

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2015-2018) OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

88TH Sitting

Friday, 11TH May, 2018

Assembly convened at 2.05 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave to Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, leave from today's sitting has been granted to Hon. Mr. Cornel Damon and Hon. Ms. Sheila Veerasammy.

Visit to Guyana from Secretary of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Mr. Speaker: You are all aware of the visit to Guyana from Mr. Akbar Khan, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Mr. Khan is in our midst today and will be observing part of our sitting. We welcome you, Sir. *[Applause]*

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Papers and Reports were laid:

- (1) Audited Financial Report of the Protected Areas Commission for the year ended December 31, 2012. *[Minister of State]*
- (2) (i) The Code of Practice for Forest Operations No. 1 of 2018.

(ii) The Forests Regulations 2018 – No. 2 of 2018.

[*Minister of Natural Resources*]

(3) Annual Report of the Guyana Securities Council for the year 2017. [*Minister of Finance*]

(4) (i) Annual Reports of the Guyana Office for Investment (GO-Invest) for the years 2014 and 2015.

(ii) Annual Reports of the Guyana National Bureau of Standards for the years 2006 to 2011. [*Minister of Business*]

ORAL QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Recruitment of persons into the Guyana People’s Militia

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing an oral question without notice in my name to the Minister of State in the Ministry of the Presidency, Member of Parliament, Minister Harmon. The question is in relation to the recruitment of persons in the Guyana People’s Militia (GPM). On 3rd January, 2016 the Chief of Staff of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), Brigadier Mark Phillips, announced that the GPM had been reactivated with effect from 1st December, 2015, and that it hopes to recruit an addition 1,500 persons as reserves.

“These are not full-time, these are part-time soldiers. The whole concept is to have a small regular army and a larger reserve that could augment the regular army. Phillips explained the advantage of having the GPM as a separate entity rather than being part of the GDF as the Second Infantry Battalion since August, 1997.”

He went on to say:

“They will have a separate budget and a separate organizational structure, greater involvement at the regional and community levels in defence and security activities, not to mention training and employment activities,”

He has reported to remark.

The Commander in Chief stated at the 2016 Annual Officers Conference:

“The ‘reserve force’ – the Guyana People’s Militia – is being re-built in every administrative region. The militia is an essential arm of the regional system. Each regional capital town will have its own unit, eventually, to enable to respond more promptly to render assistance to residents in the event of emergencies.”

During the annual budget debate on Budget 2016 estimates, 15th February, 2016, the Hon. Minister Harmon informed the House, in response to questions that the Guyana People’s Militia was, in the past, situated within the GDF as a Second Infantry Battalion Reserve and its budget was included within the GDF budget and administration. Could the Minister provide this National Assembly with the following information...?

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Teixeira, I have permitted you to...

Ms. Teixeira: I am reading my question.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, your question will not be allowed and, therefore, I will not allow you to put the question to the Minister. Your question, which is a question without notice to the Minister, does not qualify for presentation as you have done. I think you probably know that. It is not a question which is urgent.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I seek on what grounds my question is not being allowed? With due respect on what grounds? On the Standing Order, I am allowed to ask all question without notice, that it is relevant, definite and it is of importance to the House.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 18 (b) provides that a question without notice must be urgent and important and relates to the business of the day.

Ms. Teixeira: Sir, if you let me ask the question you will see why it is urgent and important. People are being recruited, there is no advertisement and we want to know why.

Mr. Speaker: Ms. Teixeira, we really should not do this. If I said to you that it does not qualify, it will not be qualified because you repeat those things. What I am saying to you is that it does not qualify as a question to the Minister without notice. You have asked why and I refer you to Standing Order 18(b).

Ms. Teixeira: It is not urgent, important or relevant to today’s sitting. Thank you Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

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

Piracy attack on Guyanese Fishermen off the Coast of Suriname

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on 10th May I received a letter from Ms. Teixeira, Opposition Chief Whip requesting leave to adjourn the proceedings “...on definite matters of urgent public importance.”

As Hon. Members would know the time fixed for receiving such a request is not later than 11 a.m. on the day of the sitting. This request was received at 15:40 hours on 10th May and so it is well within the time allowed for receiving such request. Such request to be approved must be definite, urgent and of public importance. The request treats as a definite matter which is of public importance. It is my estimate of things that it is urgent. I therefore hold that this matter qualifies for treatment under Standing Order 12 and I approve the request. Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, this request will be taken after the suspension.

Ms. Teixeira:

“WHEREAS four boats with 20 fishermen, most of whom were Guyanese, were attacked in a most horrific and violent manner on Friday, April 27, 2018 by pirates off the coast of the Republic of Suriname leaving 12 missing, five survivors and three bodies found thus far;

AND WHEREAS less than a week later another boat with Guyanese fishermen was also attacked by pirates in the Republic of Suriname leading to one dead and 4 survivors;

AND WHEREAS families of the fishermen in Guyana met the Leader of the Opposition who subsequently travelled to Suriname to meet with families and survivors of these piracy attacks, and, the Guyanese Community, in Suriname;

AND WHEREAS the families and the survivors have explained in great detail the horrors that they have endured at the hands of criminals and expressed great fears that these atrocities will be repeated unless the perpetrators are arrested and brought to justice;

AND WHEREAS these attacks were not merely robberies, murders and acts of piracy but by the very cruel and inhumane manner by which they were executed, these should be treated as acts of terrorism requiring the application of the full force of the law to bring the perpetrators to justice by both the Governments of Guyana and the Republic of Suriname working collaboratively and swiftly in addressing these horrific incidents fully and comprehensively;

AND WHEREAS the families and communities of the victims, and, fishermen in general, have been deeply traumatised and severely aggrieved by the lack of empathy, information, and action by Government officials in the last two (2) weeks;

2.20 p.m.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Guyana informs this National Assembly of the actions which have been taken in respect of this horrendous human tragedy, thus far, and what actions it intends to take, in relation thereto, generally, but more specifically, in respect of the following matters:

- (i) the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators of these horrific acts and the intellectual authors thereof;
- (ii) the measures put in place or to be put in place designed to create a safe environment for fishermen to continue to ply their trade at sea;
- (iii) what form of financial assistance, if any, is being or will be offered to the families of the victims, as well as, the owners of the fishing vessels, engines, seine and equipment which have been damaged, destroyed or lost;
- (iv) what form of enhanced collaboration, if any, is being pursued with the Government of the Republic of Suriname to patrol and monitor the waters, inclusive by air, and including the installation of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) or similar technological apparatus on licenced fishing vessels;

- (v) what mechanisms, if any, have been put in place to ensure that when reports are made to the Law Enforcement Authorities in Suriname and Guyana, they are treated seriously, confidentially and with dispatch;
- (vi) what enhanced role is being play by the Guyana Embassy in Paramaribo, Suriname, to represent, facilitate, and render assistance to these traumatized families and victims, in particular assisting with access to the Surinamese authorities with regard to law enforcement, health care, immigration and the release of bodies for burial, and further issues which affect the interest and welfare of all Guyanese either residing or working in the Republic of Suriname.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the Government of Guyana has not yet acted upon the issues articulated above that this National Assembly urges it to do so with every convenient speed;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this National Assembly urges the Government of Guyana to utilize the provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Piracy Act to bring the perpetrators to justice.”

Mr. Speaker: As I indicated, the discussion, the debate on the motion, will take place after the suspension.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO.78 (2)

BE IT RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 78(2) be suspended to enable the Assembly, at this sitting on Friday, 11th May, 2018, to consider sympathy motions on the death of Mr. Alli Baksh, former Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture and Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, former Member of Parliament, as its first and second items of Public Business. [*First Vice-President and Prime Minister*]

First Vice-President and Prime Minister [Mr. Nagamootoo]: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following motion in my name.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That Standing Order No. 78(2) be suspended to enable the Assembly, at this sitting on Friday, 11th May, 2018, to consider sympathy motions on the death of Mr. Alli Baksh, former Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture and Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, former Member of Parliament, as its first and second items of Public Business.”

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I draw to your attention the fact that the relatives of the late Mr. Alli Baksh, his widow and children and grandchild, are present and of Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, relatives are present as we debate this motion.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. I wish to ...

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is the motion that is proposed and we will wish this suspension motion to be considered.

Ms. Teixeira: I wish to support the Prime Minister’s motion for the suspension to allow for these two items to come up right away rather than waiting as per normal until after the supplementary Financial Paper. It would have been very inconvenient for the families to wait until 7 o’clock or 8 o’clock at night. I thank the Prime Minister and we support this wholeheartedly.

Question put, and agreed to.

Standing Order suspended.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS

MOTIONS

MOTION ON THE DEATH OF MR. ALLI BAKSH, FORMER MINISTER WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly places on record our profound grief at the great loss suffered by the people of Guyana on the death of Mr. Alli Baksh, on 23rd November, 2017, and pays tribute to his dedicated service to the Parliament of Guyana where he served as Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture and Member of Parliament from 5th December, 2011 to 16th May, 2015, and to the people of Guyana;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly directs that an expression of our heartfelt condolences and sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives. [*Ms. Teixeira*]

Ms. Teixeira: There is a motion before the House on the passing of Mr. Alli Baksh, former Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture and Member of Parliament and we ask that this House support the motion to honour and to extend condolences to the family on the passing of a really wonderful man.

I stand before this National Assembly with a very heavy heart to present this sympathy motion on behalf of the Parliamentary Opposition with regard to my comrade and colleague, Mr. Alli Baksh, former Regional Chairman of the Regional Democratic Council (RDC) for Region 2, former Member of Parliament and Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture and a Minister of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) Government, who passed away on 23rd November, 2017 at his home in Cotton Field, Essequibo.

I first met Mr. Alli Baksh in April, 1977 when I returned to Guyana to work as the personal secretary to Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Leader of the Opposition. Comrades Mr. Alli Baksh and Mr. Ishak Bashir, who was at the time a PPP Member of Parliament, and myself went out and did political work in the Pomeroon River and the Essequibo Coast. Alli was young and knew the people in the communities we visited and I was impressed with his ability to communicate and to know everybody and their relatives. He had a particular joy in poking fun at me, "this girl who returned from Canada", and laughed heartily when I fell into the Pomeroon River coming down a slippery boat landing. This became a standing joke between us.

Throughout the 40 years I knew him, Mr. Alli Baksh remained a humble, faithful, quiet and respectful hardworking member and leader of the People's Progressive Party. He represents the best of the PPP, our backbone that has sustained us through 68 years as a political party, making us a political force to be reckoned with and included in the body politic of Guyana.

Born on 11th June, 1947 in Bush Lot Settlement, his family then moved to Cotton Field where he grew up. He came from a rice farming family and he became a rice farmer himself. His father was an activist for the PPP and the Michael Ford Bookshop for the Essequibo was located in the downstairs of their home. His father introduced him to Dr. Cheddi Jagan and thus began his unshakable commitment to the PPP and its vision for the future.

In the famous rigged 1973 General Elections, at the age of 26, he was a counting agent for the People's Progressive Party and in his attempt to protect the ballot boxes that were being taken away by the GDF soldiers, he refused an order to leave the station and he was thrown into the back of their pickup and stomped on. He suffered a broken jaw, broken elbow and spinal injuries. These spinal injuries worsened as he progressed in age and caused constant and debilitating pain for years.

In the 1990 campaign for free and fair elections, he was arrested again along with Mr. Moses Bhagwan and Dr. Luncheon.

He rose to be a member of the Central Committee and held that position for decades after each successive congress. He was also repeatedly elected to the Executive Committee of the party. Mr. Alli Baksh remained unshakeable in his commitment and dedication to his beloved party.

After the first free and fair elections on the 5th October, 1992, he became the Regional Chairman of the Regional Democratic Council for Region 2. This was his region that he loved forever. Again, he was re-elected to that position after the 1997, 2001 and 2006 General Elections and was the longest serving Regional Chairman in the successive People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administrations. May I say - I also believe that if he was not the longest serving Regional Chairman ever - he was one of the longest serving Regional Chairman since the system was introduced at the 1985 Elections.

He never lost touch with the working people. He empathised and understood their problems especially those of the rice farming community, and small cash crops, and he made no bones in representing their interest at other forums, so that he could bring relief and improvements to their conditions of life. He remained a dedicated *Essequibian*, always representing the people in his region, whether at the party level or with various PPP/C Presidents and Cabinets of successive Governments.

The changes in the physical infrastructure in Region 2 from a downtrodden, abandoned and neglected region in 1992, to what it became by 2015, were due in no small path to his relentless contribution as Regional Chairman and his insistent representation to Ministers for the support for the developmental changes in that region. The famous ‘abortion’ road that threaded its way along the Essequibo Coast between Supenaam and Charity - and many times, many of us sitting in this House have traversed that road, and that road took an agonising time to navigate - it became a thing of the past. Fortunately, the young generation have no memory of that nor do they have to suffer traversing that road. Thanks to the PPP and Mr. Alli Baksh.

Improvements in drainage and irrigation so that the farmers could improve their yield and make this region a major rice producing region.

New primary schools were built and there was the rehabilitation of older schools over the period of his stewardship which continued up to 2015. The same took place in the health sector in the region with the rehabilitation to Suddie Hospital, health centres and the Charity Hospital.

Improvements in the standard of living in the Amerindian villages were visible with the provision of water, schools and health centres. Mr. Alli Baksh was respected in all of the villages of the coast as a leader. People could have approached him regardless of their political affiliation, race, religion or gender and raised their concerns on any matter. He was also well-known in Region 1 as with other regions where he tirelessly worked on behalf of the PPP.

After the 2011 Elections, he was appointed as a Member of Parliament on the 12th January, 2012 and appointed as a Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture. He worked in the Tenth Parliament until it was dissolved on 28th February, 2015. He was more comfortable as a Minister when he was out in the field than sitting behind a desk and continued as a Minister to be himself – approachable, accessible and concerned about the people’s welfare. By this time, the pain he

suffered from his injuries was getting more and more unbearable. He continued to the end to be ever vigilant with the concerns of the farming communities, Amerindian communities and the availability of jobs and opportunities for self-employment for young people.

Mr. Alli Baksh was born on the 11th June, 1947 and got married on 11th June, 1981. He got married on his birthday. Knowing Mr. Alli Baksh, it was probably a way to save money and *kill two birds with one stone*. Anyway, he married a lovely woman called Lalita Mohan who is here with us, a young and very pretty teacher from Cotton Field. They had one son and three daughters, Latchman Baldeo, Arifa Persaud, Azeena Baksh and Shereefa Toolsiram. He left behind six grandchildren, Matthew Alli Persaud, Rebecca Persaud, Rachel Persaud, Sarah and Saveer Toolsiram and Zachary Salconer, the latest grandchild.

He remained a firm believer in education as the key to breaking the poverty barriers, and especially focused on young people as the country's future and that education investments in them were critical to the future development of our country.

In his own family, he ensured that his children were educated with university degrees, and even master's degrees and that they were all independent. For a father of three daughters, he was liberal and encouraged them to be courageous and to achieve anything they dreamed of.

As a party leader, he always stood for equality of women in the party and encouraged their upward mobility. Personally, I have never heard Mr. Alli Baksh make a sexist comment about women. He was very proud of all of his children's achievements, in particular his daughter Azeena Baksh who was appointed the Registrar of Deeds. Unfortunately, he was dreadfully pained in the last few months of his life by the accusations and treatment meted out to his daughter, Azeena.

2.35 p.m.

His philosophy in life was grounded on a belief that the way to God was not through religion but on doing good for one's fellow men, a belief that he imparted to his children and comrades. He often repeated the saying, "I live this life but once I live it with no fear of tomorrow, but I will do what I can for my fellow men for I know not if I will pass this way again with the same feature

and outlook.” He also loved Frank Sinatra’s song, *I Did It My Way* and I think that song embodies how he felt about his own life.

He was a Guyanese to the core and he loved to celebrate the national days, especially Mashramani Day, in which you could have found him in the parades with the revellers right there in Region 2.

Mr. Alli Baksh imparted in his family and comrades a strong sense of community, of dedication to country, to the working people and was opposed to any form of discrimination on the basis of religion or race. The latter too, he believed were the main causes of such terrible strife and conflict in the world. In the last few months of his life in 2017 he suffered a lot, but this did not stop him from being worried about what was taking place in this country and what the future holds for the younger generation.

Mr. Alli Baksh was a leader of the PPP/C, our comrade, an elected representative of the people in RDC, Region 2, a Member of Parliament and a Minister of PPP/C Government. We were honoured to have such a fine, gentle Guyanese patriotic soul amongst us. We wish to convey our undying respect and extend our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Baksh, the children, grandchildren and all relatives of Alli Baksh.

Thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rajkumar: Mr. Speaker, the late Alli Baksh was an *Essequibian*, my fellow countryman, and a true son of the soil and a household name in Region 2. He would have spent almost all of his life serving the people of Essequibo in various capacities. He served as a political activist for the PPP/C, as the Regional Chairman of Region 2 and then he went on to serve the people of Guyana as a Minister of Agriculture.

Alli Baksh, Chairman, as he was known and called in Region 2, was born on the 11th June, 1947, at Bush Lot Settlement, Essequibo Coast to his parents Edun and Magdoo Khan. He received his early education at CV Nunes Primary School at Anna Regina, Essequibo Coast and then he went on to study Political and Social Science in the Soviet Union.

I recall Alli Baksh, as a little child I was in the late 1970s and 1980s, as a political activist for the PPP going along the Essequibo Coast on a Russian made motorcycle, distributing the *Mirror*

Newspaper, visiting the homes of people and sharing his political views. He was the supervisor of the PPP office in Reliance and an organiser of the PPP activities along the coast for many years. Alli Baksh became Regional Chairman in 1992. He served the people of Essequibo in that capacity for 19 years.

As Regional Chairman, he was very helpful to the people of the region and he had a special interest in agriculture, more particularly so, the rice sector. He would be remembered for championing the many causes of the rice farmers in our region. During his tenure as Regional Chairman, Alli Baksh was instrumental in the establishment of the Essequibo Technical Institute, a branch of the Guyana School of Agriculture on the Essequibo Coast and the upgrade of Amerindian hostels and many schools along the coast among other things.

I have had many personal encounters with Mr. Baksh as Regional Chairman and socially. Even though we were on the opposite sides of the political divide, we were cordial and we shared mutual respect for each other. The late Alli Baksh was appointed Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture in 2011, and he served in that capacity until the prorogation of Parliament. On the 23rd November, 2017, after a brief period of illness, Alli Baksh, politician, former Regional Chairman, former Member of Parliament and Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture, passed away at his home at Lot 5 Cotton Field, Essequibo Coast. He was 70 years old. The late Alli Baksh is survived by his wife Lalita, his children, Latchman, Arifa, Azeena Baksh and Shereefa and his six grandchildren, Sarah, Saveer, Rebecca, Matthew, Rachel and Zachary.

I join with my colleagues in this honourable House to express our sincere condolences to the widow, children and grandchildren and all the relatives of the late Alli Baksh.

May his soul rest in peace. [*Applause*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

MOTION ON THE DEATH OF MR. MOONEER AHMAD KHAN, FORMER MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly records its deep regret on the death of Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, on 14th September, 2017, and pays tribute to his dedicated service to the Parliament of Guyana as a Member of the Senate from 5th October, 1961 to 24th September, 1964, a Member of the House of Assembly from 25th September, 1964 to 25th May, 1966, and a Member of National Assembly from 9th July, 1966 to 5th November, 1968, and to the people of Guyana;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly directs that an expression of its sympathy be conveyed to his sorrowing widow, children and relatives. [*Mr. Rohee*]

Mr. Rohee: I rise to move the motion standing in my name requesting the National Assembly to record its deep regret on the death of Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan and to pay tribute for his dedicated service and further, that the National Assembly direct an expression of sympathy to the children and relatives.

Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan was a Member of the PPP, beginning from 1953, and appointed a senator of the British Guiana Legislation in 1961 following the elections that were held in that same year. After independence - Guyana was granted independence in May 1966 - Mr. Khan became a Member of Parliament until retiring from active politics in 1972. As a Senator, he was well respected by his colleagues and opponents. He believed in representation of all Guyanese and passionately took part in debates where he could have obtained justice for all. Mr Khan's particular speciality was agriculture. In this regard, he represented the farmers, millers and small cash crop growers, seeking for them, fair and other markets and other benefits.

Mr. Khan was appointed Chairman of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board at a time when British Guiana was going through socio-political changes and used its acumen to find international markets for our rice and other agricultural terms. Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan was passionate about the rice industry, being the son of a rice farmer from the island of Leguan.

Mr. Khan was elected a Member of the General Council of the PPP in 1965 at the Fifth Congress of the party that was held at Zeeburg on the West Coast of Demerara. He was a powerful

articulate and commanding speaker at all events at which he spoke. When Mr. Khan stood up to speak in the National Assembly, Mr. Burnham listened attentively to him.

During the 1962-1964 period, Mr. Khan, as Chairman of the Guyana Rice Marketing Board, was faced with enormous challenges owned to the situation obtaining at the time in our country. During the 80-day strike in 1963, Mr. Khan kept the Guyana Rice Marketing Board functioning. On several occasions, he, himself, took staff to work at the board using a boat to transport them in the Demerara River behind the Guyana Rice Marketing Board building.

On 17th July, 1964 Mr. Khan was at the headquarters of the PPP when a terrorist bomb exploded killing Michael Forde and injuring several others. While at the board, attempts were made to plant bombs on Cuban and Russian boats that had brought fuel to the country to break the blockade and to take rice to Cuba.

In 1964, Mr. Khan was among the detainees at Sibley Hall at the Mazaruni Prison with 34 other detainees of the PPP. Mr. Khan participated in the historic freedom march across the coast of our country beginning from 5th April and ending 17th April, 1965. That march demanded the release of all other political prisoners held at Sibley Hall.

Mr. Khan was one time the chief organiser of the PPP and later the manager at Freedom House. His days as a Member of Parliament were remarkable as he continued to use his position to ensure that he offered fair and equal advice to all those that he came into contact with, believing that being a Member of Parliament was a privilege to serve all Guyana. He would have often visited outlined areas to find out what were the challenges facing the residents of those areas. The “angry guard” as he was nicknamed in the party held neutral respect for his colleagues of all parties and was regarded as a Member who was willing to debate and coalesce on issues for the benefit of the country.

Upon retiring from active politics, he entered into the real estate business whereby he built low cost housing schemes in the villages of Craig and Pearl on the East Bank of Demerara and Belvoir Court in Georgetown. In his recognition, the scheme at Craig was named the Mooneer Khan Housing Scheme.

Mr. Mooneer Khan was elected a member of the board of the New Building Society (NBS) in January of 1977. He was then appointed Chairman of that board from 1986 to 1993 and served as a director from 1994 to 1995. During his tenure as Chairman, he was influential in affording homes easier for lower income families, particularly in rural communities, making the NBS the premier lending institution for housing. Mr. Khan was also instrumental in the NBS building, the NBS Hall of Residence at the University of Guyana, providing dormitories for students. He also served as a director on the board of several private-public companies.

Mr. Mooneer Khan kept his deep religious belief as a Muslim, being the great maternal grandson of the builder of the first mosque located at Philadelphia on the West Coast of Demerara in the then British Guiana.

2.50 p.m.

