed by the Minister shall comprise:
  - (i) not more than five persons from the Public Service;
  - (ii) not more than three persons from the private sector after consultation with their representative organization.

The Government after various discussions put this matter, of the nomination of members to the Board, to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

The Government about three years ago did put forward some names to the PAC and the discussions then moved on to criteria more detailed than in the law which should be met by nominees, and details about modalities and

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procedures about choosing persons for nomination. This continues to be a work in progress at the PAC.

**For Oral Replies:**

- Questions Number 10 to 24 are for oral replies. Question Number 10. Honourable Member Mrs. Holder, please ask your question.

**Mrs. Sheila V A Holder:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The question is...

**The Speaker:** Sorry, just a moment ... [*Pause*] Yes ...

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:**

*Mr. Speaker, I stand ... I am not sure I can rightfully say it is a point of order, but a point of clarification, as to what procedure this Parliament follows when a question is placed on the Order Paper, notice is adequately given, the date is fixed in Parliament for the answer, and the relevant official of the Government does not provide the answer to those questions?*

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**The Speaker:** You want to say something, Prime Minister?

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there is some error, because I submitted all three, the answers to three questions that were posed to me, and there are some other questions ... there are some other answers that I see in the paper, the head in front of me, so I think there have been more answers than maybe the two that you recognise.

**The Speaker:** I do not ... you answered your questions?

Yes, Prime Minister ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** And I think I see some other questions ... some other answers here.

**The Speaker:** Yes, but my statement was Answers to Question Number 1 in the name of the Attorney General, and Number 2 in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs ... not you.

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Corbin, the question to which you have seen an answer will be found somewhere in the Standing Orders. I am not in a position to give you that answer at the moment, but I think that you can seek your answer in the Standing Orders, and the Clerk will guide you. The Clerk is

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instructed to ... is the expert or the person responsible for that area of activity, and I am sure he would be able to guide you accordingly.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Thank you Sir. I need guidance on the right book. I am not seeing the answer.

**The Speaker:** The incident... a similar issue arose in the Trinidad Parliament recently. You might wish to explore that.

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mrs. Holder, and my apologies. Please ask your question.

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The question is directed to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, and I am seeking to get from him:

*At what price or prices Guysuco sold sugar to Trinidad & Tobago for the last few years. I want to know whether the prices have been constant, or they have changed from time to time, and at what [rate?].*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister ...

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**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to the question, there has been some level of consistency in the price, but you have to recognise that there are three types of sugar we sell: the regular bag, the Demerara Gold, and the Demerara Brown. So the prices vary; like for instance, for the bagged sugar, we got between \$360 to \$400; Demerara Gold, package, between \$500 to \$510, that is, in 2006; and the Demerara Brown package, between \$450. In 2007, for the bagged sugar, we got a bit more, between US\$420, that is last year. For the Demerara Gold, the price remained the same, US\$510. Demerara Brown, also that was consistent, that did not go up or down.

In 2008, we also saw a further rise in the bagged brown sugar, Trinidad, for this year, \$460. The Demerara Gold packets went up a bit, up to as much as \$525; also the Demerara Brown packets went up to as much as \$480. The reason I am not giving specific prices, giving range, is because there is an element of market intelligence. I could share that in camera or privately with you, but because they are other competitors too, and Guysuco has to compete in terms of its market share, and so there is some level of confidentiality, which I am willing to share directly with the Member as long as it is in camera.

**The Speaker:** Mrs. Holder.

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:** Supplementary, please.

*Would the Minister be in a position to indicate to the House, therefore, whether that price is over and above the average cost of production of the various types of sugar?*

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** All the markets that Guysuco has sought over the years, you have... the European Market is the more lucrative market, which is in the vicinity of US\$694 per metric tonne. But even the markets, say for instance the US and in the Caricom markets, where we get a business, the aim is to ensure that you sell sugar at a price that, as it were, would bring income and would cover your costs and make some money. So that is the general procedure of Guysuco in terms of its marketing efforts, but different markets get different prices. The Europeans, we all know that that is a very peculiar arrangement, which in 2009, when the 36% price cut kicks in, we will also see some loss again picked up in terms of what we were getting historically from Europe.

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:**

*I gather from the Honourable Minister that the possibility of this, that sugar therefore has been sold, and that is debateable, from time to time, at below*

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*the cost of production and therefore might have incurred losses. Am I accurate in that interpretation of what you said?*

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** The information that I have does not give me that picture.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mrs. Latchmin Budhan-Punalall, please ask your question.

**Mrs. Latchmin Budhan-Punalall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question is addressed to the Honourable Prime Minister.

*Does the government have early plans to provide electricity to the residents of Madhia and its environs?*

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members there are about a hundred or more communities, hinterland communities which are all desirous of becoming electrified at some time or another and the government in its programme of advancing electrification, in particular the Unserved Areas Electrification Project did think of the hinterland areas and did have in place, did put in place, a hinterland electrification component which would be a pilot and a demonstration, and in the

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course of implementing that component consultants were retained to study a representative set of certain hinterland communities, amongst which was Madhia. So Madhia was one of the communities looked at and indeed, Madhia was considered to be one of the pilot communities for electrification at this time.

Our general policy for electrification has been for the government to assist in the capital cost and to look to the consumers to cover the current and ongoing costs, but when we looked at the position in Madhia we found that Madhia, in Madhia, there were three private businesses supplying electricity to a number of residents within the vicinity of those businesses, and recognising this initiative by these private people, the government spoke with them to see if it could encourage them to form some sort of partnership for joint operation and management of an improved large system for Madhia.

But the principals of the businesses, however, were not at that time inclined to working together and going in that direction, and so we moved on to another village of that type, because as you ... as I said earlier, at this stage we are looking at some pilot representative... some representative communities in the hinterland to pilot various approaches.

And so we moved on and looked at a village or a community which was judged to be in the same



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category as Madhia, and that is Port Kaituma. Port Kaituma also had some supply of electricity, including some private businesses, but in that location, we were able to get together proposed institutional arrangements for the management of the electricity system there, and so we are proceeding at this time to implement an electrification system, a general electrification system in Port Kaituma and subsequently, as funds become available, we will return to Madhia. But in the meantime, Madhia has some amount of electricity being provided.

I take this opportunity to invite Members of the House to acquire a copy of Government's Hinterland Electrification Strategy, available on the website [www.electricity.gov.gy](http://www.electricity.gov.gy).

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:** May I ask a supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** You must bear in mind that this session ...

**Mrs. Sheila V A Holder:** I understand that.

**The Speaker:** We have a long list of questions. I propose to suggest to the House that we allow the exceeding of the time limit, so that we can complete them, as the year is coming to an end.

I therefore have to ask Members to restrain your

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natural exuberance in asking a supplementary question. I will allow it. I leave it up to your discretion.

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The question I wanted to put to the Prime Minister relates to the time, the date, at which those negotiations took place in Madhia:

*Whether they were recent years or sometime in the past, and whether or not the listing, rather than the list of concept is available to indicate to the general public as to the government's raison d'etre for a decision to decide which community should have access to rural electrification, and I see you mentioned the website; is that information provided on the website?*

**The Speaker:** PM, please comment ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** The question of which community to get electrification, the government hopes, aspires in time to have all the communities with some amount of electrification, and that I would say, in this UAE, there is a hinterland component, which is essentially a demonstration component to set up a pilot situation.

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There are maybe over 100 communities in the hinterland. There was a consultant group who studied them and studied a representative number of 30, and put them into three categories. Madhia was in the category, No. 1, most advanced of the hinterland villages, but there were other communities in that category too, including Port Kaituma. So at that time, it was some time ago, at the beginning of the project, that the discussion took place with people, with the providers in Madhia, about whether they were prepared to make the step, and that was not easily forthcoming, so we moved on to Madhia.

So the negotiations took place some time ago; it could have been three years ago, I am trying to recall.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mrs. Punalall ...

**Mrs. Latchmin Budhan-Punalall:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is addressed to the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water,

**The Speaker:** Before you ask the question, Mr. Benn, who I think is acting for the Minister of Housing, is not here. Is there any person who can answer that, or is willing to answer that question on his behalf?

**Mrs. Latchmin Budhan-Punalall:** Well, I was ...

**The Speaker:** I see the Prime Minister.

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**Hon. Samuel A A Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, may I ask that this question be deferred?

**The Speaker:** Question deferred.

**Mrs. Latchmin Budhan-Punalall:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Basil Williams.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** This question is directed to the Minister of the Public Service Ministry.

*Could the Honourable Minister of the Public Service tell this National Assembly when the Public Service Appellate Tribunal will be reconstituted?*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister ...

**Hon. Dr. Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr. Speaker, may I inform the Honourable Member, the Public Service Ministry has no constitutional mandate in the constitution of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal. But I am reliably informed that the stakeholders who have such responsibility are currently in discussion on the matter.

**Mr. Basil Williams:**

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*Notwithstanding the reference to the Minister in the Public Service Act, Appellate Tribunal Act, might I respectfully request the relevant Member on that side of the House, who has the responsibility in relation to the reconstitution of the Public Service Appellate Tribunal to provide an answer, because there is a Public Service Appellate Act, which makes reference to a responsible Minister?*

**The Speaker:** You wish to respond, Honourable Minister to the Honourable Member? Would you ask the next question, please?

**Mr. Basil Williams:** This is directed to the Minister of the Public Service Ministry, or whoever might be responsible:

*Could the Honourable Minister of the Public Service tell this National Assembly which Ministry or Government Department has responsibility for the employment of contracted employees?*

**Hon. Dr. Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Ministry has the constitutional mandate to approve and recommend all employment within the public service. Thereafter, it is the

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contracted employee, the relevant agencies, will fulfill that mandate following our recommendations and approvals. It is a pensionable worker the Public Service Commission thus has.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

*Is the Honourable Minister... I suspect that the Honourable Minister is responsible. Could I ask the Honourable Minister on the last question whether the contracted employee is employed by the Public Service Commission or by the Public Service Ministry?*

**Hon. Dr. Jennifer RA Westford:** Mr. Speaker, I would repeat what I just said, and I hope the Honourable Member will be listening more keenly. I said the Public Service Ministry has the constitutional mandate to recommend and also approve all employment within the Public Service. Thereafter, if it is on a contractual basis, the relevant agencies then do that employment, and if it is a pensionable worker, the Public Service Commission.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Basil Williams ... No. 15 ...

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**Mr. Basil Williams:** This question is directed to the Minister of Labour.

*Can the Hon. Minister of Labour say when the government would restore the annual subvention to the Guyana Trade Union Congress?*

**The Speaker:** *[Inaudible]*

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Look, they dealt with Critchlow Labour College subvention. That was the test.

**Hon. Manzoor Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Guyana has no intention of returning to the position of providing an annual subvention to the Guyana Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I must add that providing such support could be seen as a violation of ILO Convention 98, which was passed at the 32nd Session in June 1949, which concerns the application of principles of the right to organize and bargain collectively. That particular Convention, Sir, and I have a copy here, states that:

*Workers' organizations shall employ adequate protection against acts of interference and furthermore, acts of support of workers' organization by financial or other means shall be*

*deemed to constitute acts of interference.*

Thank you, Sir.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Williams ...

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Notwithstanding the interpretation ... a supplementary, please ... to the Hon. Minister of Labour:

*Could the Honourable Minister of Labour indicate whether that rule applies to a situation where the granting of a subvention has been subsisting over the years?*

It is not high tech; you will understand.

