

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2014) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN*

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73<sup>RD</sup> Sitting

Tuesday, 1<sup>ST</sup> April, 2014

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*The Assembly convened at 2.07 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

### **For Written Replies**

#### **1. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PARAMAKATOI PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Mrs. Marcello:**

(i) Could the Hon. Minister tell this House why construction of the Paramakatoi Primary School, Region 8, which started in April, 2012, has not been completed?

(ii) Could the Hon. Minister tell this House when construction of the Paramakatoi Primary School would be completed?

*Reply not provided.*

#### **2. PLAYGROUND LOCATED AT LOT 142 DURBANA SQUARE, LAMAHA GARDENS**

**Mr. Greenidge:** The playground located at lot 142 Durbana Square, Lamaha Gardens and owned by the Civil Service Cooperative Housing Society by virtue of transport was illegally sold. The residents of Lamaha Gardens protested to the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, the sale of their playground to Mr. Terrence Taljit.

In March, 2013, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security requested the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs to take steps to have the transport issued to Mr. Terrence Taljit be rescinded on grounds of fraud. On 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2013, the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security informed the society that the earlier award of the registration of the Civil Service Cooperative Housing Society had been rescinded and that irregularities, which had been uncovered, led to the dismissal of the Chief Cooperative Development Officer.

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister tell this House why criminal charges have never been laid against persons involved in the illegal sale of lot 142 Durbana Square?
- (ii) What steps have been taken to ensure that such predatory behaviour is not provided protection by the state and its agencies?
- (iii) Is Mr. Terrence Taljit currently employed by or working for the Government of Guyana in any capacity?

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]:**

(i) The sale of 142 Durbana Square, Lamaha Gardens does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Central Housing and Planning Authority. The said land was privately owned by the Co-op (Civil Service Cooperative Housing Society).

As outlined, this matter does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Central Housing and Planning Authority.

(ii) When Central Housing and Planning Authority becomes aware of any fraudulent practices pertaining to illegal sale of house lots in our housing schemes, the following actions are taken:

1. Notify the public of the fraudulent practice by certain individuals - the Hon. Minister would engage the media (both television and the newspapers) advising the public to

beware of the fraudsters. Notices are also placed in the newspapers warning the public not to enter into transactions outside of the Ministry.

2. Pictures of the fraudsters are placed in prominent places around the Ministry.
3. An investigation is carried out by the Enforcement Unit of the Authority.
4. The file from the investigation by the Enforcement Unit is forwarded to the Guyana Police Force for its action.
5. If a charge is instituted and the matter proceeds to court the officers of the Authority would assist in giving evidence in the Magistrates' Court as per request.

(iii) No person by the name of Terrence Taljit was ever employed by any department or unit within the Central Housing and Planning Authority.

### **3. CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARASAWA HEALTH POST IN REGION 8**

**Mrs. Marcello:** Could the Hon. Minister explain why three years after the commencement of construction the Arasawa Health Post in Region 8 has not been completed?

**Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Whittaker]:** The construction of the Arasawa Health Post was a capital project on which work commenced in the year 2010. Below are details of the project.

Name of Contractor: Troy Dainty

Year executed: 2010

Building Type: Concrete

Building Size: 30 ft. x 18 ft.

Status: Incomplete

Percentage completed: 50%

The contractor has failed to complete this project. Legal advice has been sought by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development on the matter. The Regional Democratic Council, Region 8 expects to complete it under its 2014 current work programme.

#### **4. CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOUNTAIN FOOT HEALTH POST IN REGION 8**

**Mrs. Marcello:**

(i) Could the Hon. Minister explain why construction of the Mountain Foot Health Post in Region 8, which started in April, 2012, has not been completed?

(ii) Could the Hon. Minister say when the construction of the Mountain Foot Health Post will be completed?

**Mr. Whittaker:** This is a Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) project. BNTF did advise that the contract was terminated.

BNTF did experience difficulty in securing additional funding for its completion. Having secured same, the contract for the completion of the project was rewarded to Vishal Contracting Service.

Works are scheduled to recommence on the 25th April 2014 with a five-week duration for completion.

#### **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

#### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTION**

#### **MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2014**

“WHEREAS the Constitution of Guyana requires that Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for any financial year should be laid before the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution also provides that when the Estimates of Expenditure have been approved by the Assembly an Appropriation Bill shall be introduced in the Assembly

providing for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet that expenditure;

AND WHEREAS Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2014 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2014-03-24;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2014, of a total sum of **two hundred and five billion, three hundred and seventy million, five hundred and eighteen thousand dollars (\$205,370,518,000), excluding fourteen billion, and six hundred and seventy six million, one hundred and forty three thousand dollars (\$14,676,143,000)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under-mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*Assembly resumed budget debate.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I would like to say, not by way of an announcement, that yesterday I announced very strict times that Members would have to keep. That held us in good stead last evening. However, individual Members have, I would not say protested, asked that, as Speaker, I be somewhat lenient, and these are Members from both sides of the House. I will be giving Members, depending on their areas and the speech, if I believe they need, a little extra time to proceed.

We will, I believe, commence today’s with the Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence making a presentation. You may commence.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** In 2011, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) campaigned across this country inspiring and arousing this nation to its call and promise of “A Better Life For All”. This theme is now owned by every Guyanese, irrespective of where he finds himself on the political divide. For us in the APNU, however, it is not the words but the action that matters. When the Minister of Finance stated that the theme of Budget 2014 is *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese* we knew that APNU’s call for “A Better Life for All” was heard by the Government. It is said

that imitation is flattery, nevertheless it is an encouraging sign to APNU that this Government has chosen its theme to be used in its Budget 2014. Where APNU leads, Sir, others follow.

It is in this context that I rise to speak in this debate on the Budget 2014, laid in this National Assembly by the Hon. Finance Minister Dr. Ashni Singh. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate him and, more particularly, those persons who worked tirelessly on compiling these documents. I want to encourage them not to tire in their endeavours, despite this budget fails to make any provision, whatsoever, for any increase in their wages and salaries. Be assured workers that we are over the halfway mark to another General Elections and A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) shall keep its promise of better wages and salaries for our public servants. We will never hear from an APNU Government, as the nation heard many years ago, “not a cent more.” The leopards do not change their spots.

At page 16 paragraph 4.1 the Minister spoke of the Government's vision:

“Government's vision is one where Guyana makes the leap from being a country of promise and potential, which it has been for a long time, to a country where that promise is fulfilled and that potential is realised. It is one where all Guyanese can live and work comfortably and harmoniously in pursuit of personal prosperity and the collective wellbeing.”

These are excellent words to the ear. The Minister continued in very much the same vein and in paragraph 4.3, on the same page, it states:

“...the richness of our human resources, are all harnessed in service to the national good.”

Having read that, I wanted to see what provision the Minister had made to address the levels of poverty in our country, a crucial issue at the heart of our socioeconomic development. I surely expected to read of wide-ranging programmes which would address that part of our population deemed to be poor and living under the poverty line, but to my dismay nothing substantial was evident.

One would expect this Government to demonstrate its commitment to improving Guyana's Human Development Index ranking of 118 out of 185 countries. Perhaps the Minister in his

response will tell us what measures the Government has put in place to decrease our present Human Development Index ranking. Where is the human face of the Government?

Our teachers are migrating by the hundreds because of poor salaries; our policemen work for a pittance and are disgruntled, small wonder that there are so many roadside courts; our pensioners barely eke out an existence and other vulnerable groups suffer as poverty escalates. Political officials and some privileged contract workers live on the fat of the land and fly when they are sick on Learjets to get medical attention, while the majority of sick people cannot get basic medication.

*Stabroek News*, on September 15, 2013, carried an article entitled, "Guyana and its Human Resources", which spoke to the trend that has been taking place for ever long, but it is one that seems to have gathered speed over time with no discernible policy to stimulate such an increase. It is appalling to note that for every three young persons you engage in a conversation two plan to migrate. This remains the case, notwithstanding the penultimate sentence in paragraph 4.3 of the budget specify reads, "That Guyana is one we would all be proud to call our home". The Minister has not mentioned a "p" much less a peep about how we are going to retain our skilled Guyanese. This gives credence to Mr. Rawle Lucas' article, which went on to state, and with which I agree:

"The administration seems quite happy to let Guyanese go since it seems to thrive in the social and economic chaos that it has created, and the insecurity that emanates from it."

So many omissions, so many areas not addressed, but let me call attention to some of the very pressing needs.

First, I would like us to take a closer look at a special group of people — our differently abled. Unlike many of us, there exists, in our society, a group of persons who, unlike some of our youth, are unable to seize the opportunities to migrate. These persons continue to be left by the wayside in the Minister's plan each year and are only given recognition during special occasions such as, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) day for disabled persons. After much lip service, these persons with disabilities are still to be properly recognised as important. The Minister of Human Services & Social Security could not say it loud enough last evening when

she said that you judge the humanity of government by the way it treats its seniors and differently abled. By her own measurement, her Government would be declared inhumane.

The APNU calls on the Government to rigorously review its programmes with a view to comprehensively and cost effectively assisting the differently abled in our society for they too deserve the right to a better life.

A visit to the David Rose School in Thomas Lands, Georgetown, tells a sad story. The teaching methods, resource materials and the environment take you back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The teachers and caregivers all should be given national awards for teaching differently abled children in the 21st century with methods used in the middle ages.