He was a founder member of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana (CIOG). Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, was married to the late Maimun Kassim in 1953 and had four children: Meeraan Majeed, Faoud, Muntaz and Shahab Khan. He was a proud grandfather of Sara and Salma Majeed, Saeed, Hana, Tahira and Omar Khan. He praised their individual academic achievements. In his later years, he became the great grandfather of Isabella, Jacob, Joshua and Oscar. He was a dedicated and loving father, son and son-in-law. He was loved by his siblings and in-laws equally. His advice, wisdom, compassion and generosity are remembered by all his relatives. He was indeed a kind, fair and generous person to all whom he met. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. C. Persaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I stand here on behalf of the Government to pay tribute to a former Member of this honourable House and a distinguished Guyanese, I must remark that the Hon. Mr. Rohee did give what could be described as a very detailed eulogy and leaves very little for me to say in relation to Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan. I wish to also draw the House's attention to the fact that Mr. Mooneer Ahmad Khan, after he became a Member of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) in 1953, he became a Member of Parliament before which he was a senator.

As we stand to pay tribute to fallen colleagues' relatives, as the case may be, death could be described as a very melancholy affair or a very tragic one, depending on the cause of it. I also

wish to suggest that death has a way of bridging gaps and bringing people together, regardless of religious, social and political backgrounds. Mr. Khan was instrumental in doing just that. His work as a Member of the PPP was not dedicated to its supporters only. He worked for the benefit of all Guyanese.

I wish to suggest also that religions have crossroads and death is one such crossroad. I say this because if we take the three major religions - Hinduism, Christianity and Islam - they all have one common thread in the way to look at it, as we say life after death. Christianity looks at the resurrection. Hinduism talks of Awagawan or, based on reincarnation, we are reborn. Islam deals with the day of judgement and, after that, there is a rebirth. I wish to suggest that death is not the end. I will offer a very simple analogy to the relatives of Mr. Khan and Mr. Baksh who are present here and at least have an opportunity to hear this. I wish to offer an analogy of the pregnant woman. After inception, assuming a full gestation period of nine months, the baby is born. While the foetus is in the mother's womb, it is a world of darkness. The foetus feeds on whatever the mother feeds on. At birth, the baby comes out and the umbilical cord is cut. Was the life in mother's womb, this world of darkness, a better one than the baby is having now, which is an opportunity to be fondled, kissed and fed by nipple, whether it is breast or bottle? Is that the end or is it the beginning? I will leave it at that for now and suggest that, after death, there is life. It is not the end; it is the beginning. I would suggest to the relatives that Mr. Khan's passing simply means that he has moved on to a different stage and, perhaps, a better life than the one he had.

His passing has left a number of persons in a very depressed state because it is never, ever, a pleasant thing to say a final farewell to anyone. With that, I suggest that he is in a better place and I would ask that the relatives stand strong in the belief that he is in a better place and take faith in God. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we proceed to our next item, I would invite us all to rise and observe a moment of silence, again, thank you.

[Assembly observed a moment of silence on the death of former Member, Mr. Khan.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we will pause for a moment to allow the relatives to leave the Chamber.

[Relatives of the deceased left the Chamber.]

GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS

MOTION

CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 2/2018 – CURRENT AND CAPITAL ESTIMATES.

BE IT RESOLVED:

Financial Paper No.2/2018 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,526,563,240 for the period 2018-01-01 to 2018-12-31. *[Minister of Finance]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Assembly will now resolve itself into the Committee of Supply to Consider Financial Paper No.2/2018.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply.

In Committee of Supply

Minister of Finance [Mr. Jordan]: Mr. Chairman, in accordance with Article 172 (2) of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration, by the National Assembly, the Motion for the approval of the proposal set out in set out in Financial Paper No.2/2018 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$2,526,563,240 for the period 2018-01-01 to 2018-12-31, and I move the motion.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Minister. The Motion is proposed. We will consider the Financial Paper as usual. The items would be taken from both Current and Capital Estimates in the order for which the Minister is responsible.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$600,000,000

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. We are only in the fifth month of the year and already this Ministry, and this particular agency, is coming for its second Supplementary Provision, the total of which will be almost 25% of the amount that was approved, the provision voted for, \$10,710,500,000, as you observed. This gives an indication that this Ministry is not sure about what they are doing. The explanation in the Remarks column for \$600,000,000 seems to be very bland. I would ask the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, through you, for him to tell this House and, by extension, the people of Guyana how he expects to spend this \$600,000,000 that is being sought for today. Thank you, Sir.

Minister of Agriculture [Mr. Holder]: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the Hon. Member for his rather insightful question. The Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) is no longer cultivating and producing at four estate locations, East Demerara, Wales, a section of Rose Hall and Skeldon. The Government is seeking to divest and or diversify these facilities in interested investors. As of 31st December, 2017, the facilities are no longer actively managed by GuySuCo.

3.05 p.m.

These estates, however, play a vital role in the Drainage and Irrigation networks where they are situated and provide drainage to both agricultural and residential areas. It is in the Government's best interest to retain and maintain certain aspects of the operations facilities of these estates. In the first instance, the continued provision of residential farming, drainage and irrigation to these areas served by these estates is a necessity. Additionally, the main vessel upkeep of the system will allow for a more profitable divestment of these estates earmarked for divestment to future buyers.

We are talking here of virtually a work-in-progress. The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) has been saddled or asked to assume responsibility for the following additional 26 drainage pump stations with 55 pumps, three additional irrigation pump stations with 8 additional pumps, the maintenance of 4,560 additional miles of drainage and irrigation canals, 1,000 miles of access dams, 720 bridges and 14,742 in-field structures. Here it is, the NDIA was asked to assume this responsibility which it has done. As we can see, the rains have started and there are no problems.

The new ones - the divested estates - we have to take full responsibility for. The others that are under the estates which have been retained are being maintained by GuySuCo but at the cost of NDIA.

As we should appreciate, bearing in mind the sudden imposition of this on the NDIA, the fact that it is a work-in-progress and to take on virtually what represents a 50% increase in its mandate, our ability to be very accurate in our budgeting is, to some extent, challenged. As we get more and more involved in it, we realised the intricacies, the additional costs required and that basically is the reason that we request the additional expenditure at this point in time.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. I did mention at the beginning that in the fifth month we are already here for the second supplementary. I said clearly that it would appear that this agency does not have a clear idea of what it is about. The Minister would have been contemplating...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, Mr. Seeraj, you really should ask a question.

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir. The Minister would have been contemplating the closure of GuySuCo for years. How is it now that it is a sudden imposition – the cost? We know what would have been the cost for the closure of the estate but we are now learning...

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Seeraj, what is your question?

Mr. Seeraj: My question is: could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture tell us what is the total value of the Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) services that GuySuCo used to provide in these areas that he mentioned?

Mr. Holder: We could give basically a very rough estimate of that for this reason: GuySuCo never really separated the cost of the front lands. What we are dealing with is a conservancy with irrigation and drainage canals going through to a seawall. The front lands of that represent the residential areas which would be drained. If those are not drained, then GuySuCo's agricultural lands cannot be drained. It is all part of a system but, as we appreciate, that residential part is not really GuySuCo's mandate. It was a social service they offered. It was not separated in GuySuCo's books. Now that we have come to grips with that, perhaps, by the end of this year, we would be able to separate it. It was never part of GuySuCo's separated cost to say that this

was residential and... The lands were drained in one – not certainly irrigated but certainly drained, kokers, sluices and pumps and things of that nature. It is very difficult to separate it. I think we would all appreciate that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Seeraj, you have the floor.

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir. I was waiting for the microphone to come on. The Minister of Agriculture said that they do not have an idea. Are we to expect that the Minister would be coming back to the National Assembly to request more supplementary provision to offset additional work as he continues with his studies?

Mr. Holder: There are two aspects to this. One is the Ministry of Agriculture's ability to predict. I think that we are doing as good a job as we can. Secondly, there is the ability of the resources available to the nation to make all funds available at one point in time. We have to balance these two together. I cannot give the assurance that we would not be back in here for more. I hope we do not have to. These are the things that influence our decision. I think that we appreciate that we are now in a learning curve with regards to additional 50% increase in what the NDIA is required to do.

Mr. Seeraj: Clearly, there is no planning. In the rush to close the estate, the Government did not undertake a study to determine what would be the cost of closing estates. Now they are discovering that the closure of these estates would cost this nation much more than it would have cost them to keep them going. The Minister said 26 drainage pumps and three irrigation pumps. Is the Minister saying that as a part of the \$600 million, are these moneys to buy these pumps or for operational and maintenance costs for the pumps?

Mr. Holder: I would appreciate if the Hon. Member would listen to what people say in this thing. I said that there are 26 drainage pumping stations with 55 drainage pumps. I said that there are three irrigation pump stations with eight drainage pumps. I put those things in perspective. I am not sure where he is really coming from. I hope he just...

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you, Comrade Chairman. Sir, I would like to, again, through you, express our appreciation for the Minister telling us how many pumps are at those pump stations. This, of

course, is a declaration of what the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government did to assist the drainage and irrigation needs of our nation.

Mr. Chairman: Are you going to ask a question, Hon. Member?

Mr. Seeraj: The four estates that the Hon...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Seeraj...

Mr. Seeraj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You must ask your question.

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture state whether these sums would be used to finance irrigation costs in the Skeldon Expansion Area for the private farmers who are supposed to cultivate canes for the Skeldon Estate?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure where I talked about the private farmers. We have to maintain the D&I infrastructure that we have. Whether the estates are functional or not, it is a system run from a conservancy to the sea. The system has to be maintained. For any purpose you create that, it is a system. That is why the lands there are basically lease lands from the Government. You cannot sell the land. If you sell pieces of land, who would then maintain the drainage canals and irrigation? What would be the connection with the conservancy? Who will help with kokers and outfall channels? It is a system. The Government would have to maintain that whether you divest, do not divest; whether the Skeldon Estate is functioning or not, we have to have that system. It must be maintained. It is part of our patrimony.

The PPP/C Government did not put these pump stations there. The People's National Congress (PNC) did not put the pump stations there. They were inherited as far back as 1976 from a previous perhaps "Booker Sugar Estates Limited". We are maintaining these things. As you maintain them you have to replace as you go along. It is a capital asset. A pump might give you 10 years of life. You replace it and then you continue. This is what is going on. We are maintaining a system. They did and we have to do it as well. It is simple.

Mr. Chand: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Minister advise us of the sum that would be expended with respect to each of the four closed estates – Skeldon, part of Rose Hall, East Demerara and Wales?

Mr. Holder: The amount expended on what? We are talking here about drainage and irrigation. What are we really talking about?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Chand, you need to make your question a little clearer.

Mr. Chand: I am referring to the sum of \$600 million, the sum that would be expended with respect to each of the four closed estates with respect to drainage and irrigation (the “Remarks” column is clear) and responsibility previously undertaken by GuySuCo.

Mr. Holder: I will try to assist here, Mr. Chairman. Let us take Skeldon Estate. The actual expenditure monthly with regards to drainage and irrigation for the first three months: January - \$4,248,456, February - \$5.5 million, March - \$6.2 million.

Is it Albion Estate he wanted? Which section he wanted?

Rose Hall - \$13.6 million in January, \$12.4 million in February and \$14 million in March.

Enmore Estate - \$32.5 million in January, \$17.6 in February and \$20.05 in March.

Wales Estate - \$1.5 million in January, \$1.5 in February and \$2 million in March.

Those are the ones we are talking about.

Mr. Hamilton: Minister, could you indicate to us, of the \$600 million sought, how much would be spent in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6 on the drainage responsibilities previously undertaken by GuySuCo?

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Holder: I am not sure how far we could go with this. We could get down to asking how much money did we spend on the Leonora koker and how much did we spend on the drainage pump at Joppa. I do not have that information here.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Holder: But if I could get specific information required, I could ensure that the Hon. Member gets it within a week, detailed. If you give me exactly what you want, I would try to ensure you get the information within a week. I certainly did not walk with it here. [Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Speaker, with due respect...]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Joseph Hamilton, let us take it easy and the Speaker will give you the floor. You have the floor.

Mr. Hamilton: We are looking at \$600 million. This number did not fall from the sky. A totality of numbers, I am sure, makes \$600 million. I am asking, the drainage that the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority is now to undertake that GuySuCo previously dealt with, how much of the \$600 million would be spent on the drainage system that the NDIA would be now focusing on that GuySuCo previously focused on? How much of the \$600 million would be spent in Region 3, how much would be spent in Region 4, how much would be spent in Region 5 and how much would be spent in Region 6?

Mr. Holder: I would lay over that information and make it available to him within a week.

Mr. Dharamlall: Thank you. I hope my questions would enhance the incompetence at the Ministry of Agriculture. The Government has a proclivity to increase rates and taxes. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, now that the NDIA is bearing the additional cost, as the Minister said, of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) in these areas, would lease rates, for example, be increased in those areas? That is the first of some questions that I have.

Mr. Holder: I doubt whether I am competent to answer a question on rates and taxes. It does not quite fall under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please indicate whether you envisage manual cleaning being done as part of the D&I?

Mr. Holder: Certainly, manual cleaning, we find to be extremely efficient and, certainly, less costly than mechanical cleaning. Mechanical cleaning is required in some situations where you really have to re-dig canals and altered, but to keep a canal weeds, manual cleaning works extremely well and much less costly and provide employments and a number of other things.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, could you please then state, what efforts would be made to secure jobs for the thousands of workers who were laid off as part of the manual cleaning exercises provided by NDIA?

Mr. Holder: Every effort would be made to ensure that workers in the various locations or localities are employed, certainly a priority.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister indicate, from this \$600 million, the breakdown of how much would be for fuel, employment and other related cost in a structured manner?

Mr. Holder: I certainly would be willing to supply that detailed information to the Hon. Member within a week.

Mr. Dharamlall: Could the Hon. Minister please state to what extent works have already begun in 2018?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure I understand the question. This is a continuing activity. It has to go on. It is not a start or stop something because the place has to be drained, kokers have to be maintained, irrigation canals has to be kept going, the sluices and the relief canals and the structures have to be maintained. It is an ongoing situation. It is a question now of just changing the guards, so to speak. In short, in some areas, GuySuCo handled it before. Now the NDIA is handling it. We have had a manner of understanding between the two and the whole process of moving over from one commitment to another. All of that has been worked out largely over the last few months.

Mr. Chand: GuySuCo recently announced that it secured a contract with the NDIA to supply D&I services in the closed estates. Is this sum or part of it intended to fund this contract?

Mr. Holder: Certainly, because we would be employing a lot of the same people who were previously employed under the previous situation, so, as I said, it is a continuing thing. A lot of it would be spent on that.

Mr. Mustapha: First of all, I would like to ask the Minister, is there a transfer of asset from GuySuCo to NDIA?

Mr. Holder: The assets of GuySuCo have remained with GuySuCo and we are paying GuySuCo to utilise those assets. I am sure the Hon. Member is referring to pumps and Hydraulic Machine or Excavator (HYMACs) and so on; you cannot refer to drainage canals and so on because those are not transferable to anyone.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member Zulfikar Mustapha, do you have another question?

Mr. Mustapha: Yes, Sir. The Minister just said that they would employ dismissed sugar workers. They would employ people to manage these infrastructures. Now, we are hearing that they would pay money to GuySuCo to maintain. Is that what the Minister is saying? I just want to find out if these assets would be transferred over to the NDIA or they would contract people and pay GuySuCo to maintain these infrastructures?

Mr. Holder: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority and the Guyana Sugar Corporation. However, the MoU, the NDIA would contract GuySuCo to carry out the following maintenance works: drainage and navigation sluices and the maintenance of these, side lines, *[inaudible]* and water parks, middle walks and cross canals, aqueducts, bridges, access dams, light-duty revetment and other operations, rebuilding access dams, roads, tubing structures, irrigation intakes and pumps. The NDIA would monitor and supervise these works, while GuySuCo would provide necessary personnel to carry out the aforementioned works.

In addition, GuySuCo would provide a coordinating officer at each estate to liaise with the NDIA technical officers to inspect and verify that works were done in accordance with estimates and breakdowns would be submitted by GuySuCo on a monthly basis. On a monthly basis, GuySuCo would request from NDIA, the sum total for that month for all of the estates using the warrant system, returning and the necessary required documentation for the NDIA financial reporting. GuySuCo would then use these funds to accomplish the require drainage and irrigation works. I trust that is quite clear.

Ms. Teixeira: Could I ask the Hon. Member for clarification? He is referring to GuySuCo board. Could he tell us which board he is talking about? Is it the one headed by Mr. Heath-London or the one that has not been appointed yet by the Cabinet? Could he advise us which board is he referring to with the MoU?

Mr. Holder: I am trying to find out exactly where this board fits in. Should I repeat, again, what I said? [Mr. Jagdeo: Yes, repeat.] Alright. The MoU was signed between the NDIA and the Guyana Sugar Corporation. Under the MoU, the NDIA contracted GuySuCo to carry out the following maintenance works, and I listed them.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, if there is crosstalk while the Hon. Minister is answering the question, you may be putting yourself at a disadvantage to hear the full answer, so I would want to ask you to allow the Hon. Minister to answer, you hear the answer, and then you ask the next question.

Mr. Holder: I am not sure what board they are talking about because there is no Memorandum of Understanding with any board; it is with GuySuCo, so I do not know why the Hon. Member is trying to get in some other question and bring some other matter that is not germane to what we are talking about. I am at a lost.

Mr. Seeraj: Could the Hon. Minister tell us what is the value of the contract that the NDIA has signed with GuySuCo?

Mr. Holder: I will repeat, again; it is a MoU we signed with GuySuCo and we were told how it would work out; supervision, we have here, NDIA would monitor and supervise these works while GuySuCo will provide the necessary personnel to carry out the aforementioned works. On a monthly basis, GuySuCo would request from the NDIA the sum total for that month for all the estates. There is no contract that states that I would give you a million a month; it is just not there. We are going to work it accordingly.

Mr. Seeraj: Sir, could I kindly ask what is the value of the MoU? How much money is it that the Minister intends to pass on to GuySuCo out of this \$600 million? Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Holder: Once again, I will read from the contract. Payment to the GuySuCo: on a monthly basis, GuySuCo would request from the NDIA the sum total for that month for all estates using the warrant system whereby moneys would be transferred to GuySuCo, returning the necessary required documentation for NDIA financial reporting. GuySuCo would then use these funds to accomplish the required drainage and irrigation work, so it is an MoU; it is not a contract.

Mr. Mustapha: Before I ask my question, could I ask the Hon. Minister if he could lay over a copy of the MoU to us that the NDIA signed with GuySuCo?

3.35 p.m.

Secondly, if the Ministry, through the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA), will be expending Government's and taxpayer's funds, did the Ministry do any survey to determine the present status of these infrastructures?

Mr. Holder: The short answer is "certainly". We will lay over a copy of the contract and the memorandum of understanding (MoU).

Mr. Chand: Cde. Chairman, let me make a little point before. It could be rightly argued that the sums that NDIA now has to spend on maintaining the drainage and irrigation services in the closed estates amount to a subsidy by the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) to the nation. What is the cost of GuySuCo's drainage and irrigation (D&I) at the operating estates, as the company is still subsidising Central Government operations? That is the cost for the operational estates, which are the Uitvlugt, Albion and Blairmont Estates.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, I will read the memorandum of understanding again:

"On a monthly basis, GuySuCo will request from NDIA, the sum total for that month."

I do not understand what subsidy the Hon. Member is speaking about. GuySuCo is being paid for what it does. There is no subsidy.

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry Administration – \$600,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs- Development of Foreign Policy - \$788,049,000

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, could you advise us whether the sums here in, the \$788,049,000 requested, originates from the US\$18,000,000 signature bonus? That is my first question and I have questions to follow.

Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mr. Greenidge]: The request contained in the supplementary provision reflects the estimated expenditure that the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs will incur as a result of retaining counsel for fighting the case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Ms. Teixeira: I want to be absolutely clear Hon. Minister. Is the money, the \$788,049,000, coming from the money that was the US\$18,000,000 signature bonus? In other words, I am looking for the source of the money. I know that it is for the defence of Guyana, I am aware of that.

Mr. Greenidge: I do not know that you would normally ask where the sources of the expenditures are. Regarding this particular element, I will just remind the House that this question was more or less posed before asking as to how the US\$18,000,000 and more specifically, the US\$15,000,000 intended for use by the Ministry of Foreign affairs, will be used. This is what the situation is. The Ministry requests permission to expend the funds under this arrangement; that is what this is. The Ministry of Finance, as part of its normal arrangements, will transfer those funds from the accounts where they stand now, or this part that is shown here, to the Consolidated Fund so that the payment can be made.

Ms. Teixeira: This amount of money is equivalent to US\$ 3.75 million. Are you saying that only US\$3.75 million was transferred into the Consolidated Fund and is, therefore, accessible to your Ministry? Therefore, where is the balance of the funds? Is this what we are going to go through here, that every time you need money you are going to come here?

Mr. Greenidge: We have been through this explanation before. The Ministry anticipates - and we have to anticipate because lawyers are paid on a time basis, essentially - at this point in time, we anticipate that the demands on the lawyer's time should not cost more than the figure that is shown. It may be more or it may be less, we are not able to anticipate that. The portion or the total that is shown here is the expenditure that we anticipate in 2018, as was indicated before in the debate that took place in this very House. In 2019 and in 2020 and however long the case takes, there will be estimates of the amounts needed in those years. When we have that figure, we will ask that the House approves those expenditures.

Ms. Teixeira: Could the Hon. Minister state why the Government would not transfer the entire US\$18 million into the Consolidated Fund? I have follow-up questions to that.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am not entirely sure that I understand the intent of the question. We have asked the Government to fund and we have indicated to the Parliament that we will fund an exercise. The exercise takes place across a number of financial years, and so we do not plan to transfer it all in one year in order to make the payment, we have to transfer it in the year for which the expenditure applies. That is the answer to the question as to why all were not transferred. The entire sum, US\$ 18 million, is not to be transferred in this year. If that is the question, then it should be straightforward and we ought not to have to go through this so many times.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, we approved, in December, the \$300,000,000 under the voted provision, and you had reported and answered in the House that it was towards the legal fees. At that time, we did not know that we were going to the ICJ - it was not confirmed - now \$788,049,000, which is \$1.08 billion. Could you then advise the House what is the size of the legal team that the Guyana Government has hired; what are the salaries and benefits and could you advise if we have hired consultants, both local and foreign; and have we hired, also, a consulting or an expert firm to guide us? In other words, we have moved off from the Consolidated Fund, you have said what you said about the \$3.75 million. We want to know now what this money is going to be used for, in detail.

Mr. Greenidge: I know that my Colleague would not be too familiar with how these legal fees had to be spent because, in the case involving Canadian Oil and Gas Exploration Company (CGX) and Suriname, it never came to the House. I do not mind explaining that. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, if we ask questions then we have to await the answer.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I am trying to explain that, regarding lawyers and the work that they are going to do on this particular occasion, we are only able to tell you that the moneys will cover fees associated with the hours spent by the lawyers and any additional expenses that they identify. The question of gratuity and some other story I hear being raised over there, is not a part of any standard legal arrangement of this type that I am aware. You contract the services of a lawyer at an international level, and I had this experience at the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) Secretariat, you had the experience elsewhere. You contract a firm of

lawyers or a single consultant and the agreement now is, as in those cases, they will be paid on a per hour basis and any expenses that they incur. For example, they may and will be required to travel to Guyana, they will be required to travel to Paris, they will go to The Hague and they will submit bills and invoices for those expenditures incurred and we reimburse them. No other expenditures are involved except those directly pertaining to fighting the case.