**Hon. Manzoor Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that in the challenges the People's National Congress government did start a subvention; it was continued, and now we have corrected that situation.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

*Does the Hon. Minister of Labour agree that this government, the PPP/C government, paid that subvention from 1992 until recently, when they stopped?*



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*Is this a situation as has been when  
Archimedes shouted Eureka?*

**Hon. Manzoor Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, Archimedes did discover a very important principle, and I do not think this is as significant as Archimedes'. However, I would say, Sir that if you notice, over the years we have stopped the President making the feature address at Trade Union Congress, forcing workers to march on Labour Day, allowing the workers' organizations to do the things that workers should do to strengthen their organization. We do not want to interfere, and maybe that principle is as sacred as Archimedes' principle on the upthrust of an object immersed in a liquid.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** Could the Honourable Minister ...*[Interruption]*... why you all so afraid when I speak?

*Would the Honourable Minister agree that this interpretation of that Convention that you alluded to, has no bearing whatever to the substance and form of that Convention, and is highly erroneous?*

**Hon. Manzoor Nadir:** I do not agree with him, Sir.

**Mr. Basil Williams:** *[Inaudible]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Mervyn Williams ...

**Mr. Mervyn Williams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My question, sir, is directed to the Honourable Minister of Health in three parts:

1. *Could the Hon Minister tell this National Assembly if there is still in place a government policy requiring that pharmaceutical suppliers imported into Guyana and dispensed in Guyana be labelled in the English language?*
2. *Is the Hon. Minister of Health aware that pharmaceutical supplies purchased by the National Insurance Scheme for distribution to claimants are labelled in languages other than the English language?*
3. *What is the Hon. Minister of Health supposed to do to remedy the situation with the National Insurance Scheme procuring and dispensing pharmaceutical supplies which are labelled in*

*languages other than the English language, and how soon does the Minister propose to address this matter?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Health ...

**Hon. Dr. Leslie S Ramsammy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, part (a). The policy is stated in the Food & Drug Act, Section 10, and in the regulations pertaining to labeling in part 3 of the regulations, and quite simply, it states that all labeling must be in English. For drugs procured from non-English-speaking sources, they can be relabeled in Guyana in English, but this must be done under the supervision of the Foods& Drug Agency.

In terms of the second part, we are aware that drugs procured by the NIS for distribution are labeled in languages other than the English language. NIS had indeed indicated to the Ministry of Health that through a tendering process, medicines were purchased from the International Pharmaceutical Agency from a non-English-speaking source, but which met international certification standards. The local agent, the IPA, relabeled the drug in English. However, this was not done in accordance with the rules of the FDA.

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In the case of the third question, the third part of the question. We have addressed the issue with the National Insurance Scheme, and remedial actions have been taken. The NIS is ensuring that the relabeling of medicines still in stock, are done in accordance with the rules, and all future procurement will ensure that the rules are rigidly applied.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Ms Teixeira ...

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Works, a question in my name.

*Would the Prime Minister inform this National Assembly as to the grounds on which the Guyanese authorities granted permission to Rev Jim Jones and the People's Temple to acquire land in the Northwest, otherwise known as Jonestown, and*

- (i) How much land was given,*
- (ii) whether it was leased or bought, and give us some of the names, and*
- (iii) for what period of time.*

Thank you. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister.

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I did request of the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission, what records they had if any, and they have informed me thus:

With respect to the above captioned subject, please be informed that the People's Temple of the Disciples of Christ was issued a lease numbered 898/90, by the Department of Lands and Surveys.

The said lease comprised a gross area of 3,852 acres, and was duly surveyed by Mr. GE Matthews, Sworn Land Surveyor, on the 15th January 1976, and shown on a plan, No. 16787 on record at the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. Lease 898/90 was applied for on the 10 April 1974, and was issued for a period of 25 years. This lease would have expired on the 9 April 1999. An entry in the Lease Register suggests that the Lands and Surveys Department was instructed by memorandum to cease further recollection after 1977, so there is no recollection after 1977. The file for the said lease is however not in the possession of the GLSC, and further details are not available.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Can I ask a supplementary question, Mr. Prime Minister?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Ms Teixeira ...

**Ms Gail Teixeira:**

*Can the Prime Minister say if information on the lease was available to the public prior to the massacre of 900 innocent souls nearly 30 years ago?*

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** I could not say definitively but from some of the literature that have been about that time and which came to my eyes it appears that it may not have been ... there was literature talking about much larger numbers, 27,000 acres, and 100 years, but that the information as to what was available to the public and when, I could not speak to that.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Supplementary question, sir.

*Could the Hon. Prime Minister say where he was 30 years ago, and would he admit that the information he has given to this House is generally hearsay, and not within his competence? [Interruption]*

*Speculative ... [Interruption]*

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, the information that I have given to this House is

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information coming from the Guyana Lands and Surveys ... *[Interruption]* The second part of it can be had from newspapers, and news items of the time ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Nokta ... You are asking a supplementary on a supplementary?

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Prime Minister is informing this House that in accordance with the records of the Lands and Surveys, an amount of 3,000 plus acres was leased. *[Interruption]* ... I have here with me, Mr. Speaker a booklet entitled, *Guyana Massacre*. It was written by one Charles A Cross, and it says ...

**The Speaker:** Let us have some order ...

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** ... an eyewitness account ...

**The Speaker:** Just ask the question.

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** I was referring to this book in order. *[Interruption]* ... What the Prime Minister said, Mr. Speaker, is what is written in this booklet ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, we do not want ... we do not know what is written in ... could you ask, if you wish me to be of assistance? Could you ask the Hon. Prime Minister if what is written in the

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book, that is to say ... and summarize what is in the book, if it is true or not ... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** Mr. Speaker that is what I really intend to do! But I am trying to give a background ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** You are starting to read ... and we do not know where that reading was going to end, if it was going to end quickly, you know, or it was going to be expansive. ... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** Okay, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask Prime Minister if the amount is 27,000 or only 3-plus thousand acres ... *[Interruption]*.

**The Speaker:** Yes, Prime Minister ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would have to convey this ... what has been reported to me by the Lands and Surveys Commission that the lease they did put in place was for 3,000 acres and 52 acres.

**The Speaker:** Yes ... finished?

Mr. Norton ... it is on a point of order ... he is not finished yet. Yes Mr. Norton, proceed. ... *[Interruption]*

Let us have some order, Honourable Members,



please!

Could you conclude, Prime Minister?

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Yes, I... the lease is for 3,000 acres, 52 acres, but I am aware that persons, including myself at one time at Mabaruma, visiting at Matthews Ridge, who wanted to look into the area. They were not aware of where the boundaries were, it could well have been the 27,000 acres, but the lease here is for 3,800 acres ... *[Interruption]*

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, can I ask one more question?

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Ms Teixeira.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** The Guyana Chronicle of November 28 1978 referred to the Cabinet of the day deciding on what to do with the land at Port Kaituma that was under People's Temple.

*Could you say, Prime Minister, in the records, does it show that the land has reverted back to the ownership of the state?*

**Hon. Samuel A A Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, Members, the Lands and Surveys Commission had said that the lease would have expired in 1999, and they cannot find the lease. I presume this means that they could not say if the land was reverted after the suicide, the

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mass suicide at Jonestown ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Ms Teixeira, have you finished your three questions?

Honourable Member Mr. Whittaker ... *[Interruption]*

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Question for the Minister of Home Affairs.

**The Speaker:** You ask the next question?

Yes Ms Teixeira ...

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Yes, I would like to put to the Minister of Home Affairs ... I am sorry, Mr. Speaker ... these questions are making some people rather uncomfortable ... *[Interruption: "Who?"]*

*Would the Minister of Home Affairs  
inform this National Assembly ...*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, order, please!

**Ms Gail Teixeira:**

*... about the details of Reverend Jim  
Jones and his presence in Guyana in  
the 1977/1978 period; specifically:*

- 1. What was the basis of his congregation's immigration to Guyana, and who approved their visas and stay in Guyana?*

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2. *Had members of the People's Temple in Guyana, in Jonestown and elsewhere been granted licences to bear arms? Which agency granted these gun licences and how many were granted?*
  
3. *What, if any investigations were held by the Guyanese authorities after the massacre and what were the results?*

Thank you. ... [*Interruption: "900 people died"*]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister ... [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** ... the Honorary Consul of Guyana at that time to have this organisation sent at least 500 persons to Jonestown, or to be provided with a certain acreage of land because of the coincidence of views and the philosophy, the emphasis on rural development and agricultural development, the government of the day acceded to that request by Honorary Consul at that time, and allowed Reverend Jones and an initial number of about 200 to come to Guyana to establish this community in the country.

Within a relatively short period of time, that number rose to 775, and later almost 900. It appears there was some agreement; that agreement has not been located, but it appears as though there was some agreement ... just speculation ... it appears as though there was

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some agreement between the then administrations to have these persons here in Guyana.

I have, Mr. Speaker, the proceedings and debates of the first session of the National Assembly of the third Parliament in Guyana, under the Constitution, which met on Friday 24th 1978. Mr. Corbin at the time was the Minister of State in the Ministry of National Mobilisation ... Minister of State in the Ministry of National Development. Mr. Reid made a statement in the House, and in that statement, I should have a copy here, that undertaking by which the government would facilitate Jonestown, the Jim Jones and his merry-band's entry in Guyana. It was on that basis that visas were granted sometimes through the consulate in New York, or sometimes through the consulate of the embassy in Washington.

Thank you.

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** Supplementary question, Sir ... The Minister in presenting his answer, Sir, mentioned that the Honourable Member Corbin was the Minister of State.

Had the Hon. Minister not said that he might have been aided with a proper answer to this Parliament by consultation with the former Minister of State of National Development? *[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister ...

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**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker that thought never occurred to me. But what I did was peruse the records that were made available to me by certain policemen who were part of the investigating party that went into the area. I called on a number of them and invited them into my office, had conversations with them and rather than speaking to a politician who was around in those days, I thought it would be better to speak to the professional people. I have with me here, Mr. Speaker the report that was submitted to CID Headquarters in 1978 by the Assistant Commissioner (Crime) in those days. It has all the details. And so I feel that this document together with the speech that was given by the Prime Minister Mr. Reid in Parliament in addition, Mr. Speaker, to a very informative article that was published in the December issue of the Guyana Review by Mr. Neville Annibone who was the GIS representative at the time they flew into Jonestown with the first team investigating the situation ... I feel that having read these documents and having spoken to investigating ranks at the time I am satisfied that the information I have at my disposal is quite sufficient in order to answer these questions.

I have forgotten to answer, Mr. Speaker the other part of the question in relation to firearms ...

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** ... but you sat down back.

I still have a supplementary question ...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** I am still on my feet, Mr. Speaker ... Mr. Reid, in his statement in the House, said the following, and I quote:

*There have been some questions concerning the security of the area. We can state positively that the authorities have been aware of the significance of the security of the area, and have been exercising supervision ...*

He went on to say:

*... with regard to the possession of guns and ammunition by persons at Jonestown, our records show that 4 licences were granted after application had been made, and in respect of which proper checking had taken place.*

But then he went on to say, went on to admit:

*Our present information discloses though that there has been a serious breach with regard to the possession of firearms, but prior to this event there was due indication that such a breach had occurred. In any case, the culprits may now be beyond our punishment.*

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Mr. Speaker, the records show that Jonestown owned four boats, and these boats had easy access to Port Kaituma ... *[Interruption]*

November 28, 1978, Guyana Chronicle; *Guyana Cabinet to discuss future ... [Interruption]* this is the State-owned newspaper. The albatross, the ... *[Inaudible]* and one of these boats was arrested, Mr. Speaker, by the GDF because he was found with a boat used for transporting uncustomed goods into the country ...

**Mr. Winston S Murray:**

*Would the Hon. Minister kindly state the specific source of this information, other than the Chronicle? Because that is not a record ... [Interruption] ... the news record ...*

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I have never heard anyone denying the admissibility of newspaper ... it has been quoted *ad nauseum*.