The School for the Blind housed in the St. Roses' High School is the most inappropriate place for any child much less a child with a disability. I call on parliamentarians to visit that area set aside for these children, especially at lunch break when they will see the horror which takes place there. The Minister is saying that she is removing them and I am happy to hear that. The conditions are deplorable for lack of suitable accommodation and 21st century teaching materials. Children are our most vulnerable. A group of global leaders said, at a UNICEF conference last September, that children cannot wait as they are voiceless and helpless. Did not our Lord Jesus say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven"?

It is a fact that our society lacks information on how to treat persons with disabilities and as a result disabled persons are side-lined and oft times their needs are misunderstood. Madam Minister of Education, it is time we have a reformed programme for educating our differently abled children so that those less challenged can be integrated into regular schools and others can be taught, where possible, to be independent and go on to live a good life.

As we look around us, we cannot remain oblivious to the many young adults who are disabled in our society, hence it is also imperative for our Government to make provision for them in every possible way. We note the following –

- Buildings continue to be constructed with no ramps for the disabled.



- That disabled persons must compete with able-bodied persons at many places of business, even Government offices.
- Despite the reprint of the \$1, 000, \$500, and \$100 notes, no features were added to assist the visually impaired to identify these various notes.
- They are still being discriminated when seeking the use of public transportation.
- The failure to encourage the sale of computer software, for example, audio books, audio watches and clocks at VAT free and subsidised prices.

Allow me to reiterate that the Government must allocate funds to provide buses for disabled persons, ramps and special seats to cater for those persons with cross disabilities - our differently abled, a grave omission, Mr. Minister.

Alcohol abuse. Another area not properly addressed is that of alcohol abuse. The time has come for us to look at those factors which can cause persons to behave and act in a violent manner. One of these factors is the consumption of alcohol. In a workshop conducted by the Ministry of Health and PAHO in April, 2009, it was revealed that alcohol has been identified as the country's number one drug problem.

Alcohol is consumed by a large percentage of adults, teenagers and surprisingly among a growing number of young women in our society today, as a result several problems have emerged in our society and in families. While people indulge in the consumption of alcohol as a means of relaxation and to forget, for a moment, about their many problems, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that their thoughts do not linger on the negative effects which can arise. Studies have shown that consumption affects one's judgement, mood, reaction time, physical coordination and concentration and most times lead to inappropriate sexual behaviour, unwanted pregnancies and many times violence. Yet, according to the man in the street, alcohol is the cheapest commodity on the market and continues to get cheaper as vendors continue to operate outside and above the laws.

During the conference the Minister of Health Dr. Ramsammy told this nation, "Guyana is now one of the countries to become engaged in the evaluation of the impact of alcohol and life in Guyana."

He was further quoted in the *Kaieteur News* article of September 2009 as saying:

“Apart from being one of the primary causes for underdevelopment in Guyana, alcohol has also been identified as the country's number one drug problem.”

What steps, then, is the Government taking to monitor and curb the high alcohol intake which is at the core of the loss of life through accidents, not to mention the alarming incidence of violence and violent related activities? What about other factors leading to violence - little or no schooling, dropouts, lack of guidance and counselling?

Moreover, I am concerned, as several members of the teaching profession, of the high rate of consumption by our children and women. The easy access with which our children acquire this drink is worrying and ought to be a concern to us, the legislators and the Government. The increase in 2013 of over 114%, according to the reports from the Ministry of Labour, Human Services & Social Security, in the number of our children who are before probation officers, those sent to New Opportunity Corp (NOC), those under supervision, those on parole coupled with the many cases which never passed through our system, is alarming and worthy of our attention. Should the authorities pay a visit to the various night clubs, bars and open air dances, they would find an alarmingly high number of our children under the age of 16 consuming alcohol. What about the high rate of suicide among women? Guyana is ranked number two after Haiti in the Caribbean.

Like our children, our women have turned to alcohol for pleasure, as a past time relaxer, and to deal with stress. A survey would have shown that our women are consuming high levels of alcohol. Magistrate Tejnarine Ramroop, who sat at the Albion Magistrate Court, said to *Stabroek News* that 100% of the domestic violence cases, which came before him, were related to alcohol. He further stated that he was saddened when he heard wives say their husbands were good men when they did not drink alcohol. He also mentioned Blairmont and Kwakwani magisterial districts where he saw more and more women appearing before the courts for abusing men while being under the influence of alcohol.

If our women, who have been bestowed with the gift of producing and nurturing nations, begin to display unhealthy practices, become incapable of performing their duties of providing care and nurture for their offspring and their families due to intoxication, our children, families and nation are in trouble. What will be the effect on our health system, education and social services? May I

say to the Hon. Minister of Finance, that it matters not how large the budget is, or how substantial the increase allocated to the social services sector, once there continues to be easy access to cheap alcohol in the communities of our dear land we, as a nation, will surely pay the price. I urge the Government to stop covering for its friends and address this country's number one drug problem, which according to Minister Ramsammy, is that of alcohol.

Another area of concern is the girl child and her concerns. We surely need to pay more attention to the girl child and her concerns and vulnerabilities. On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170 declaring 11<sup>th</sup> of October as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.

The fulfillment of girls' right to education is first and foremost an obligation and moral imperative. There is also overwhelming evidence that girls' education, especially at the secondary level, is a powerful transformative force for societies and girls themselves. It is the one consistent positive determinant of practically every desired development outcome, from reductions in mortality and fertility to poverty reduction and equitable growth. Having said that, I wish to inform you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of this honourable House that our nation faces a threat, not from outside forces but rather from inside. Our girls are in trouble. The need for immediate and concerted action cannot be overemphasised.

I speak of "Motherhood in Childhood" quite nicely put by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)'s State of World Population 2013 report, the Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago, Ms. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, coined it as "Grave danger facing the nation's children". For me, I would declare, in Guyana, "Guyana chicks, endangered species".

While there has been significant progress in improving girls' access to education over the last two decades, many girls plagued with low aspirations, low self-esteem and self-worth, the lack of good role models coupled with promises from older men of a good life are all factors conspire to prevent them from achieving their full potential.

According to the UNFPA's 2013 report, despite an overall fall in total fertility rates, adolescent birth rates remain relatively high in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region. The CARICOM Secretariat reported that among girls aged 15-19 years old, the birth rate ranges from

26 to 27 per one thousand adolescents. Guyana, it is reported, has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the region.

2.37 p.m.

Our problem in Guyana is that everyone knows that there are children under the age of 16 years... [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, could I have some protection?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are doing well. I am not hearing Mrs. Lawrence. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Our problem in Guyana is that everyone knows that there are children under the age of 16 years who are sexually active, yet nothing is being done about it. Men are getting away with statutory rape, for many of the fathers of underage teen mothers are between the ages of 25-40 years. [**Ms. Manickchand:** Ask your Member Sharma; A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) Member; chief Member]. There are girls under the age of 16 having babies and no one has ever been charged...

**Mr. Sharma:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand, referred to Mr. C. N. Sharma when Mrs. Lawrence was speaking about statutory rape. She needs to apologise for what she said.

**Mr. Speaker:** What I heard, Mr. Sharma, was even beyond that. She said, "Ask your APNU Member" so I think it went further. Ms. Manickchand, we were doing well and there is no need for us to even venture there. I know that you are capable and I am asking you to both refrain and to apologise for that comment. It is a very, very dastardly comment to make against a sitting Member of this House. It is dastardly.

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** We are in a bit of a tight position here, Sir, and I will tell you why. I have never refused to heed your advice but it goes against...five children...

**Mr. Speaker:** Ms. Manickchand, you will be speaking later. I will not recognise you to speak in this Assembly.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I am not speaking today, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** On any day of this debate, if that is the attitude you are going to take against a sitting Member of this House who has done nothing...

**Ms. Manickchand:** I was not...

**Mr. Speaker:** You said, "Ask your APNU Member." I heard you. You said, "Ask your APNU Member," and that was out of order. I said we should refrain from bringing in members of peoples' families or anyone.

**Ms. Manickchand:** C.N. Sharma has declared himself to be an APNU Member.

**Mr. Speaker:** If that is the attitude you are going to take, I am really, really very disappointed.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I will say without reservation that I was not referring to...

**Mr. Speaker:** You said, "Ask the Member of APNU, Mr. Sharma." I heard that.

**Ms. Manickchand:** Sir, I did not know that only persons who are sitting here are members of the APNU.

**Mr. Speaker:** Come on. Let us not try to split hairs.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I was not speaking of the Member in this House and I say that without reservation.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am saying, Ms. Manickchand, that I have deemed it to be highly improper. I am deeming it highly improper and I am asking you to both refrain and to issue Mr. Sharma an apology. You can decide whether you would like to give it or not. That is your right. You have said that you are not and that is fair enough. Thank you.

Proceed, Mrs. Lawrence.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** There are girls under the age of 16 having babies and no one has ever been charged despite the enacting of the 2010 Sexual Offences Act. I reiterate, no one has ever been charged.

Section (2), subsection (3) of the Act states that a person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for five years and on conviction

on indictment to imprisonment for ten years. This, like so many other legislations, remains on the shelf although created to protect our girls and meet international standards. The human rights of our girls are being trampled upon. Any girl, Mr. Speaker, who becomes pregnant, regardless of the circumstances or reasons, is one whose rights are undermined. The report, on page 101, states that our adolescent birth rate per 1,000 women aged 15 through 19 is 97. What a dilemma!

All is not lost, Mr. Speaker. At Women Across Differences (WAD), provision is made for young girls whose rights were violated. At WAD, girls can find persons who respect and care about their wellbeing and that of their child. The horror stories are many, but the successes are great.