Regarding the number of lawyers, again I am quite sure that this is something that is not unfamiliar to the other side. You have an illustrious, legal member of the House sitting next to the distinguished Member, and I am sure that he would be able to advise that ... **[Mr.**

Jagdeo: *[Inaudible]* That is because you are not perceptive and generous enough. You have to be generous. The arrangement in those circumstances is that there is a core team, and that core team is not quite complete at the moment. But, as the case goes through its various stages, lawyers or firms will be brought into the team, maybe to address specific challenges, maybe to address a specific issue or, depending on the language requirements, they may come in to undertake the advocacy in specific circumstances. Regarding the specific question, I am not able to tell you, at this stage, all of the lawyers who would be involved because I do not know. A lot of this will depend on what the other side does. At this point in time, even the ICJ has not yet scheduled and broken down the number of meetings that it will have - the oral meetings and presentations and the written presentations.

3.50 p.m.

There are many stages. We need to have the funds available to us to pay the lawyers quickly. I can understand my distinguished Colleague requiring the details, but as you would know Mr. Chairman and I am sure that you will help me advise her afterwards, if necessary, that lawyers in these circumstances are not willing to commit themselves to hours at all, let alone the different expenses. It is not an attempt to avoid an explanation. This is the reality. If they were economists we would have been in a better situation, but unfortunately, economists cannot argue the case before the ICJ. Thank you. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. Dharamlall, do you wish... You go when the Chairman gives you the floor.

Mr. Dharamlall: I yield to Ms. Teixeira.

Ms. Teixeira: I like when the younger Members of Parliament (MPs) see with me. Thank you. Minister, before I come to my question, I just must say that there is absolutely no comparison between what you have referred to as the Canadian Oil and Gas Exploration Company (CGX) and the ExxonMobil Corporation, in relation to the Government of Guyana. [Mr.

Greenidge: I agree.] There was no money given by CGX to the Government of Guyana; there was no money for the maritime boundaries; there was no money that went into the coffers of this country; there was no money that went into the Consolidated Fund or into any interest bearing account. Just for the record.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

Mr. Chairman: Ms. Teixeira?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask the question.

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. Hon. Minister, a simple arithmetic question and that is, we budgeted \$300 million in December. It is now May and we are asking for \$788 million. How much of the \$300 million have we used? Have we used this already? Do you anticipate that this \$1 billion will last us for the entire year? It is because \$300 million to be used in just three or four months of the year is a lot of money. Have we used up the \$300 million and would this \$788 million take us to the end of the year in what we understand as the evolving situation?

Mr. Greenidge: The \$300 million, to which the distinguished Member makes reference, was a sum or is a sum that was utilised for the previous arrangements, that is, arrangements arising and left over from the interface with the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) and his Personal Representative. As you will notice, that item is called "Other" and there are also other elements in there that pertain to payments to other consultants and lawyers associated with works, such as the Border Commission with Suriname and other elements. That is what is in the amount and that is separate from the amounts that are required to meet the expenses of the team and the ICJ.

The ICJ element, if you treat it as separate, are only those expenses arising from the court case itself, but we do have other obligations. We have had to hire lawyers to assist us in dealing with

the Personal Representative of the United Nations, the UN Secretary-General himself, as well as the other activities associated with the defence of our territory in relation to Suriname, and some of that would even relate to Brazil, although the question of defence in that sense does not arise.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister you indicated that a timetable is now being worked out at the ICJ. Could you indicate whether you are aware that this case may go beyond 2020?

Mr. Greenidge: I am told Mr. Chairman that my distinguished Colleague on the other side of the aisle is probably in a better position to answer than I, since he lays claims to the same type of titles as the distinguished and Hon. Member, Mr. Nandlall.

The situation is simply that it is a matter entirely in the hands of the Court. Those matters are entirely in their hands and how long the Court gives. Certainly, it will go beyond 2018, but how much longer will depend upon the response of the Government of Venezuela. The Court has drawn to the attention of the Government of Venezuela that there is a case and they will be invited to meet with the representatives of the Court, when the Court meets to do the scheduling. That is a known procedure and that procedure is what will be employed.

Mr. Dharamlall: Hon. Minister, this year you are estimated to spend close to US\$3.8 million equivalent of the US\$15 million. Could you please state whether you have an idea of how the balance of the US\$15 million will be broken down, which is almost US\$12.2 million?

Mr. Greenidge: Since our Colleague did not hear the answer, let me repeat it. One - the moneys will be spent on fees claimed by the lawyers, based upon the hour of work they put in; and two - the moneys will be spent to reimburse them for expenses other than their professional fees, in other words, where expenses have to be met by way of exceptional travel or for the acquisition of documents. These are the other elements - two elements only. I can give you no further breakdown than that. No breakdown.

Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Jagdeo]: Mr. Chairman, let me just say that anything that we say here must be interpreted as not supportive of our case or Guyana's case at the ICJ. We are in full solidarity with the Government of Guyana in pursuing that case. I have a few questions for the Minister. The first is: Does the Minister anticipate that the Consolidated Fund will go broke in 2018 or in future years?

The second is: Does the Minister anticipate that we will run out of foreign currency in the Central Bank in 2018 and in the future?

The third question is: If the answer to the two questions above are no, then, what is the compelling reason for keeping the entire sum of money outside of the Consolidated Fund in breach of our Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) and the Consolidated Fund?
[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

If the answers are, no, to the two questions and the Government is committed to coming here through a process, for seeking supplementary, then there can be no justification for keeping the sum outside of the Consolidated Fund. The fourth question is...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, perhaps you should allow the three questions to be answered and then you will be given...

Mr. Jagdeo: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Greenidge: I thank the distinguished Member for giving us the assurance with regard to the intent of the party. I can say that, of course, we have worked jointly on this matter and I would hope that the cooperation that we would have been engaged in over the last year or more will continue. Let me just make that plain.

I noticed that, as usual, Mr. Jagdeo has come in now as what we would call in another context “*a big gun*”. The *big guns* are now firing. Apparently, the others were not disruptive enough. Let me say, secondly, the answer... [Bishop Edghill: ...[*Inaudible*]] No, disruptive is not unparliamentarily. The answer to all the questions... [*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.*]

Mr. Jagdeo was on the floor. The answer to all the questions is no. That is the simple answer to the question. With regard to the final query regarding the Consolidated Fund, of course, there is a Minister here with that responsibility, but we had actually deliberated on this matter before. We have dilated on it, on how we would utilise and access the fund in successive years. I do not know that we need to be detained by this again at this point in time. We have had this debate

over Constitutions before and the person who is referring to the Constitution was the person that had advised the other side on constitutional matters that led us to an election. When was the election? [Mr. Patterson: Three years.] I did not say prematurely. I do not claim any special knowledge of the Constitution, but at the same time, I think that we can understand that this is an area that may perhaps leave room for different opinions.

Mr. Jordan: I rise on a Point of Clarification under Standing Order 40 (b). I think that we are threading dangerously on a matter that is before the Court. The Hon. Member of the Opposition asked I think the third question that requires an interpretation of the Constitution. That matter is before the Hon. Chief Justice. Sir, I beseech you to not allow Hon. Members to thread anywhere near matters that are before the Courts. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I thank the Hon. Member for bringing that to our attention. I believe Hon. Members will be guided by the admonition contained in our Standing Orders. Do you have another question?

Mr. Jagdeo: Regarding the explanation by the Minister of Finance, it was this Government that brought to the National Assembly a request for a supplementary, and the source of that supplementary is the signing bonus which is a subject before the Court. We did not reopen the matter, but to not have us question or interrogate that issue, would be stifling our right as Members of the National Assembly to interrogate financial expenditures in this Parliament. That is the first point.

I know that we are not going to get answers to the questions which I have asked, so I will ask the fourth question. The contract with the ExxonMobil Corporation, Article 33.1 states that the signing bonus would be made and that:

“The Contractor shall verify such bank accounts...”

This is in relation to the signing bonus.

“...and the Minister agrees to cooperate, assist and provide Contractor any information it requires to conduct such verification.”

Once this money is transferred to the Consolidated Fund as requested by the supplementary, will the Government share with the ExxonMobil Corporation, information pertaining to this transaction and the accounts which they are unwilling to share with this National Assembly and the people of Guyana?

Mr. Greenidge: I believe the reference to the signing bonus itself is misplaced. There are two elements in these items. One is an expenditure item and the other is a revenue item.

4.05 p.m.

We are not coming here to ask the permission of the House to use the money from any specific source and I have never mentioned that. To suggest that he has an excuse, a pretext for raising that, is mistaken. We are asking for permission, which is what the Constitution requires, to spend... **[Mr. Jagdeo: Why keep it?]** No. The permission, Mr. Chairman...

[Interruption]

[Mr. Chairman hit gavel.]

The Fiscal Management and Accountability Act specifically ask us in relation to... *[Interruption]* but Mr. Chairman we are...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we cannot ask the question and not wait for the answer. If the answer is not what we like, I do not believe that is a reason for us to express ourselves in the manner in which we are so far doing. Minister, please proceed.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am reminded of the aphorism which colloquially makes reference to *beating your drum and dancing to your own tune*. That is why we are getting answers to the questions that are being put. All I am trying to say is that under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, we are required to seek the permission of the House to undertake expenditure. If the expenditure is in excess of what might have been required earlier in the year, we simply ask the permission of the House. It has nothing to do with the source. We are not required, at this stage, to argue about revenue and the source of revenue. I just reminded our Colleague on the other side. He is finding. **[Mr. Jagdeo: You mentioned the *[Inaudible]*** I made no mention of any fund. I am closing my response at this point, Mr. Chairman. I have

answered what I was required to answer. We are asking of the House what we are obliged to ask and that is enough.

As regards to our interface with third parties, the Colleague on the other side may either ask the appropriate Minister or bring the relevant motion at the right time. Thank you.

Item 2 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Development of Foreign Policy - \$788,049,000, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I perceive that we are beyond the four o' clock hour, but, I will put to you that we should proceed to complete the consideration of the capital estimates and then we take the suspension. It was my hope that we would be able to do this. I would not want to jeopardise anyone's health. If we cannot, then when we return we will... *[Interruption]* Hon. Members, I would want to know that Members feel themselves well enough for us to proceed. If all Members feel themselves well enough, just probably we would not take as long. *[Interruption]* Hon. Members, we will take the suspension and we will return at twenty minutes after five o' clock.

Assembly resumed.

Assembly suspended at 4.12 p.m.

Assembly resumed at 5.32 p.m.

In Committee of Supply

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members we would continue the consideration of Section 'B' – Capital Estimates.

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$226,161,235

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you, Cde. Chairman. Could the Hon. Minister enlighten this House as to which legal matter is being referred to here in the remarks column?

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority had been given approval by the Government of Guyana in 2014 for the execution of a project in the procurement of 20 mini-hydraulic excavators for the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. These equipment were to be utilised by the Community Development Drainage Programme (CDIP), with special funding being allocated as was advised by the Cabinet's Sub-committee on Infrastructure.

In order to facilitate the procuring of the 20 mini-excavators, the NDIA received a transfer in the amount of \$226 million from the Ministry of Housing and Water in 2014. Public tendering took place in September, 2014 and a total of six bidders submitted tenders. In October, 2014 the Evaluation Committee made a recommendation for the award of contract to the lowest responsive bidder, the Guyana Tractor and Equipment (Guytrac), at a tendered sum of \$226,161,235. The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) then submitted the documents to Cabinet for the required 'no-objection'. The NDIA [*Inaudible*] a copy of Cabinet's 'no-objection' dated 3rd December, 2014 and the NPTAB's award of contract dated the 5th December, 2014.

Having received all necessary approvals for the execution of the project, the NDIA issued the contract document in the sum of \$226,161,235, along with the letter of acceptance dated 11th December, 2014 to the awarded contractor, the Guyana Tractor and Equipment, for its perusal and signature on contract. The contract document was subsequently returned to the NDIA for signature by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as part of the normal operating procedure. The document was signed and dated 12th December, 2014 and a copy was issued to the contractor.

The NDIA subsequently received a copy of Cabinet's memorandum titled "Amended Contract Decision" dated 17th December, 2014, detailing Cabinet's decision one, rescinding its original 'no-objection' to the project, and two - requesting that NPTAB have the evaluation redone. The request for the evaluation will redone by a second team of evaluators appointed by NPTAB, for which a report dated 31st December, 2014 was submitted to NPATAB. However, the second Evaluation Committee was unable to come to general consensus and a third Evaluation Committee was appointed by NPTAB. This Committee submitted their evaluation report again with only two of the three signatories recommending that the NDIA enter into negotiations with

the highest price bidder. The NPTAB, henceforth, submitted all the documents to Cabinet its perusal and 'no-objection' which is still pending to date.

On the 12th December, 2014 the NDIA authority issued a letter of termination for breach of non-payment of a performance bond. Subsequently, on the 1st June, 2015, the NDIA was served with a legal summons from the Guyana Tractor and Equipment for breach of contract. The matter subsequently went to trial and on the 26th day of April, 2017, judgement was entered in favour of the plaintiff, Mr. Hareshnarine Sugrim, trading under the name of Guytrac.

Judgement in the sum of \$226,161,235, together with interest at the rate of 6% per annum from the 1st June, 2015 to 18th April, 2017 and, thereafter, at the rate of 4% until fully paid, was awarded. Additionally, it was ordered that damages in the sum of \$44,602,000 plus resulting damages of \$19 million be paid. Cost of \$75,000 was also ordered paid.

Subsequently, upon appeal, a settlement proposal was made by the Plaintiff. Given the amount the amount of damages that was awarded, a settlement was meted out to the value of \$226,161,235.

[Mr. Chairman hit the gavel.]

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I must ask Members to bear in mind that the Minister is giving a reply to a question. It is only fair that the person who asked the question and all other Members of the House should hear the reply before we move on from there.

Mr. Holder: Subsequently, upon an appeal a settlement was proposed by the plaintiff in November, 2017. Given the amount of damages that was awarded, a settlement was meted out to the value of \$226,161,235, the contract sum. Cabinet subsequently gave its approval of the settlement on 7th November, 2017. At that time the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) was in the process of improving its fleet of equipment. Under the terms of the settlement, the NDIA was slated to receive new a list of equipment, not just the mini excavator but what it needed, four long reach excavators along with spare parts, and so on, for the exact sum.

The proposed settlement would also include a waiver of all interest, damages and cost to be paid. However, since the settlement was not budgeted for in NDIA's capital budget, a request is now made for a supplementary budget to be approved in the sum of \$226,161,235 to offset the settlement and for NDIA to acquire much needed equipment to ensure efficient maintenance management and operation of the various irrigation system countrywide.

Bishop Edghill: We heard a long background to this case, but my question to the Hon. Minister if the award that led to the court case which he outlined for 20 mini excavators, how is it that having had judgement concerning a contract for 20 mini excavators you are coming to the House for moneys for four mini excavators and six long boom excavators?

Mr. Holder: NDIA does not need 20 mini excavators. The impression we had is that the 20 mini excavators seemed to have been procured or wanted to be procured by the previous administration perhaps for electioneering purposes to get these small excavators to executive communities to show and perhaps acquire votes. The NDIA does not need those excavators. It needs more long boom excavators. It needs things that can do work, meaningful work, and that is the reason for the paid settlement.

Bishop Edghill: The first question, in response, the Minister indicated that these 20 mini excavators went out to public tender and it had three evaluations. Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly tonight, what process was used to acquire these four mini excavators and six long boom excavators?

Mr. Holder: It was just straight negotiation. I do not know whether the legal luminaries could help me here, but here it is an award of \$226 million which had to be paid, whether anything was got or not. We in negotiation with the individual who would have to get \$226 million anyhow, with or without the excavators - correct me if I am wrong - said let us negotiate. We negotiated and got the best deal that we possibly can. In terms of the legal aspect, I think others might need to help me here.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly who did the negotiation and it is if he could point us to the court judgement that allowed the NDIA to break the contract from the 20 mini excavators to other equipment?

Mr. Holder: I seek the assistance of the Hon. Attorney General who handled the case.

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Williams]: Mr. Chairman, it is just to add to what the Hon. Minister of Agriculture said...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General I am not anticipating your answer, but I believe there was a point at which the Minister did say that he was pleading in aid of your assistance to enable the question to be answered.

Mr. Williams: Yes please.

Mr. Chairman: Is this what you are answering?

Mr. Williams: Yes please.

Mr. Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Williams: This matter was a matter that was in the Court of Appeal. In the Court of Appeal the question of a settlement arose and as a result of that we recognise that the problem created by the last administration to wit, having made an award to Hareshnarine Sugrim. It then purported to withdraw that award. Between that period of a grant of award to him and the withdrawal, he had already mobilised and started to perform the contract. Apparently he had acquired equipment and everything as a result. When the last Government refused to resolve the matter with him, he went to court. When he went to court this order that was referred to was made. This was a matter that...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, may I ask you to assist us by...?

Mr. Williams: Sir, I am explaining it. That is what I am doing. There was no negotiation – we are explaining the matter. This matter having being created by the last administration, another one, had to be resolved by this new administration, as with so many others that will come to the fore.

Therefore we recognised that since NDIA, in fact, needed the equipment, one, it was decided that we would get the equipment in exchange for the original sum awarded by the last Government and that is where we are. In doing that, we saved \$44,602,000 that was ordered as damages. Then

there was resulting damages in the sum of \$19 million. That was also waived. **[Bishop Edghill: I am rising on a Point of Order.]** I am answering a question. Which question are you rising on?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I thought you would have been able to assist the Hon. Minister, in the question he asked. I would like that you take the cue from the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and provide the answer to the question asked.

Mr. Williams: Sir, which is what I am doing. I indicated to you that the matter is in the Court of Appeal and the question of negotiations, as in any case came up and it was decided that...

[Mr. Jagdeo: Who did that?] Who did what? **[Mr. Jagdeo: Who did the negotiation?]** The lawyers on the case had to deal with the negotiation. As a result, the proposal was reduced into turn assessment then taken to Cabinet, for Cabinet approval, and it approved. That is where we are. **[Mr. Jagdeo: No.]** No, what? I have spoken on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, do you wish the floor still?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I have one more question, but I saw my colleague...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I must tell you that you do not cede to anyone in the chamber. The Speaker observes a Member wishing to speak and the Speaker calls on that Member. That Member does not then tell the Speaker who he should call on, which is the effect of what Members do. I noticed it has become a habit almost – “I cede the ground, “I move away”. It cannot be that way. If I call on another Member to speak in this House he is to do so or indicate that he does not wish to speak. What he does not do is to tell the Speaker that the Speaker should call on someone else. Members, I have made it clear. I hope that it will assist us all in the future.

Mr. Nandlall: I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister of Agriculture can confirm that the proceeding referred to commenced in June, 2015 in the High Court and culminated or concluded on 18th April, 2017, June, 2015 to April, 2017, long after the PPP left Government? I would like the Minister to confirm that.

Then, my second question is: Could the Hon. Minister confirm that the contract provided for a performance bond in a sum of 10% of the contract price to be lodged, and the contract further

provided that the failure to lodge that bond would be a basis for termination, and that the NDIA terminated the contract because of the failure to lodge that performance bond, and that would have been an absolute defence to any action once competently defended in the courts? I am asking the Hon. Minister to confirm those three things.

Mr. Holder: To the best of my knowledge and the information available to me is that on 1st June, 2015 the NDIA was served with a legal summons from Guyana Tractor and Equipment (GUYTRAC) for breach of contract and went on trial from 26th April, 2017. That is what is available to me. I did not go to trial. I was not notified. The mischief occurred before that.

Mr. Nandlall: Those are two things. My third issue is if the Hon. Minister can confirm that the contract provided that a 10% performance bond must be lodged and the contractor failed to lodge that bond and the contract provides that failure to do so will result in termination, and a termination letter was served pursuant to that breach. That is all I am asking you to confirm. I have all the records here. If he needs them, I can assist him.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you will not share it with us tonight.

5.55 p.m.

Mr. Holder: I do not have the information available to me because the Ministry of Agriculture... I could get the information and lay it over. You are asking something that happened before this Government. You went back to a contract and a bond and something that happened in 2014, and so on. I do not know whether the Hon. Attorney General has further information, but I do not have it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Bishop Edghill, do you wish the floor? Please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: The original question that I asked was not yet answered, and that is, who did the negotiations? I am adding to that question now. Who determines the acceptable value of these mini excavators and long boom excavators that are now to be procured?

Mr. Holder: In all fairness to me, the Ministry of Agriculture did not go to court. What we are aware of is that the lawyers came to us and asked how we would want this matter to be settled. We gave our ideas as to what we need. We said that those mini excavators are not what the

NDIA needs now. This is the shopping list that we prefer to get for that value. That was handed over to the lawyers and they did the negotiations, between lawyers, I supposed. That is the best I could offer.

Mr. Nandlall: The last question that I asked, unfortunately, it was not answered. I am asking respectfully if someone can answer it.

Mr. Chairman: Perhaps, you might wish to repeat the question.

Mr. Nandlall: The contract provided for a performance bond to be lodged and that the failure to lodge that bond would be a basis for termination, that the bond was not lodged, as per the contract, and a letter was served terminating the contract for the non-provision of that bond. All I am asking is if that can be confirmed.

Mr. Holder: I would imagine that that matter was addressed by the court and a decision made. That is the most I can do. I do not know whether anyone else can help.

Mr. Nandlall: The NDIA was obviously aggrieved by the decision of the learned trial judge and hence an appeal was filed, and in the appeal, it said that the judge was hopelessly wrong. Why did it pay \$226 million under a judgement that was hopelessly wrong? I am respectfully asking, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you shed new light on this?

Mr. Holder: My understanding is that an award was given to someone for \$226 million. That person would have got that money anyhow, not having supplied any excavators or anything. My information available to me is that rather than just handing over \$226 million and getting nothing, negotiations... The actual judgement... **[Mr. Jagdeo:** You would not know about it and he does not want to answer. You are responsible and you are not giving answers.] I do not know how much more helpful I can be.

Mr. Nandlall: Am I to understand that the Minister's understanding of what transpired was that \$226 million would have had to been paid anyhow to this contractor and, for the goodness of his heart, the contractor gave two long boom and four short boom excavators? Is that your

understanding that you were gifted these things and that the \$226 million that was paid was not for these excavators?

Mr. Holder: I would like someone to help me in the legal aspect here. I do not know what to say, Mr. Chairman. It is a legal matter and it is apparently outside of my pay grade and I do not know how to satisfy the Hon. Member. I am trying to say what I understand. What I understand could be fortuitously wrong in law because I did not go to court. My people did not go to court. The lawyers spoke to each other and they came to us and said if there is a settlement, what you would like to see? We said that the 20 mini excavators are not what NDIA needs now. We would prefer to get long boom or long reach, whatever, and a couple minis, and that was what we said to the lawyers.

Mr. Nandlall: I have one clarification from the Hon. Member, and I apologise for being so persistent.

The lawyers that you keep referring to, which institution did they come from? Were they lawyers from Croal Street? Where were the lawyers from that you are referring to?

Mr. Holder: The only lawyer I am aware of that the Government deals with is from the Attorney General's office. I could be wrong.

Mr. Nandlall: Now, that the issue has been cleared, I can now direct a question to the Attorney General. Well, of course, he can choose to ignore it, Sir, with your permission.

Mr. Chairman: The Ministry of Agriculture, that is what we are dealing with.

Mr. Nandlall: You would appreciate that the Minister of Agriculture is severely constrained and has pleaded with us to understand. He has drawn my empathy.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, you know in court that you sometimes do not get the answer that you want. Why are we doing this? Will you take it further than we want to?

Mr. Nandlall: Unfortunately...

Mr. Chairman: If you have a question to address to the Minister of Agriculture, please do so.

Mr. Nandlall: I seek your permission to direct a question to the distinguished Attorney General. Even the gods are in his corner.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Nandlall, you will still...