**The Speaker:** The newspaper is not a record, Hon. Member ... *[Interruption]*...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** ... and members of the Guyana Defence Force, and let me, unless you want to go into names, into statements... ....*[Interruption]*...

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Port Kaituma is not a port of entry. Port Kaituma is not a port of entry. When you have a vessel traversing the Atlantic and entering Port Kaituma, where there is not Customs, where goods enter the country, uncustomed goods enter the country, that is not only a breach of the Customs Act, it is also a violation of our country's territorial integrity, and this, Mr. Speaker, was one of the major criticisms that the government faced in the day where you had virtually a state within a state, vessels within the national jurisdiction without any regulations whatsoever unloading goods that the State knew nothing about, and as a result, our territorial integrity being violated.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Corbin.

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** Supplementary question, sir.

*Would the Minister agree with me that the question which is asked is one of policy, and policy is set by the political directorate, since it relates to the basis upon which certain decisions were made to allow an immigrant group to come into the country?*

And supplementary to that,

*Whether the Minister in his research of that period did not also discover as a*



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*general policy that several other groups came into Guyana from overseas and were settled on the Linden Highway and other parts of this country, and I think there were no such instances like Jonestown? Did he discover this in his research ... because you are dealing with a policy issue?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister ...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, in answering that question, I am guided by the statement given by the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Ptolemy Reid, says here Cde P A Reid, in the Minutes of the Record.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Reid in his statement to the House, never made any reference, never made any allusion to any other group even though he made reference to the fact that the policy of the government ... it is my research, what Dr. Reid said, part of the research that he made. The government said this was consistent with Guyana's policy of hinterland development ... *[Interruption]* ... that this is a group that was subsequently formed ... Mr. Nadir ... but it is true. It is true that there was indeed a policy for hinterland development, and he did say that.

But he also went on to say that there were several violations of procedures and regulations by these

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people. It was initially allowed to bring 500 people, but this ballooned into 900, and so much so, Mr. Speaker, so much so, one of the senior ranks visited Jonestown not after the incident, but before the incident. He was the Divisional Commander for E and F Divisions and was made to spend almost 45 minutes, made to stand for almost 45 minutes at the gate of Jonestown before being allowed to enter it, and to examine and to have a look-see at what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the noise we are hearing from the Opposition benches, it was clear that for anyone to gain admission to Jonestown, first of all, the place was so highly secured by armed guards ...

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, we cannot entertain this. This is...*[Interruption]*...

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Can I ask two questions? The third component of my question, that the Minister has not answered as yet, was the verification after the massacre were done by the said government.

Secondly, in reference to the immigration issue, on the first component, the police found 803 passports after the massacre ...

**Mr. Winston S Murray:** The Member is making a statement. Could she please say what the

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supplementary question is?

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** I am asking a supplementary question.

**Mr. Winston S Murray:** What is it?

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** I am asking that my ... I am not ...Mr. Speaker, I am under your jurisdiction, I believe?

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate ... The third aspect of my question ... I am asking for an answer, and I have not heard it ... whether there was investigation or not.

Secondly ...

**The Speaker:** Could you ... just a minute ... if you have a supplementary, let us deal with the last component of the question first, and I will allow it.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Yes. Thank you,

**The Speaker:** Yes, Honourable Member ...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, according to the report submitted by the Assistant Commissioner (Crime), police headquarters to force headquarters, there was indeed an investigation that was carried out. There was an investigation that was carried out,

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and Mr. Balram Raghbir, at the time Commissioner of Police was ... I do not remember his name right now, but the investigation team was lead by Mr. Balram Raghbir, and he was assisted by Mr. Gravesande, Mr. Skip Roberts as well as Mr. Alvin Smith. Those were the investigating ranks and the report, Mr. Speaker, will reveal it.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:** Thank you, Minister.

What you have given is an investigation and it appears to be by the police.

*Was there an official investigation at the level of the Government?*

I heard of a brief investigation which is ...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker the records show that arrangements were being made for an early inquest into the deaths, but years later detective stories actually began, because to find the record as to whether the DPP had advised that there be an inquest, and whether that advice was sent to the police, and whether the police in turn sent it to the magistracy, or the district magistrate to carry the inquest, none of that information is available, so this Honourable House cannot be reliably informed whether an inquest was carried out, police investigation was done. No inquest was made. At the time when Dr. Reid spoke in the National Assembly, Janet Jagan,

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who was at the time the Opposition Leader, made attempts to have this question ventilated, but this was disallowed by the then Speaker, Mr. Sasenarine.

**Ms Gail Teixeira:**

*Minister, could you say if 803 passports were found at Jonestown after the massacre, but 900 people ... 900 bodies were found, over 900. Could you say ... explain this discrepancy between the amount of persons and the bodies?*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister ...

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker ... *[Interruption]* ... reading from statement that was made by Dr. Reid to the House on the 24th November 1978, it was difficult to make reconciliation between the discovery of that number of passports and the number of persons that were there actually, which was reported to be 915. It is difficult to make the reconciliation. But I do know the records show that there were four children, 82 were Guyanese-born, and it is quite possible that there could have been more. Thank you.

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** My final supplementary question, if you do permit, Sir ...

**The Speaker:** Yes ...

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:**

*... is to ask the Hon. Minister if he does not feel that the time for the Parliament today could have been better spent discussing the floods, rather than discussing matters which he should have raised and pursued when he and his other colleagues were in Opposition 30 years ago?*

**The Speaker:** You are well aware I cannot allow that question.

**Mrs. Deborah J Backer:** A question: Could the Honourable Minister, the present Minister of Home Affairs, share with this House if there is any reason why when Ms Teixeira, the Honourable Member Ms Teixeira was the Minister of Home affairs, she did not speak to an investigation, as you are now ... why she did not do that?

**The Speaker:** I cannot allow that question.

Honourable Member Mr. Whittaker ...

**Mr. Norman A Whittaker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Thirty years after the event, Sir, questions are still being asked by thousands of Guyanese, and I ask the question, the very same question of the Honourable

Minister of Health.

*How many Guyanese children were killed at Jonestown? Were the bodies ever returned to Guyana and handed over to their families?*

*Secondly, Sir, does the Ministry of Health have any records of the names, ages, gender, ethnicity, nationalities of the 909 persons who perished at Jonestown prior to or after the removal of the bodies by American officials after the massacre?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Leslie S Ramsammy:** Mr. Speaker, the record keeping system of the Ministry of Health at the time was very, very weak. In the case of the records pertaining to Jonestown there is absolutely no records at the Ministry of Health. We do know that over 900 post-mortems were done from reports we have read, but there is no record of a single post-mortem at the Ministry of Health.

In terms of the number of children of Guyanese parentage that were killed, it is hearsay from the newspapers and so reports, in the case of the breakdown in terms of gender, the Ministry of Health has absolutely no record.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Whittaker that is all your questions? Number 20.

**Mr. Norman A Whittaker:** Thank you, sir. This question is directed to the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, and it refers again to the strange activities that took place in Jonestown prior to and including the activities of that fatal day of November 1978.

*Would the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs inform this National Assembly if the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Guyana Police Force, in the 1977-1978 period, were receiving reports from residents in the North West Region about strange activities in Jonestown including:*

*The presence of armed persons guarding the entrance and the perimeters of the Jonestown settlement, and their refusal to allow Amerindians to walk through the Jonestown property to hunt and fish as they had done for centuries; and ... [Interruption]...*

*Amerindian children being taken into Jonestown and their parents being disallowed subsequently from seeing*



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*them, and/or removing them from  
Jonestown.*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister of Home Affairs ...  
*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, I doubt whether there is any ... *[Interruption]* ... I doubt whether the questions are stipulated, because when you examine what is available to the Guyanese public, let us put it that way, when you examine what is available to the Guyanese public, even officially, official records, it is clear that there was some shadiness, and there has been shadiness ... there were no words like transparency, accountability, so I could say in answer to the question in respect of Amerindians not being able to enter into the place: absolutely not. They could not gain access into this place, because it was determined to be private property. It was well guarded, and therefore anyone found trespassing would obviously ... anyone found trespassing on this property ... therefore they were not allowed to hunt, they were not allowed to fish on some 3,000 acres of land.

In respect ... I am answering the question ... *[Interruption: ... "If you know better you could give a political answer"]* Mr. Speaker, the other question about children being taken into Jonestown and seized,

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being disallowed from seeing their parents ... this is a strong proposition ... *[Interruption]* ...

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, this is question time and we barely have time to interrupt, but this is question time, and question time is when, if you read the rules ... a question and a brief answer ... This is not gaffing time ... *[Interruption]*.

**Hon. Clement J Rohee:** Mr. Speaker, I was just concluding on that note that there is a high possibility ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Just answer the question as if this is a real possibility.

**Mr. Robert H O Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, a serious question to the Minister:

*... Whether he does not feel that this nation will be better served if the government is so concerned about this matter, to commission a professional group from the university, who would objectively do some research, interview the people who are concerned, and come up with a proper report that can stand scrutiny to this serious Assembly, and that I am sure people will be willing to give information around, and I get the feeling that the better*

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*approach than to try to make political mileage and make this issue into a political football that is so candid and is so serious CNN could have done it and gotten a brief report. Do you not think that that is a better approach than the government ...*

**The Speaker:** Mr. Ramjattan ...

**Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan:**

*Could the Minister kindly say to stop the shadiness in governmental transactions, whether PNC then, or PPP now, that we pass the legislation now, Freedom of Information?  
[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, I cannot allow that. Honourable Member Ms Chandarpal ...  
*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal:** Mr. Speaker, would the Minister of Finance inform this National Assembly which year was the Public Accounts Report not prepared and laid by the Auditor General in this National assembly from 1955 to 1992, and what were the explanations, if any, provided by the Auditor General and/or the Ministry of Finance and/or the

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Office of the President for the non-submission of the public accounts for any of those years.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dr. A Singh:** Mr. Speaker, public accounts ... *[Interruption]* ... audited public accounts were not prepared and not submitted to the National Assembly for the years 1982-1991, and the question asks, Mr. Speaker, which year were public accounts not prepared, and the answer to that question is 1982-1991.

I say further, Mr. Speaker, in response to the question, particularly the second part of the question that inquires whether there were explanations provided by various offices, I am not, Mr. Speaker, aware of explanations, of any explanations being provided by either the Ministry of Finance and/or the Office of the President, apart from a reference in the Auditor General's report for 1992, which was presented in 1993, apart from the reference in that report to the period that was not accounted for, and that reference essentially says that the Accountant General, whose office is at the Ministry of Finance, explained that computer problems had prevented him from finalizing the public accounts reports for the period, that is to say, the years 1982-1991. ... *[Interruption: '8 years computers ain't work?']*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member.

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Honourable Member Mr. Chandarpal ... sorry, Mr. Nokta ...

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:** Mr. Speaker, can I ask the Hon. Minister of Finance if there is any record of money amounting to several suitcases containing US\$500,000 or any other asset or property from Jonestown handed over to the government?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Dr. Ashni K Singh:** Mr. Speaker, the Guyana Chronicle of 21 November 1978, says as follows, and I quote the headline, Mr. Speaker, *Cash, Gold and Diamonds Found*. The story relates to carrying out searches in Jonestown after the People's Temple, North West District found a substantial quantity of cash, including Guyanese and American currency, cheques, gold and diamonds ...

**Mr. Winston S Murray:** Mr. Speaker, the question is if there is any record. A quotation from the Chronicle, with great respect, is not a record.

**The Speaker:** Well, the Honourable Member ... I will take it for the Hon. Minister to say about the conclusion of the reading of that report, whether he has any record of that or what ... *[Interruption]*

**Hon. Dr. Ashni K Singh:** Mr. Speaker, indeed this is merely the preamble to my answer, and if I were to conclude the quotation from the 21st November

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Chronicle, it goes on further to say that on that day, the exact value of the cash was not known until late last night ...