Despite our education policy that girls may return after delivery to complete their education by enrolling in another school, very few do so given the challenges they face. These include: someone to keep the child, abusive partners, neglect, hunger and homelessness and lack of family support. So, Mr. Speaker, here is another vulnerable group and topical issue which the Minister made no mention of in her presentation. These girls do not only deserve a better life, but they deserve protection from predators within our society.

Mr. Speaker, in my hand, I hold a Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) titled “Guyanese Girls Gone Wild 2”. One may mistake it for a Compact Disc (CD) which has lewd music. I wish to inform you and this honourable House... [Ms. Kisson: At Sleep In.]

**Mr. Speaker:** One second, Ms. Lawrence. Ms. Kisson, you will refrain from any such comments because we are going to get personal and when the dirt starts to fly, none of us could handle it.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, one may mistake it for a Compact Disc (CD) which has lewd music. However, I wish to inform you and this honourable House that it is not so. Rather, Sir, it is a pornographic film, or a “blues” or a “BM”. Mr. Speaker, I hold in my hand another form of exploitation of our teenage girls and girls younger than 12 years old. These can be had across the length and breadth of our country and just like alcohol, it is big money business. These pornographic films cut across all barriers – race, class, colour and age. Some are done in homes, hotels, back yards and back dams. In many instances, you can detect that the girls appear dazed and one may assume that some form of drugging took place.

Sir, right now, at this very moment, we can send across the street and pick up several such films. When I began a few minutes back, I said that our nation faces a threat not from outside forces, but rather from inside. My question to the Minister is: who will be our Kamla Persaud-Bissessar? Who will bell the cat?

**Mr. Speaker:** Mrs. Lawrence, your time is up. You will need an extension.

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue her presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Minister of Finance, the APNU stands ready to support an increase in the allocation for the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security to set up a strong and fearless body to fight against this scourge which seeks to engulf our society and to deprive our girls of their dignity and human rights.

And now I will embrace the misfortune of the elderly in our society. When the United Nations (UN) in 1999 declared the “Year of the Older Person”, the main thrust was to see older persons as equal subjects of their development and participants in all spheres of social life and not just as objects of public policy. The Minister, as he concluded on paragraph H on page 72 and began paragraph I on page 73, began like the Christmas song, “*Here comes Santa Claus, here Comes Santa Claus, pap tat pa dat pap*” [singing] as he began “Old Age Pensions”. In summary, what the Minister outlined using many words were: pensioners would not get the \$15,000 they had hoped for and pensioners would also not receive the \$1,500 which they got as an average yearly increase since 2006. Rather, they shall receive \$625 in the fifth month of the year and they will not receive any back pay for the months January, February, March and April. This measly sum is reflective of the callousness and inhumanity of a Government whose squander mania and corruption are unparalleled in the Caribbean.

He further went on trying to hoodwink the pensioners by telling them that there is an increase in the amount for the Electricity Assistance Programme by 50% and that this has resulted in an additional increase of \$300 million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, Notice Paper No. 284 dated February 13, 2014 saw the response from the Minister of Human Services and Social Security that for the year 2013, only 7,283 pensioners applied for electricity subsidy of which only 7,026 were eligible. Therefore, Sir, of the \$590 million which the Minister told us last year was allocated for the Pensioners Electricity Assistance Programme, only some 16% benefitted from that dollar amount. Perhaps, the Minister of Finance will tell us what has happened to the remaining balance. Let me then, Hon. Minister, posit the question: why did you not give our pensioners \$1,500? Why pretend you are doing something wonderful for pensioners when, in fact, all you have done is to shift moneys to the two failing entities – the Guyana Power & Light (GPL) and the Guyana Water Inc (GWI). This is nothing but a crying shame.

Mr. Speaker, it is a crying shame that we witness the lack of provision for our homeless elderly. The headline in the Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> March *Kaieteur News* titled: “Abandoned elderly patients at GPHC” attests to this. As far back as 2003, studies were done on the elderly in the Caribbean. We were told that older persons in the Caribbean are living longer and the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) Report 2013 reported that a Guyanese’s life expectancy at birth is 70.2 years up from 69.2 years. One would expect that a caring Government would plan for the provision of health care, increases in pension schemes, both contributory and non-contributory, increases in housing or homes for the elderly and, in some cases, assistance to caregivers, indigent homes, to name a few.

Further, over the years, there have been consistent increases in the number of residents at the Palms Geriatric Home and the Night Shelter, which is now a 24-hour shelter for the indigent and less fortunate in our society. Mr. Minister, after telling this honourable House last year that \$54 million was provided to complete and operationalise the Hugo Chavez Centre, which would cater for 180 street dwellers, why, after five months of being commissioned there is no occupancy? Is this another Family Court which, according to the Hon. Attorney General, is still sourcing furnishings after one year? Are you waiting for the rains to come and wet the many persons living on our streets or are you waiting on a visit from a foreign head of state?

The wellbeing of our citizens is paramount to us in A Partnership for National Unity. Hence, we believe that unless the Government is accountable and transparent, unless we the people can have value for money in every area of spending, unless people can participate meaningfully in



the events and processes that shape their lives without fear, unless citizens can access health care without being spoken to in a crude and rude manner, unless our medical centres are provided with modern equipment, thus eliminating the long hours persons must wait for results, and unless every Guyanese is governed by the same laws, we cannot and will not achieve a better life for all Guyanese.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus my attention on the fate of our women. The incidence of cancer amongst women in Guyana today is much higher than ever before. Over the years, it was reported that the main causes of death among women were ischemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease and neoplasm, which represented a mere 9%. Subsequently, deaths by neoplasm increased to some 20%, followed by diabetes with 71%. Presently, 53% of all deaths in females is due to cancer – breast and cervix amounting to some 36.6%.

Cancer is a growing medical problem in Guyana and the number of persons, especially women, continues to grow at an alarming rate. This ought to be a major concern for the Government. Over the last two months, I have encountered nine women with whom I am personally acquainted who have been diagnosed with this dreaded disease. Of these women, two have died. Of those remaining, six can hardly afford to exist comfortably much less meet the high cost for treatment such as mammography, pap smears, chest X-ray, chemotherapy, radiation and Computerised Tomography (CT) scans, to name a few.

Further, the time has come for the Government to place more emphasis on the availability of more oncologists at the various medical institutions whereby our women can benefit from continuous service. Important to note, these services must be available not only in Georgetown, but rather to women and men in all the regions. Mr. Speaker, let us give our people, especially our women, a fighting chance with early detection. The subsidising of these expensive medical tests, I assure you Minister, would certainly increase the chances of these Guyanese enjoying a better life.

Rights of our pregnant women: while employers are not legally obligated to make it easier for a pregnant woman on the job, it is illegal, however, for employers to discriminate against women because of their pregnancy.

It is expected that the women in our society, like those in developed countries, would be given protection by their Government. Likewise, it is expected that the working women in our country will be protected by our Government and more so the Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security.

A chat with our young girls and women, especially those who work in the hospitality, security and commercial entities inside and outside the city, reveals their daily exposure to the blatant discrimination which they face at the hands of their employers. These women are robbed of their earnings on a weekly basis. The calculation of their overtime pay is always incorrect. In most cases, when challenged, they are threatened with dismissal or told that there is no time to pursue stupid requests for recalculations. They are required to work long hours, carry large boxes up long flights of stairs, work in stockrooms which have no proper ventilation or cooling equipment such as fans or air conditioners. What is most alarming is the continuous deprivation of National Insurance Scheme (NIS) coverage for these women. In most cases, one of the following applies: amounts less than that deducted from wages and salaries are paid to NIS. It is said that employers note smaller salaries on their contribution forms. No contribution is remitted to NIS though deductions are made from employees' wages and salaries and remittances are always paid long after deductions are made.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, those women who become pregnant are not paid their 30% as required by the National Insurance and Social Security Act. This very Act states quite clearly that women are entitled to a further 13 weeks if they are incapable of work as a result of complications arising directly out of the pregnancy and delivery.

The time has come for the Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security to bring to this house a Bill on maternity protection, one which, no doubt, will provide the much needed protection to women who work in agriculture and domestic fields and hospitality and commercial industries and all working women, skilled and unskilled, for these persons too deserve a better life.

One cannot deny the fact that our women are being trained under the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) Single Parent Training Programme. What concerns me, however, is that there seems to be no provision for review of the programmes offered. For several years now, we have

been training women in the same fields without any feasible study effected to ascertain the needs or demands in the various regions. As a result, there is over training in some areas. For instance, how many cosmetologists, seamstresses or caterers do we need and where are they needed? Come on Madam Minister, have a feasibility study done by region and do not give training in fields which have become redundant. Many of our single mothers may be capable of becoming nurses, agricultural officers, plumbers, goldsmiths or even farmers. Let us improve the relevance and effectiveness of such programmes based on the trajectory growth the Minister spoke about on page 7, paragraph 3.4.

Mr. Speaker, It would be remiss of me not to extend congratulations on behalf of the women and men of the APNU to the two women in our society who were recently honoured. Sir, I speak of Ms. Karen De Souza, who was bestowed with the 2014 Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Award, and Hon. Pauline Sukhai, honoured with the Order of Congolese Merit. To them, we say congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, women are the bedrock of this nation and must be given the care and attention they need to enjoy a better life.

A better Guyana for all Guyanese is good and should be embraced by all, notwithstanding, unless people can participate meaningfully in the events and processes which shape their lives, national human development paths will be neither desirable nor sustainable.