Mr. Nandlall: The Attorney General's Chambers had conduct of the matter. I am sure that the competent and diligent Attorney General, that he is, he keeps abreast of all the files and follows the matters very closely.

Mr. Chairman: You are asking a question, of somewhat.

Mr. Nandlall: I am asking respectfully whether he is not aware that the terms of contract provided for the lodgement of a performance bond to the tune of 15% of the contract price and it also provided for a failure to lodge that performance bond...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nandlall, I interrupt you to say that you have asked that question.

Mr. Nandlall: I asked it, Sir. Unfortunately, it was to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that we are *ad hominem* here, that we could just ask anyone or any Minister anything. That is what we are doing. I will not permit it with more. We have got to ask a Minister, and if that Minister feels that he needs that, the Minister can then direct for that.

Mr. Nandlall: He pleaded to us that it is not him; it is the Minister of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Chairman: What the Speaker will not do is to join in an exchange and a shouting. The Speaker will not be part of that.

Mr. Nandlall: I just want the record to reflect that I am asking of the Attorney General the questions that I have asked. Are you permitting him, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: I will permit the question, just once. I will make it quite clear to all Members that I will not allow Members if they cannot, and I know that they can, construct their questions in a way which elicits the answers they want. Members will not be allowed to go all over the room asking various Ministers questions when that Minister is not the subject of the matter before us.

Ms. Teixeira rose to her feet.

Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, please resume your seat.

Mr. Nandlall: My question is precisely for him and I seek your leave to pose it to the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, a question is being posed to you, please proceed.

Mr. Williams: I thought that I had already addressed the issue, but I will try again.

Those questions that are being asked of us are questions that are within the bosom of the very person who is asking the questions, because as the new Attorney General, we met that problem with the GUYTRAC and NDIA. In other words, the Attorney General Chambers was dealing with this issue by the time this Attorney General arrived there. The former Attorney General must know the answer to the question that he is asking, that is, about a performance bond that he is asking about... [Mr. Jagdeo: You do not.] Apparently, the Leader of the Opposition does not wish me to answer the question. The question about a performance bond being involved, but also means that the question of a mobilisation fee would have also been involved. In other words, the payment of the performance bond would have been contingent upon the outlay of mobilisation fees. The point and fact is when I went there I met a draft document.

6.10 p.m.

I met a draft pleading and all I did was add to the pleading. Since the last Government awarded the contract and it purported to withdraw the contract, it meant that it was a frustrated event. I have decided that we should add to the defence the issue of frustration. Mr. Chairman, you would look at that and you will that there is an amended defence. The case could not have been heard if there is an amended defence. The amended defence would have had to be in play and then the case was being heard. The issues about the breach and all of that would have occurred under the last Government. What we received would have been a *fait accompli* and we just added to it, so it is dishonest to purport to ask me what happened to performance bond or what happened with all of that when all of that was determined under them. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I do not think that I should be naming Members, but Members must cooperate also. Bishop Edghill, please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: Mr. Chairman, I am consulting with the budget...I am ready to ask my question.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask the question.

Bishop Edghill: I have consulted with the budget document and the NDIA, in its capital profile, received \$1,404,000,000. The Minister earlier indicated that when the lawyers consulted with them and negotiated what they needed, he said what they needed. Could the Minister say what he is acquiring in 2018 with the \$1.4 billion and if the equipment that is being acquired through \$226 million could not have been acquired from this allocated sum?

Mr. Holder: I am not sure about the relevance of the question. This thing is totally outside of what we are talking about. In doing a budget, we did not anticipate this situation, so it could not have been budgeted forward.

Bishop Edghill: For clarity, the NDIA would have indicated what the capital needs for 2018 are and the total of \$1,404,570,000 for 2018. At the time of the negotiations for the settlement of this court case, NDIA still has to procure capital items. I am asking if the items that are listed here are other equipment that was not listed in the 2018 profile or it could have been acquired as part of the 2018 profile.

Mr. Holder: My short answer for that question is no.

Mr. Seeraj: The Hon. Minister in answering previous question gave us a layout of what would have occurred as in response to my first question. The Minister also spoke about the termination of the contract. My question to the Minister is that in the ensuing court, back and forth, cases which are going on, whether the person, who terminated the contract, was ever called to quote to give evidence in defence of NDIA for the termination of the contract?

Mr. Holder: It is not as far as I know.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this is the last question.

Mr. Seeraj: Is the Minister informing this Assembly that the person who terminated the contract that he is not aware whether that person was called to defend the agency in code? Does he not find that important?

Mr. Chairman: It is not a fair question.

Mr. Holder: Mr. Chairman, all that I can say it is to ask and answer.

Item 1 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry Administration - \$226,161,235 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 2 32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Transport - \$346,500,000

Mr. Chairman: The additional resources are required to facilitate the purchase and installation on two additional boarding bridges for the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) expansion project.

Bishop Edghill: During budget debate of 2018, on the 7th December, 2017, the Hon. Minister told the Assembly, "Budget 2018 has a provision for \$5 billion for the completion of that project when referring to the CJIA." My first question is: Could the Hon. Minister tell this Assembly when was the decision made for these two air bridges that are being referred to in the remarks column?

Minister of Public Infrastructure [Mr. Patterson]: The two additional air bridges, it is no secret, I would have spoken on this extensively that we would always have four air bridges on the completion. That is since we took over. The contract had two and I have always said that we will have two more air bridges before the opening.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister list the items that were provided for in the contract for the CJIA before it was amended post May, 2015? Could he list all of the items that were provided for in the contract? For the purpose of clarity, because I did hear heckles about toilet bowl, we are not talking about that. We are talking about runway, apron, parking, terminal, air bridges and square footage length and numbers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I must say that you seem to have the list that you required from the Minister.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, I will start off. It is 75 pages. With your leave, I could probably start...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I believe that there is another way by which the Hon. Member can learn of that list, and it will not be by reading it here.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, this is a public document that has been released in the public years ago. It is here and I can read it for him if you want.

Mr. Chairman: If the Hon. Member will be willing to make that public list available to the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, that would suffice.

Bishop Edghill: I thank you. I would like to have that document laid over, but tonight it is if he could specifically say in that contract, how many air bridges were in the original contract?

Mr. Patterson: There were zero air bridges in the original contract. In the China Harbour Engineering Company's contract, there was zero air bridges. Sir, it is here and maybe we can have a recess for five minutes. This is the original contract, Sir. We can have a recess for five minutes and if the Hon. Member can find air bridges in the China Harbour Engineering Company's contract, ...

Mr. Chairman: Two Members are standing. One is speaking and one is not. Hon. Member, do you have another question?

Bishop Edghill: Sir, I must indicate to you that the revelation is quite an interesting one and I would like to accept invitation for the five-minute recess, so that we can have a look at the contract. I would like to have the contract. It is important to this matter tonight, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The Speaker has not called a five-minute recess and he would not. We will proceed. The Hon. Member can make that available to you by whatever mean Hon. Members use to contact one another while in the chamber. If this is still before us at that time, then you can proceed if there is something else. I know that it is beyond Members to contact one another during the course of debate.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you Sir. I would like to have it.

Mr. Chairman: Let us do what we know that we can do, make the document available to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member will see the document and then decide what else he wants to ask on it.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, if I can get the assistance of a staff from the Parliament Office, I would like to retrieve that right now, because I have been promised documents before that never came to me. I would like to continue my questioning while I await that document.

Mr. Chairman: Please ask your question, Hon. Member.

6.25 p.m.

Bishop Edghill: I would like to continue, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure confirm that the original design of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA) included eight air bridges?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure, we await your response to the question.

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the China Harbour Engineering Company Limited's (CHEC) contract, which I had given to persons to share to you, you could pass on to the gentleman to ensure that... They made provisions for the spaces for the eight bridges. They made spaces, openings, doorways but they have no air bridges in their contract.

Bishop Edghill: While I await the copy of the original contract, could the Hon. Minister, who just told the House that the China Harbour Engineering Company Limited made provisions for eight spaces, provide to this House a copy of the artist's impression and design that accompanied the contract, the architectural design?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, those are public documents. You can Google the artist's impression. Every time I got up to speak, you could recall that I have provided this House with all the documentations. The Hon. Member seems to have a very loose filing system because he never brings anything back but he asks for it again. I am sorry, Sir; I will take your guidance on....

Bishop Edghill: Just to put on the record, this is the first time that I am receiving a copy of this contract, even though I have requested it at least three times. I would like to continue my

questioning. Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that there was an amended contract post June, 2015? If there is one, we would also like to have a copy.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, I can confirm.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: Sir, we are requesting a copy. Like we got one now, we would like to have a copy tonight.

Mr. Patterson: That is perfectly acceptable.

Mr. Chairman: What is acceptable, Minister?

Mr. Patterson: He requested an amended contract and that is perfectly acceptable. We are getting it up.

Mr. Chairman: Would you make a copy?

Mr. Patterson: I will make a copy available to you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You will make a copy of that document available to Hon. Member Bishop Edghill.

Mr. Patterson: Yes, right now, Sir. I only have one copy of that at the moment. I do not have anything to hide. He did not do any research. He knows nothing.

Mr. Chairman: The Hon. Member should rise when he is addressing the Speaker.

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that, in the design which had eight spaces, if those spaces were intended for air bridges?

Mr. Patterson: Sir, the Hon. Member may know more than me. He was part of the negotiating team. As for what the intended purposes were, I would not dare attempt to speculate on anything that the Hon. Member knows.

Mr. Chairman: I thank you. I will allow two other questions on this matter. Bishop Edghill, please proceed.

Bishop Edghill: This is for the record. The Hon. Member may wish to correct. I was not in Government at the time when this contract was negotiated. He said that I was part of the negotiating team. I take it that he would wish to correct that. I would like to ask what the unit cost for an air bridge that is being installed at the CJIA.

Mr. Patterson: The cost in the Supplementary Financial Paper is \$346,500,000 for two. If we divide that by two, you would get the cost. It is a simple division.

Mr. Chand: Comrade Chairman, would the Minister advise us of the eight spaces for which he hopes to have four bridges? Would the four bridges go into four of the eight spaces?

Mr. Patterson: The four air brides would go on the new terminal building. I am at a disadvantage; I am not too sure where the four and eight come in. There must be an opening for a bridge and these four would be there. I know they are at the CJIA.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We were told that we were getting a contract but this is the Bills of Quantities. This is all this is; it is not the contract. It is the Bills of Quantities dated the 11th November, 2011. It is between the Ministry of Public Works and the China Harbour Engineering Company Limited. The Hon. Minister said that he would share the contract.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I think that is solved very easily. It could be returned to the Hon. Minister, indicating that he has given the wrong document.

Ms. Teixeira: That is why I am saying it so that he could correct it. I assume that he has given us the wrong document and he would correct it.

Mr. Patterson: The whole contract includes the International Federation of Consulting Engineers' (FIDIC's), conditions of contract and those things like that. There is the Bills of Quantities, which is how you actually compute the price. We have it in soft copy. I came prepared, Sir. Could the young gentleman come here and collect the soft copy? It is all signed and if you do not know who Mr. Robeson Benn is, he was a former Hon. Member and Minister you must know his signature; I would not forge it. You would be getting it. **[Mr. Jagdeo:** Is it both the original and amended?] Do not worry. I will give you both the original and amended. I have already committed to that.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you; there is one other question, please. Who would like the last question?

Bishop Edghill: Could the Hon. Minister confirm to this House that, with this supplementary provision that is being sought, a fixed price, a design and build contract for 138 million renminbi and \$12 million United States (US), is it being now extended by another \$1.64 million? A fixed price, design and build contract is being extended.

Mr. Patterson: No, Sir. The fixed contract is 138 million renminbi. You are absolutely right 138 million renminbi *et cetera*. This would be a new contract. This is being paid by the Government of Guyana. The contract with the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM) remains fixed as always.

Item 2 32-323 Ministry of Public Infrastructure - Transport - \$346,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 49 - 492 Ministry of Social Protection - Social Services - \$81,614,005

Dr. Persaud: Mr. Chairman, I noticed there is a 12 times increase from the original sum of \$6,696,000 to now \$81, 614,005. Could the Hon. Minister say what prompted this major increase? Has there been a change in the design or anything that would have prompted this increase? Also, in terms of the original figure, is it that there was a change in terms of how much was going to be constructed before?

Minister of Social Protection [Ms. Ally]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6.40 p.m.

First of all, I want to say that our duty as the Government is to ensure that the citizens of our country, be it inmates of the prisons or the New Opportunity Corp (NOC), are secure and that we provide the necessary security.

The voted provision of the \$6,696,000 was specifically to deal with the Palms and not the NOC.

Ms. Teixeira: To the Hon. Minister, are you admitting that you had no monies allocated under Capital for the NOC for 2018 after all the discussions on the Juvenile Justice Bill at the last Sitting?

Mr. Chairman, this appears to be an extraordinary expensive fence for what seems to be a rather... The NOC is made up of 50 acres. This obviously cannot do it. The cost for a square foot of this is over \$18,830. [An. Hon. Member: Square foot.] Square foot, thank you.

[An Hon. Member: A linear foot.] A linear foot. I am getting square foot, linear foot. It is linear foot.

Having had the discussion on the Juvenile Justice Bill, could you say in what way the expenditure of \$81.614,005 million was justified for a fence versus \$81.614,005 million for Programmes for the children who are students at the NOC to make their re-integration into society better?

Ms. Ally: First of all, no provision was made for the NOC. Secondly, it is perimeter fencing of some 4,338 feet.

On the question of the Juvenile Justice Bill, let me say this and I said it when I answered my first question: it is because we want to secure the inmates, the resident inmates - the people who we have to rehabilitate.

We inherited an NOC which was bush. The physical infrastructure in the dormitories and everywhere was really at a low end. We now at the Ministry of Social Protection are doing everything possible to secure and protect the residents of that institution. [An. Hon.

Member: Which story are you telling?] It cannot be story-telling when you did nothing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I am bound to say, Hon. Members, we cannot proceed this way. There is a Member who is not aware of the strength of his voice. Maybe I may have to name him before the evening is out. You cannot continue in this way.

Ms. Teixeira: I believe the Hon. Minister should correct herself. The children at the NOC are not called inmates. They are not called residents and they are not called prisoners. They are students by law.

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

Ms. Teixeira: A law that goes back since 1907.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, do you have a question?

Ms. Teixeira: Yes, Sir. I will come to that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Knowing that is what you are standing for, please proceed with your question.

Ms. Teixeira: I will but I thought it was my duty to not call the children inmates because they are not.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please proceed with the question.

Ms. Teixeira: The Hon. Minister appears to be more concerned on securing the children. Therefore, are you building another prison? Is that what you are doing with the NOC?

Ms. Ally: I said they are not prisoners.

Ms. Teixeira: I said that you are building another prison, Madam. Are you building another prison with \$81.614,005 million? Are you doing that, Madam? [Ms. Hughes: It is not a prison.] Oh, be quiet.

Ms. Ally: My answer to the question is – No, we are not building a prison. We have a very small fence that was inherited. It is low and very often the children run away. As a matter of fact, over the last 12 months, there have been seven separate incidents where 46 of the offenders absconded from the NOC. We are doing everything possible to make sure that they are protected because they are our responsibility.

Ms. Teixeira: Fences do not keep children from running away. It is the programmes that keep them in. [Ms. Ally: You did not have any programmes.] You do not know what you are talking about. The fences that are there are considered adequate. Seven children getting away requires a board of inquiry or requires an examination of what were the causes why the children ran away. Was it the lack of food or were they ill-treated? It is not to do with \$81.614,005 million to fence them in and to keep the problems in. Before you decided to build a fence for \$81.614,005, was there a board of inquiry to determine why the children ran away? The average is that two or three children run away each year.

The second thing in question is that the population of the NOC has declined quite remarkably. Therefore, what used to be three children for 140 a year, you are talking about seven children to about 85 a year. Something is wrong in the institution and not with the fence.

Therefore, Madam Minister, I am calling on you to withdraw this and to reallocate the \$81,614,005 million for programmes for the children in the NOC in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, however strongly you feel about anything, we are dealing with Supplementary Estimates. We really must try to keep it to that. There are issues which appear to be part of it that one may make a comment on but it does not help us if we [*Inaudible*] so far away that there is heat. It is amazing the amount of heat that figures can give rise to.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When you talk about Programmes at the NOC, we say kudos to this Government. The children there, and I thank you for correcting me, Madam Teixeira, have been exposed to a proper literacy programme, something that you never paid emphasis on. We have intensified skills training in a number of ways. The physical conditions that we inherited at the NOC were purely a rundown building. Thirty-eight million dollars that is in the budget would be used to rehabilitate the NOC. That includes the Training building.

Mr. Seeraj: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: There would be one more question after Mr. Seeraj.

Mr. Seeraj: We have the length of the fence and, as was pointed out before, it seems to be quite an expensive fence. Could the Minister provide this House with the specifications – not only the length, but the proposed height and what material they intend to use to build this fence?

Ms. Ally: The height of the fence would be 10 feet. The front would be five feet and it would be with razor wire.

Item 3 49-492 Ministry of Social Protection – Social Services – \$81,614,005 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$484,239,000.

Air, Land and Water Transport

Mr. Chairman: The agency has identified financing to the tune of \$213,885,000 from within its 2018 Capital programme to meet the initial payments for the acquisition of four aircrafts. The additional resources now being requested are required to facilitate final payment.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister of State explain to this House if these four aircrafts are new or are they used or reconditioned? Were they purchased from the manufacturers?

Minister of State [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]: They are not new aircrafts. They are aircrafts that have been in service and they are being purchased from a company that owns them. The four aircrafts that we are purchasing are two Sky Vans and two Highlanders.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister inform the House how old are these aircrafts and how many years have they been in service?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These aircrafts were manufactured. The Sky Vans were manufactured in 1977 and the Highlanders in 1976.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say which country and for which company were these aircraft purchased? Was it a European company, was it South American company and if so, could the Minister explain the companies and countries for which these aircrafts were purchased?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The sky vans are out of Belgium, but it is owned by an American company called Liberty Aviation of 235 N Edgeworth Street, Greensboro, North Carolina, United States of America.

Mr. Rohee: It was not clear to me, Mr. Chairman, which country the highlanders were from?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Both are from the same company and we are acquiring both from the same place. Sorry, Sir, let me just make a correction to that. The highlanders are from Brazil; sorry about that.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister tell the honourable House while the sky vans were in use by, and I would expect that due diligence was done on the company that you mentioned, Liberty Aviation, could the Hon. Minister say when these aircrafts, the sky van and the highlanders, were in use, what the highlanders were used for and what the sky van was used for?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The highlanders were for passengers and cargo use. The sky van was for parachuting and for chute carrying purposes.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister say whether these types of aircrafts are still being manufactured?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: It is a good question. These aircraft, particularly the sky van and the highlanders, are aircraft that when people have them, they do not sell them. It is like having a Rolls-Royce; they do not sell them. What has happened is they have not been in production for some time now, but there are many countries around the world that operate these aircraft, and, therefore, spares are not an issue. Training and so on is not an issue. They are very sought after aircraft because of the capability. It allows for short take-off and landing. It allows for use of the type of airstrips which we have in Guyana, 90% of which are short types of airstrips, and therefore, these two types of aircrafts are specifically suited to those circumstances.

Mr. Rohee: The Hon. Minister mentioned spares and he did not mention maintenance, but I would like to bring in the question of maintenance. On the question of spares, there is usually a problem with shelf life associated with spares, particularly for aircraft. Could the Hon. Minister say whether he had been assured by the company for which these aircrafts were procured that the shelf life for spares...first of all, that spares are included in the package, and that the shelf life for the spares are to the satisfaction of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF)?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Preliminary inspection was done of these aircrafts. In particular, the airframe is what is important and the number of hours that have been flown on those aircrafts is important. As I said before, the spares are easily accessible because there are a number of sky vans that are operational in Guyana. In fact, the GDF has one of the sky vans in operation and we have no difficulty in acquiring spares.

Additional, maintenance, we have a very experienced fleet of maintenance personnel at the GDF aircrew for the sky van and the highlander, as well as the pilots. I could give you some details about the experiences. There are seven fully trained and certified engineers for these aircrafts. We have some of the most senior who have about 25 years of service and some of the juniors ones have about 12 years of experience in this matter. Training was done by the original aircraft manufacturers and engine manufacturers. We have three training and checking captains, five captains that are Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) qualified and most of them have experience for more than 25 years as captain.

Mr. Rohee: In keeping with the concept of the Guyana Joint Services, could the Hon. Minister explain to the House whether or notwithstanding the procurement of the aircraft for the Guyana Defence Force and in keeping with the concept of the Guyana Joint Services, in terms of operations, that other components of the Guyana Joint Services, for example the Guyana Police Force, would have access, jointly, with the Guyana Defence Force in order to carry out surveillance and other operations?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, and it is a matter which I intend to speak to when the other motion comes up about privacy and the fact that we have employed these aircraft specifically on matters of aerial surveillance. The decision to purchase these aircrafts were made at the Guyana Defence Board on which sit the Minister of Public Security who represents the police very adequately as well as, on some occasions, the Commissioner of Police, so that these aircrafts, when they are purchased, are purchased with a national plan in mind and not just for the GDF. Most of our aerial surveillance are done jointly by the police and the army as well as other elements of the State. But certainly these aircrafts are purchased with a national character. Of course, the GDF would be the unit to which it is assigned and would have maintenance and captain responsibilities and so on, but they are available to the rest of the State for use.

Mr. Rohee: Could the Hon. Minister inform the House whether these aircrafts would be used for commercial purposes and be in competition with the private operators?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These aircrafts are for the use of the Guyana Defence Force and the other security forces. They are not bought with a commercial purpose in mind. They are bought for the purposes of operations, search and rescue, surveillance of our borders, that is to say, the

land borders as well as our sea borders, so those are our primary purpose. It is not purchased for the sake of competing with the private sector to fly into hinterland locations. It is for operational purposes, as I said.

Mr. Rohee: My final question is: could the Hon. Minister tell the House what is the position with the four aircrafts that illegally entered our airspace and are now safely, I use that word very guardedly, secure and the intention of this Government in respect to the use or the disposal of those four aircrafts that are now in the possession of the State?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These aircrafts are in the custody of the State. They are being secure by the State. There are still some legal processes that have to be completed, and at this point in time, I would just say that they are securely placed in the care and custody of the Guyana Defence Force. Beyond that, I cannot say.

Mr. Gill: Could the Hon. Minister assure this House that the aircrafts would be used primarily or exclusively for joint services operations and would not be abused by Ministers going into the interior for campaigning purposes?

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: The Speaker has to ask; I am not answering you.

Ms. Teixeira: Hon. Minister, we notice in the legend that it states that \$213.8 million was paid for from within the GDF 2018 capital programme and that was an initial payment and then this new request is to make the final payment. The problem we are having is that, when we look at the voted provision on the air, land and water, the provision was \$73.4 million, so where are you finding the additional money to come up with \$213 million being spent? Are you viring from other heads and where are those being vired from? That is my first question.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: These sums were taken from buildings which we have to forgo - certain constructions of buildings, some pure water supply projects and matters of that nature.

Ms. Teixeira: So, Hon. Member, you are viring from within your capital budget. Is that so? I assume with the approval of the Minister of Finance.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Yes, definitely, we have the approval.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you. Hon. Minister, was there any explanation by the technical people in the GDF as to advantages of twin otter versus highlanders for use of the joint services, for the GDF, in particular. Twin otter is generally used quite extensively in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular, even in Canada in the North by the armed forces in those countries for a variety of operational purposes, so I am wondering what was the reason why the twin otter was not considered.