The next day, Mr. Speaker, on 22 November 1978 the Chronicle again reported that, and I quote again, *American and Guyanese moneys have been found at Jonestown*, but this has been estimated about one million US dollars.

Mr. Speaker, my ministry has no record ... *[Interruption]* ... of any ... Mr. Speaker, my ministry has no record of any disposal of any assets or properties, and if I recollect, and if I might add with your permission, if I might add with your permission, I find it deeply distressing that Members of this House on the other side could find amusing a matter as grave ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member Mr. Nokta. Let down the noise, please, Honourable Members.

**Mr. Harripersaud Nokta:**

*Will the Hon. Minister of Public Works and Communications state whether there were any questions to the Government of the day before and after the massacre, and if there was a position, if these were put on the Order Paper and answered. If not, why not?*

**The Speaker:** Hon. Minister, Prime Minister ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, my research shows or states that several questions were put, but generally they did not meet the Order Paper, nor were they answered. And I have here a listing of some eight questions that were sought, that various Members of the Opposition at the time sought to get on the Order Paper, and it does not seem that they did get onto the Order Paper.

One was by Cde Janet Jagan on the question of drugs that may have been at Jonestown, and were obviously used in the massacre, and how did they come into Guyana, and I have a question by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, who raised the question about the licensing of radio, transmitting and receiving radio, at Jonestown. And there was another question by Narbada Persaud, on the question about the amount of money, foreign and local currency, belonging to or found in possession of members of the People's Temple, and there was a second question by Narbada Persaud on the vessels belonging to or operated by the People's Temple. There was a question by Clinton Collymore on reports of attempts to influence the decisions of judges in a stowing case, but there was another question by Collymore, about how many American citizens were in Guyana as part of the People's Temple, and another question by Collymore for arms and ammunition found in the People's Temple.

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So those are the questions that we have ... I have found some record of that were submitted, that were put for answers, but it appears that they did not make the Order Paper and they certainly were not responded to. I think, Sir, that this is a ... this should be seen in quite contrast to what we are doing at this time, where we have ...

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, the question did not relate to this time, you know.

**Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan:** Mr. Speaker, could I ask a follow up?

**The Speaker:** Yes ...

**Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan:**

*Could the Minister say from his research and records, whether this was prepared at the time that the PPP constructed it, set up this critical support for the PNC government then?*

**The Speaker:** I cannot allow this question.

The next question by Mr. Nagamootoo ... Is there anyone who can ask the question on his behalf? I understand that Mr. Nagamootoo has written asking that the question be deferred.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS INCLUDING**



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**POLICY STATEMENTS**

Honourable Member Mr. Robert Persaud ...

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for granting the request made earlier today, be given the opportunity to update the National Assembly, which I think it deserves, as to the response to the effects, the negative effects, particularly on the East Coast of Demerara, of the high, intense rainfall that we are currently experiencing.

Mr. Speaker, there are incidents and issues, which, in the light of the situation, transcend any partisan considerations and which reflect sometimes the entire population, or sections of the population. At such times, the opportunity to lead with maturity, unity and compromise presents itself and history and the electorate judges harshly those who choose to regard national threats and challenges as opportunities for narrow political gains.

The devastating floods of 2005 witnessed by Guyanese from all walks of life and politicians from across wide divides united to combat threats to our health, our livelihood and our comfort and security.

Although we are still feeling the economic reverberations of those floods, the maturity of Guyana and the resilience of our people, and in fact

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our politics achieved a new level, and the country emerged much more united from that disaster, with the knowledge that we are indeed our brother's keeper, distract from our identities. The meaning of being Guyanese during periods of national emergencies especially when we were confronted with problems such as the floods was more clearly grasped than during many other national events during happier times. The Guyanese people demonstrated, perhaps to themselves more than to any outsider that this country pulls together when faced with common constraints.

It is important, too, to recognize for ourselves any threats to our way of life and how to tackle those threats with a degree of confidence that our country knows how to unite and hold its head high in the face of natural and external threats.

Mr. Speaker, once again, at the end of this year 2008, we are faced with rainfall of a magnitude and intensity comparable to 2005, and while the 2005 floods underscored the need for massive infrastructural works that our government has undertaken contributing significantly to reduced risks, we are still in a vulnerable position with respect to accumulation of water and flooding in some low-lying communities on the coast, especially in Region 4.

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A comparison of the total rainfall accumulated for December 2008 with December 2005 demonstrates that at several locations on the coast, the December 2005 rainfall figure was higher. However, as a result of diligent and sustained efforts that the government has made in drainage and irrigation, we have not witnessed as widespread flooding as we did in 2005. We are also advised by the Hydromet Service that we can expect additional high intensity rain days during which rainfall amounts will exceed 50-150 mm in two rain gauges in 24 hours.

To put matters into perspective, it must be noted that between the 1-18th December, 2008, close to 500mm of rainfall was received at widely dispersed locations such as Better Hope, Supenaam, Wales, Georgetown, Ogle, Good Hope, Enmore, Bee Hive and if you look at the data, the average for the last 100 years has been just about 209mm for the entire month of December.

The few who mischievously contend that the government has learnt nothing from the 2005 floods and its activities in preparation for the rain were, and I quote: *frantic, last minute and uncoordinated*, should be well advised. In fact, since 2005, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet has appointed a permanent technical oversight committee, chaired by the Hon. Prime Minister, and consisting of the Ministers of Agriculture, Local Government and Regional

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Development, Public Works, representatives from the flood-hit regions and a number of state agencies.

The presence of untruths, that is the government having an uncoordinated response, were not so dangerous at this point in time, it would be laughably ludicrous. For the record again, immediately after the December 2005, the government of Guyana established a task force for infrastructural recovery, comprising both and local international experts and experts re engineers. The task force implemented several drainage projects in Regions 2, 3, 4,5 and 6, including the East Demerara Water Conservancy and the Boraserie Conservancy, and resources and these exports on these projects were supported by DFID and CIDA. Major works with the recommendation of that task force included new outlets for the East Demerara Water Conservancy at Hope and the installation of six new drainage pumps along the East Coast of Demerara.

As we speak today, Mr. Speaker, all the recommendations have been fully implemented, and in fact in many areas we have exceeded those recommendations and some of these recommendations were fulfilled ahead of the time frame that was set by the task force notwithstanding budgetary constraints.

Also further works are being implemented which are

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being guided, these were long term works suggested by the task force and being implemented by the NDIA in the context of improving primary drainage in the agricultural areas. Also since 2005 there has been a lot of emphasis on developing institutional capacity of the National Drainage and Irrigation authority with support from the IDB and through collaborative work with a number of universities and related institutions. Mr. Speaker, Guyana like several other countries who are developed and developing have been experiencing extreme weather events particularly in recent years. The flooding of 2005 was of a result of unusual weather system and was the worst ever recorded in Guyana's history. In many other parts of the world extreme and climative events such as increase intensity and frequency of tropical storms have been observed. In 2007 the world received a very strong warning regarding climate change from the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change confirming that human induce climate ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** I think we have to adjourn for a few minutes ... we have some music ... until the music ...

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** I am sorry, I did not hear or else I would have probably attempted to dance.

**The Speaker:** We were just being entertained with some music.

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Okay ...

**The Speaker:** I thought that was because of the festive season, but continue ...

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Shall I proceed? Yes Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in 2007 the world received a very strong warning regarding climate change from the Inter Governmental Panel on Climate Change confirming that human induced climate will wreak havoc with life as we know it if action to the reverse is not stepped up. Climate change, the IGPCCC warned will hit hardest the poorest and most vulnerable countries such as Guyana.

The IGPCCC findings link many of the extreme weather events experienced clearly with climate change. Guyana has made many national interventions to strengthen the country's capacity to address climate change. His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo, the President of the Republic, has also presented important initiatives to the United Nations climate change conference which just concluded in Poland in the quest to develop a new post-Kyoto framework for addressing climate change. His views are increasingly gaining international credence such as his recent statement that the developed countries' proposal to assign two percent of the carbon trading in Europe and other civil trading schemes in the carbon market generally for adaptation purposes

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especially in developing countries was just too small to tackle the magnitude of the problem that is funding adaptation. It must be noted Mr. Speaker that the talks in Poland ended with the developing nations accusing the rich of doing too little to help them cope with impacts such as:

- Droughts;
- Floods;
- Disease; and
- Rising sea level

For us in Guyana, the rising sea level is indeed a serious problem. An analysis of data collected since the middle of the last century indicates that the sea level has risen by 22 inches during that time and that the rise is accelerating. The implications for Guyana are very important and in fact sad. It is becoming increasingly difficult to drain water off the land by gravity through sluices since the level of the sea has risen. We will therefore become more dependent on pumps and to power these, imported fuel.

Consequently, flood prevention and management will be very costly and demanding even more resources. Several weeks ago the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority issued a call to all NDCs - Neighbourhood Democratic Councils and Regional Democratic Councils to prepare the drainage systems

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as the Hydromet department had forecast to them and they anticipated greater than normal level of rainfall.

It must be recognised that the drainage system in our country is managed by different Local Government entities. Town councils are responsible for those in the township, the RDCs for the general drainage within those regions working in conjunction with the NDCs which has responsibility for village and community drainage system and the National Drainage and irrigation Authority of the Ministry of Agriculture which is responsible for the primary drainage system in agricultural areas. From time to time the NDIA would assist these bodies with technical and material support once these are available, but Mr. Speaker, if these bodies do not adequately gear the system then we can compromise the entire drainage system which has been designed in fact to deal with between 1.5 to 2 inches of rainfall in a 24 hour period. The fact that the system has had to deal with 3-7 inches over the past two weeks and avert a disaster should tell us that there have been some improvements.

Another key issue relates to the impact of dumping of garbage into the drainage canals and generally improper disposal of garbage along the coast. It is important to remember that drainage canals are inter connected and blocking one can restrict water flow out of an entire district and we have many examples



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of this currently. Mr. Speaker, as we meet here this afternoon the areas that are seriously affected are some villages between Montrose and Unity, some of the villages are draining faster than others, but I must say nationally other regions have been experiencing heavy rainfalls, but with less intensity than what we saw on the East Coast. We have also seen several communities witnessing accumulation of water and even flash flooding, but these generally are under control.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to focus on the recent activities of the Government as it relates to drainage and in particular the ability of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority which is a semi autonomous body managed by a board and which as I said earlier has responsibility for the Primary drainage system in our agricultural area. The NDIA to support the regions has assigned engineers in regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. NDIA over the last fourteen to sixteen months has acquired 31 excavators and these excavators are deployed. You have 4 in region 2, 7 in region 3, 6 in region 4 and when I say region 4 I mean on the East Coast and that is in addition to some others which we have mobilised from other agencies. 3 in region 5 and 5 in region 6; in the East Demerara water conservancy we have 4 excavators and in the Boraserie water conservancy we have one excavator working around the clock. In addition region 5 which falls under the MMA/ADA authority

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that authority has 7 excavators and 5 draglines. All these resources have been required over the last fourteen to sixteen months. The drainage system also has supporting our sluices 76 pumps of various capacities. The pumps are deployed at strategic locations based on a flood mapping exercise and that flood mapping exercise was done based on the 2005 flood, but also some of the international agencies themselves in support of the Government have conducted such activities and that is informed where these pumps go. In region 2 there are 6 mobile pumps there are placed at:

- Lima;
- Andrews;
- Dartmouth;
- Westbury; and
- Charity

And from time to time these will be relocated depending on the exigency of the situation. We also have 2 fixed pumps in region 2 and those were installed over the last three months at Anna Regina and Kosea which runs adjacent to the Pomeroon River. In region 3 we have 2 fix pumps at Canal's Polder and as we speak we have purchased 2 more which are on the way and one will be placed there. A heavy duty pump at Canal No.2 Polder and there are four small drainage pumps or devices if you want to

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call because some of them we have had to as it were, utilising the irrigators from GUYSUCO to supplement drainage.