Just to highlight a few of those which hinder the mere thought of inclusion: Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> December edition of the *Kaieteur News* carried the headline, “Money spent on overpriced drugs could pay 20% increases to nurses and teachers”; “Jagdeo authorized radio license for 'Ghost Company'”; Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> February edition of the *Stabroek News* carried the headline, “Parents withdrawing students over feared collapse of \$77M Rupununi School. Repairs needed just I year after construction”; Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 *Stabroek News* carried the headline, “Pumps from India still to be commissioned one year after contract ended”; “Cops accused of ignoring report of Port Kaituma man’s threats to kill family”.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your 15 minutes are up. Conclude in five minutes please.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Mr. Speaker, how can we build a better Guyana for all Guyanese when there is no participation and involvement by the stakeholders?

Mr. Minister, the billions are not being shared by the indigent and the elderly, nor are the majority of women and young adults being offered any substantial relief to their plight. Unless there is adequate allocation of funds to improve the wellbeing of all Guyanese, the theme of your Budget would remain meaningless for a vast majority of our dear country's population.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay homage to one of our fallen heroines, the late Deborah Jan Osman Backer, a stalwart who relentlessly championed the cause of women at all echelons of society. I dedicate this speech to her honour and to her unstinting quest to improve the quality of life for all women folk. As we move forward, may we be catalysts of change for the status of our women who the late Deborah Jan Backer strove so valiantly for. May her soul rest in peace.

Thank you, Sir. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Labour [Dr. Gopaul]:** It is irrefutable that *Budget 2014* is one which will create a better Guyana in the interest of all Guyanese. The Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, and his staff deserve our commendation and praise for a job well done.

The stakeholders have had consultation on the Budget prior to its presentation and many of the stakeholders, including those of labour and the private sector, have, since its presentation, applauded the Government and the Minister of Finance on the 2014 Budget.

*3.07 p.m.*

It is unfortunate that the Opposition parties did not avail themselves to the invitations of the Minister of Finance to engage in the discussion on the Budget prior to its presentation. This, indeed, is a lost opportunity but when we listen to the Opposition, all we hear are negative views with no real or concrete proposal or sound advice to enhance the Budget or the economy. I, therefore, speak today in support of this Budget and urge that it be given unanimous acceptance in this House.

Before I go into details of the Budget discussion, I mainly wish to highlight some of the activities successfully undertaken by my Ministry during the year 2013.

### **The Labour Department**

The Ministry of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health Department, during the period under review made some significant achievements in the following areas:

1. We ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 on domestic workers, thus making Guyana the first country in the Caribbean to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention in August 2013.
2. We prosecuted 19 cases which were reported for failing to pay the minimum wage and charges were filed against one of the largest security firms for violating the national minimum wage and that is the Strategic Action Security Service.
3. On the national minimum wage, we issued the Order which became effective, as the Minister indicated in his Budget, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2013. The new order stipulates a 40-hour work week at five days per week, eight hours daily. The new order paved the way for new categories of workers to benefit under the 40-hour work week scheme. As the Minister pointed out in his Budget speech over 31,000 workers have benefited from this arrangement and are now entitled to leave with pay benefits.

I heard Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence speak on violation of workers' rights but these two measures, the signing of the Convention 189 as well as the introduction of the Minimum Wage Order, offered real protection to workers whom she mentioned have been exploited and the Ministry of Labour will pursue any employer that violates the rights of workers. We will not turn a blind eye to any infraction of the labour laws of this country. That is the reason why during the year, in introducing these measures, we have appointed six new labour officers to complement our lot and we are targeting to employ additional officers and target a senior personnel, very experienced in the field of industrial relations, to work as a consultant in the Ministry, shortly.

In the area of occupational health and safety, we are working with the Ministry of Education on the process of streamlining occupational safety and health in the school curriculum and that process has begun. We also translated key labour laws into Chinese, given the number of Chinese employers and employees operating in Guyana and, earlier, in 2012, we translated those

same laws into Portuguese. We also had interaction with the Ministry of Education and interventions on the issue of child labour were conducted in schools across Guyana.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) regulations have been gazetted and tabled in this House with mining, manufacturing, noise and chemical regulations completed, and we hope to have them vetted by the Attorney General's Chambers before they go through the same process.

In the area of the Board of Industrial Training, the total number of persons trained in 2013 was 2,304, with the Apprenticeship Programme having 95 youths who commenced training, 68 of whom were at the GuySuCo Training Centre at Port Mourant, 10 at Barama, and GPL had 17, and this lot represented the largest block of apprentices under the BIT scheme for a number of years.

The National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (NTPYE) completed training for 1,537 persons, certified in the area of engineering, electrical work, construction, health services, information technology and clerical work and home economics.

The Single Parent Training Programme completed 447 persons at the end of last year being certified in garment manufacturing, construction, cosmetology, catering and some as drivers and sales persons, and this would answer the issue raised by the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence, whether we are sticking to one programme. In the past, it was merely cosmetology and maybe garment. We have moved into construction and the other areas.

We also have had extended programmes where 113 persons were certified at the forestry training school and 112 at the evening class programme conducted by GuySuCo, mostly in the area of information technology. Those at the Forestry Training School have been trained in the areas of forestry, harvesting and other activities.

Because we have attached grave importance to the Board of Industrial Training Scheme, a number of companies have applied and we have examined their applications with what they are doing and we certified, over this period, new companies, in addition to GuySuCo, GPL and the Guyana National Insurance Company (GNIC), which existed before. We have added to those Barama Company Limited. The Republic Bank has been approved and we are in consultation

with them on their training programme for school leavers in the banking industry and we are working with the Forestry Commission, which we will certify as masters under that programme.

During the year, we have also acquired two new Bobcat machines, heavy duty equipment with implements, to enhance our training programme for heavy duty equipment operators since this skill is in high demand with an equally high response rate, so added to the two which we already have. We now have four which we will carry across the country to increase our training under this programme. Again, this answer would be in response to what Mrs. Volda Lawrence said just now that we should not stick to merely one programme; we are moving ahead.

In addition to that, we have been in consultation with the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health and we have seen the need to train more biomedical trainees, to bring them into the field because that has become a scarce area of endeavour and we want to be self sufficient. Hitherto, those aspects of the work were done by Cubans and we are hoping to commence training of about 15 persons in that area very shortly.

We have also, over the year, continued the School Retention/ILO Tackle project on the Highway where we targeted 360 children, representing the entire population of Dora Secondary, Kurukuru Primary and Nursery on the Linden/Soesdyke Highway. That project, which came to an end at the end of last year, saw an investment of US\$222,878 financed mainly by the ILO with Guyana's contribution amounting to \$365,000. Prior to that project, records from the Dora Secondary, for example, showed a 65% average attendance rate; Kurukuru Primary with a 77% attendance rate, with 56% at the nursery level. Consultation with parents and teachers revealed that the primary reasons why many children were unable to attend school regularly were due to financial constraints. Our project intervention included the following:

- Teachers and school administrators training programme;
- Numeracy and literacy programme;
- Nutrition support and transportation programme;
- Parenting workshop; and
- Psychological support.

The Programme, which was launched in September, 2011, saw within two weeks of its implementation that attendance had moved from 64% to 94%. The other results included

punctual and regular teachers and students attendance because they were provided with transportation. The teachers' attrition rate had reduced considerably. One of the schools, for the first time, presented 18 children to write the National Grade 6 Examination in 2012, the previous highest number never exceeded seven. That school entered into the National Poetry Competition and copped a prize at that competition. One student at Dora Secondary School recorded eight Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) subject passes, the best performance the school had in a decade.

The ILO project, as I indicated, concluded and I am advised, because my Ministry was working in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, that this project will continue by the Ministry of Education.

The US Department of Labour, ILO HIV/AIDS Project also concluded recently. This project started in October, 2003, and concluded on February, 2014. It was funded by the United States Department of Labor between the years 2003 to 2006 to the tune of US\$397,000 and between the period 2006 to 2012, the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funded the programme to the tune of nearly US\$1 million. The Government of Guyana's contribution was merely in the form of releasing workers and participants within the Government sector to cooperate and to work with the Project. The Project had a national coordinator and was effectively and independently supervised by the tripartite body consisting of the Ministry of Labour, the Guyana Trade Union Congress and Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG), as well as the CAGI representatives.

The programme saw many benefits. At the top of the list was the working of the HIV/AIDS regulation which was drafted and which we had gazetted and tabled in the House recently, as I mentioned earlier. We had the National HIV/AIDS policy developed. We had partnerships formed with 33 companies in various sectors and they had about 30,000 employees trained during that period to raise the education and awareness about HIV/AIDS at the workplace, particularly in the security, mining, manufacturing, media, banking and agricultural companies. We have also mounted successive education and awareness campaigns throughout this country and hosted numerous training for employees and employers in counselling and educating persons and for the focal points at the work places. The tripartite grouping, with the end of that



programme, will continue its work with the national tripartite body to oversee and monitor HIV/AIDS regulations and other issues at the work places.

The Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency, during the period 2013, registered 3,099 applicants and, as a result of those registrations, it was able to place 2,596 of them at work places in the areas of supervisory work, clerical/typists, customer service representatives, receptionists and, in craft related areas, welders, drivers, fitter/machinists, mechanics, machine operators, skilled and semi-skilled workers, factory workers, cleaners/sales clerks and labourers as well as security officers who were also added to that list. The year 2014 will see the Programme being further decentralised with the recruitment and placement officers appointed and placed in every Region of this country and having an integrated network system. Staff members have been trained and we are in the process of installing a new software system and equipment to modernise the service of the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency so that persons can use the service from any Region as long as they have internet service.