The second thing has to do with these aircrafts being rather old. I know that we all as developing countries end up buying second-hand cars. I noticed the Minister of Finance did not allow us to buy second-hand tyres. We have to buy brand new tyres at four times the price of the other ones, so I was wondering if are we really buying second-hand goods here.

Going back to 1976, could the Minister say, did your experts travel to Brazil, Belgium or North Carolina or wherever you said to check on the air worthiness of the aircraft because you do need to have an air worthiness certificate from legitimate bodies, not from the company, but from legitimate oversight bodies to ensure that you are not getting a dud and that you are not getting something that you would have to replace engine and everything else within a matter of mornings. Could you say who issued or which agency issued the certificate of air worthiness for these aircrafts and you would need that anyways because they have to be flown to Guyana, so you would need all of that. Could you enlighten us on that?

7.10 p.m.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Well, for the air worthiness, the European agency and the Brazilian agency and certainly, one will have to have those certificates before he/she can actually move the aircraft from the hangar where it is. I want to give the Hon. Member the assurance that the necessary checks and so on have been done and that additional checks will be done before we actually move those aircraft.

With respect to the Twin Otters - yes they are as good as the Islanders. The problem, however, with the Twin Otters is that the loading arrangement is different from the Islander. With the Islander, it can be loaded from the rear – sorry, the Skyvan. The Twin Otters are used extensively, just as the Islander. We find that the Islander is a more versatile aircraft and we have more experience dealing with it in the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). Spares are easy to come by

and we believe that we have the capacity, with respect to captains, co-captains and maintenance as well for the aircraft. So, both the Twin Otters and the Islanders are good, but our preference is for the Islander.

Ms. Teixeira: I thought that you would have said that they were cheaper and that would have been an acceptable answer. However, I hope that the GDF and you, Minister, are not being influenced by the fact that the majority of private aircraft used in Guyana are Islanders, and a number of GDF pilots, also, from time to time, fly Islanders. Therefore, it is much easier to keep Islanders. I hope that is not a consideration, and that the consideration is which aircraft is the best for use in the GDF. The Skyvans - I never would have question the Skyvans because they are work-horses, but the Twin Otters are also considered the work-horses of aviation. I am not to have any *avocation* of any company, but the issue is that the Islanders are not good in terms of workload. The Twin Otters' work load is much higher than an Islander's and it can carry much more load than an Islander. Therefore, that is a disadvantage. If you had money to buy only one Twin Otter, I thought it would have been a better buy. The Skyvans are definitely important and I am happy to hear that you are buying two more.

To go back to my original question, you said "Brazil and the agency". Who in Brazil is the agency? Which agency? Is it the National Civil Aviation Agency of Brazil or the Belgian Civil Aviation Authority? Who is it? Certainly you would need to have that before you even go to pay and collect.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: The National Civil Aviation Agency of Brazil is the entity in Brazil. In so far as the cost, I thought the cost was so vastly different that it would have been something that was quite understood. The cost of a used Twin Otter is between US\$ 2.4 million to \$4 million. That is a used one. A new one is US\$ 7 million. The Islanders that we are talking about, we are paying about US\$300,000.

Ms. Teixeira: You are getting duds; do you know that? Is it US\$300,000 for a Skyvan?

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: It is for an Islander.

Mr. Chairman: The last question. Mr. Gill, do you have a question.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Chairman, my question was not answered.

Mr. Chairman: You have the last question Bishop Edghill.

Bishop Edghill: Thank you, Sir. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the expected time of the delivery of these aircraft in Guyana and, if it is before the end of the year, if there is adequate allocation in the current budget for the operation of these aircraft.

Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon: After full payment of the sums, there is one month within which we can expect the delivery of these aircraft.

Item 4 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence and Security Support - \$484,239,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

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

Assembly resumed.

Question

“That this committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2018 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,526,563,240 for the period 2018-01-01 to 2018-12-31.”

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 2 of 2018 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,526,563,240, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: This completes consideration of Financial Paper No. 2 of 2018. We will now move onto the next stage, the consideration of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NOS. 13(N) AND 54

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, Be It Resolved that Standing Order No. 78 ...

Mr. Speaker: Standing Orders 13 (n) and 54.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much for your assistance, Mr. Speaker. I move that these Standing Orders be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2018) – Bill No. of 8 of 2018 be introduced at this stage.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing Orders suspended.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2018) - BILL NO. 8 OF 2018

A Bill Intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2018, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Question put, and agreed to.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with article 171(2) of the Constitution of the Corporative Republic of Guyana, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2018) - Bill No. 8 of 2018 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the National Assembly and move that it be read for the first time.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read for the first time.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2018) - Bill No. 8 of 2018 be read a second time.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS - SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2018) - BILL NO. 8 OF 2018

A Bill Intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2018, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2018) - Bill No. 8 of 2018 be read the third time and passed as printed.

Question put, and agreed to.

Bill reported without amendments read for the third time and passed as printed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have concluded consideration of Financial Paper No. 2 and the Bill No. 8 of 2018, which is the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. I thank you very much for your assistance.

It is now 7.25 p.m., I would suggest that we take a short break or if Members are otherwise persuaded, we can continue. Very well, I take it that silence means I should proceed.

MOTION OF ADJOURNMENT ON A MATTER OF DEFINITE URGENT IMPORTANCE

WHEREAS four boats with 20 fishermen, most of whom were Guyanese, were attacked in a most horrific and violent manner on Friday, 27th April, 2018 by pirates off the coast of the Republic of Suriname leaving 12 missing, five survivors and three bodies found thus far;

AND WHEREAS less than a week later another boat with Guyanese fishermen was also attacked by pirates in the Republic of Suriname leading to one dead and four survivors;

AND WHEREAS families of the fishermen in Guyana met the Leader of the Opposition who subsequently travelled to the Republic Suriname to meet with families and survivors of these piracy attacks, and, the Guyanese community, in Suriname;

AND WHEREAS the families and the survivors have explained in great detail the horrors that they have endured at the hands of criminals and expressed great fears that these atrocities will be repeated unless the perpetrators are arrested and brought to justice;

AND WHEREAS these attacks were not merely robberies, murders and acts of piracy but by the very cruel and inhumane manner by which they were executed, these should be treated as acts of terrorism requiring the application of the full force of the law to bring the perpetrators to justice by both the Governments of Guyana and the Republic of Suriname working collaboratively and swiftly in addressing these horrific incidents fully and comprehensively;

AND WHEREAS the families and communities of the victims, and, fishermen in general, have been deeply traumatised and severely aggrieved by the lack of empathy, information, and action by Government officials in the last two weeks;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government of Guyana informs this National Assembly of the actions which have been taken in respect of this horrendous human tragedy, thus far, and what actions it intends to take, in relation thereto, generally, but more specifically, in respect of the following matters:

The arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators of these horrific acts and the intellectual authors,

Thereof;

- (ii) the measures put in place or to be put in place designed to create a safe environment for fishermen to continue to ply their trade at sea;
- (iii) what form of financial assistance, if any, is being or will be offered to the families of the victims, as well as, the owners of the fishing vessels, engines, seine and equipment which have been damaged, destroyed or lost;
- (iv) what form of enhanced collaboration, if any, is being pursued with the Government of the Republic of Suriname to patrol and monitor the waters, inclusive by air, and including, the installation of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) or similar technological apparatus on licensed fishing vessels;
- (v) what mechanisms, if any, have been put in place to ensure that when reports are made to the Law Enforcement Authorities in the Republic Suriname and Guyana, they are treated seriously, confidentially and with dispatch;
- (vi) what enhanced role is being played by the Guyana Embassy in Paramaribo, Suriname, to represent, facilitate and render assistance to these traumatised families and victims, in particular assisting with access to the Surinamese authorities with regards to law enforcement, health care, immigration and release of the bodies for burial, and further issues which affect the interest and welfare of all Guyanese either residing or working in the Republic of Suriname.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if the Government of Guyana has not yet acted upon the issues articulated above that this National Assembly urges them to do so with every convenient speed;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this National Assembly urges the Government of Guyana to utilise the provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Piracy Act to bring the perpetrators to justice. [*Ms. Teixeira*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Chair has given approval for the adjournment motion in relation to as it is termed “Definite matters of urgent public importance”. That motion was standing in the name of the Hon. Gail Teixeira. I would now invite her to speak on the motion.

7.25 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The motion that we brought is one that we believe is of critical importance and we thank you for giving us the opportunity for this matter to be discussed.

The National Assembly - Suriname discussed this matter yesterday and the reports in the media show that the National Assembly of Suriname was able to have unanimity, on both sides of the House, in favour of the motion by both the Opposition and the Government, to address the issue of the terrible tragedy that took place off the coast of Suriname. They also agreed to a number of actions to be taken in Suriname and with Guyana in relation to having a safer environment for those who are involved in the fishing industry.

When one read about the incident on 27th April, 2018 and then about the one that came a week later, one can only imagine what happened out there at sea and how terrifying it must have been. I have tremendous respect for two professions, basically, fisherman and pilots. This is because they go into the unknown and they deal with nature and its unpredictability. Therefore, the sailors and fishermen, particularly in this case the fishermen, would go out into the sea to make a living in treacherous waters, in unpredictable weather situations, and worst yet, they are confronted by the human and terror element of those who would wish to attack and to kill them.

When we read the stories of what took place that night on 27th April, 2018, and when one goes to the Hijacking and Piracy Act of Guyana, it is very clear, in the definition, that what took place in Suriname requires the full application of the law. We sincerely hope that the Governments of Guyana and Suriname will work in collaboration with each other.

We have heard attempts by others to try and say that piracy is not a problem in Guyana and that they have fixed the problem. The problem is that, 95% of the fishermen who go out on Surinamese-owned boats are Guyanese. The majority of them live and work in Suriname. These are our brothers, our compatriots, who have been attacked brutally, viciously, inhumanely and horrifically, in a way that cannot be seen as just a regular armed robbery or a regular criminal activity. Clearly, those who perpetrated the act planned it, premeditated it, knew where to find the boats, knew to attack and went out with such revenge and vengeance. It is really hard to conceive of that level of mental state that 20 men, on four boats, were attacked. We know so far

that three bodies have been found and we believe that a fourth body also. There are five survivors and twelve men are still missing. There was an attack a few days later on another boat and one man was killed and there are four survivors.

Unfortunately, these are two attacks that have come to notice but there have been several. In fact, it is estimated that about nine attacks have taken place in recent times in these waters and the particular attack that happened on 27th April is the worst recorded in the entire region - Latin America and the Caribbean. There has been no such attack of that level of brutality and deadly force as was used on 27th April and no other recorded attack that can be found along the entire Coast of South America, Central America or neither in the Southern United States of America nor in the islands.

Therefore, what happened requires an urgent response and certainly we can get into the political battle, but this is a human issue. These were humans who were murdered and who were caught out in the high seas, with no way of protecting themselves and no way of getting back to shore easily because their accounts were that men's feet were tied and weights were put on them and they were thrown overboard. Their chance of getting away was nil. The intent was to murder, to kill and if possible to ensure too that there was no evidence. Clearly, those who went out there had to ensure that the fishermen were supposed to suffer and to suffer as long as possible, and also, that there was not supposed to be any survivors at all. The fact that there were a few survivors that is why we know what happened otherwise we would not have known.

On this side of the House, we have been calling what happened there a 'terrorist act'. In the definitions of terrorism and piracy, persons who are caught doing anything of this level, it calls for life imprisonment. In particular, in the Hijacking and Piracy Act, section 7 states:

“Every person who murders a person on board a vessel that is under attack while committing an offence of armed robbery, piracy or hijacking is liable on conviction on indictment to suffer death.”

It goes on to talk about the accomplices that are involved in this. Section 5 of the Hijacking and Piracy Act of Guyana defines what is an act of piracy. Clearly, when we look at global cases of piracy that have been made public by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN) of the pirates who have attacked boats around the area of Yemen entering

into what is the seas that go into the Suez Canal, these have not only been considered to be pirates, they have also been called 'terrorists'. It is because the methods and the way in which it had occurred cannot be explained by even what is considered a pirate act. Unfortunately, when we look at movies like the *Pirates of the Caribbean*, sometimes the whole idea of the piracy has become romanticised. What we saw and heard of, that the pirates who attacked our fishermen were brutal, and, in short, they ensured that people would be harmed and that this would create a major disaster and tragedy.

The problem with the tragedy has been the slow response of all concerned. We have had fires, floods, terrible car accidents and we have had murders. In this case, although what took place took place in another country, nevertheless, we know here, living in Guyana, that the majority of fishermen in Suriname are Guyanese. We knew within a matter of days that these were Guyanese and, yet, there was silence. This is unacceptable for our people. Maybe and I have no doubt that, at the security levels, the Guyana Defence Board, Minister Harmon, the Prime Minister, Minister Greenidge and Minister Ramjattan, were all somewhere huddled in a corner discussing these issues.

The problem is that the Guyanese people were closed out and the families of many of these fishermen, who are living in Guyana, could not access information and could not access officials on this issue. For those families who needed to travel to Suriname and who needed to ensure that their people and their relatives were still alive or what would they do if they were not alive, where would they go?

We can call it a massacre and if massacre is the term that the Government wishes to use, then it (the government) should act as if it was a massacre. We do not need to have it baptised as a massacre. But then Government sat down and did nothing about it and waited almost two weeks before it finally got up and went to Suriname to find out and to talk to their Colleagues on that side. This is what is hurtful about the entire thing; it has been the lack of disclosure, the silence and what appears to be lack of empathy. No one is blaming the Government of Guyana for what took place, so you do not have to go into the defence mode. We are not attacking the Government of Guyana for the incident in Suriname; we are criticising the Government of Guyana for the lack of speed, the slothfulness and the silence in relation to responding to an issue that involved nationals of our country. That is where the problem lies and, unfortunately, you do

not want to accept that is a problem. In fact, as far you are concerned, everything is *hunky-dory*; you did everything right. The problem with that is when you seal yourself in this little ivory tower, the families of the victims who tried to see officials of Government on this side were not able to and, also, there were families on the Surinamese side who needed to see officials.

When one listens to the horrors in great detail that the survivors have described and what they had endured at the hands of the criminals, one cannot be oblivious to the fact that these men's livelihood is the sea. How do they go out to the sea again and work and make a living when they have endured such situations and such torture? Again, I say empathy.

No one is saying that the Government of Guyana went out there and had a pirate attack, so stop going into your siege mode. You are always going into your siege mode.

It is unfortunate and I must say that I fear, having read the account of the debate in the Parliament of Suriname that this will not happen here. The Parliament of Suriname, both the Government and the Opposition, supported the motion that required a number of things, and when one reads the report, it is almost the exact things that we are calling for in this motion. I just said I have a fear and I hope that my fear is not real and that the Members of the other side will be forthcoming. **[Mr. Greenidge: It is always one side working.]** No, it is never one side working. Do not be irrelevant, Minister Greenidge.

The issue is that we need to have answers. There are times when things happen in a country and when the Government of the day, the President of the day or the Prime Minister of the day has to pick up the phone and call the Leader of the Opposition about something that has happened.

7.40 p.m.

I have been privileged to be in the room with several Presidents of Guyana, when they picked up the phone and called Mr. Corbin as Leader of the Opposition and later on Mr. Granger as Opposition Leader to deal with matters that were of a national importance – non-partisan issues. This is not a partisan issue, this is a non-partisan issue.

There is no communication with the people who are the victims or their families. There is no communication in the public as to what is being done and so people are kept in the dark. We have asked very simple questions that I do not believe should be seen as irrelevant, as out of

order – Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that you have not found this out of order - that the members of the Government recognised that, in fact, they would be given an opportunity which they have not taken thus far, to be able to say in this House what are the issues.

Clearly, we are reading in the papers that the Surinamese have arrested people and that they have detained people. We are also interested in whether there has been any update on the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators of this horrific act and the intellectual authors. This is because you do not need to say to us who they are, but, at least to give an idea to the Guyanese people. We are reading what the Surinamese are doing; we have read in the papers that a number of arrests have taken place in Guyana based on - from the Commander of Region 6, I forgot what area that is now - based on information shared from Suriname and they have been collaborating with Suriname to arrest these people. Where are we with this?

The second issue is: What measures are being put in place or are being designed to create a safe environment for fishermen to continue to ply their trades at sea. As a Minister of Home Affairs before, and my Colleague Mr. Rohee will speak as a former Minister, as a Member of the Defence Board and the Commissioning Board, I am very aware of what were the efforts being made to deal with piracy. Many were the meetings with the fishermen themselves, with Ministers of Government and with Cabinet in the 2006 to 2011 period. In terms of what did the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) do? What was one of the issues of the Defence Board to have the floating station in the Essequibo mouth? To allow for more rapid response in relation to going where most of the piracy was taking place – in the Corentyne and that corner of Guyana.

Secondly, was to be able to purchase and acquire more boats to allow the army to be able to be more mobile and to carry out more patrols and to be more available because they are more mobile, to respond to issues such as pirate attacks.

The issue of telecommunications, radio equipment, firearms and flares, these were all things that were discussed and mechanisms were being put in place for people to be licensed to be registered, but that is on the Guyanese side of the border.

You cannot say to us that, “Yall ain’t do nothing’ about piracy.” - that is the Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPPC) - when the incident took place in Suriname. We have not accused you of doing nothing against piracy, but, since you have attacked us, we would like to enlighten you on

what were the things we were doing. I am sure that Minister Harmon is more *au fait* than probably anyone in this room about what were the issues being put in place. The issue of safety, you cannot obviously predict everything nor could you prevent everything. The efforts and, therefore, the discussions with Surinamese of how to provide a safer environment... I do not think that people realise how much money is involved with the fishing industry. As I said earlier, 95% of the Surinamese fishing boats are manned by Guyanese fishermen. These boats bring in catch or fishes that bring in export earnings for Suriname. For us, the fourth revenue earner for Guyana, after gold, rice and bauxite, is fish – the fisheries. I do not think that you know that. Therefore, we are not talking about something ... This is not... *[Interruption]* **[Mr.**

Greenidge: *[Inaudible]* Do not get excited, Mr. Greenidge, I am talking about the fish. I do not know if you want me to find which fish is in land and which is at sea. I am dealing with the revenue coming into Guyana. The revenue Sir is US\$99 million for Guyana's fish earnings. The Surinamese we are not aware of, but certainly, we could... *[Interruption]* I seem to have touched a corn of the Minister over there. He is usually not so agitated, but, anyway it is alright. **[Ms. Charles-Broomes:** Fake.] That is okay, you could call it fake.

If we are dealing with the level of revenue that Guyana is making from the fish industry, you could have an idea of the level of foreign earnings that Suriname is benefiting from the fish. It may not be as much as us, but, certainly the fishing industry is a major contributor to foreign currency earnings, both in Guyana and in Suriname. From the point of view of economics, this is something of importance.

From a social point, this is important. If the men cannot go out to work because they are fearful of their lives, boats have been lost and the equipment has been lost. How do they start their lives all over again? The issue of financial assistance - we have a responsibility to offer financial assistance; boats were lost, equipment was lost and lives were lost. What is the finance, if any, being offered to the families of the victims of the massacre? Has there been any discussion by this Government with the owners of the vessels in terms of assistance to do with equipment? What level of discussion has been taking place with the Government of Guyana, with the fishermen who are Guyanese and with the Surinamese authorities on what kind of collaboration could take place to ensure that the waters are safer off the coast of Suriname and therefore, safe

for Guyanese even in the waters in Guyana. Pirates do not have borders. Pirates have no interest in maintaining borders, they are free to go on any sea they want to, once they have the capacity.

We are asking simple questions. We have heard that Minister Ramjattan went over to Suriname. This is a good opportunity for the Minister to be able to tell this House, what were the level of collaboration with Suriname to patrol and monitor the waters for Guyana and Suriname? Are there any collaborations going to be going on by air? We just passed a budget for four aircraft - two Skyvan and two Islanders. Are those going to be used? Minister Harmon said that this will be used in operational purposes and I believe he talked about piracy as well.

Therefore, in what way and meaningful ways, are the countries agreeing that, one - this tragedy that took place must be the last and that the only way that they could tackle it as two countries with limited resources. No one is attacking you for that, but we have limited resources. How are we going to be able to tackle this to make sure that there is no other tragedy like this that would happen to Guyanese or Surinamese; in Guyanese waters or in Surinamese waters, that we will try everything to prevent that?

What about the use of new technology or providing GPS and other technological apparatus to the fishermen on both sides of the border? Has the Government engaged with the Guyanese in Suriname? Has the Government engaged with the Guyanese who are victims in Guyana? Have you spoken to them or have you just been happy to sit in air-conditioned rooms when you go to Suriname and only deal with it at that level?

Again, the issue of law enforcement officers working collaboratively across both countries - Mr. Felix is here, he knows there has been collaboration with police forces in other parts of the region. There is Caricom Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) and, therefore, one could work with Suriname to treat with these issues with intelligence sharing, information sharing. That when reports come to them, information or reports of actual events, that both law enforcement authorities treat these with alacrity, with speed and that they treat with it confidentially. These are not difficult things one is asking for. These are not demands or measures we are asking for that put anyone in a bind. You do not have to have a *knee-jerk* reaction as if you are under siege.

Guyana's Embassy in Paramaribo, what if any, how has it been playing a role to assist the Guyanese families and victims of this horrible tragedy - this deadly attack? Somewhere along the line, I think that the Government missed the ball. It did not comprehend; it did not realise; or it did not recognise that what happened on 27th April was the worst pirate attack in the entire region for probably in the history of since we have been tracking pirates over the last several years. You reacted as if it was business as usual. Therefore, sometimes you have to admit that you did miss the ball and that you need to take corrective actions.

Guyana's Embassy in Paramaribo, we need to know; have they been put into an enhanced role, a more advanced stage, that they are offering assistance to the families and the victims, including families that are coming from Guyana to Suriname? In some cases, they do not speak the language, they need help with translations, they need help with how to navigate in another country in terms of language, immigration, health care, how they are able to retrieve the bodies of those who have been found and to take them for burial - in many cases, if they want to bring them back to Guyana. Someone needs to be there to help them and Guyana's Embassy in Paramaribo should be the body that does that. These are our citizens, our people. Therefore, we are asking, what did they do? This is because, clearly, the demand would not be there Minister Greenidge if they had done it with greater alacrity and were doing it so well. Clearly, something is radically wrong, Mr. Greenidge.

We have to recognise our Constitution. Our Constitution is very clear that we are Guyanese, even when we live in another country, because our country allows for dual citizenships. This is so that Guyanese living in Suriname or are residing there and something happens to them, we have a responsibility to take care of them. We have a moral and constitutional duty.

7.55 p.m.

Unfortunately the reason why these demands are here is not because they have been plucked out of the air. The Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Member Bharrat Jagdeo, was in Suriname. A delegation with him met hundreds of Guyanese and some Surinamese who talked emotionally and who expressed themselves emotionally, passionately, about the difficulties they were having. This is not an academic exercise. This is not one where someone sat in an air-conditioned office and decided what needed to be done.

It is unfortunate, as I said earlier, that the Hon. Minister went to Suriname and did not do the same thing as Mr. Jagdeo. I am sure that the people wanted to see you, but you were too busy running around and doing whatever you do. I hope that you did not have time to taste the Surinamese's cargo. I hope you did not have too much time for that. **[Mr. Greenidge:**

You need to have a unanimous decision.] Mr. Greenidge, if you believe in this House that people do not spar, go to another Parliament you will find that it is worst.