In region 4 where we have the highest complement and when I say region 4 again we speak of the East Coast of Demerara. We have currently 51 pumping units, 14 mobiles and they are placed at locations including:

- Paradise
- Hope
- Enterprise Front
- Buxton
- Belfield
- Greenfield
- Montrose

We have had to supplement one of the GUYSUCO pumps which is currently under repair.

- Enmore and
- Supply

We also have 39 fixed pumps between:

- Ogle
- Montrose

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- Plaisance
- Triumph
- Goed Hope
- Annadale
- Buxton
- Golden Grove
- Victoria
- Enmore
- Hope
- Greenfield
- Strathheaven and
- Huntly

In Region 5 we have 2 mobile pumps and 3 fixed pumps and they are located at locations including:

- Mahaicony within the MMA area
- Trafalgar and
- Blairmont

In Region 6 we have 3 mobile pumps and they are currently located at:

- Rosehall
- Excess and

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- Whim

And 7 fixed at:

- Eveshem
- Seewell
- Burlam
- Cumberland and
- No 78.

Mr. Speaker, the East Demerara water conservancy is of particular interest in respect to flood control in region 4 and more so on the East Coast of Demerara. Its operations come under a board of directors. For routine it would have 32 persons employed, but during the rainy season an additional 50 persons are employed in monitoring activity. Hydraulic excavators are utilised in the East Demerara Water Conservancy and recently based on those interventions we have completed the cleaning and excavation of close to 51 miles of water way and raised close to 9 miles of embankment between Flagstaff and Annandale. This is work continuing.

A new sluice door with a lifting mechanism was installed and constructed at Colgaine and construction of a 20 foot revetment at Shanks on the embankment was completed. Why is this important? Because this will allow us to discharge more water into the Demerara river than if the conservancy reaches a very

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dangerous level then we would have to resort to dumping water in the Mahaica creek which as you can cause or aggregate a flood condition in that area. The NDIA has also fabricated a 250 tonne pontoon to be used along with 2 excavators to dredge slotted outfall channels along the Coast and some riverain areas. I must say as a result of these pieces of equipment we have been able to clear outfalls at:

- Hope;
- Belfield;
- Greenfield;
- Golden Grove

And I must say contrary to what I say somewhere in the newspapers and I think the basis of a question by Mr. Corbin. The dredging of the Hope outfall is done seasonally.

- It was done for the May/June rain;
- It was done two weeks ago;

The dredge and the excavators were then moved to:

- Greenfield; and to
- Golden Grove;
- Belfield; and also to
- Victoria

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When it got down to that end the siltation level again at Hope went up. So what you see currently taking place is the second round of dredging at Hope within a two week period because there is high sedimentation and you may attribute that to some of the effects we talked about, but also over the years for decades we have neglected the maintenance and management of our groin which was in a way a barrier in terms of ensuring that the outfalls remain clear.

Mr. Speaker, further that some of the initiatives that falls within a wide national drainage master plan that is also fitted with a national country adaptation programme we have received support from as I said a number of international agencies and currently we have an active programme with the Inter American Development Bank and for the last six months alone we have been able to rehabilitate 160 miles of canal in some of the designated areas. You may see and if you go to some of the communities especially on the East Coast enhancement of the drainage work at the back lands which were abandoned for forty/thirty years that itself put additional pressure on the discharge capacity that we had in front. In fact you can say that we have become a victim of our own success.

Also ongoing is a US \$3.8 million project and that is focused on the East Demerara water conservancy

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project there and that is called the conservancy adaptation project which will address some of the long term needs of that critical water system. Mr. Speaker in addition to the weather phenomenon and the high intense rainfall that we are experiencing sometimes the greatest challenges lie within us collectively.

An issue such as negligence by the personnel such as the koker attendants and operators do create serious problems. In fact for the last week alone several regions and the regions manages these koker operators and the sluice attendants they have had to dismiss close to five operators because they did not turn up on time or for different reasons they were unable to manage these systems.

Also the removal of dam tops during the dry season and we had where the classic case of Dazell Housing Scheme; that scheme was endangered because the Buxton Fouls NDC sold off the top of the dam and when the level in the canal rose it moved right into that housing scheme. What that meant is that the NDIA now had to go and rebuild the top of that dam during that period thus causing inconvenience.

Also the vandalism of drainage structure and equipment too is another problem. The Dochfour situation is an example there that drainage problem is compounded by the fact that some cattle farmers went



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to the crown dam area and damaged a section between the Ann's Grove to the Duchfour area that saw a huge amount of water coming so while we were trying... water was being as it were drained in the front, you had with the tampering taking place the water was in fact coming in with the rainfall into those communities. As we speak there is an excavator working there to seal that breach or the destruction.

Also the need for greater responsiveness by Local Government... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** How long more do you have, Honourable Member?

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, if you permit me five minutes I think. With your permission, can I proceed?

**The Speaker:** Well I have to give you permission to proceed, but this is not what I expected really.

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Okay Mr. Speaker, my apologies that I did not live up to your expectation.

In terms of the need for responsiveness by Local Government agencies ... also another issue that we need to do. It is also clearly known and understood by those who follow the development of agriculture in Guyana that thee works that we are doing are very essential in terms of opening up much area and these

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in themselves have allowed us to bring much more land under cultivation as well as being able to serve the drainage needs through the acquisition of the fleet of excavator and other drainage equipment.

Also the construction of major flood control embankments in vulnerable areas in:

- Mahaica;
- Mahaicony;
- Pomeroun; and
- Abary rivers have certainly allowed those communities to deal better with the high levels of rainfall.

Mr. Speaker, the NDI is currently undertaking other major works such as the construction of a parallel canal and discharge sluice along the right bank of the Mahaicony River and a new river embankment and drainage structure in the left bank of the Mahaica River to compliment works one after the 2005 flood. In 2008 alone 11 abandoned sluices were reactivated and these sluices were in areas such as:

- Belfield;
- Victoria; and
- Golden Grove

Some of these sluices were abandoned way back in

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the late 70s, 1980s and even the early 1990s.

Also new sluices were built at:

- Charity;
- Westbury; and
- Friendship

Also we have currently under construction new sluices at:

- De Willem;
- Retrieve;
- Mahaicony;
- Four at Crabwood creek and very soon we will commence the construction of another sluice at Cottage Mahaicony.

Also since the 2005 floods, Mr. Speaker, pumps have been reactivated.

- At Victoria, these stations were thrown out;
- at Trafalgar ... that station was decommissioned in 1984/1985 period;
- at Anna Regina;
- one at Cozier;
- one at Canal No.1 Polder;

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- Two new pumps have been installed at Lusignan;
- one at Hope;
- one at Greenfield;
- one at Paradise;
- one at Huntley and
- one at Plaisance.

Also due to the work done in the EDWC and good management the levels are still manageable despite the above normal rainfall being experienced. Mr. Speaker, we are now able to store and discharge much more water in a manageable way, however, we must note that much more work needs to be done and some of these are currently taking place.

Quite frankly speaking, our drainage system was not built to deal with the current effects of climate change, but the cost of funding the required work today is beyond or means as a Nation for two regions alone making the necessary drainage adjustments will require US \$400 million, however, I want to assure this house that no available resource, expertise and vigilance is being spared in dealing with this natural phenomenon. In fact we have even enlisted communities to help us monitor and even implement localised solutions which they claim their NDCs have ignored.

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No one in this House, especially members on this side of the House could ever be comfortable with any individual or community which is discomfited by water in their yards. I want to report that based on the regions, NDCs and even at the NDIA that all technical staffers with whatever resources they have available have been deployed in the battle against the weather and to ensure that these communities are drained. In fact once the weather holds you see substantial movements of water from the land, but as soon as the rain returns you see there is a build up.

Since the onslaught of the heavy rains the Government has made it clear that it is committed to proving support in various forms to assist the effected communities in coping with the flood situation where that exist. Also, the Ministry of Agriculture within the context of our support programme to farmers because once we looked at the weather forecast and saw the prediction of such high intensity rainfall we know that there will be some disruption in agricultural production.

We had already put aside some resources in terms of assisting those who might be affected. I am quite sure subsequently that we will get updates as to what the civil defence commission, the Ministry of Health. Also the animals and Health services of the Ministry and the different agencies which have been working around the clock, deployed in the affected

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communities to provide support and relief to those affected.

To those affected communities I want to assure that the NDIA board which consist engineers and regional chairpersons from regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10 are committed in terms of their approach in dealing with the drainage situation. Mr. Speaker, this board is an excellent example of people from different political backgrounds or allegiances working together everyday, every night in this battle against the ongoing rains. I wish to commend them and the technical staff for their diligence and do hope that all of us in this National Assembly recognise their efforts. Mr. Speaker, I know that as politicians it is important for us to criticise and question and our opposition parties play an important role in scrutinizing the activities of Government after all that is what our mandate and responsibility is to the Guyanese people who elected us.

However, peddling of half truths and outright lie at a time of national threat is ill advised, dangerous and outright unpatriotic. I call on all members of this Parliament to recognise the need for maturity at this time. This is an opportunity to once again demonstrate that as political leaders of this Nation we can work together with maturity and dignity to the benefit and well being of our fellow Guyanese. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

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

**The Speaker:** Yes Mr. Corbin ...

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, I wrote you earlier today seeking leave under Standing Order 12 asking you to grant me leave to move a Motion that this National Assembly stands adjourn to discuss a matter of urgent public importance namely the extensive flooding currently being experienced on the coast. I am very pleased with you hint Sir that you might be kindly disposed to entertaining this Motion. If that is so, I would not try to elaborate on my request, but just read the letter I sent to you if that is required.

**The Speaker:** No, I do not think that is required.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** To say that I think it is a matter of extreme importance, what I have heard so far has given me no hope to withdraw this Motion.

**The Speaker:** You can incorporate the letter in your presentation.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Thank you.

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**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, I have considered the claim by Honourable Member Mr. Robert Corbin and I am satisfied that the matter qualifies as one which may properly be raised on a Motion for the adjournment of the Assembly, however, a leave of the Assembly is required. I will also now seek such leave.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Motion carried**

The Motion will therefore in accordance with our Standing Orders stand over for a short period.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

**Hon. Kellawan Lall:** I rise Mr. Speaker to present the *Local Authority Election Bill 2008- Bill No.24/2008* standing in my name.

**The Speaker:** Let the Bill be read the first time, please.

**Bill No. 24/2008 read the first time**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Labour ...



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**Hon. Manzoor Nadir:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the

**Trade Union Recognition Amendment Bill  
2008 - Bill No.25/2008**

and ask that it be read a first time.

**The Speaker:** Let the Bill be read for the first time please.

**Bill No. 25/2008 read the first time**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Human Services and Social Security ...

**Hon. Priya D Manickchand:** With your leave Mr. Speaker, I present to this National Assembly the

**Child Care and Protection Agency Bill - Bill  
No.26/2008**

and ask that it be read the first time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Bill No. 26/2008 read the first time.**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS BUSINESS**

**The Speaker:** Mr. Norton, what is the position with your Motion? Is your Motion proceeding or are you not too sure as yet? [*Pause*]

**Mr. Aubrey C Norton:** Mr. ... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** You do not have to answer; I do not want to pressure you.

**Mr. Aubrey C Norton:** Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to be flexible and to watch and see what happens and then I will, at the appropriate time act.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, we ought to have suspended at 16.00 H, in view of the rest of the programmes for today inside and outside of the National Assembly. I was wondering if Members would agree that we take Mr. Corbin's Motion now and when that is finished we review as to whether we should suspend at that time or at some other time later. Would that be satisfactory to members? Okay, by acclamation.