With respect to the cooperative department, in the year 2013, there were 80 expressions of interest from groups desiring to become and to form friendly societies, rules of which were submitted to the department and vetted and meetings were held with those steering committees of each of the groups with consideration and approval given to most of them. They have also, over the period, conducted investigations into the friendly societies for at least three of those. They have audited 50 and released 47 audit reports to these societies and they have had a total of new registrants of about 30, while they conducted field visits of about nine of these agencies based on reports received.

With respect to the co-operative societies, four new ones have been registered; two were cancelled in 2013; inquiry and investigations were held against three of the societies. Amendment for rules of a few societies, and we had one investigation done with the amendments granted. There were also 42 audits done. All of the audit reports have been released to these bodies. We also had, based on reports and requests by the co-operative societies, 61 field audits concluded.

Yesterday, the Hon. Member Ms. Kissoon made reference to co-operative societies to quote me and to highlight some of the importance and to point out that they must be concerned with the

advertisement that some 212 co-ops have been slated for cancellation. We have already been in receipt of letter of concern and expression of willingness to work with the Ministry from the Leader of the Opposition's office under the signature of Mr. Joseph Harmon. I have had a meeting with Dr. Roopnarine on the concern expressed by one society and I have had discussion with the Hon. Member, Mr. Clement Rohee, in his capacity as General Secretary of the PPP/C over concerns expressed by another set of co-operatives and to indicate that in all of these areas, we will be examining the list to ensure that every society that wishes to continue and show that willingness to continue will be given that opportunity. But we want to ensure that we start and that all the issues pertaining to good governance would be observed. Many of the societies, however, Mr. Speaker, will not have an impact on the co-operatives since many are defunct for over a decade and we are merely cleaning the records of those. As I indicated, not a single society or member's assets will be put in jeopardy with this exercise. Our willingness to continue to work with every single organisation and body that is willing to come forward and to encourage compliance with the law and good governance as well as to assist with good management practices, we will work with.

The 2014 allocation under the Budget would see \$159 million expended or being voted in the Budget for labour administration which will cover employment costs estimated at about \$97 million with other costs to the tune of \$286 million. We also have budgeted under this programme \$46.8 million for our capital programme. The Budget allocation for 2014 with respect to these agencies, therefore, will see the continuation of these programmes with improved results and participation in 2014.

I now turn to some of the salient points raised in the budget and which had been raised by Members during the course of the debate. I want to deal, first of all, with respect to the issue of wages and workers' interest. The Hon. Minister of Finance indicated that *Budget 2014* is expected to see the economy growing by 5.6% and with the world economy, when one compares that, we will see a growth of about 3.7%. What is significant is that for the year 2013, we have had the highest growth rate over the period, showing 5.2% increase with inflation pegged at about 0.9%, the lowest inflation rate in almost a decade. The world's performance averaged a mere 3%. When one takes 5.2% as the economic growth, measure up with the rate of inflation and one examines what was paid to public workers as well as what was done for workers in other

sectors, one would see that 2013 has been one of the most successful years, in decades, for the workers of this country. Real wages have been protected in a real way, unlike what has happened in the past. I wanted to prevent going into the past but Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence, in her presentation, made mention to 'not a cent more' a statement alluded to earlier in Dr. Jagan's life as a politician and as administrator of this country.

The issue has been one which has been raised several times but must be given clarity. Dr. Jagan did not in a high-handed way say 'not a cent more'. He was engaged in negotiations with the Unions, made offers and, in fact, paid offers and indicated that he did not have more money after he would have made... He was involved in the true process of collective bargaining, unlike what had happened in the past. In the mid-1980s, we had the infamous 'Hoyte Circular' which proscribed collective bargaining. No agency, no one, was allowed to engage in any form of collective bargaining and settling any agreement with anyone; that is what we had in the 1980s. In 1979, we had the withdrawal of increments and refusal to pay workers their benefits, while for two years in the 1980s, a wage freeze was introduced. That must be measured with what has happened between 1992 and 2013.

In addition to that, the situation in the country in the 1980s got so miserable and so desperate for workers that analysis done by high-ranking economists, including Professor Thomas, showed that real wages in the 1980s declined by 45% below the 1942 level. In addition to that, when we compared in the 1980s and put the diet of the slaves under slavery and cost it in the 1980s, we found that the slaves were enjoying a better wage than the workers in this country. Those studies were done. When one examines the performance of the economy over the years under the PPP/C Administration and when one examines the wages paid, one will find that the PPP/C Administration has improved real wages in a real way.

In addition to that, throughout the period, even when there was poor performance in many sectors, we see that wages were paid, some level of wages. That is not all, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, when one looks around the country and one witnesses development, even the blind people would say that they have never seen development of this magnitude. Look around the countryside, Mr. Speaker, and see the numerous homes. The workers in this country have been given the opportunity to own their own homes. In the past, the workers in this country were limited to housing opportunities and they were limited to banking facilities and loans.

Interest loans were in the vicinity of 20% and 21%. Under the PPP/C Administration, that dropped to 3.95% for low income. Workers who are low income earners can own their own homes as a result of that, with repayment being less than what it takes for one to rent a bottom house these days so every worker is being encouraged. More and more public servants are given opportunities under this scheme to own their own homes; Police officers, public servants, are all given lots within this 30,000 allotted so far.

When one looks at the economy, one will see progress in the banking sector with over a decade of progress in the banking sector, profits increasing, assets base increasing, with every passing year. Look at every one of the financial reports. Look at large companies, Mr. Speaker, and you will find that every single large company and even those mushrooming are becoming very large companies, establishing branches outside of Georgetown. Georgetown is no longer the hub for business activities. Almost in every village in every Region, there are many business activities and employment creation in these areas.

**Mr. Speaker:** Your time is up, Hon. Member. You will need an extension of 15 minutes.

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*3.37 p.m.*

**Dr. Gopaul:** I now turn to the issue of the sugar industry, something that has been near, dear and close to my heart. I know a number of persons, a number of our brothers and comrades, brothers and sisters, Honourable Members in this House, have expressed genuine concerns, but some have expressed concerns to the extent that they want to damage the industry; they believe it is no more viable. But sugar has over 300 years of history. As a young man, I grew up reading the story of British Guiana which is about the sugar industry and not anything else. The story and history of Guyana is about the history of the sugar industry. Over the colonial period the sugar industry had huge sums of money extracted, as a result of the sweat and tears of workers, by Bookers who moved away large sums to Great Britain. It is said that huge sums of money expended during that period by Great Britain were extracted from colonial countries which were

sugar based. Following nationalisation sugar continued. Many of the estates were manned by local managers; workers continued to work and this country benefited tremendously in terms of development from the sugar industry.

The profits from the sugar industry were ploughed into many national activities. One recalls clearly the 1970s. When sugar prices soured in 1974, in particular from a sugar levy that was introduced in 1974, millions of dollars were extracted and used for national development purposes. In fact, it was misused. The levy was used for all sorts of experiments. They went into other crops division. They went into spending at the National Service. We knew how much money from the sugar industry was expended in National Service especially at Kimbia; irrefutable record. **[Mr. Greenidge: Where is the record?]** The records are there if you examine it. What the sugar industry has given to this country no one can ever repay, no one can ever compensate that industry for what they have extracted and what it has done. Today the industry, like many times in its history, has bad patches. The sugar industry, if you look at the records you will see declining periods as well as periods of growth. There are those who continue to do commentary like a certain former Member of Parliament. I have seen several pieces of commentary from one Mr. Vieira which have been used only to embarrass the Opposition on the activity of the sugar industry and their proposals.

But there is a saying, the more you write is the more you expose your ignorance. And Mr. Vieira coming out with some of the writings on the industry did not have the belly to continue in sugar when faced with hardship; he closed down his estate, put workers on the breadline and never continued. Today he wants to lecture this Government on the sugar industry. Mr. Vieira is in no position to lecture the industry in any way as to improvement. He has a failed record; he is a failure in terms of the sugar industry. Others who have tried to... **[Interruption]** Guyana Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU) and my relationship do you see where we are and do you see where you are? You will remain there. The sugar industry has played an important part and was exploited. We hope that in all the rantings, our colleagues, the Hon. Members, will see the wisdom in making this allocation so we can bring this industry back. It is important to note that the Economic Services Committee in either 2011 or 2012 visited the Skeldon Sugar Factory headed by Mr. Winston Murray and with Mr. Vieira as part of that grouping; I was there. During

that visit they were satisfied as to the management team and they expressed that publicly; they were satisfied with what was being done to correct measures in the sugar factory.

That was made public in their meeting with the management. We continued that development process and those corrective mechanisms are ongoing. And I want to say without any fear of contradiction or I want to say like the Minister of Agriculture will tell you, that sugar and the Skeldon Factory will continue and make progress before the end of the year. We will fix it. The problem of Skeldon, if I may say, if people want to be educated they will know, it has nothing to do with the Government of Guyana. The problem of Skeldon had to do with a management team brought in by the People's National Congress in 1990. That management team was responsible for the supervision of the factory and created enormous problems. Mr. Speaker, because this matter is in court I will not delve more but allude them to a writ filed by GuySuCo and signed by me, and for which I gave evidence in court as to the numerous failings of the GuySuCo management and for which under the leadership of Minister Robert Persaud we fired them. We fired them and did not pay them. Booker Tate can be seen as a major factor in the supervisory personnel in the Skeldon factory's operation and not the Chinese. The Chinese were merely performing work based on the engineers. I will urge my colleagues if they believe in the interest of the sugar workers, and the learned and Hon. Members from Alliance For Change (AFC), who came from the bowels of the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the father of the Nation, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, and saw the struggles and admire and continue to mention his name, will not cause him to turn in his grave if they were to vote against the sugar industry and the workers.