The reason why this motion has come here is that it is urgent. It is something that concerns our people. It is national. It is something that concerns all the people of Guyana. It is public. It is something that requires a response of seriousness and of respect to say that we need to do better. We need to collaborate with our neighbours to do better. We cannot sit here in this House..., and because I am saying that you have not been accessible to the people, you suddenly go into your defence mode and siege mode. In what way does that help the victims of the pirates?

We have raised this motion and I have said it before, while speaking, that this is an issue of national interest and it is one that requires a national response. In fact, in this case, it not only requires a national response, it requires a response by two countries working collaboratively and that has to be led by the Guyana Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security to be able to hold the best skills, the best capacity of two small countries and to be able to make sure, as I said before, that we do not have another tragedy such as this again. It cannot be that what we put forward here in this motion, the questions that we are asking the Government that you find these questions so offensive. How could these issues that we asked for be so offensive?

We have brought a motion because we believe that it is time that the issue is brought to the House. This is an issue of national importance. It requires an issue that we decide how we can work together on this.

I hope, in closing, that we would be able to succeed as the Parliament of Suriname did yesterday in passing a motion in support of taking collaborative actions to be able to reduce, and prevent, piracy and to make the environment for fishermen safer. The demands they made and the demands in their resolution are very close to ours. Therefore I appeal to Comrades on the other side that we use this opportunity to be able to work to prevent a terrible tragedy, ever like this,

from happening again. That we also use the opportunity here to make sure that those who are victims and the families of the victims, all fishermen, feel safer, they are all able to get back to their work and continue to have their livelihood.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

Minister of Public Security [Mr. Ramjattan]: Indeed, this motion that was brought, I respect it. It must not be a situation where the Opposition Member who brought it is going to give the impression that we do not want to do anything with this motion. **[Bishop Edghill: Did**

somebody say that?]

That is how she was giving the impression with the words that she uttered, that we are trying not to do... **[Ms. Manickchand: Who is she?]**

The Hon. Member that made that very crude, naked, opportunistic speech just now, giving the impression as if we have not in any way done anything about piracy. I am going to give you the statistics about piracy.

Going after the family members, which is a good thing, and I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for doing that. But I was on the ball all the time with the Minister of Suriname Police and Justice. The Commissioner, acting, was with them on the phone indicating when we could have come to talk to the people over there and also to talk to the authorities over there, because we have been doing a fantastic job in relation to curbing piracy. We have brought it down and dismantled the piracy in Guyana here. To the extent of up to this year, here, we would not have a single incident of piracy reported, not a single one.

If I may give the statistics, I have it here. In 2011, there were ten reported incidents that were verified, 2012 - 22, 2014 – eight. There were three in 2013 and four by the time we came into Government and when we came into Government none. In 2016 - zero, 2017- nine and this year there was nil as of the 11th May.

What we are saying here is that a lot was done to the piracy in Guyana and it is extraordinarily that this is seeking for political mileage. Do you know that is what they want? They want to give the impression that they are there with the relatives and friends. It is how they are so caring. Did you tell the people that you have to come back and vote out this Government? Did you tell them to come back and register? You did not tell them.

I want to say that our Government introduced a number of surveillance measures. I am absolutely certain that will be spoken to by Mr. Harmon. We held talks with the fishermen when we had a couple of incidents there in 2016. I went and indicated to them that we need them to purchase transponders. We went and did the research and the expert team that we have in my Research Department came up with the cheapest transponders that could be bought in the vicinity of \$100,000 to show their positioning and where they can also have help through this device to tell the authorities outside of Guyana, where they are, who and who are the strangers around them, and all of that. Even if it is more than that, we indicated to them that they could have radio sets placed, because we have to modernise our fishing fleets, whether it is a small boats or big boats. The boat owners did not want to expend any moneys for those things. I spoke at Number 66 Village about those things. [Ms. Manickchand: One month salary.]

Yes, what is a one-month salary? These fishermen indulge in a business that is very profitable. When I indicated to them too that if they would like to have firearms when they are going out to fish, it is to walk with the firearm so that they can defend themselves, they said, “No. More of the fellows would want to attack us because we have firearm in our boats.”

It is not as if we have not asked them a number of things to do. I rather suspect we will still have to work on it and that is why only yesterday I have come up with the decision that I have to buy the transponder and they would have to now come and pay instalments. That is the position. The radio, we will have to buy some, and they will have to put up half of the money so they themselves can secure themselves. We cannot have helicopter hovering around when they are catching fish. We cannot have metal sharks around them, that the GDF has to go and see where they are catching fish and stay there whole day. That is an exercise that they also will have to understand that the Government of Guyana nor the Government of any country, great marine countries such as England, does not have boat and fish catchers next to surveillance vessels or security vessels. It is a wide ocean out there. It is totally difficult and challenging for us to make that kind of things happen that some of these fishermen did ask me about. I indicated to them that that is out of the question. We cannot do that. What we can do, however, are the things that we have already done. It is aerial surveillance that has a deterring effect and also it is knowing generally who some of the suspects are in this business and ensuring that the police are always on their tips.

Additionally, we have some certain intelligence information about some of them that we do a couple of things that not necessarily would be spoken about here in the Parliament. Understand that is why it was reduced so drastically, but you come here now there has been an incident and these incidents sometime I cannot make a commitment that they will never happen, that Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira wants me to. [Mr. Teixeira: I never said that.] That is what it is saying. Let us do some collaboration to ensure that it would never happen again. Well that is a hope and aspiration. [Mr. Dharamlall: Why are you *busing*?] ...I am not *busing*; I am rebutting. It is important then to understand that all of the things that ought to be put in place in accordance with the resources we have..., because if we get more resources, we certainly can put up a lot more vessels out there to ensure better security. It is very important that that context be understood.

When we come here dancing around the issue saying we did not do anything, we were enjoying the air-conditioned offices, and so on, that is not true. That is why opportunistically I say this is a crude naked piece of politicking in this motion. They knew that I went with three very senior officers. They did not put that in their motion. Only the Leader of the Opposition went, only the former Attorney General went, but he did not find it generous enough that he got write up in the thing. [Ms. Ally: He went and campaigned.] Yes. I suppose. I want to give a report here to the Parliament as to what and what we did in relation to our trip over there and the aim of it.

Our aim there, if I may say so, was to apprise the key stakeholder, the Commissioner of Police of the extent of the attacks, the validity of certain reports relating to the attacks and the status of police investigation in Suriname and the assistance that would be offered and required by the authorities there. Our team comprised of myself, Mr. Eastman, Mr. Kingston and Mr. Dehart, all of them are Superintendents of Police.

8.10 p.m.

During the visit, I engaged with the Surinamese Minister of Justice and Police, Mr. Stuart Getrouw, Minister of Defence, Colonel Ronni Benschop, Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Mr. Soerdjan - the Minister of Agriculture is also the Minister of Fisheries - the chief police who was investigating the matter and the acting Commissioner of

Police over there who heads the police force. In accordance with this set of agenda items, we also shared a number of our intelligence with them about the pirates that are in Guyana.

On Friday the 27th April, 2018, from what we now know, and it is in the press, but I should repeat it, about 6.30 in the afternoon, four fishing boats being plied by Guyanese nationals were attacked by suspected pirates at an area called *Dragtenweg* bank, *Maruni* – and I hope I pronounced that correct – in Surinamese waters. That was more or less on the high seas next to French Guiana, not near to Guyana. The attack was carried out by a total of 14 males armed with shotguns and machetes, who used two boats and were suspected to be Guyanese nationals. The attacks, all were initiated by the suspected pirates firing at the fishermen to subdue them, after which, they then boarded the boats and proceeded to beat and chop them up, and in some cases shooting them. Of course, this is the information from those people that the Surinamese authorities had got information from. During the attack, several of the fishermen were injured about their bodies with the machetes and forced overboard while others tried to evade the attack by jumping overboard.

Then there is a report regarding the attack at another place called *Matapica Commewijne* in Surinamese waters, a second attack, on the 3rd April. The perpetrators were same from the previous attack at the *Wia Wia* bank. In this instance, the boat crew was beaten and the captain was repeatedly chopped and flung overboard whilst the boat engine was destroyed and the crew left adrift.

Now, the details that we got from the attack, these boat numbers were given to us here. The owners' names are given to us and the date of the attack. Four boats were attacked on the 27th April and a fifth one on the 3rd May and they all have the SK – SK meaning that their licence is from Suriname. The main locations where the attacks occurred, as I said, were more to the French Guiana side. The police have established that that the motive for the attack is a reprisal by family members of a person who was gunned down, a person by the name of Somnath Manohar, male, East Indian, 39 years, of Lot 53 Cashmere Paramaribo. The Guyanese national was fatally wounded during a drive-by shooting at his residence on the 30th March, 2018. Of course, Mr. Manohar was suspected to be involved in acts of piracy and his death, as we are now deducing, may have been organised by irate fishermen.

As of Tuesday, 8th May, a total of three bodies have been retrieved from the waters. The bodies are still to be positively identified because they were badly decomposed. Nine fishermen were found alive and 13 fishermen are still missing. As of Tuesday, 8th May, a total of 14 persons were arrested, 12 remained in custody subsequent to questioning. In Suriname, the son of that murdered, gunned down, person, Mr. Manohar, was arrested and implicated as the organiser of the attack while two other known pirates connected to Mr. Manohar were also arrested and subsequently gave confessions, which highlighted their involvement in the attacks and further implicated that the family of the deceased, Mr. Manohar, had paid for their reprisal. That is what we are getting as the information based on all statements, whether confessions or not.

Of course, there were issues arising. We indicated that we wanted to help. The Government and police of Suriname are receptive of the idea of a broad investigation, spanning both Suriname and Guyana in pursuance of the perpetrators and intends to share all crime files approved by the offices that deal with these, the Commissioner's office and Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP) office here, and there is a legal officer over there. I forgot what it is called, but it is equivalent to our DPP and the police legal advisers over there. The police authorities continue to work, that is, the police of Suriname, towards positively identifying all the victims. Now, I must tell you that they have a procedure over there for doing deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing to identify, through DNA testing, the persons. They cannot just go and make the identification based on some mark or so. They would like DNA testing because they do not want the bodies to be wrongly given to the some other relatives, and so on, and that is part of their protocol. The identify process is somewhat laborious as victims, deceased persons, are predominantly known only by aliases. It is a major issue that is over there.

The progress of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) investigations were revealed to the Surinamese authorities, when we were there, and it was further reported, that there was one of the brothers in custody in Guyana and he is from Number 43 Village. He and an associate were arrested and being questioned, and so far, we are getting some positive results. Members of the Suriname Police Force and the Guyana Police Force – the three members who were there – agreed to maintain daily contact. We have been having daily contact since it was reported on the 28th about what happened. We have daily contact on the issue and we will assist where necessary and applicable.

The Surinamese authorities and their support continue. They are scanning the waterways for the bodies of the missing fishermen. They have indicated to us that they have employed helicopters and also their coastguards and army are doing all manner of things to find the other bodies. They are also questioning well-known persons associated with piracy and in that context, that is what they are doing. I must say that we have indicated to the Minister over there that a number of things have to be further done, and all will be done.

I want to say this too that on my first day of arrival there, that is the Sunday, and in the very early morning, a lot of work was done by our Ambassador Keith George to get the family members to come to the embassy. There were about 25 members, relatives and friends of the family who came to indicate their concerns. Some of which were negative, but the majority of which they indicated that the incident has really traumatised them, as it would normally do to anybody.

[**Mr. Nandlall:** We had 2,500.] Well, fine and yes, you will want all of them to come over and vote for you here. Well, I hope they come. [**Mr. Nandlall:** Crude and callous...]

Well, he can say crude and callous. You were not crude and callous at saying that you have 2,500. That is how you are making political mileage out of it, the deaths and look at the numbers - "Look at how many persons came and spoke to us." That is why I am saying it is crude and opportunism on your part.

The investigations must continue. We have strengthened intelligence with Guyana. This has happened a couple of months ago because the Commissioner of Suriname Police Force was here and we have been constantly, almost every half yearly, going across to Suriname and having Surinamese police contingents here to strengthen our intelligence with Guyana, so that we can get to the root cause of these killings and also to ensure that we do better in relation to the piracy. It is to continue joint operation with coastguard, police and army and collaborating with the community of Guyanese fishermen there. What was also told to me, in relation to fisheries sector by the Minister of Fisheries, was that they are going to create check points at certain places of departure when fishermen go to fish and to get a register of all those who are going out and coming in, where they come from, and a whole set of administrative arrangements in place, so that they would know of the people who go out and come back in.

They are also indicating too, and like with us, to work out a fishing vessel monitoring system. I indicated to them that we had done that here but we did not get the support of Guyanese

fishermen. They indicated that it would be a useful thing. It is to see what support can be given to families of victims and that was indicated that it will be from both sides. We, in Guyana, here, will give moral, psychological and financial support. We also feel because there was some talk as to whether the business should be closed over here. I indicated, no way. It is a very important industry and they indicated too that a number of the fishermen, who came to meet me at the Guyanese Embassy, which was arranged by Ambassador George, indicated that they wanted it to be reopened because they have to make a living. [Mr. Nandlall: Is that the 25?]

Yes. It is the 25. That is the very important 25. There are boat owners there and a number of them indicated that they would like to have their boats go back to do the business. I conveyed that to the Minister and I understand that a number of them have already gone back into the business.

I want to say too that we had a press conference there on the Monday. The press conference was held at President Dési Bouterse's press room and there were a number of senior Ministers there, the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, and so on. There were the policemen there too, although, the questions were not directed to them. They were directed largely to the Minister of Fisheries of Suriname and the Minister of Police and Justice.

When people are giving the impression that nothing has been done and nothing is getting done, and all of that, ... [Ms. Manickchand: Why do you sound so guilty?] ...I want to say that on the third day after the incident, some people went to the Commissioner for passports or for travel documents, seven of them, and the Commissioner engaged them to the extent of giving them and waiving the cost of whatever they had to pay. [An Hon. Member: Who sent them?]

I do not know who sent them. They did not say that. I do not know if they were afraid to say his name. [Interruption from Members of the Opposition.] Whatever it is. You see your opportunism again. It is the Leader of the Opposition. That is what he is saying.

It is important to understand that the very first time that the Commissioner or my Ministry was asked of any assistance, we gave it immediately. Do not come here and say that we did not, and that when we say that we did, you are saying that I am feeling guilty. That is what I do all the time. Did you ever know of a leader by the name of Jagan? He used to do that all the time too. It is important then that we understand.

Now, I want to say, in relation to this motion, it is worded...It is because when I first saw the motion I did not realise that it was obviously to create what is called the political mileage, but that is okay. I could understand the nature of the PPP, because I was there. Almost everything, even debts they are going to take advantage of.

8.25 p.m.

To that extent then, notwithstanding my disagreements with a couple of the things that they have said there, I would allow it to pass. It is not a terrorist activity. I do not see that, but if you are of the opinion that it is that, well, it is fine. I am not going to stick a bone and have polarisation and different views on that because it was a very despicable act. It is murder from every indication that I have just read out, reprisal murder, vengeance, and so on. If it is whatever you want to label it and you want to put in the motion, that that is what it is, well, it is fine. Remember, this is a different kind of motion which is called matters coming for urgent business here, as a result of important, and all of that. I agree but we will have a discussion and this is the discussion that we are having.

The Government of Guyana, the Minister of Public Security along with senior officers did a lot of work, going over there talking to the players after an arrangement was made at the embassy where they came and also it is giving them all of the support at that stage that we could.

[**Mr. Nandlall:** You charged them.] No one has been charged as yet and you know that. I do not know if you know that they were charged, but from my reports, and I have given you the up to date one, no one has been charged as yet. It is important that that update that I have given there, I hope, it meets what you are talking about.

There were two or three other amendments that I had wanted to put to the motion, but I understand, from the Speaker, these kinds of motions are not what you amend. You just go on to have the discussion because it is a matter of urgent public importance and that is what I think that it is. To that extent, it indicates that all the answers are given at this stage. There is nothing to vote on or nothing to approve in a motion of this nature, so we support it. We are having the discussion and it is just a matter of urgent definite public importance. As the Clerk told me, there is nothing to vote and approve on and that is fine with us.

Effectively then. I want to say that whatever other information, I will gather, will, certainly through press conferences, be given. The press conference that I gave was just 24 hours after I came back from Suriname. I thought that it was a very comprehensive press conference. To that extent, I was also meeting with the press, giving them some of the information that I had got and even whilst in Suriname, I was doing that. The Leader of the Opposition had gone to Suriname. In any event, we thought that we had done everything in our power to ensure that our stakeholders are met and the big players in Suriname are met and we got their information.

I hope that is substantially what is required to meet with some of the questions asked by the Hon. Member Gail Teixeira here.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Rohee: I have listened very attentively to my colleague Member of Parliament Ms. Gail Teixeira and I have listened also very carefully to Member of Parliament Minister Ramjattan. I have also listened attentively to the Leader of the Opposition while he was in Suriname about the interviews and meeting with people and also when he had returned to Guyana. In that same vein, I have with me the *Stabroek News* newspaper of Monday 7th May, 2018, which reports on the press conference that was held by Minister Ramjattan on his return from his visit to Suriname. What struck me was a statement to the effect coming from the mouth of the Minister when he said:

“We told them...”

It is meaning the Surinamese authorities.

“...that we are here to tell the Surinamese authorities that we want to collaborate and cooperate with them to the fullest.”

Is what you went to Suriname for? It was eight days after. This is totally unacceptable. Almost one day after, the Minister jetted off on a junket to inform the authorities over there that he is there to collaborate and cooperate with them to the fullest. When you contrast this with what the Leader of the Opposition did while he was in Suriname, unlike the Minister of the Government of Guyana who found himself ensconced in the comforts of the embassy in Paramaribo, apparently he got wind of the information that the people were not going to come out to meet

him, withstanding preparations that were made for the meeting that was held. The meeting was held at the embassy. That is what we were made to understand.

What also struck me with the Minister's statement, and I do not want to sound confrontational here because he does not want to sound confrontational,...I am simply repeating for the benefit of reminding the Hon. Minister of his own words and for him to situate what he said in the context of Guyana, what is being heard by the people of Guyana and what is being heard by the Guyanese in Suriname. Apparently, he did not listen to what you were saying and he did not recognise the weight of what you were saying at the time. He went on to say in the press conference:

“Ask if the Government of Guyana has committed to assist in transporting the bodies back to Guyana, the Minister responded in the negative.”

How can a Minister be so unsympathetic? You do not have to get permission at the given point in time. You could have given a different answer. You could have given some kind of assurance. At least, it was to give the people the assurance that you are working on it, I am looking into it; I am pursuing it or something to that effect. That is not what was meant in here. He said it in the negative.

The Minister said that he did a lot of work in Suriname but from the little that we gleaned, in respect to the work that he did, it had to do with a meeting at the embassy and a meeting with the authorities which he went there to cooperate and collaborate with. That was the end of the meeting.

As the speaker coming after the others, I have to deal with this matter. When he said what my colleague, Member of Parliament Ms. Teixeira said, and described it as “a crude, naked and opportunistic”, the statement that she made, I would ask the Hon. Minister to withdraw those remarks. You should withdraw those remarks. In the spirit of what the Opposition Leader has sought to set out at the beginning, not here in the House, but in the country, that this is a national event. [Mr. Greenidge: What is being said here?] This is what he said here. He said that here. The Hon. Member said, in response to a statement that was made that we are being “crude, opportunistic and naked.” I am asking for the Hon. Member to withdraw that in the interest of the highest degree of unanimity being met in respect to this question. I do not know

why the Minister of Foreign Affairs is getting worked up. He is supposed to be the calmest head here. I do not want to belabour this point but I think in the interest of the discussion and what the motion is seeking to arrive at, a degree of unanimity, a degree of meeting of the minds on the matter of national interest that the Hon. Member should withdraw those remarks.

I would like to mention another important observation which the Hon. Member has been belabouring. He has been belabouring the point that all the patting themselves on the shoulder, backslapping each other, that we have done away with piracy. It is finished. It exists no longer. We have done away with it; we have dismantled the network. What has happened is that the majority of fishermen have migrated across the border having got the SK licences from the Surinamese authority, as a result of the economic hardships and the taxes and all the other things that you have imposed. The fisherman, having migrated to Suriname, does not mean that piracy no longer exists. Over the past two years there have been nine incidents of piracy on the Surinamese. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, I know that the Hon. Member Mr. Rohee wanted to address the Speaker but that should be at all times, not only occasionally.

Mr. Rohee: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps, it is a good thing not to be distracted by anyone else when you are doing so.

Mr. Rohee: Are you implying that the Hon. Member is a distraction? If he is, I will concede.

Mr. Speaker: The Speaker never takes part in these matters.

Mr. Rohee: All that I am saying is that over the past two years there have been nine incidents of piracy in which Guyanese fishermen have been victims, so it is more of a half-truth to come and tell us that we have cleaned up the piracy in Guyana. You may have cleaned up the piracy in this jurisdiction but it has moved to another jurisdiction and the victims are the same.

8.40 p.m.

All of this talk about coming to collaborate and to cooperate, if there was this collaboration and this cooperation between the intelligence community on the Guyanese side and the Surinamese

side and if, as the Leader of the Opposition had put in place when he was the President of Guyana, what is called the presidential engagement between the President of Suriname and the President of Guyana, where security of fishermen would meet from time to time, did you continue that? **[Mr. Greenidge: No.]** Good, you abandoned that. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Speaker: *[Inaudible]* wish to give way because I saw there was an attempt by another Member to... Was it to attract the Speaker's attention?

Mr. Rohee: The coolest and calmest head here is supposed to be the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs. **[Mr. Ramjattan: You are sailing all over.]** I am not sailing all over. I am saying, if the Minister is speaking about the engagement between the Guyanese and Surinamese authorities and the intelligence community between the two countries collaborating and cooperating with each other, how come they abandoned the presidential engagement which allowed the security officials on both sides to meet at least every six months? What did they have in place? That is highly questionable.

The Hon. Member spoke that the Surinamese authorities need to do deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) tests before bodies could be identified. **[Mr. Greenidge: [Inaudible]]**
Look the Minister is there; ask him. *Interruption*

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Rohee: I am not going to be distracted, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, let us address the Chair. You would find that the Speaker is prepared to listen.

Mr. Rohee: I am dealing with the statement made by the Hon. Minister to the effect that the Surinamese authorities do not release corpses unless they have experienced DNA testing. I want to contest that because we know, as a fact, that people, families and relatives identify dead bodies or relatives of theirs by different means. One body was recently identified on the basis of tattoos and another by clothing that the wife knew he left the home with. I am sorry to be dealing only with rebuttal, so to speak, but I think after I am finished speaking will be Minister Harmon.

The Minister said that the Leader of the Opposition went to Suriname to look for votes, to tell the people to come back to vote for them. Where does that come in, Hon. Member Mr. Ramjattan? You are poisoning the whole spirit of the Motion by introducing such political innuendos, which have no truth. Could you please bring a copy of the statement in print, where the Leader of the Opposition said something to that effect? Where is it? [Mr. Ramjattan: Where is it?] Yes. The Minister needs to present the evidence because he is making a statement in the House and we are all honourable people here. If he makes a statement to that effect, I would expect him to be as honourable as he ought to be in presenting the evidence of the statement which he claimed the Leader of the Opposition made in Suriname.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, in his presentation made reference to the arming of fishermen but he appears to have back-tracked, not through the back track; he back-tracked on that. [Mr. Ramjattan: *Inaudible*] Have you not backtracked on it? I have a newspaper report from the *Guyana Times* of the 26th June, 2015. This was soon after they got into Government and assumed Office. On the 26th June, the Minister made a statement:

“Fishermen will...”