Honourable Member Mr. Corbin.

**Hon. Robert HO Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, when I wrote you earlier today it was with a very heavy heart having witnessed the condition which many citizens of Guyana are at the moment enduring particularly along the coastlands as a result of the heavy rainfall that we have been having over the last few weeks.

The Nation I said in my letter has been alerted to the plight of several citizens who have over the past two weeks had their communities inundated. The

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prolonged presence of the water on the land has caused serious damage to crops, death and dislocation of animals and disruption of their lives; residents have been unable to access water either for drinking or for domestic use and the health situation is also precarious.

In the letter I also stated that the Nation was alerted to the possibility of heavy rains by the relevant departments of Government and we had a reaffirmation of that a few moments ago in the statement by the Hon. Minister including the meteorology department and the Ministry of Agriculture. We were further assured that large expenditures to the tune of millions of dollars were incurred in preparing infrastructure to cope with the anticipated rains and that the relevant departments were well prepared to deal with any emergency and we have had quite a detailed presentation a few moments ago by the Hon. Minister of all that allegedly had been or has been done to deal with the situation. Regrettably, the factual situation does not accord with those pronouncements.

I visited several villages on the East Coast on Friday, December 19 last including:

- Bachelor's Adventure;
- Paradise;
- Buxton;

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- Vigilance;
- Bare Root;
- Enterprise

and found an appalling situation closely resembling the conditions of the 2005 floods. Severe losses have been experienced by villages and to date Mr. Speaker no significant effort had been made to provide relief. On Sunday a delegation of Parliamentarians from the PNC and executives from the PNCR also visited several areas and there was no marked improvement, rather the situation had become grave and as one headline in the daily newspapers today states and I quote:

*Duchfour misery continues.*

The article begins as follows:

*It was watery misery for the thirteenth day in Duchfour, East Coast Demerara yesterday and the major cause of flooding, the silted up Hope koker, is only now being cleared.*

Surely the urgency of this matter could not do better described. Mr. Speaker, I have raised this matter because I believe that unless perhaps the facts are exposed the Nation could be deluded into believing that we on this side of the House are being

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irresponsible, accused of being manipulators of the facts, using the situation for political mileage and not being according to the Honourable Minister loyal and demonstrate as he said maturity and dignity.

That is why in my letter today I said I was prepared to show a video if the Speaker would permit it for all members of Parliament so that we cannot rely on the words only we would have the video of what is on the ground on the East Coast from Plaisance right on to Mahaica which footage was taken only a few days ago-Friday and as late as Sunday. So when the Minister tells us about the great work that is being done I think the video footage will be the best way of determining whether we have been mischievous or explaining the plight of farmers, citizens and people in this country. We are not here to make mischief Mr. Speaker, Mde Speaker. The record of the People's National Congress Reform Parliamentarians in 2005 speaks for itself and therefore our approach to all matters of national concern is one which places the interest of Guyana first rather than making political mileage in any situation. I dare say that the record of our participation in 2005 from the initial day when we discovered that there was going to be a disaster speaks for itself and I do not want to waste time today to regale what we did and what we did not do because that is not going to help the people of the East Coast, the people of Bare Root who are flooded at the moment.

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- How many pumps you put in;
- How many drainage canals were dug;
- How many miles of canals were prepared;
- How many recommendations were made; and
- How quickly they were done

As I heard the Minister speaking I recognised particularly since I was reminded by a certain face in the gallery ... I was reminded, Mr. Speaker of one of the proverbs of our dear old creole Guyana when I heard what was happening. It goes like this: *wah a fun fuh lil boy a dead fuh crapo.*

We have heard all, announcements, people being satisfied with arrangements, but the facts are Mr. Speaker that water is on the land and I would have thought that the Minister having used the opportunity of Statements by Ministers in the Parliament this afternoon would not regale us about how many pumps are being put down. He would be telling us about when he is taking reliefs of water to Bare Root the very Dazzle housing scheme that he claims the NDC did not function properly.

He will tell us that the Civil Defence Commission has been activated and water will go in from this afternoon because from since eight days ago the

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water main which takes water to that community has been submerged prior to the flood Mr. Speaker. We have had cause to publically announce that the water supply to many of those areas was below standard. In other words the pressure was so low that in order for those residents to get water they had to dig holes in the ground, place buckets below the level of the earth in order for the water to flow into their buckets.

In fact, in those communities there is a thriving donkey cart water supply business where donkey cart owners are able to fetch water from the road way down to the back of those villages for the people to get water. That was before the flood when Minister Rohee came to the Parliament a few weeks ago announcing that he had reports of my visit to Vryheid Lust if you remember Sir; telling me that he heard what I told the people of Vryheid Lust because we did not wait until the flood to go there I was there a few weeks ago so I can make a comparison then. They had difficulty getting water and I was calling on GUYWA to do something about the water supply in those communities. Even at that level Sir the water is about a foot above that level.

On Thursday they were given a false assurance that the water would recede and indeed some of the water did recede in fact in some parts the farmers told me they were comfortable on Thursday night and they went to sleep thinking that all was well and woke up

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on Friday morning to find that their pens were all covered with water. Thousands of ... [*Interruption: 'Not only in Dazzle'*] ... livestock have been lost.

There is a woman there who depended only on poultry: ducks and chickens she had two pens, I do not want to get into the names, but I have it all on video if the Minister wants to look. There was ... she woke up in the morning to find that in one pen 1000 ducks and another one 500 chickens struggling for survival. Many of the chickens had already died and she said she opened the pen and allowed the birds to go on the dam and of course, knowing some of our Guyanese friends she was helped because some people she said recognised that she had no place to put the fowls and ducks so they decide that the best place for the ducks and fowls was in their kitchens. So she lost some even from predial larceny people were preying on her in this moment of crisis. That is the reality on the ground, not pumps and drainage canals.

Recognising that situation, on Friday afternoon I left there when it was almost dark, I called the regional chairman, Mr. Corlett I know he had gone with a team, the Minister was visiting some areas that very day so I am not saying that the Minister was not out there in the field. There was a regional team visiting there is a task force, all of that has been established. I am aware of all of that but the fact is when I called



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Mr. Corlett he could not tell me yet what arrangement had been made to take water supply to a place like Bare Root, Paradise, et cetera so I suggested that they take action that very evening because there could be a health hazard developing in that area.

On Saturday morning he called me very early said he had found the Minister of Local Government that night and that the Minister of Local Government had even given him his cell phone number and guaranteed that action would have been taken. I assume they must have said that they could not find the Minister at that particular time when he called, but he was certain that action would have been taken over the weekend.

Mr. Speaker, a Parliamentary team went there on Sunday, I am still waiting to see this response that is needed at this time not words, the civil defence commission going into action as we saw in 2005 truckloads of water being distributed in those areas where people do not have water.

The medical team and that is why one of the questions I asked was how soon would the medical emergency be activated. I do not want to hear it started and I am saying that there is no visible effort on the ground of a serious approach to this being taken. We were told that a medical team would have gone into the area, but I am saying that what is being done is grossly inadequate and there is no evidence of

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a serious approach being taken in this matter. People have had severe losses; these losses are a direct result of the comfort zone and assurances which the Minister of Agriculture and other officials of the Government have given them.

Statements like the one we have had here this afternoon to this Parliament that millions are being spent, drainage pumps are in place and all these things are there to guarantee that there are going to be no more floods and so farmers ... [*Interruption: 'You said that' "Who said so?" 'You have it under control so do not worry so ... We have grow more food campaign ... Seeds distributed ... plant up!'*] This is what the Ministry of Agriculture said in a Grow More Food Campaign a few months ago. You encourage these people to start to be self reliant which I supported Mr. Speaker and I am glad that Minister Rohee reported accurately that when I went to Vryheid Lust I did not tell the people not to farm, he reported accurately. I said plant up your lands, I congratulated some of the farmers for planting up and one of them said you sure we will not get floods? I said you have assurances, the Minister say you are not going to have floods. So the people have relied on statements by this administration, expended their resources planting up their lands, start the chickens pens, poultry pen so we do not want to hear we are sympathetic. We want to hear the level of compensation that the Minister proposes to give to

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these farmers who are in crisis at this moment.

*[Applause]*

That is what we want. We were told and this is not a matter I am raising in the Parliament for the first time. I recognise that there is a regional chairman there Mr. Speaker. I am coming here because I am not satisfied that the Minister is ceased with the gravity of the situation. When I spoke with the regional chairman about this matter he told me that things were under control because he spoke to the Minister and the Minister is sending a team there. He called the name of the veterinary officer that was responsible for this team that will go to access the damage that was done that some compensation will be paid and he gave assurance that if the farmers had any problems with selling any commodity or livestock that was in danger the GMC will buy it, but no administrative arrangement is in place Sir for that to happen. No guarantee about what price will be given to them about these things so it is really a pig in a poke situation in which the farmers some from Dutchfort have been calling me for the last two weeks and they want a clear, cut statement as what to do in this crises where up to this morning from Lusignan, a woman called me and said three sheep died in her pen.

The people at Dazell Housing Scheme, that I spoke about a few moments ago with their pens under

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water. In some cases people have had to evacuate their home who live on the bottom flat so this is not a light matter. I saw people actually moving their furniture because in three of the homes, the bottom flat on Friday there was at least three feet of water in the bottom flats. I have this all on video that is why I had asked you Sir if you permit maybe while the entertainment is going on because we should not be drinking and having fun unless we settle the problem with these farmers. *[Applause]* because when they see us knocking our glasses in this Parliament as their representatives and we have not addressed the serious problem they are facing and the plight they have to experience at this time of the year where many of them are unlikely to have a Christmas. I think we owe them a service, we owe them a commitment to say something positive to them today. Among the things I expect to hear is that the farmers will be properly compensated and that monies will start going out as of tomorrow ... *[Applause]* because some assessment started already ... Yes we have had emergency operations put in place. It must be treated like the 2005 flood belatedly because it was several weeks in the flood after persistent hammering at the Government that some arrangement was put in place for that kind of response. Are we going to wait until we have a few lives and then we are going to pull the Civil Defense Commission into place? People have lost a great deal Mr. Speaker and I would expect that we will get that response from the Minister today. I

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would like the Minister to inform this House not what the NDIA did several weeks ago because the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I am pleased that all this work has been done, but the bottom line on Friday was that one of those pumps was not working all day. You are ... what you appointed? The Committee for Disaster Preparedness, the very committee you referred to where villagers were set up to help monitor the disaster. I was speaking to one of the committee chairman in Paradise and he was reporting to me that the pump out there was not working all day while the water was building up on the land and they were virtually in a state of panic. So it is okay to explain all these pumps, but I am saying that the arrangement on the ground is ... the arrangements are inadequate to really deal with the present situation.

We can speak about the MMA excavators and the five draglines, but Itica was still under water. An MP Wade, is she here today? She was in there I do not know if she gave you a report, but she is capable of giving you a report of the factual situation in there. She was there since last week. The farmers of Itica and let us not only think that the floods have touched the people on the coast. Poomeroon is in serious trouble so what is this national response to a crisis? This is the point I would like the Parliament to address this afternoon Mr. Speaker not what they plan to do and what they did before. I would like to hear in precise terms what is being done to deal with this

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situation. I do not want to refer to what the Minister has said here Mr. Speaker. This is a political speech this cannot impress anybody about climate change and all of that. I could come here and said Mr. Hoyte recognized that and set up Iwokrama, but that is not going to put food on the table or give compensation to those people now. *[Applause]* So it is okay to speak about global warming and all of that we have discussed that in the Parliament. I think we even had you making a statement on this matter some time ago in this Parliament so we do not want to deal with this issue of climate change that is not going to help the people here at this point in time. So as I committed to you Sir I do not want to dwell at length with this matter. I have raised it at this point in time with the expectation that of this afternoon we will hear from the Minister:

- That the civil defence commission has been reactivated.
- That the trucks are taking in water;
- That you are putting some emergency tanks along the East Coast;
- That you tell the farmers put it in the newspapers and do not make it as hazardous as the Buxton expose.