We have a glorious opportunity; we do not want to delve into the past. The Hon. Members of this House I am sure, and have demonstrated in no uncertain way, they have the interest of Guyana at heart, all of us, but we have different ways of thinking and different methods of solving issues. Unfortunately, over the past three years while an opportunity was presented to the combined Opposition by the voters, who placed them in a majority position in this Parliament, one would have thought that using that opportunity they will show this Nation that they as an Opposition, they are a government in waiting, that they will do things in an objective way; that they will promote national development not sabotage the economy; that they will promote national development; they will enhance the Government programmes and work side by side with the Government. Instead what do we find? For two and one half years, and I am appealing to my

brothers and sisters, the Hon. ladies and gentlemen of this House to work together so we can build this country. We can no longer be divisive; as politicians we have to work together and mere lip service, whether you call it a political solution or whether you call it some form of compromise we have to show that we really mean it, that we are sincere. You cannot want to extract it through coercive mechanisms, you cannot want to tell us you want to work together and sabotage national development. So let us be realistic and put the Nation's interest first; let us work together. *[Interruption]* Do not make any new demands.

The President, I am advised, and I heard from him and the Hon. Minister of Finance – and this was stated publicly - gave a commitment to the Leader of the Opposition and other members in his discourse with them on the Anti-Money Laundering Bill. He said to them that I know you have some demands, we want the bill to be passed; if some of those demands are acceptable let us pass this Bill unconditionally and I will give my attention to those issues which you have concerns with and we will work thereafter. That was a genuine offer. I believe this Nation can ill afford not to pass the Anti-Money Laundering Bill. The Nation's future, every Guyanese's future is at stake, every Guyanese, every worker. So I appeal, if you want to see good will show good will; political grandstanding from either side will not work. There is need for us to rise above that level. Let us work together. I gave the assurance of my colleagues, and all my colleagues on this side that we will work feverishly with colleagues on the other side if good will is shown from today that we will work to build a better Guyana and work together in the interest of this country. Our country can no longer sail in an area of doubt, an area where we fight each other daily, where every position is seen nearly from one party's point of view. We have to listen to each other; we have to negotiate with an open mind. We have to say sometimes that it is not always what we present but what is right for Guyana.

I am reminded of Shakespeare - Julius Caesar – of the following:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune, omitted all the voyage of their life, is bound in shallows and miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures”.

The People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Administration has a course. We call on our colleagues to work with us. No one should dominate either side. Dr. Cheddi Jagan struggled

since the 1970s, talked about critical support; Dr. Cheddi Jagan gave support for the nationalisation, unconditionally, of the bauxite industry when it was needed, and promises which were given to him were never fulfilled. Who from the PPP was named a member of the board which was promised? This is history. Dr. Cheddi gave critical support to the People's National Congress on many issues. Put that in the pages of history books; we want to turn a new. We want to work for a better Guyana; we are committed to work towards a better Guyana; we want good will to be shown on all sides. On this note I call on the Hon. men and women of that side to let us work together, let us eschew confrontation. Another election will not solve the problems of this country. It will solve the issue of majority over that side and minority over here, because as you cut the budget you will cut your votes and you will cut your seats over there. So comrades I want us to work together for the betterment of this country, for our children sake. [Applause]

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you Cde. Speaker. Let me just quickly respond to the Hon. Minister of Labour when he stated and I quote:

“The PPP have a course.”

While one tends to agree with him that the PPP have a course the PPP ship lacks the rudder. And that rudder can be found on this side of the House.

Cde. Speaker, I rise to make my presentation on this 2014 Budget under the theme, “*A Better Guyana For All Guyanese.*”

You know it does not matter what the theme is because the theme says one thing, but the contents say something completely different.

You see, Cde. Speaker, the Founder Leader of my party, Guyana's first Executive President, Caribbean Man of the Century and indeed the Father of the Nation, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, always said that “it is a sign of maturity when you read not only what is on the lines but what is between the lines”. So do not let us worry about the theme. To quote one of our local soca artistes in this year's soca competition it can be described as just “*yada, yada.*”

Let me take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Ministry of Finance, who, no doubt, would have spent many long hours, late nights and maybe weekends away from their families preparing



these Estimates of the 2014 Budget, For all of their hard work, we say thank you and you are all appreciated.

Cde. Speaker, this 2014 Budget, like the 2013 and 2012 Budgets, has fallen into what I would call the PPP/C series of unfortunate events.

In my 2013 Budget presentation, I alluded to indicators that signaled, for want of a better term, disrespect. I alluded then that despite the calls made, on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 by the Majority Leader David Granger on his Excellency President, to establish a Tri-Partite Budget Committee to have all the parties represented in this August House sit together and put together the people's budget, there was not even a hint of progress made to this end.

The call was ignored, notwithstanding it was made against the backdrop of the new composition in this House resulting from the choice made by the electorate during the 2011 General and Regional Elections. I can recall saying that once is an accident; twice is a coincidence; three times is disrespectful. This 2014 Budget represents the third presentation in this Tenth Parliament, the third occasion that the Government has failed to consult with the majority elected Opposition.

This 2014 People's Progressive Party/Civic Budget, as presented, has now confirmed to the Nation that this Government is most disrespectful to the needs of the people of this Nation: disrespectful to the Police Man and Woman who have to every day and night risk their lives to protect citizens and their property; disrespectful to the soldiers who have to spend days and nights away from their families on our porous borders; disrespectful to the Doctors and Nurses who have to provide health care; disrespectful to the Teachers who are the educators who mould the nation; disrespectful to the Pensioners who in their younger age did all of the above to pave the way for all of us here today who are enjoying the fruits of their labour; disrespectful to those who are in need of public assistance - the visually impaired, the differently able; disrespectful even to our own parliamentary staff who toil tirelessly to ensure we do the Nation's work effectively and efficiently.

### **Series of Unfortunate Events**

The Government's attitude of non-consultation can best be described as a series of unfortunate events transcending beyond the setting up of the tripartite budget committee. The failure to consult with the beneficiaries is another such unfortunate event.

In his budget presentation, the Hon Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, under the caption "Education Grants" stated, and I quote:

"Government will provide this year a cash grant to the parents of every child attending nursery, primary, or secondary school in the public education system in the amount of \$10,000 per child for the year 2014."

He further stated:

"This grant can be used to meet such costs as transportation, and will provide added impetus to raising enrolment and attendance rates"

This sum calculates to \$40 per day. For those living on the coast, is not even a short drop via public transportation. What about those students living in the hinterland and riverine communities? A case in point is the village of Hackney on the Lower Pomeroon River, Region 2, where students traveling via boat are forced to pay as much as \$1,000 per day per child from the village of Hackney to Charity to get to school.

The unfortunate event here is that the Government did poor consultation or did no consultation with parents; if they did, they would have been told that in riverine communities, a school boat would be their first choice and for those on the coast, school buses their preference and the ten thousand dollars can be put into the wages and salaries of the parents.

### **Series of unfortunate events - New Opportunity Corps (NOC)**

Under the capital project profile program for youth, we see an allocation of \$30 million dollars for the completion of confinement building and construction of fence and walkway for the New Opportunity Corps.

Even though, it is public knowledge that these works are due to the unrest at the facility on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2012, the taxpayers who have to front this bill are still awaiting the report from the

Commission of Inquiry which was set up to examine the circumstances that led to the break out, the fires that destroyed buildings, and make recommendations.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 publication of the *Kaieteur News*, an article was carried under the caption “*NOC Commission of Inquiry - Final Report to be Presented This Month End*. The article also quoted Minister Anthony as stating his assurance that “any staffer found guilty of abusing the children when the report is presented this month end, will be dealt with accordingly”.

Cde Speaker, that was on the 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2013. Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2014 and we still await the report.

There are countless reports from former inmates of the NOC of the abuse that they have endured during their time at the institution. What is even more alarming is the fact that the caregivers at this institution are the persons engaged in those abusive practices.

The NOC is a correctional institution that provides opportunities for rehabilitation of those inmates. It is funded by the taxpayers and, as such, the taxpayers have the right to know what led to the unrest of 2012, the measures that have been put in place to prevent same from recurring, and that both inmates and caregivers that have been found culpable are dealt with. Why the secret?

#### **“Series of unfortunate events”**

Under the caption “Youth”, the Hon Minister of Finance stated, and I quote:

“Government continues to support the development of vulnerable youth across the country by empowering them with the skills and knowledge to improve their own livelihoods.”

The Minister went on to state that over 2,300 young people benefited from training under several training programmes - National Training Project for Youth Empowerment (NTPYE), Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST) and the Board of Industrial Training (BIT) training programmes. What is absent in the Minister’s 2014 Budget presentation, like his 2013 and 2012 presentations, is the J-O-B-S, the jobs.

One would have expected that when the Government boasts about how much moneys have been spent to train youths, it would have been proud to shout on the mountain top that we the PPP/C have created thousands of jobs for our young people and this year we are expected to create even more; nothing of such. In fact, over the years, we have seen five government ministries – the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Labour – continue to jostle each other to offer a variety of glamorous, short-term, ad hoc, training courses for young people. They all promise but do not provide long-term careers that youths desperately seek.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, for example, in 2013 launched \$200M Youth Apprenticeship and Entrepreneur Programme (YAEP).

The Ministry Of Culture, Youth and Sport conducts the Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Training (YEST) programme.

The Ministry of Home Affairs offers training in what it calls “life skills” a vocational pursuit under its Citizen Security Programme (CSP).