...not ought to be, or should...

“....will be allowed to go out to sea with their firearms and, when they return, the police will take charge of their weapons and ammunition.”

He goes on to say:

“I am keen on something like that because when you are out on the ocean, it is like olden times in America, like you are out in the west, so you only have a six-shooter revolver to depend on yourself.”

Then he contradicts himself by saying, as he just said, he is repeating what he said in 2015. There is nothing new in what he is saying now, that we cannot have Coast Guard vessels watching how you fish, that this would not be possible. He goes on to rubbish a call by the fishermen and their families for maximum protection as ever. You cannot provide this and you cannot provide that. The Hon. Members, Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Harmon, and the President have made statements to the effect that they are going to provide the Coast Guard and the Guyana

Police Force (GPF) with all that is required to bring crime under control. For example, the Hon. Member, Mr. Harmon, said:

“Government gives a clear undertaking to the Guyana Police Force that it will provide the wherewithal for them to go after the criminal activities wherever they occur.”

He goes on to say:

“The use and the resuscitation of the Police Marine wing to give them greater flexibility and greater access to Inland Waterways is an important part of our strategy.”

All these fancy words and declarations, but nothing is happening. It is a figment of their imagination to say they have done away with piracy, based on what I have said earlier. I would not wish to continue much longer, but simply to say that I support the Motion. The Government must be strong enough recognise that it was under this Government and under this particular Minister which we had a jailbreak in which 17 persons lost their lives and the Georgetown Prison was burnt down. We also had piracy, this recent case, where the worst of its kind took place. Yet we find the Government and the Minister seeking refuge in a whole host of statements that are basically *a whistle in the wind and hot air* and, in fact, looking to blame the People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) when they ought not to.

I believe that this Motion is quite in order. It ought to attract the attention of the Government and win the support of the Government so that we leave this House signalling to the Surinamese authorities or, first and foremost, to the families affected, the families of the deceased, then the Surinamese authorities, to whom we issue something that is of a reciprocal nature, which is in the same way... I do not want to say what is talking there, Mr. Speaker, but, in the same way they have reached unanimity with respect to this matter on the Surinamese side, I think it would be a great signal were we, on both sides of House, to signal in a reciprocal manner, in the interest of reciprocity, the agreement on this particular Motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the spirit of this Motion. I support the spirit of the Motion, but, in fact, I cannot say that I agree with many of the statements that have been made, as preliminary statements, to the resolution which it calls for. As a National Assembly, I believe that we should send a very strong message that piracy is something which

we stand against. We should send a strong message to the families of those persons who were brutally killed that, as a National Assembly, we stand with them in their time of loss and mourning. I believe it is important enough for us to make that statement here tonight.

I have been engaged with this matter from the first time it was reported and I can say that our Hon. Minister of Public Security has been very aggressive in dealing with it. Even before his visit to Suriname, the Hon. Minister was here in Guyana coordinating with the police officers. He was here on the telephone coordinating with his colleagues in Suriname. Therefore, it did not require any indication that the Leader of the Opposition was travelling for the Minister to decide and to determine something that was of national interest. It did not require that. I want to say that, on the Government's side of the House, we fully support the Minister on the actions which he took in this matter. We believe that it was in the public and national interest that he acted that way.

I do not want to say too much, but there are certain matters which were raised in the Motion, that require a statement with respect to our preparedness because there are a lot of Whereas Clauses in the motion.

I want to assure the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, that the security arrangements we have put in place are not a figment of anybody's imagination; they are real. There are real people involved and engaged in it. Mr. Rohee, I could say this to you: you have questioned the matter of the DNA testing in Suriname. I am sure if you were to see an image, probably you have seen them, the images of those persons, chopped up, a hand, a foot or a head there, all over the place, would you have been able to identify them like that? It is brutal and there is no decent citizen, I believe anywhere in the world, who could countenance that kind of dastardly behaviour. I believe that we have to take a stand in that matter. As a country, we have taken steps because we recognise that piracy is a national problem. Our fisher folks that go out there to earn a living on a daily or weekly basis need to have a safe place to work, a secured environment in which they ply their trade. That is the responsibility of the State.

The Minister of Public Security has actually outlined some of the measures that we have taken in collaboration with the fisher folks. He has actually gone there on several occasions, trying to hammer out arrangements that could satisfy the requirements for security.

8.55 p.m.

Earlier tonight, we passed Supplementary provision for us to purchase Fixed-Wing aircrafts. We are not buying helicopters to fly around. We are buying Fixed-Wing aircrafts to augment our surveillance system of the coast. Currently, what we have are Coast Guards bases along our coast, at Morawhanna, Pomeroun, Fort Island, Georgetown and New Amsterdam. From those bases, several military patrols, in some cases patrols going around with the Police, the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA), the Guyana Fisheries Division and personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture to patrol from those bases. This is a weekly activity. I do not want to basically give out all of the techniques that they use but I could say to you that this is something that is happening on a regular basis.

In addition to that, our aerial resources have been utilised to do air reconnaissance. At one time, we did it on a monthly basis but, because of the dropping off in piracy, it is now a little less than that. What happens is, when the aircrafts go out, they go and they have a full team of them, part of what is known as the Anti-Piracy Task Force. The Anti-Piracy Task Force comprises the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Defence Force, the Guyana Defence Force Coast Guard, the Maritime Administration Department, the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), the Fisheries Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU), the Guyana Energy Agency and the Coordinator of the Task Force. We have a Task Force that meets at last once a month to review piracy. It is not a figment of anybody's imagination. These are real people doing real work.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, when that aircraft goes out, it is equipped with cameras and personnel who could actually look and spot the vessels that are in the river or in the sea. When they do that, they relay back to their base and the positions are plotted. All of that takes place. I do not understand if the Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, expects us to go to **Mongo** and to intercept some pirates out there. What does he expect us to do, cross the border and go straight over there? We can cooperate. That is what we do, Mr. Rohee.

The point that is the limits of our jurisdiction for enforcement operations is delimited as defined by international law. We try to help as much. We try to cooperate as much. There are several levels of cooperation between our two countries. The Minister of Foreign Affairs could

address that more exclusively. At the level of the Guyana Police Force, there is a lot of cooperation taking place. Almost on a weekly basis, people come and go and they talk to each other. It is important for us to understand that when our fisher folks go out there they are not on their own. They are not at the mercy of Tiberius but are protected by a state, the apparatus of this State that has been charged with protecting them. I want to say tonight that the work which we have done or which we continue to do is intended to prepare or to create a safe place of work for those fisher folks. It is that, in the event that something happens, we will have the capacity to respond in a short space of time.

It is very unfortunate what has happened and we mourn the loss of those persons.

I read once a famous writer who said that:

“no man is an island, entire of itself... any man’s death diminishes me,”

The death of any Guyanese anywhere in the world diminishes us as a nation. We put a very high premium on the life of every Guyanese, irrespective of where they are, whether it is Suriname, Brazil or where ever. They are Guyanese and it is our responsibility to take care of them.

The death of these fisher folks has diminished us as a nation. It has created a news item on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and it has gone viral around the world. It is not that we could have done something by ourselves here in Guyana. It happened in a foreign jurisdiction. They are Guyanese and we have done as much as we can to make sure that they understand that we would continue to do what has to be done.

During the course of the last week, the Surinamese gave information that they would call off the search. We insisted that, if they call off the search, we would like to continue it. We would not be satisfied until we are able to account for those bodies. As a result of that, the Surinamese continued after Minister Ramjattan went there.

I want to say that this motion is important for us. We want to say to the families of those persons who died - children, husbands, wives - that we sympathise with them in this loss. We offer them comfort and, as a Government, we would do what needs to be done to ensure that they can be comfortable. The Minister of Public Security has already said what the level of Government’s commitment is and we would also continue to pray for them.

For those persons who are responsible for this dastardly act, we are saying that we would spare no effort in rooting them out from wherever they are because they are criminals.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I wish to support the motion. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: It was indicated to me that the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs would make a comment here. You have the floor, sir.

Mr. Greenidge: I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This incident that is the subject of today's motion is really an extremely traumatic one, I think, for Guyanese as a whole and not only for those who were directly affected by the loss of their families and immediate relatives.

There is no excuse for the murder of anyone, let alone the callous and inhumane brutal form that these acts of murder took. I would like to offer some observations on this matter to address two sets of problems or two sets of issues. One is to decry the tone that emanated from the other side. I think that it is unfortunate in the circumstances. It is unfortunate for a number of reasons. If it is that our Colleagues on the other side would like to have or wanted to have our fulsome support on such a matter, then I think that it behoves them to try and ensure that we do not reduce our presentations simply to seek political capital. That is the point that Vice-President Ramjattan made. I do not have to explain his position. I embrace him, namely that in circumstances like these we ought to rise above the temptation to make political capital out of our people's misfortunes.

I want to say, for example, this call for collaboration and a joint approach to the incident and the suggestion that there was a failure on this side is really completely unwarranted. First of all, I would like to emphasise what Minister Harmon said. The territory in which this attack took place lies outside of Guyana's jurisdiction. The territory lies outside both of our territorial seas and beyond our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). You cannot collaborate in the interdiction of criminals in Suriname's territory whether it is their EEZ or territorial sea by rushing vessels, whether they are aircrafts or ships, into that area. It is just not an option. We, notwithstanding the presidential engagement so expertly managed by the Members on the other side some time ago, experienced during that very era the seizure of one of our vessels by military vessels owned by our neighbour. Having decried that, we are not about to repeat the same illegality so let us get off of that.

Our Colleague, Madam Teixeira, regaled us, at some length, on the economics of the fisheries sector, explaining that \$99 million is earned annually from the export of fish. Let me explain. The \$99 million does not come from the fishing zone or the fishermen that are the subject of this motion.

Those fishermen sell practically all their fish to Surinamese. To point out, in an attempt to pull at our heart strings, you pull out of the irrelevant materials, misrepresentation of the fisheries and our capacity. That is the point I am making. This is not part and parcel of a shelf controlled by us. It is not damaging our exports. It is of Guyanese operating in a fishery outside of our zone. That needs to be borne in mind.

You must not get carried away by compounding a misdemeanour on the part of criminals by us trying to take political advantage by erroneous materials and erroneous allegations. The Colleague on the other side, distinguished Member Mr. Rohee, complained about Vice-President Ramjattan rubbishing proposals to patrol the fisheries. That is the point I am making. It is defensible to rubbish those proposals because they are inappropriate. You cannot send out vessels when you hear that an incident is taking place in the EEZ of Suriname to fix that. Therefore, we have to bear that in mind. We have to say quite clearly that the Surinamese territories and French Guiana lie outside of our purview. We have, in fact, worked with the Surinamese.

The first unconfirmed report that we received was on 29th April, 2018. On 30th April, 2018, before all the elements were confirmed, we spoke to, were obliged and were accommodated by the Surinamese authorities. The Surinamese authorities visited and participated in a meeting with Guyana's representatives in Suriname. That briefing was conducted at 16:39 hours on 30th April, 2018 at a time when we were not even sure of what had taken place. The Surinamese authorities, with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Police and the police corps and so forth, briefed Guyana on the information that they had or Guyana's representatives as regards the information that they had.

We are satisfied that that collaboration was genuine. They shared their concerns.

9.10 p.m.

The areas that they had not being able to cover, we got, as the days went by, information on the bodies and so forth spotted by the aircraft, the distinguish Hon. Member, Anil Nandlall, mentioned the name of one of the companies that carried out the surveillance, so all of that was in place.

Officers from the embassy then, on the same day, the 29th, before the meetings with the Surinamese, set out from the embassy to go and visit three of the families they knew or they were aware of. We got pictures and Identification Card (ID) from the Surinamese. We made it available to the relevant authorities here. The officers from the embassy also carried out additional visits later on in the day and subsequently. In those discussions, for example, they even went as far as discussing the needs for interfaith services, the flying of flags that half mask and the like. In other words, we must not, in our enthusiasm, beat up on this Government, forget what was actually done in the time or deny that the matter was regard as serious and we went to a great deal of effort to ensure that whatever was needed to be done was done.

I think it is particularly irksome, irritating, to hear the pious outrage that emanated from the other side, failure to communicate problems of meanness in providing support. Let me just remind Colleagues that, after the hurricanes that battered the region last year, we were being conscious of the humanitarian situation. We, as a Government and in conjunction with the private sector, organised means to go and pick and move as many people as we could and it included the retrieval of a corpse, so we are not callous on this side. And may I also say to you that in the course of the discussion with the relatives of the people killed, yes, there were requests about assistance with moving the bodies. Vice-President Khemraj Ramjattan may well have said what it is reported he said. The point is that is not the point of discussion on such a matter and, in the last analysis, the individual Minister, such as the Vice-President, would not have the authority to commit funds. But we have had discussions elsewhere, that is with these very persons, the representatives of those affected, as regards to what we could do and they have provided information and the preferred means of rending that assistance, so it is in system; it was part of the discussion taking place in the system.

Again, it is unfortunate that we should find ourselves assailed in this body as though the Government has failed to do its duty, has neglected an important set of the community. It is especially unfortunate that these views should be coming on a day like today. Today is the 11th

May. It is significant because it is on the 11th May, 2015 that the other Administration was removed because it did not do the things it now claims it has been doing, all of these that they were doing.

The very Minister that is telling us about the surveillance and aircrafts and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) is the Minister who failed to put in place the laboratory, the laboratory in which this analysis of the type he is talking about could be done. In his tenure, it was not done. It is not a personal attack on the Minister, but I just want to remind you, Colleagues, that, at the same time we are being accused of, in the last three years, all of these 40 something thousands people have ended up in Suriname. We know that is not the case.

The fishermen who ended up in Suriname came from a region which is overwhelmingly a region that the Hon. Members on the other side claim to be theirs and they moved during the tenure of the Hon. Members on the other side, just as the same way as those who are coming back from Venezuela to who we are rendering assistance who also fled during that time. *[Interruption]*

We are hearing a moral outrage from the other side, from a side that seems to be suggesting that somehow it is the fault of the Government that such a terrible thing could have taken place. Lindo Creek incident took place prior to 2015. The 2002 killings, two places and you are still speaking. The 2002 Bartica, Lusignan...all of these took place under your watch.

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel]

Here it is we are witnessing and hearing the moral outrage of those who are exceptionally gifted at managing the system. I do not want to, and I was warning do not start cataloguing because of course that is not the purpose of today's exercise... If it is our purpose to ensure we give our affected community the moral support that I believe they need, let us focus upon the substance. This is a terrible thing to have occurred. We could try and put in place the mechanisms. All that we could do would not solve the problem. The Vice-President, Khemraj Ramjattan, who has responsibility for this area, pointed out that many of the remedies have been discussed with the fishermen themselves.

The very incident itself suggests that the problem is not only about legitimate fisheries' exploitation and so we know why it is that some of them would not have wanted transponders

put on their vessels because this is one way of tracking the fishing that is taking place. Partly, it maybe because you do not want other people to know your fishing grounds and where you are in any particular point in time, but also if you are engaging in activities other than legitimate activities, you do not want transponder. So there I am saying to that there are many issues that cause the fishermen not to be able to exploit all their opportunities with us that might be available to a government and that is not peculiar to this Government. It is the same problem our Colleagues on the other side would have had, so I do not know what the “*ohhs*” and the “*awws*” are about. If they are only now discovering that fishermen have refused or would prefer not to use these devices, then they were not doing their jobs. It is not a new phenomenon and we must not take things, for instance, that we know to be true and use them as devices for dividing our people. This is something too serious for us to reduce it all to a political capital or even comedy.

While the Surinamese, in their House of Representatives, in their National Assembly, looked at the matter, there are two things to note, that is, that they have correctly passed a motion, unanimously, but also that I think it missed a lot the sort of personal barbs and so forth that we see characterising some of the presentations here. We are, none of us as governments, without faults and flaws and do not let us behave as though there is a halo on the other side and the devils are on one side. It is not we, as parliamentarians, who committed these crimes. We have a responsibility to work together in the knowledge that the public out there as a whole does not regard this incident and this type of behave as being appropriate to Guyanese. In fact, many people find it difficult to recognise that people that were born and grown in this country could behave in that way. That also brings me to any challenge that face in the interdiction and prosecution of the people.

It is also the case, while the fishery that is being cited lies outside of our jurisdiction, many of these people were also born in Guyana, but they are also citizens of other countries. All of these make apprehension, and perhaps, prosecution that much more difficult, so, while I embrace...
[interruption] I am glad that my Colleagues could intervene in this cooperative manner so as to correct my language and I accept. I think that is the test if it could be brought to your attention that something is correct you ought to at least to be able to say yes, and do the right thing that is the point.

I would embrace the motion. I will support the motion, notwithstanding the concerns about tone and would invite my Colleagues to support the motion in light of if you like the bigger picture behind it. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Mr. Jagdeo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping that we would have ended the debate on this motion after the Hon. Member, Joseph Harmon, spoke. But then we had a presentation from our dear Vice-President, Carl Greenidge, and, while his tone may have been more subdued, I am appalled by the content of his presentation.

We have heard that there may be reasons why fishermen do not want transponders on their vessels that they may be engaged in activities that are illegal in nature, illegitimate, and, therefore, the fishermen today become the victim in this House. We heard similar presentations when, in this very House, Amerindians were described as “avaricious” people. We have heard another Minister, a few weeks ago, when asked about the Hope Canal, say that fishermen there might be thieves; they would steal the stuff there.

We have heard the rice farmers being described as wealthy and not worthy of Government support in this House. It seems as though there is an all-out assault on people who are engaged in particular professions in this country. Therefore, I cannot allow that kind of characterisation of people who are trying to earn a living go unquestioned.

We are here because we brought a motion to the House and we were seeking answers. When I met the relatives of the affected fishermen here in Guyana, I said to them that we would try to seek help, that we did not know enough about the situation. They told me that they had approached the Government. I did not know how much information they had from the Government. I said to them that our information is what we got from the news media, both from Suriname and Guyana. They raised issues about wanting to travel but not having appropriate documents. We made contact, not in a hostile way. We said that we would try to contact the Government to see if we would get any help.

9.25 p.m.

Before they left the meeting, Member of Parliament (MP) Nigel Dharamlall got in touch with Minister Felix, who said “Yes, they should approach the Passport Office and we will assist”, and

they were assisted. When I was in Suriname, we sought to meet as many people as possible, not because of politics, but because, outside of the fishermen who are directly affected by this tragedy, there are many other Guyanese who live in Suriname - many who live in Guyana and travel to Suriname and are from Linden, the East Bank, the West Coast, the East Coast, in Essequibo as far as the Essequibo Coast, along with many others from Berbice. I do not know if there was a survey done for the Vice-President to conclude that most are from Berbice, but I met fishermen from every part of the country and they were worried that they cannot not go to sea and earn a living. Many of them were worried about money that they had to send back to sustain their families here in Guyana. The remittances, although they do not land the catch here, as the Hon. Vice-President was trying to prove that the \$99 million dealt with catches landed here, they send money back home to their families to sustain their livelihoods here. It does affect the economy and the livelihoods of people – Guyanese people who live in Suriname and who live here in Guyana.

Meeting more people than just those who were affected, we thought that they needed the assurance that we will raise their issue. As an Opposition, that is our job, whether they support us or not. Our job is to raise this issue in Guyana to see that it is treated appropriately. I said to them that our President described this as a massacre, and a massacre of Guyanese requires exceptional treatment. Therefore, we were hoping to raise this in the Parliament to find out from the Government what this exceptional treatment would be, how we would approach it in an exceptional manner.

This is not a routine crime, it is not a single murder, and it is not somebody being struck down on the road by a vehicle. It is a set of criminals who went to sea and their motive was not piracy; they did not take the fish nor did they take the seine. They went there to kill people in the most brutal fashion. **[Ms. Charles-Broomes: Like Lindo Creek.]** This is the callous kind of thing. You speak about people getting killed and this is the sort of insensitivity that we have from some members.

And so, that was it. Throughout my engagement in Suriname, it was all recorded, every time the Surinamese media was there. I dare the Hon. Member Minister Ramjattan to produce the record if, at one time, did I say “You must come to Guyana and vote for the PPP and get registered”, when I met with the people. I said “I am here, not because of politics. On this issue, we are

united.” That is how I started all of my meetings, every one of them; that we are not here to blame the Government. In fact, we want to elevate the issue in our Parliament.

I should just say why we put certain provisions. We were very conscious of the issue of jurisdiction and where this incident took place. If we use the current laws, the perpetrators who may have fled to Guyana, or who came from Guyana, if they go to the Courts in Guyana, they may argue the question of jurisdiction and be released, that the crime did not take place here. And so, we said, as Minister Harmon pointed out, that Guyanese affected in any part of the world, we have an obligation to take care of them. Our embassies must get that instruction and also, at a national level, we must resolve to ensure that we defend their interests vigorously. We were urging, maybe the use of the Terrorism... That is why we said that if we use the Anti-Terrorism and Terrorist Related Activities Act - regarding any crime committed against Guyanese in any part of the world, we should be able to argue jurisdiction in this case so that people do not use the narrow confines of the anti-piracy law to escape justice in Guyana. We defined the crime broadly and it cannot be described as anything but “an act of terrorism”. When you chop people into pieces and then, whilst they are still alive, pour burning or hot oil on them and then tie them with batteries to their legs and throw them overboard, that is designed to terrorise and to kill. The fear that it has caused in the entire industry - it has created the intended purpose, which is terrorising people and making them fearful.

I believe this qualifies under terrorism. If we define this act, it cannot be described as anything else but terrorism. That is why, to avoid the jurisdiction issue because we are aware that we cannot go into the Surinamese border to enforce this issue.

But, on the other hand, we have a duty to demand of the Surinamese. Had Minister Ramjattan gone out, and maybe they did tell him this in the embassy - and almost everyone who spoke with me there, and there were three persons, three boat owners, who said to me – this is not exhaustive of what former Minister Rohee mentioned –that in the course of the last two years, they were hijacked nine times over there. Many of them sought to make reports but their reports were not even taken seriously, and those were just three fishermen and nine times. Clearly, the hijacking has moved beyond our jurisdiction and a lot of the fishermen moved too because the Surinamese authority has been making it more difficult for them to get licences to fish in their

waters, unless they are residents there. They had to follow that process and physically move to Suriname.

Notwithstanding all of this, we have a duty to confront the Surinamese authority to say that one, we would like more licences. We did that in the past through a robust engagement that we would like more licences issued to Guyanese fishermen so that they can land their catch there. Two - that when they go to police stations to make reports – many of them are taxpayers there and most of them are legal – that they are treated seriously. We want to ensure that their issues will be addressed. Thirdly, many people complained about their fear; they know who the hijackers are and they fear sharing information with the police on both sides. I said to them, “Why not come to the Freedom House or go to ...” *[Interruption]* I am telling you exactly, if you are fearful, come and tell us. Share the information with us. Go to our MPs because if you give them, you do not have to be worried about the hijacker knowing you directly. That is why we have put in the motion that we would like the Government to work on a system that will ensure confidentiality of information shared. This is why we put that in the motion, so that the Minister can assure us that, if people cooperate in trying to find these hijackers, that this information will not harm them – the leak of this information. We ask that in the motion because we are seeking answers and assurances from the Minister. I could not tell them to go to his Office, so that is why I said to come and see me if you have the information.