I do not want to get into that or divert my attention.

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Let the farmers at Dutchfort know what you are going to do to compensate them for the losses they had more than two weeks ago. That is what they would like to hear and I trust that if we deal with that matter I could think we could have a good Christmas. If those matters are not addressed I do not think any member of this National Assembly should think of having any Christmas at all unless those farmers and people's problems are addressed. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**The Speaker:** Thank you Mr. Corbin

Honourable Prime Minister

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I would like to assure Mr. Corbin and this Assembly and the people of Guyana that this Government has been vigilant and alert as this rainy season began. I think that we all know the situation of our coastland that it is below sea level. That we have periods of heavy rainfall and under to the 2005 floods the conventional wisdom and the practice was that there were installations, canals and pumps that could drain 1 inch of rainfall a day, but Sir we experienced then and we are experiencing at this time rainfall of 3, 4, 5 and 6 inches.

It is quite right and proper that Minister Robert Persaud should have stated at some length the amount of work that has been done in improving our situation

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since 2005. As a result of that work we are now able to drain water at a rate that is some 50 percent greater than it was when the floods of 2005 came on. That did not come cheaply, we have to bear in mind that while we are in distress, we share the distress of people who find their homes, their fields and their pens flooded while we share that distress, the quantities of monies that are required to change Guyana's coastland to a situation where there is no harmful effects of heavy rain it is enormous. The Minister did state there how much money has been spent already and that the Government is looking, considering, seeking ways to raise a further some 400 million US\$ overtime to be able to better manage the rainfall that we experience so I think that the Honourable Member Corbin was being mischievous when he sought to draw, to make a relationship that if there is flood, if there is accumulation of water no work has been done or there is no sensitivity of this Government. He was being mischievous even though he disclaimed any intention to be so. *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member do not persist with this word mischievous.

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** In... *[Interruption]*

**The Speaker:** I try...please do not persist with this word mischievous.

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Okay Mr. Speaker, I would



withdraw it, but to draw...

**The Speaker:** I did not ask you to withdraw ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** ...or to make a statement or to lead people to believe that the fact that there is water accumulation is right away a confirmation that it has been done or that the system is not being managed. We share the distress and we have been following every day the rainfall looking at the reports of rainfall and Honourable Member Corbin himself did say that last Thursday some of the people he spoke with seemed satisfied that things were being managed and then they woke up in the morning and found flood. I can say that the same experience occurred the previous week Thursday to Friday at the Office of the President when at ten o'clock the place was dry and on Friday morning at seven o'clock or so there was water in all the bottom flats of the Office of the President.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members we should be aware and many of us are old enough to recall the time when the practice was that no lower flat was less than four feet above the ground and when Guyana was known as a country with houses built on stilt. So we have a situation which we are:

- Fighting nature;
- Fighting the rainfall;

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- Fighting the natural conditions and we are doing as much as within our ability at this time.

On the question of doing something for those areas that have been flooded from last week the CDC began taking out water in bulk to the areas of Dochfour and some other areas. As the Honourable Member Corbin has admitted just now there have been teams going out from the Ministry of Health particularly into that area and also veterinarian teams from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Government will continue to monitor the situation and with an eye to the resources that are available will determine the point at which there would be a massive mobilization and at what point it may be appropriate to consider establishing shelters and so on. This is an assessment that is being done at least once a day if not more than once twice a day. As soon as that point is reached the CDC will be put into full mobilization, but I would like to assure Honourable Member Corbin, Members of this House and our country at large that we continue to monitor and to assess the situation steadily and as soon as conditions... There are conditions which warrant a mobilization we will so mobilize the CDC. *[Applause]* Thank you Sir.

**The Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister.

Are there any other speakers? None?

Yes Sir proceed ...

**Mr. David Patterson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention on this Motion. Having heard the Honourable Minister of Agriculture lengthy policy statement like you I was a bit surprised at the length without no content. On the status of the country's drainage system one may have been tempted to believe that all is well, flooding will soon be a thing of the past on our coastal plains. Mr. Speaker, sadly the truth is that flooding is still with us. All the activity that the Minister described all the intervention, all the excavators all this has been done and yet this situation has not been alleviated.

2005 was a wake up call for citizens on the coastal plain. It demonstrated the levels of rainfall we could expect over a set period. It also highlighted our lack of preparedness. One would have expected after 2005 that any reasonable Government would have come up with a plan using 2005 as their baseline. One would have said that 2005 therefore was the worst-case situation whereby we would have put our plans in place to ensure that at least at the bare minimum the country would be able to withstand floods at the level of 2005. Mr. Speaker, we do not even have those levels now and we are flooding. I know the Minister and everyone else talks about climate change and

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those things. That is a reality they shall be with us for a while. Until that time we should expect annually rainfall in excess of the average.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to look at what ... the Government keeps bandying around all these millions and billions of dollars they have spent on the drainage system to give the people the impression that we are prepared, however, listening to the Minister's policy statement in it I would like to quote: several weeks ago, we are in December the NDI issued a call to all NDCs and RDCs to prepare the drainage system for the anticipated larger than normal levels of rainfall. Several weeks ago that has been on the outside; six weeks, eight weeks. What does this Government expect any NDI, RDC do to alleviate rain during the rainy season in a two weeks or an eight weeks period. You had billions to spend, you had three years to spend this money and yet today we are still flooding. *[Applause]* It shows a short sideling that no plan was in place *[Interruption: 'Well that I right, lack of vision; all these boards coincidently the AFC is not even represented on all these boards that have been commissioned and these bipartisan boards staffed by millions of people yet several weeks ago that is when the NDC is supposed to...']* one would expect that all these drainage systems would have been done in the dry season so therefore we would not have these floodings now.

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One of the issues in his policy statement the Minister also mentioned that all the recommendations that came out of the 2005 report were implemented.

Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations in that report right was the question of garbage. If the Minister has implemented all of the policies in that report maybe he should get up and state to this Assembly what he has implemented to do with clearing the garbage in our drains because up to now you could still go, there is still garbage in our drains. There is no provision for the clearing of the garbage in the drains. This continues to hamper the drainage of our cities and low lying areas.

It is clear that insufficient remedies were implemented to alleviate flooding because this happens every year and it will continue to happen every year unless this is done objectively.

We always hear about the quantity of money expended, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture spoke about the hundreds of millions of dollars expended; maybe what needs to be done Mr. Speaker is an audit of how and where this money was expended. *[Applause]*

Because I cannot see you are spending 700 billions of dollars, you are buying 39 excavators and we are still in the same place or sometimes worst. Areas that have never flooded in the years before are flooding

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now. Maybe an audit has to be done and while they are auditing and while they are going about it maybe we can get a report on the money spent for the 2005 flood. You can do all in one see who is actually collecting this money and what they are actually doing.

*[Interruption: 'Mr. Speaker that is the attitude. We have work to do. You have work to do, but you are doing nothing. I do not know what you are deceiving yourself about; you are doing nothing: we are still flooding.']*

Mr. Speaker, the... *[Interruption: 'the people judge...']* I have heard nothing, the leader of the opposition referred to it. We have heard nothing in the activation and emergency services in the event of any water borne diseases in these flooded areas; you have nothing. What would probably be nice is if we can relocate that member speaking somewhere in Buxton or somewhere like that to stay under water and then you can make those comments.

Mr. Speaker, in areas like Buxton and I would like to re-emphasize this because we visited there. In areas like Buxton the newly led water lines/water mains by GUYWA are under water. These water mains were laid there are no stop valves; there is no stand pipe so the flood came and they are under water. I know that if Mr. Nawbatt was here he would champion and he would report gleefully how there is new water lines in

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Buxton, but the persons cannot access the water because it is under the flood water. Of course there is no assistance here. Mr. Speaker, the question of increase retention basins needs to be addressed. We need to now not wait until the next flood and talk about... we need to have additional retention basins to take off the waters that we are having. You can talk about the back dams being flooded and the leader of the opposition is quite right, grow more food; you encouraged, you cleared up the back dams for the health and safety of the people along the East Coast; you cleared up the Buxton back dams. What did you do? You increased the possibility of those areas flooding. Every action... [*Interruption: 'I want you to go there.'*] Every action clearing those backlands results in the settlement of water in those. It is our contention that this Government plays an annual lip service when it comes to the drainage and irrigation of this country. All year you hear, you see photo ups with persons standing in front of excavators, standing in front of large pontoons you actually see the Minister attempting to drive it. When actually the cows come home... [*Interruption: 'there is a lot of PR'*] the situation in the city and on our coastal plain remains the place. So it is time that this Government comes and explains definitively a short term and a long term programme of how they plan to stop flooding in these areas. [*Applause*] Telling us how much money they spent, telling us how many embankments they redid will not do. Obviously by

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now in 2008 you recognize that how this was not good enough. You should take shame from out of your eyes and admit you need to rethink. You need help and fortunately we are willing to help. You made a statement about going past petty politics and making statements for political gain and then inclusiveness. Well I would like to make this offer, we are willing to help; you should by now acknowledge that you are not the reservoir no pun intended, all useful information and knowledge. Maybe when the next speaker gets up he can accept our offer to help and maybe together I am sure with our input together we will be able to at least by next year provide the residents of the East Coast with some level of comfort. Not a rain Christmas, *[Laughter]* not a flooded, rainy Christmas. *[Interruption: 'It would appear like that Mrs. Chandarpal and nobody along the East Coast paw paw trees or anything like that would die out.']*

So Mr. Speaker, I would just like to end this just to restate our position that we feel in the Alliance for Change that not enough has been done and not enough will be done if the Government continues to approach the D&I situation in this country in the manner in which they are doing. I thank you. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister of Agriculture



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**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest the submissions made by the leader of the opposition and the Honourable Member too Mr. Patterson. I must think that the Honourable Mr. Corbin I am quite sure that he is genuinely concerned about those who are affected as all of us I am quite sure in this National Assembly here are, we need to understand the context and also understand the constraints we face.

First and foremost we must appreciate that our coast, let us do not forget for a moment we are a meter and above below sea level. Let us not forget about that. Let us not also if we are going to dispute certain topographical and scientific factors how then as the Honourable Member Mr. Patterson is suggesting do we come up with proper and sound solutions. Politics and scoring points will not solve some of the realities that we face in this country and one of those is drainage. So we need to recognize certain factors that our low lying communities will remain vulnerable and all the engineers will tell you that.

If you did not throw out McAllister he would have told you that too that the reality is that there are certain communities that will remain vulnerable to flooding and some of it will experience vulnerable ... I do not know, forever until we are able to make some massive investments and we are talking in the tune for 2 regions alone, for regions 4 and 5 close to \$400

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million so let us understand... US\$ we are talking about and let us understand that reality. What we have to do is to ensure that we come up with the right adaptation plan and that we make the necessary adjustments. I want to assure the members of the National Assembly; some of those in the opposition they are fully aware:

- That there is a larger national drainage master plan;
- That there is a strategic plan that is being implemented, but a strategic plan that requires resources that our country today cannot fund upfront and that is where we need to ensure that incrementally and as resources become available we do what it takes.

So let me address the point that there is a plan, we know the work that is required. In fact there has been submissions that has been made to:

- The Chinese Government;
- The Japanese Government

Looking at funding for some of these projects. *[Interruption: 'Perhaps we inherited that, that is why we are still in that position.']* The other issue is that I want to ensure that no one is intended in covering up anything. You cannot cover up anything. The reality

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is that there are communities although the water level is receding there are communities that has large amount of waters in people's home and even in the drainage system. Everyone here, everyone in this National Assembly it was the Government that first went out and spoke about the issues out there and spoke to the plight of those persons who were inconvenienced as a result of the high levels of rainfall. Let us not forget about that and that was followed immediately as the Prime Minister confirmed.