The Ministry of Labour, through its Board of Industrial Training (BIT) conducts a two-year apprenticeship programme now called the National Training Project for Youth, Empowerment (NTPYE).

There was even the PYARG- the President Youth Award Republic of Guyana.

All of these programs YAEP, YEST, CSP, BIT, NTPYE and the PYARG attracts millions of the taxpayers’ dollars to be spent, yet the Hon Minister of Finance cannot even report to the National Assembly on how many jobs have been created.

This country’s unemployed young people feel that they are in an employment cul-de-sac. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its National Employment Report stated and I quote:

“Seventy-seven per cent of educated persons of working age migrate because of the lack of employment opportunities. They feel that they have become entangled in a web of bureaucratic programmes, which generate lots of certificates and diplomas, but provide few jobs.”

4.07 p.m.

Too many Guyanese youths still leave school unskilled, enter the workforce for the first time and are obliged to resort to the informal sector for employment in low-paying occupations. Four out of every ten youths face a jobless future and the PPP/C Administration is still to announce a plan to deal with the crisis of youth unemployment. This, is but another of the PPP/C “Series of Unfortunate events”.

### **National Cultural Centre**

The PPP/C “series of unfortunate events” continues. Over the past few months, this premiere landmark has been described as a “hot mess” with its broken air condition unit, poor lights, weak audio system, etcetera. We note, however, in this year’s Budget, there is an allocation of \$55 million to replace the air condition unit, lights and audio system.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony, at a press conference, complained about the Centre losing money and that it cannot sustain its operations because, he claims, of its low rentals. Here are a few facts, as recently reported by the producers of the popular *Link Show*, Mrs. Gem Nascimento of Gems Theatre Productions, stated:

“The National Cultural Centre charges an \$80,000 flat rental for the entire building. In addition to the basic rental of \$80,000, the producer pays a surcharge of 20% on all ticket prices, rental of bars, for the printing of tickets, a charge for the use of the producer’s own video camera to film this very producer show, for rehearsals, ushers, front of house staff and security.”

Calculated on ticket prices of \$2000, \$1500 and \$1000, once there is a full house, a total sum of \$2,947,500 is realised per night. The producer then pays approximately 26% of the gross income to the National Cultural Centre or a sum of \$766,350, plus, the producer then pays a 16% Value Added Tax (VAT) to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) or \$471,600. Although, 40% of each night of the producer’s gross income is paid over to the Government, this amount paid to the Ministry of \$766,350 per night for eight nights at minimum, amounts to \$3,183,300. This is only for one show that is hosted at the National Cultural Centre. One therefore wonders was the

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport misinformed when he said that the National Cultural Centre was unable to sustain itself or if he was simply being creative with his remarks.

According to the man on the streets, Sir, it is because it was built by Forbes Burnham under the People's National Congress (PNC) administration that it is being allowed to fail and fall apart.

**Mr. Speaker:** One second Mr. Jones your time is up. Mr. Jones you have five minutes within which to conclude.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you Sir. "Series of unfortunate events" – Sports. The Minister of Finance stated:

"A sum of \$960 million has allocated to the sector of which \$344 million is expected to be spent on continuing works at the Lenora Athletics Track."

According to the Government Information News Agency (GINA), of 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2013, in an interview with the Minister of Finance, he said:

"Earlier this year, 2013, a sum of \$176 million has been contract to B.K. International for the construction of two stands at the northern side of the track. Minister Anthony said the foundation work for the stands has started. These are being constructed in stages and once completed will accommodate approximately 10,000 persons. The Minister further explained that all materials for the track are in Guyana and the Ministry is awaiting good weather for the German Company to return to lay the track."

Again, the Government Information News Agency on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2013, quoted the Minister of Finance again as stating that the synthetics track will be completed at year end. To date Sir, this track has not been completed.

This is clearly not a "series of unfortunate events", but more like a series of confusion. Clearly, something is afoot and all is not well with this project. As such, I will urge the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony to be prepared to provide this House, when we meet in the Committee of Supply, with straightforward answers as it relates to this project. Because \$344 million is too large of an amount of the taxpayers' money to wasted.

Series of unfortunate events – the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall. The Cliff Anderson Sports Hall and the National Gymnasium are two of our main sports facilities. These facilities are used for training and competition purposes, such as, basketball, table tennis, hockey, boxing and netball, to name a few. This is according to the Government Information News Agency. However, one notices the absence of Football or Fustal Football from that list. Cde. Speaker, permit me, for the benefit of the Members of this House, to explain what Fustal Football is. It is an internationally known sport like Football however, it is played indoors.

Mr. O' Neil Durant, Sports Coordinator of the Stabroek Warriors Sports, introduced this style of football to Guyana in the year 2010. Teams are drawn from all of the Municipal Markets across the country, for example, Stabroek, Bourda, Leonora, La Penitence, Mon Repos, just to name a few, to play a friendly game of football. These vendors, who due to their very demanding and time consuming jobs, would otherwise not find the time to organise sport. One should view this healthy competition as in keeping with the statement from the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport Dr. Frank Anthony, when he mentioned, "To have Guyanese get out, get fit; get out and play." After the first competition in 2010, the Stabroek Warriors were given the royal run around to access these facilities. For the past three years, having written to the National Sports Commission on several occasions, to date they are unable to get access to this facility.

It would appear that it seems to be must easier for persons to access these facilities and then use them as an abattoir to slaughter goats than it is for sports organisations to access them, to use them for the intended purposes.

In closing, the Stabroek Warriors have indicated that in the year 2011, they have paid to the National Sports Commission, the sum of \$165,000 to host this event. Sir, I have here the two receipts, with the head "National Sports Commission" and it is stamped by the National Sports Commission. To date, they have been unable to get a refund of this \$160,000 that they have paid to the National Sports Commission. I call on the Minister of Sport, Dr. Frank Anthony to please look into this and please seek that this organisation gets their money.

In closing, the People's Progressive Party/Civic's Series of Unfortunate Events did not begin in 2012, it began several years ago, when the People's Progressive Party Civic did not heed to their own supporters call for a better life, for improved wages and salaries, and as such their

supporters spoke loudly at the 2011 General and Regional Elections. One would have expected that after this loud statement by their supporters that they Government would have changed their ways. We see now in 2012, 2013 and here again in 2014 the People's Progressive Party/Civic series of unfortunate events continue. I thank you. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Hamilton:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that yesterday on the Opposition side there were five speakers. My assessment of yesterday would be that the best speaker on the Opposition would be Dr. Ramayya. He was the only speaker that offered a solution, after he would have criticised – the best speaker.

It was this morning I had conversations with some PNC comrades, persons who support Mr. Greenidge in his quest for leadership in the People's National Congress. They indicated to me that they were very much disappointed. One liken yesterday to a 50 overs match, two teams playing. On this side 306 run in six overs, opening batsman A.K. Singh, 155 not out. Expectation is at the Stadium because to open the batting for the opposite side is a Greenidge... **[An Hon. Member: C.B.]** C.B. Greenidge, a cousin of Gordon, I am told. So there is expectation on the other side because a Greenidge is coming to open the batting.

What we had yesterday, according to Mr. Greenidge's comrades, is that Mr. Greenidge spent 50 minutes in the wicket; Mr. Greenidge, Hon. Member, batted 50 balls and Mr. Greenidge made seven singles. The second comrade indicated to me that his experience yesterday of the comrade that he thought should have been the leader of the People's National Congress Reform, was that he was expecting his financial wizard to pounce on the budget, to dissect the budget presented by Dr. Ashni Singh, but instead what he was, instead of his comrade presenting his case, the case to the Guyanese people that, "If I become the Minister of Finance, this is what I would do." Mr. Greenidge failed miserably and that is the reason why I said that the best speaker on the Opposition side yesterday was Dr. Ramayya. Because after his critique, he offered some solutions as to if he ever became a minister and if ever Mr. Ramjattan becomes the President, this is what we will do.

Mr. Bulkan, the Hon. Member, we come again to the Budget Debate. The budget presented by the Minister of Finance speaks to great ideas, a vision – hydro-projects, four-lane highways, linking Guyana Brazil and Suriname, road networks, rail networks. Mr. Bulkan's presentation, I



suspect, is more suited for a Regional Council statutory meeting, not for the National Assembly. The second point is, Mr. Bulkan is yet to understand anything at all about the Local Government System. When a Member could liken the Regional Democratic Council with a Neighbourhood Democratic Council informs you that he knows nothing about the Local Government System – nothing at all about the Local Government System. [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Tell us about the health system.] I will get to the health system in a minute.

I would not even speak to my good Friend, the Hon. Member Keith Scott. Dr. V. Persaud, in the most eloquent manner last night dismissed and indicated with just one line, “What is wrong with you.”

My dear friend Cde. Volda Lawrence, very proficient, spoke to many of the issues that are important issues. My concern always is that when we are discussing social issues and delinquency of children, it is always the Government. The question I always ask is where are the parents that brought these children into this world? That is the starting point. I said that in this National Assembly and divorced from this conversation is always the parents. It is the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social of Social Services, the Minister of Home Affairs. These are the persons that are responsible for children and no one asks the question, where are the fathers and mothers that brought these children into this world.