The Hon. Vice-President asked why. It is because one woman got up, and we have the tape of it, and she said “I went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they were not even ...” **[Mr. Nandlall: Her name is Sanjara.]** Her name is Sanjara, she is from Triumph, East Coast. She said that they were not even aware of the incident. This was days after, days after. Please do not ... *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, there is a failure too, I believe, of our diplomacy. There is a failure of our diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs treats this issue and the protection of our people in a routine manner. There are several failings that I would not innumerate here, of people speaking about the representation that they get.

That is all we were asking, “How are we going to fix these problems?” That is the purpose of us bringing the motion. Instead, we heard about the Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Lab not being

built here in Guyana, but the Hon. Vice-President would not say that the biggest item of the budget in the Ministry of Public Security is \$3.4 billion from a programme that we left from the past Citizen's Security Sector Strengthening Programme.

We heard about Lindo Creek from the Vice-President, about the massacres at Lindo Creek, Lusignan, *et cetera*. We have heard about this Commission of Inquiry (CoI). Instead of a CoI that looked at the 'Why' and the circumstances in which those five persons escaped from the prison and how they went into a community - Buxton - and captured the village and the atrocities that they committed on the people of the village, and how they found safe haven there with the support of some political actors. I daresay some of them sit in this room here today. How they used that community and the base there to launch a series of criminal attacks and, yes, massacres, we described them as that, of innocent people across the country of every race. What we got was a commission of inquiry, narrow in its confine, to find out whether the army, our soldiers, killed ordinary people, rather than trying to find out the role of 'fine-man' and the others. *[Interruption]*

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Mr. Jagdeo: You should be ashamed, Hon. Vice-President, for bringing up Lindo Creek here. I am saying that I was the President and this happened. This was not a regular crime.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we should try to return to the misfortunes that overtook us all, when the piracy occurred there. Let us try to return there.

Mr. Jagdeo: I agree with you, Mr. Speaker, but the Vice-President raised Lindo Creek. The Vice-President raised Lindo Creek. He raised the issue; he raised Lusignan, he raised the Lab, he spoke about the fishermen, and so on. I will take your advice, Mr. Speaker, and I will come back to what I said at the beginning. I was hoping that after the presentation by Hon. Member Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, that we would have ended on that high note because that is why we came to the National Assembly. But then we descended back into the gutter and I could not let that stand because it does not respect what we came here for. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, the other side is so shocked that we on this side would be concerned about an issue at the national level because they have never been concerned about issues of that nature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

9.40 p.m.

Ms. Teixeira (replying): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Leader of the Opposition has basically closed the debate. I just want to conclude the debate and to say very clearly, that I again reinforce the position that was taken which is, I felt very happy that Mr. Harmon had taken a position to outspokenly say that he was supporting the motion. I hope that he would be able to convince his Colleagues. I believe Mr. Harmon spoke for the President, as he normally does, and so I took that cue from him.

However, I just want to say on *the line* that the intention of the motion was to focus our Parliament, our country and to work in collaboration with Suriname and, also, to have questions answered which the Guyanese people want. It is unfortunate that we are seen in a different light by some of the Members of the House. However, there are important questions or issues that were raised in the debate and in the motion. I would ask that the issues that were raised, in the interest of the Guyanese people, including those who are the families of the victims in Suriname, that we are able to offer them financial assistance and for them to be able to have a safer environment to operate, whether it is in front of the coastal waters of Guyana or of Suriname.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and I wish to close the debate. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members that concludes our debate on the Motion of Adjournment on a Matter of Definite Urgent Importance which was born of the request for an adjournment so that we could debate that motion. I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today. I will invite the Prime Minister... Hon. Member. Ms. Teixeira.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS NO. 112 AND 28(3)

BE IT RESOLVED:

In keeping with Standing Order No. 112, that Standing Order No. 28(3) be suspended to enable the Assembly, at its Sitting on Friday, 11th May, 2018, to consider the Private Member's Motion in the name of Member Gillian Burton-Persaud on the Re-establishment of the Ministry of Labour under Private Members' Business. *[Ms. Teixeira]*

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, we have a suspension motion that was tabled on the Ministry of Labour. We are asking for the suspension. It was approved and, therefore, we are asking that it be put to the vote tonight - that is the suspension motion. We can then decide after that whether we continue the debate or not, but there is a suspension motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, there was a suspension motion. The Member giving notice is Ms. Gail Teixeira. I will invite Ms. Teixeira to read the suspension motion.

Ms. Teixeira: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

In keeping with Standing Order No. 112, that Standing Order No. 28(3) be suspended to enable the Assembly, at its Sitting on Friday, 11th May, 2018, to consider the Private Member's Motion in the name of Member Gillian Burton-Persaud on the Re-establishment of the Ministry of Labour under Private Members' Business.”

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this motion must first be voted on to determine whether, in fact, there should be suspension of the Standing Orders. I will put the motion to the vote.

[Interruption]

[Mr. Speaker hit the gavel.]

Hon. Members, I understand that this is something of importance. I would ask Members to give us the attention. The motion which has just been read by the Hon. Gail Teixeira is a motion which we must vote on before we can proceed to the other motion, which is the one that calls for the re-establishment of the Ministry of Labour. If this motion succeeds, then we move to the

next, which is to discuss and consider the motion for the re-establishment of the Ministry of Labour.

Question put.

Ms. Teixeira: Division.

Assembly divided: Ayes 27, Noes 33, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. Bharat

Mr. Gill

Mr. Anamayah

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Charlie

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Chand

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Selman

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. Burton-Persaud

Mr. Croal
Mr. Hamilton
Ms. Chandarpal
Dr. Persaud
Mr. Seeraj
Bishop Edghill
Mr. Lumumba
Dr. Anthony
Ms. Manickchand
Mr. Nandlall
Mr. Ali
Ms. Teixeira
Mr. Rohee
Mr. Jagdeo
Noes
Mr. Rutherford
Mr. Rajkumar
Mr. C. Persaud
Mr. Figueira
Mr. Carrington
Mr. Allen

Mr. Adams

Ms. Bancroft

Ms. Wade

Ms. Patterson

Ms. Henry

Ms. Broomes

Dr. Cummings

Mr. Sharma

Ms. Garrido-Lowe

Ms. Ferguson

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Holder

Mr. Gaskin

Ms. Hughes

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Lawrence

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Jordan

Dr. Norton

Mr. Bulkan

Dr. Roopnarine

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

Ms. Ally

Mr. Williams

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Greenidge

Mr. Nagamootoo

Motion negatived.

9.55 p.m.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

LIMIT ON AMOUNT OUTSTANDING UNDER GUARANTEES GIVEN UNDER THE GUARANTEE OF LOANS (PUBLIC CORPORATIONS AND COMPANIES) ACT

WHEREAS in accordance with Section 3(1) of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act, Chapter 77:01, the Government may in such manner and on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be agreed between it and a lending agency –

- (a) Guarantee the discharge by a Corporation of its obligations under any agreement which may be entered into by the Corporation with a lending agency in respect of any borrowing by that Corporation that is authorized by the Government;
- (b) Assume such other obligation as may be agreed between the Government and a lending agency in relation to or pursuant to any such agreement;

(c) Undertake the repayment to a lending agency of such sums as the lending agency may have advanced to or for the benefit of the Government;

AND WHEREAS it is provided under Section 2(2) of the aforesaid Act that, for the purposes of the Act, a borrowing by a Corporation shall be deemed to include the obligation of the Corporation to make payments to any person arising out of any contract lawfully entered into by the Corporation;

AND WHEREAS it is provided under Section 4(1) of the aforesaid Act that the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government in respect of guarantees given under Section 3 of the Act shall not at any time exceed the sum of one thousand million dollars or such greater sum as may from time to time be specified by the Resolution of the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS it has become necessary to specify in accordance with the with the country's said Section 4(1) a greater sum for the purpose of enabling the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government in respect of guarantees to be increased due to the extended activities of those incorporated bodies to which the Act applies in accordance development programme;

AND WHEREAS by Resolution No. 56 made on the 7th day of August, 2013, this National Assembly increased the limit of the guarantee to fifty thousand million with respect to the Amaila Falls Hydro Project only;

AND WHEREAS it has become necessary to have the limit of the guarantee set to include, along with the Amaila Falls Hydro Project, other developmental projects that are under consideration by the Government of Guyana, and as may arise in the future;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approve that the aggregate amount of the liability of the Government under Section 4(1) of the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporation and Companies) Act, in respect of guarantees given under Section 3 of the Act, shall not at any time exceed the sum of fifty thousand million dollars (\$50,000,000,000), with respect to

the Amaila Falls Hydro Project, and other developmental projects to be determined by the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.” [*Minister of Finance*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I have given consent in accordance with Standing Order 28(2) for the following motion to be proceeded with at this sitting. The Hon. Minister of Finance will move the following motion. Minister of Finance you may proceed.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister, may I ask you to resume your seat for a moment?

Mr. Jordan: Certainly.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 10 (1)

Mr. Speaker: We are approaching the 10 o’ clock hour. Hon. Prime Minister, could you move the adjournment?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, may I move that the sitting continues until the conclusion of this matter that is currently before the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Standing order suspended.

Mr. Speaker: I thank you. Hon. Minister, please proceed.

Mr. Jordan: Mr. Speaker, if you permit, I would just like to speak a little to this motion.

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Jordan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would not be long because I am thinking that this motion should be non-contentious. Non-contentious in the sense that, I am not here to ask the House to increase the limit *per se*, that had been done in 2013, in which, reading the *Hansard*, there was a very long and indeed prolonged debate on increasing the limit from \$1,000,000,000 to \$50,000,000,000, where it stands today. For those who have survived from 2013 and are still in the House today, I think that they could attest to the long, arduous and sometimes I believe

acrimonious nature of that debate. Be that as it may, a compromise was struck and the limit, as it stands today, is \$50,000,000,000.

However, I think that those who would have hammered out that resolution did not know that in putting a rider unto the guarantee, it created a problem for the Government. When the limit was \$1,000,000,000 or one billion dollars, there was no rider. The Government could have guaranteed any project or activity in respect of a co-operation up to \$1,000,000,000 locally. When the rider for Amaila Falls only was put as the limit was increased, then, in principle, the Government could not guarantee any project of a corporation other than Amaila Falls. I think, God forbid that, we did not have to guarantee any activity otherwise, I think, we would have had to come back to the House again.

It has become necessary now to extend this rider. Note carefully, we are extending the rider; we are not removing the rider because we still have Amaila Falls within our sight, contrary to what has been peddled by the other side of the House in every debate on the Amaila Falls. It is still there, but, what we are seeking to do today is to extend it to give the Government the latitude that it had, prior to the rider being put unto the limit and to also include activities that the Government could guarantee in respect of the corporations.

It has become urgent now, in light of our impending guarantee of a syndicated bond that has been put together, \$30 billion worth, for rescuing the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). As you know, the Government over the last three years has been putting in excess of \$32 billion, in terms of transfers. In addition, it has paid the debts of GuySuCo in relation to its external multilateral debts that were taken principally for the activities of the Skeldon Sugar Estate. It has assisted GuySuCo on a number of other ways. Despite that, GuySuCo's balance sheet and performance have deteriorated over the years. We do not want to go through that at this stage. I think that we know where we are. Where we are is a situation where four of GuySuCo's estates have been removed from the body of GuySuCo and placed under a Special Purpose Unit (SPU) under the National Industrial & Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL). The three remaining estates are being managed by GuySuCo and a board, to be named shortly, will be executing the activities.

GuySuCo, in its projections, will require financing in about at least \$30 billion over the next two to three years to help it in its quest to return to viability and profitability. We have been able to go into the market, both local and foreign, using the Republic Bank of Trinidad and Tobago to put together a syndicated bond. Not dissimilar to the bond that was put together by our Friends, when they were in Government, in respect of the Guyana Marriott Hotel. Except in the case of the Marriott Hotel, the bond was secured by the balance sheet of NICIL or the assets of NICIL, so to speak. I should not say the balance sheet because, at the end of the day, when the payments became due, neither Atlantic Hotel Inc. (AHI) which is the 100% owner of the Guyana Marriott Hotel nor NICIL could have made the payments. Eventually, the loan had to be taken over by the Government in order to save the hotel from being taken over by the bond holders. Had that been done in the first place and the avoidance of debt coming on to the Government, which I believe is what had happened in keeping the debt in NICIL, we would have been able to attract an interest rate that was significantly lower than the interest rate that the original syndicated bond for Guyana Marriott Hotel attracted.

In this case, we are getting an interest rate of 4.75% on the \$30 billion. It is up to \$30 billion, I should not say \$30 billion and it will be disbursed in tranches, such that if we do not require the entire amount, then we could stop at the amount that we have taken. Also, we can repay the bond well before time, depending on the performance of GuySuCo. The repayment is for five years, with one's year grace period, essentially.

By attaching the rider that states Amaila Falls other developmental projects to be determined by the Government of the Co-operative of Guyana, will ensure that we do not breach the guarantee limit. The \$30 billion would be within the \$50 billion, it would also give us some breathing space in case there are other activities of public corporations of a developmental nature that we will see fit to give a sovereign guarantee, either in whole or as part of the public-private partnership arrangement for which, only recently, we have laid a framework in this House.

In that context, I am saying it is non-contentious, we are not asking for an increase in the limit, but what we are asking for, is for that limit to be recognised that there are other activities other than Amaila Falls in the development process, as we go forward to prepare for first oil and post oil 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Minister for his statement, the motion is proposed. Hon. Ms. Teixeira, you have the floor.

Question put.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Speaker, this motion is a very important one, one in which there has been no discussion between Government and Opposition. Unlike in the earlier round of 2013 and the resolution that came before the House, when it was required, and, where the companies that are involved with Amaila Falls required the unanimous support of the House. We brought two things, one - the Hydro-Electric Power Act to be amended and this one that was to do with the liability of the Government and to increase it, so that the two companies would have had security. They wanted the unanimous support in the National Assembly, knowing, I guess, at the way things were going, they figured that they wanted security in case there was a change of Government.

10.10 p.m.

Many were the meetings that took place on this and I found it ironic and I had to smile to myself when Mr. Jordan said that the inclusion of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project and Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL), in other words, the rider as he called it, that this now hampers or hinders the Government in what it needed to do.

Well, Mr. Jordan, I believe, in those days, may have been sitting in the back and may not remember some of the fights that went on in here. These amendments in the resolution No. 46 of 2013, 7th July - the amount of time the Speaker had to call suspension to allow us to go to the back room and meet - these are the paragraphs of the BE IT RESOLVED clauses on page two of the motion of 2013 which were hammered out by negotiation.

It was the Alliance For Change (AFC) that demanded that the three months be included; in other words, provided this amended agreed limit shall not only apply to the obligation of Guyana Power and Light to make payments to the Amaila Falls Hydropower Projects and shall be retrievable by this National Assembly within three months here or if necessary.

I find it funny that the Minister comes now with a correction and a kind of attempt to restore what was originally in the law and in the motion that came in 2013. We will remember as a result of this failing that night in that we did not have unanimous support, we only had an amendment which the AFC gave support to this and the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) voted against it then the companies then pulled out of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. It was with some pensiveness on my part as to speaking here today.

The second thing is that the necessity for the Government to amend, so you are not changing the amount, but you obviously have to correct what was done in 2013. It is the wording again and what the Minister said. Clearly, the Government is going into more and more massive borrowing. We talked about the syndicated bond and you tried to find a way to justify it in referring it to Guyana Marriot Hotel Georgetown. It is two different things completely, and you know that.

Furthermore, the issue of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project was a “contingent liability”. It was not borrowing. What the companies wanted was, and what we had to be able to provide, to show that if anything went wrong we would be able to guarantee it. It was a contingent liability. It was not borrowing directly.

We, therefore, have tremendous problems with the motion that was presented. The \$50 billion that is here I find it funny that Amaila Falls Hydropower Project is left in and all of us on this side would probably remember the number of statements made in this House that Amaila Falls Hydropower Project was dead, and the public statements outside of this House. We find it funny that the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project seems to be rather opportunistically retained in the motion, but then there is a broad sweep of other development projects which are funded from the Government of Guyana and it has moved GPL out completely.

The other question we have, and the Minister would be able to enlighten us, the \$30 billion syndicated bond, is it collateralised? If it is, who is it collateralised by? Is it by National Industrial & Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL)? That has not been brought out in the public. We have read about the Special Purpose Unit (SPU), Mr. Heath-London announcing that the syndicated bond of \$30 billion is for the rest of the estates that are working, not for the ones that are closed obviously,... There is no idea of the terms of interest, because this is a commercial

arrangement and not a concessional arrangement, for how long and the issue of who is guaranteeing the syndicated bond. Is it being guaranteed by the Government? Is it being collateralised through NICIL? How is that happening?

Furthermore, the other question in relation to this is the fact that you referred to “other developmental projects” and hinted at the public-private document that you brought last week and, in that, clearly you were referring to the new Demerara Harbour Bridge as one of the projects. There was an issue in that document that you circulated at the last sitting which was extraordinarily interesting. You have changed the procurement procedures of this country without changing the law and it seems as though the public-partnership that you are proposing would have a special committee of four Ministers and a steering committee that would be overseeing and dealing with the bidding and the awarding of the contract. This is a complete violation of the procurement laws of our country - complete violation.

This is a real sleight of hand. This is extraordinarily important. I do understand and appreciate now why Mr. Jordan had to push it through tonight. I did not understand at the time, Sir. That is why I asked the Chief Whip on the other side, when are we meeting next? She told me it is June 25. I guess the Minister of Finance really needs money badly and this is why this has to be pushed through tonight, otherwise a motion of this importance to deal with the debt that the country or the liability that the Government is willing to accept would require some discussion, some preview of it before. I understand why Mr. Jordan is rushing it through. I understand that you have the \$30 billion bond as your subvention, which you are not dealing with massive borrowing actually.

We cannot support this as is on the grounds that you have given. It would have been preferable, Minister, and I think you would have got support then, if you would have allowed for more time and for more information. As in the previous motion we had before us, despite the Minister getting very hot under the collar, the real issue was to deal with disclosure, transparency and information. This is something that the Government is having tremendous difficulties with - disclosure, information and communication.

As I said, the resolution No. 56 of 2013 took a long time in discussion and if the Government really wants to have the support of this Opposition you would really let us have discussion as it

was in 2013. As it was in 2013, we had moved the liability level higher and in negotiations it was brought to \$50, 000,000,000. [Mr. Jordan: Did you ask for \$150?] Yes. It was brought down to that. You are not increasing it here. I am not accusing you of increasing it, Sir. It is not a semantic issue. The issue is that in the negotiation these are the impediments that were put in the way, but there was a specific issue and that is why there was an increase which had to do with the guarantee that the companies needed in relation to Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. It was not the Government which was using the money. It was a guarantee that the companies needed to know that if anything went wrong they were covered. That is what House asked for.

What you are asking for is something different. You are not asking for that. You are not asking for contingent liability, you are asking for liability. Therefore in the absence of information on the \$30 billion for the syndicated bond and the public-partnership that you have referred to with Demerara Harbour Bridge, how do you expect us to support something that could most likely lead to massive borrowing on the part of this Government without any scrutiny, without any transparency and without any accountability?

That is my question to you, Sir. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Jordan (replying): I just want to quickly respond and close the debate. I think the heading of this motion states:

“LIMIT ON AMOUNT OUTSTANDING UNDER GUARANTEES GIVEN UNDER THE GUARANTEE OF LOANS (PUBLIC CORPORATIONS AND COMPANIES) ACT.”

That is the heading of this here. Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, I knew we were going to get some of the old debates that took place in 2013, but I am happy that I was not around, so I do not have to remember them, but, thanks for some of the synopsis of the memory that you gave.

Trying to make a difference between contingent liability and now we are borrowing, let me say that sometimes when we go into these financial realms, especially when it is either new or it is not something that you practise every day, you can get tangled up. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that every debt taken by an entity for which the Government has 51% or more of the shares, equity or ownership, although that debt is on the books of the entity, a contingent liability has

been created, because if that entity cannot pay that debt the Government has to pay it, because the Government is the owner of it essentially. Sometimes we hide behind contingent liability or the actual liability that has been created essentially.

There is a reason why this was put together because there are going to come times when it is necessary for the Government to provide a sovereign guarantee for you to get the financing. Guyana has not and has never been to the capacity to finance its development. I am surprised to hear that this financing that is required by Guyana Sugar Corporation Inc. (GuySuCo) for which this Government came in and met a wrecked corporation where one day or two days after we arrived the then General Manager walked away and left it. We since then have had to find tremendous sums of moneys from the taxpayers to keep it going and where, now, we are trying to get GuySuCo to run as a business instead of a Government department. A business requires that business decisions being made. We have not abandoned GuySuCo and that is why the Government is putting its penny where its mouth is. That is why, in addition to the loan being collateralised by NICIL's balance sheet, we are offering a Government guarantee, otherwise GuySuCo would never get a penny of that money. For all the talk that we talk here that we love GuySuCo and the workers, there would be no money to finance the corporation as a going concern. There will be no money. If we were lucky and somebody would have sorry for us and was able to give us the \$30 billion, we would not have been able to get it at any interest rate of a single digit nature.

10.25 p.m.

The only time this House knew of the terms of the syndicated bond that was taken for the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown is when I brought it to this House after the Government had to take over the loan. That is the only time this House knew. We are talking here about ... I just told you and Mr. London told you, openly, the loan is up to \$30 billion for over five years. Again, I just told you that there is one year's grace period. You can take as how much as you want but up to \$30 billion and the interest rate is 4.75%. I told you all of that. We had to wait until there was a default on the payment to the Republic Bank (Guyana) Limited from the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown to hear that the interest rate was a horrendous market rate and that is why it payments could not have been met because the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown could not get enough money to pay Atlantic Hotel Inc. (AHI) to get back it. We

were able to reduce that rate simply because we took over the debt as a sovereign debt and we were able to take in that rate considerably.

Any growing economy, whether it is Barbados or Trinidad...Trinidad with all the money it has, look at the debt. We as a growing economy that expects to have some transformational effects with all that is coming in 2020, we can ensure that we do not have the dependence on oil and we continue to diversify the economy by saving a critical industry called the sugar industry. This \$30 billion is targeted for it and we will guarantee it.

With that, I asked that the motion be put. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this brings an end to our business for today. Before I invite the Prime Minister to move the adjournment, I would address the Hon. Member Bishop Juan Edghill. There is some concern to be certain that you have received all the documents which were directed to you. Are you in a position to say that you have received them?

Bishop Edghill: I have received a document in the first instance which I brought to your attention that starts at page 40 of 75 and ends at page 70 of 75. Since then, I have received two other documents, in which it seems to suggest that I have now received pages 1 to 75 and I have received another document which is amended. I am making the point that the document that I received at first which was said to the House was not the document. That is the point.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, the Speaker is making an enquiry which I hoped that you would have been in a position to answer. Have you received the documents?

Bishop Edghill: I have received the contract...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Bishop Edghill: ... as of 2011 and I have received the agreement to vary the contract.

Mr. Speaker: You have received the documents which you requested. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this brings to an end our work for today. I see the time is 10.30 p.m. and I am recalling that tomorrow is a very special day for all of us, on Sunday, I beg your pardon. Well, one can start tomorrow. Although, ideally, everyday should be Mother's Day, so I am going to simply say friend and protector and most reliable of supporters – mother. Congratulations to all of us on Sunday. [*Applause*]

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Speaker, I would like to endorse the remarks you just made on the occasion of Mother's Day, and in so doing, I would like to move the adjournment of this House to Monday, 25th June, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, 25th June, 2018 at 2.00 p.m.

Adjourned accordingly at 10.31 p.m.