That was followed immediately by the CDC being activated by the Ministry of Health and other agencies who are out there. Perhaps as the suggestions that we hear and perhaps they probably need to expand and intensify that and no one will probably doubt that. Perhaps if you have seven teams you perhaps need fourteen teams because that is required so too it must be done. No one should come here and say that there has been no effort to bring relief or to bring comfort to those communities. We must also when we talk about context we must understand where our drainage system was. We are in the season of goodwill, but sometimes there are certain factors and certain reality that we sometimes ignore. *[Interruption: 'Yes Patterson he knows the truth, the Honourable Member knows the truth.']* I do not feel good, I feel bad because monies that we could spend in health, housing in other areas we have

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to spend them in reopening the sluices that were shut down, we had to spend them in reactivating the pumps because the system there came out of prolong neglect and we are still in the phase of reactivation and rebuilding the system. We need to recognize that.

The other fact too Mr. Speaker, is that we need to recognize that there are certain things which we could have done and done better. One of which is that too because of our housing programme we might have also compromised some of the areas that were historically being used for water catchment. We might have done that and certainly in retrospective we might have to make some adjustments, but although we have recognized that we are looking at setting up some other water basins.

First of all when the persons who were squatting in the Good Hope area they were removed for the specific purpose of establishing a water basin. The area in front of Melanie, the Coldagen area - that entire open area - that also is being developed and has been developed as a water catchment. We are looking at other areas in which ... because we need to store water in the context that we depend on tidal drainage.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out that no one on this side of the House ever said that there will not be flooding. What assurances that were given is that within the affordability and the resources available

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steps will be taken. No one here can eliminate flooding in Guyana it is a fact of life, but what we have to do is we have to control and properly manage flooding. What we have to aim for is to ensure that we can dispose and discharge water in the shortest possible time utilizing the different resources. I want to assure and to make the point that we are open to suggestions. There has never been anyone who has offered a constructive suggestion in this area or any other area that I am quite sure that has been rebuffed.

In fact the Economic Services Committee of the National Assembly about twelve months ago had a very intensive and a very prolonged discussion on the issue of drainage so much so that members of the Economic Services Committee visited the East Demerara water conservancy. They were also updated on the number of interventions and suggestions that came out of those deliberations were inputted into the effort. So no one disqualifies or there is not anyone who is prevented from making those suggestions, but at the end of the day we are in a very intense rainy season we will require all the resources necessary to ensure that we can at the earliest opportunity discharge and drain land that is caused primarily from the heavy, intense rainfall, but also importantly as work has started this year is to look at ways in which we can provide relief and support to those affected, but also especially from the Ministry of Agriculture standpoint working with our

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farmers in ensuring that they get back on their feet and very early, those who are affected.

So Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that we all share that concern and like the leader of the opposition I agree now is not the time for jubilation and merriment, now is not the time for us to go and have drinks and so fourth. I would probably support him if he is suggesting that we defer your celebration as we have done in the Ministry of Agriculture, but because there are lots of work to be done, there is a lot of serious at hand and all of us need to be mobilized in this regard. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. *[Applause]*

**The Speaker:** Mr. Corbin.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Mr. Speaker, I deliberately dealt with the Motion that I raised as a matter of urgent public business and sought to avoid those areas that could be contentious. I could have raised the paper and show that all of the technical things the Minister is saying that one of his experienced engineers one Mr. M Ali former specialist engineer through hydraulics division. In a letter in yesterday's papers he is explaining that the Liliendaal and Kitty pumps should be replaced and how it is foolhardy to proceed in a certain direction.

I can point to the editorial in today's papers which talks about tinkering, but I did not think that that was the focus of my presentation. I acknowledged even

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that the Minister and a team were there because I was on the ground. What I was saying was that I have not seen the Government appreciating the gravity of the situation. The Prime Minister calls me mischievous, but;

- I want to take you to Bare Root this afternoon and you tell those people that.
- I want to carry you to Paradise and Bachelor's Adventure;
- I want to carry you to Mr. Suban Ali who lost:
  - 1500 roots of ochro;
  - 200 root of squash;
  - 8 bags of calaloo;
  - 35 bags of paddy at Dochfour

Tell him that that I am mischievous.

I would like you to go to Region 3 and tell the people of Pourdeyon Middle Street and Samaru dam why they have been under water for fifteen days if I am being mischievous. Tell the people of Canal's Polder who lost crops under two weeks; tell the people at La' Ritraite that and I could go on, and Itica. So if you think I am being mischievous I invite you to come with me. The point I am making Mr. Speaker, is that

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while we are talking of all these grandiose plans and pumps. I am pointing out that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. That is what I am trying to tell the Minister. I told the Minister that I offered to assist; I called the regional chairman since Friday from the field. I said could you get water in these villages people do not have water. A lady brought a baby out she said all I need is some medicine. She said I cannot think of the ducks and fowls that drown now I need some medicine for this child. She showed me the child, eczema coming out on the child's skin. What she needs is water, it has not happened and so you think I am being mischievous by suggesting that you have a civil defence commission put up an emergency and take water to those villages where they have been under water for days. So that is the thrust that I am trying to bring to this National Assembly. I do not want to debate the technical things because I could plug holes in some of those matters, but that is not going to help the people at this time in their hour of trial. I would like to hear the Government is from tomorrow setting up as we did during the flood some water tankers going up on the East Coast; let them start running from tomorrow, put GUYWA to work. Get some of the water supply companies that are doing gifts for Christmas let them give gifts of water to some of those communities. Hand the trucks to take it. [Applause] Those farmers at Dochfour behind Bare Root, the woman at Dazzle scheme that lost her thousands of chickens send Mr.



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Doxa and team that I know you have set up quickly there and say do not worry we see your problem. Assess how many fowls and ducks she has lost and say we will give you an immediate relief of say \$25,000. I did not fix a figure I said ... that is why one of the questions is how are you going to relieve now and later on you do some other adjustments. That is what the people of this country want to hear at this time, not fancy speeches we can leave that for when we come back in the Parliament after the flood when we have dealt with the immediate situation. That is why I have raised this matter under Urgent Public Business. I am very disappointed Mr. Speaker that I have not seen this urgency on the part of the administration instead I see a response which suggests that they are covering their plans and although the Minister said that there has never been a suggestion that they rebut I have not garnered from him that this afternoon or tomorrow we will see some positive speeding up of the Government response to the situation. While I am the last speaker I trust that the response of the Minister and the Government will not be in words, but in action. Again if those who believe that I am making up these stories I have walked with video. I have walked with a projector and if you wish I could set it up while you are having fun to see what I am talking about. *[Applause]* I have it here, I have my camera man, video projector, everything so that you can see that I am not being mischievous. I have brought it so you could be

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brought to the gravity of it and perhaps your heart would be moved to be act by tomorrow. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

Thank you Honourable Members.

As you are aware there is no formal conclusion to a debate of this type. Honourable Members we can now ... *[Interruption]*

**Hon. Robert M Persaud:** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order No. 39 (ii) is there not a right to reply?

**The Speaker:** No, you do not have a right of reply Honourable Member, but you may reply if you so request. You may be allowed to reply.

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to request just to speak to two matters. I spoke in response to the member saying that he was not being mischievous and I said to the extent that he is drawing a line to say there is flood therefore all this investment in canals and pumps is of no matter. I was saying that that was being mischievous.

On the question of the Government response and the CDC response, I want to assert again that the Government is being alert to what is happening. This rainy period is likely to extend unto the end of January and we would be making a judgment at what

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is an appropriate point to get in with a full response.

**Motion:**

**LIVE AND UNEDITED BROADCAST OF THE  
SITTINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The Speaker: Honourable Member Mr. Norton ...

**Mr. Aubrey C Norton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to request that the Motion be deferred to the next session.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Is that okay by Members?

Honourable Members, Mr. Norton has asked that the Motion be deferred.

There being no other business on the Order Paper ...  
Hon. Prime Minister ...

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to move that the House be adjourned unto next Monday, 29 December.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members before I call the adjournment please allow me to announce that persons who are members of the undermentioned Special Select Committees are reminded of the meetings which will be held in my chambers upon the adjournment of the sitting.

- The first meeting of the Special Select

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Committee on Money Transfer Agency  
Licensing Bill 2008;

- The first meeting of the Special Select Committee on The Impact Of Global Food Prices; *and*
- The first meeting of the Special Select Committee on The Court Of Appeal (Amendment) Bill 2008.

Honourable Members, the only purpose of these meetings is to elect the Chairperson for each of these meetings. Usually there is no dispute or contention in relation to these matters and this matter usually concludes in less than fifteen seconds. I will ask members of these Committees to please stand by.

I believe that this is the last day of the Christmas holidays and I would therefore like to take this opportunity to extend warmest greetings on my own behalf and the staff of the Parliament office to all members of the National Assembly and their families and to wish members a very happy and contented Christmas. Since we are meeting again before the New Year we can then therefore save our New Year greetings for that time. I would like to thank also the members of the media and also my own staff - the Clerk and his staff. I would like to thank them for their service and wish them pleasant and happy holidays over this period.

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Mr. Prime Minister, do you want to say something?

**Hon. Samuel AA Hinds:** Yes Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take the opportunity on behalf of the Government and this side of the House in extending greetings and best wishes for the Christmas season to you Sir, your family, to the members on the other side of the House and to the media and to all those who support the work and activities of this National Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Mr. Corbin.

**Mr. Robert HO Corbin:** Thank you Mr. Speaker, I wish on behalf of members of the People's National Congress Reform side of the House to extend sincere greetings to you and your family, to the Clerk and staff of the National Assembly, members of the media and to all members of this House. Sincere greetings for a very, very peaceful and hopefully contented Christmas. It has been a very difficult year I know where many of our people have faced difficulties and even as I contemplate the meaning of this season where the Christ child came to save the world we know that there are many people who are facing this season in distress some of whom we just discussed. I hope that we can use the Christmas season as an opportunity:

- To bring good cheer;

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- To bring some relief;
- To bring some help to those people who are definitely in distress so that some happiness could be brought to their lives during this season.

Again I wish you Mr. Speaker and all the people of Guyana a very peaceful and God filled Christmas.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much Honourable Members the House will stand adjourned until the... I thought Mr. Corbin spoke to you, but proceed Honourable Member.

**Mrs. Sheila VA Holder:** Well Mr. Speaker, I think that the Alliance For Change would invoke blessings on this House on this special occasion of the birth of Jesus Christ. We would prefer not too extend too many wishes of merriment mainly because of the consequences of our traffic accidents so we would opt to invoke blessings. Thank you very much. Blessings to you all. [*Applause*]

**The Speaker:** Mr. Franklin, you did not get an opportunity to speak.

**Mr. Everall N Franklin:** Well I did not get during the debate, but ...

**The Speaker:** I had indicated to the Honourable Members that I would limit the speeches to four ...

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**Mr. Everall N Franklin:** That is quite alright, I was not aware of that.

**The Speaker:** I am sorry about that ... I should have indicated, but now you have an opportunity not about...

**Mr. Everall N Franklin:** I could have my fifteen minutes now. *[Laughter]*

On behalf of the Guyana Action Party-ROAR I would like to wish all Members of this National Assembly, the staff and Speaker the best for the season, and hopefully for our people it will be dry, not necessarily because there is nothing to drink, but because we wish that for them and hopefully we can emerge in the next year to really do the bidding that we were elected to do and that is to work in the best interest of the people of Guyana. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, the National Assembly is adjourned until 29 December.

*Adjourned Accordingly At 17:30H*