Mrs. Lawrence, you have spoke to the issue of now features on the \$5000 bill for the blind. On the \$5000 bill on the right hand side by the map, there is a feature for the blind. [*Interruption*]

My good Friend Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon means for me to speak on the health issue. Last year when I spoke, I indicated to the National Assembly that the Ministry of Health will be launching the National Health Strategy, Vision 2020 that will run from 2013-2020. That strategy was launched last year. The three pillars that the strategy is built on is health across life course, non-communicable diseases – including chronic diseases, mental health and injuries, accidents and violence; communicable diseases including traditional and emerging infections, environmental health; fifthly, food security and nutrition, health information and literacy. Many times when I hear the Comrades on the other side speak about health care delivery in the country, I wonder sometimes where were they living. The fact is, at no time in the history of this nation was so many Guyanese able to access health care – at no time and that is a fact; whether up the

mountains; whether down the creeks and the rivers; whether on the coastlands, every Guyanese today, can access health care - never in history; whether under the colonial Government; whether under the PNC Government, it is the first time through the length and breadth of Guyana; whether coastland or hinterland, every citizen can access health care. Never in the history of this country had you had a doctor assigned to most of the health centres or a visitation of a doctor to health centres. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Lawrence spoke to the issue of elderly care and health care delivery. Presently, the Ministry of Health, monthly, have interventions at actually all of the elderly homes. For the first time in the history of this country the Blind Institute receives medical intervention once a month – the Dharm Shala, Uncle Eddies Home, the Juvenile Centre, the Hadfield Street Drop-in Centre, the Veteran’s Home - Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon, the Veteran’s Home every month – and the Joshua Home. So some of the issues Mrs. Lawrence spoke to they have already began.

Again, many of us who are old enough would have known that in times past we had, what we called Home Based Care, where the doctor visited the your home. A white flag was put up and they would know a sick person was there and they came. Presently, Home Based Care is delivered in actually all the regions of this country, pioneered by Region No.6, under Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo.

These are some of the measures that we are doing at the Ministry of Health and these are the health care interventions. I know when my good friend the Hon. Dr. George Norton gets up to speak, he would speak specifically about his little problems he is having at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. I would always say to Cde. Dr. Norton that the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC) is only one place in the health sector. *[Interruption]*

The interventions that we are doing, recognising the backdrop is... the Minister of Finance last year, made available, 17... **[Ms. Ally: Inaudible]** Ms. Ally, I would say this, you must understand that Rabbi Washington was because the PNC is. *[Interruption]* One of these days you will get the full story. Hopefully before Mr. Hamilton Green and Mr. Robert Corbin dies.

The sector expanded in excess of \$17.7 million in 2013, recognising the backdrop... **[Mr. Ramjattan: ...of Rodney’s Commission.]** Yes Mr. Ramjattan. Recognising that many of the projects and programmes that the Ministry have implemented over the last five years, the donor

support for many of those programmes, some have come to an end and some are not at the percentage where it was. The Minister of Finance recognising the new dynamic in the health sector is now making available to the health sector \$21.5 billion in the 2014 Budget allocation and we thank him most wholeheartedly for that.

As I indicated, one of the pillars of the new strategies is “*Health across the life course*”. Mrs. Lawrence spoke to the issue of elderly support and care. The Ministry of Health, recognising the need because of longevity of persons – Do you know, Mr. Speaker, on one hand you criticise the Health Care Sector for not delivering health care services and hear the contradiction, you yourself is saying that persons are living longer. Why do you think that persons are living longer? Because the health care intervention is there that was not there. It is not just living longer, it is because 20 years ago there was not the type of health care intervention that you have today – that is why people are living longer. It is simple. That is why people’s live expectancy has moved from 56 years to 72 years, as you have indicated. It is because of the health care intervention. That is what it is. They did not just start to live longer. [An. Hon. Member: What about ...] I have already answered that question.

Recognising that people are living longer, the Ministry of Health is attempting to put in place interventions. Therefore, under the auspices of the Regional Health Services of the Ministry of Health, with help from Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), we conducted training sessions where we are moving and training doctors, nurses and health care providers in geriatric care, recognising Mrs. Lawrence that the health sector is doing better and people are living longer now we have pay attention to care for the elderly - health care. That is why we have introduced Home Based Care; that is why we have introduced intervention at the elderly homes; that is why we have introduced these measures.

**Mr. Speaker:** You have five minutes within which to conclude Mr. Hamilton.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Speaker, the other issue is during the year we did surgical outreaches, where doctors are assembled and patients were screened. Last year, surgical outreaches were done in Mabaruma - three surgical outreaches, 184 patients were seen and 68 surgeries were done. In Bartica 4 surgical outreaches were done, 132 patients were seen and 88 surgeries done. [Lt.

**Col. (Ret’d) Harmon:** Where were they from?] They are from Suriname. Mr. Speaker, in

Lethem, 2 surgical outreaches, 325 patients seen and 89 surgeries were done. Two hundred and thirty five surgeries were done in the hinterland communities, via surgical outreaches.

Lethem, Bartica and the North Pakarimas – Eye Care Outreaches, Hon. Dr. George Norton. Eye Care Outreaches were done 687 patients seen, 492 patients were treated and 56 patients were referred for specialist treatment.

*4.37 p.m.*

Ultrasound services were done in Lethem and Bartica in which 434 patients were seen. In the North Pakaraimas dental services were done in which 227 patients were seen and 134 received treatment.

Mr. Speaker, the interventions by the Ministry of Health, and you would note that, again, I make this boast...I said in 2012 that for the several decades when one spoke of a doctor of Amerindian ancestry the only name came to mind was Dr. George Norton. That is not so anymore. Thanks to the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). In every hinterland community today there are doctors of Amerindian ancestry who are trained, qualified and go back to serve their communities. Dr. Norton was there for 30 years. **[Dr. Norton: I teach them... [inaudible].]** We are glad you taught them, Dr. Norton.

Mrs. Lawrence touched on the issue of cervical cancer. Again, recognising the importance of cancer in females, the Ministry of Health has launched Visual Inspection with Acetic acid (VIA) training programmes. Presently, there are 39 personnel currently providing VIA services at 19 sites across the region and Guyana – Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), NTCT, Dorothy Bailey Health Centre, Bartica, Suddie, Skeldon, West Demerara, Leonora, Campbellville, Mahaicony, New Amsterdam, Lethem, Wismar, Kitty Health Centre and the St Joseph Mercy Hospital and Pakera Hospital.

As I have said, the strategy allows for... How we plan to ensure that the strategy is successful it is to mobilise and reorient our resources, to collaborate with communities, and we have started that already, improve health literacy and to deal with intersectional actions recognising - as the new buzzword in the health sector is the social determinants of health - that health care is more than just getting sick. There are issues about the environment, and all of those issues. As I have said...

Before I close, also we are seeking to review and update health legislation. Presently, the nurses and midwife legislation was put together in collaboration with the nursing council and the nurses' association. That legislation is at the Attorney General's Chamber to go to Cabinet and then to the National Assembly.

We have done consultation on health protection and promotion legislation. That is repealing the public ordinance. The optometrist is also at the Attorney General Chambers. For the mental health legislation, consultation is to begin. There is a draft Mental Health Bill and also the tobacco control legislation. These two legislation, consultations are to commence very shortly.

As I have indicated, when I started, the Ministry of Health is appreciative, recognising the new situation in health care delivery, recognising that many of our donors will not be supporting many of the programmes and so to sustain these programmes, and to continue these interventions the Hon. Minister of Finance has indicated that he will make available \$4 billion more than what the Government had set aside last year for health care delivery.

I have outlined some of the programmes that the Ministry of Health has put in place for 2013. All of those programmes will continue and new programmes also will be put in place so that our health strategy will become a major success and, as indicated by Comrade Lawrence, people will live longer.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. T. Williams:** I rise to make my contribution to Budget 2014 presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh under the theme *A Better Guyana For All Guyanese*.

On a more personal note, before I get into the substance of what I have to say, I wish to register a concern, I believe, that 20 minutes for the backbench speakers is quite inadequate. Mr. Speaker, we are representatives for the people for the entire country...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Williams, the Speaker did not set the time. Bear that in mind. I was not the one but I will try to be flexible, but I was not the one who set the time.

**Mr. T. Williams:** I know that Mr. Speaker. I wish to speak freely in this National Assembly.

[**Ms. Shadick:** You are wasting the 20 minutes.] You do not worry how I spend my 20

minutes. For many of us, sometime the only speaking time we get in the National Assembly is on the budget presentation. I wish to state that come next year we should try to give our backbenchers at least 30 minutes.

With that said, I wish to turn my attention to what I believe are very important issues. I wish to look at this budget not just in the context of the numbers purposed and the amount of projects and programmes the Government indicates to execute, but I wish to also look at this budget in the context of the Guyanese life today, our reality, and particularly focus on the plight of our young people in Guyana.

I sat in this august Assembly yesterday expecting to find a few lapses of judgement in the presentation of the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport but I was hoping in the interest of moving the business of this critical portfolio forward to find some common ground upon which we could start that journey. I was completely disappointed to see that after eight years, with one person in charge of the same portfolio, we are essentially running blind, running in place and claiming progress.

I would like to start in the area of youth, particularly where the issues affecting our young people, our future, are being given inadequate attention.

The absence of a national youth policy. Yesterday the Hon. Minister stood and promised us the implementation of a national youth policy coming out of widespread consultations in 2013 and 2014. Permit me to refresh the Minister's memory on his history of national youth policy consultations by reading the following excerpt from an article published under the headline "National youth policy consultations in phase two".

"Stakeholders yesterday started to fine-tune a number of initiatives to respond to the challenges and concerns facing the nation's youth while at the same time creating ways to ensure their participation in the country's development... Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport Dr. Frank Anthony declared yesterday's session opened and urged active discussion and interaction and pointed out too that the new programme was geared toward empowering Guyanese youth and improving their entrepreneurial employment and leadership skills."

That article was published in *Stabroek News* in January of 2007. Almost seven years later, the same political party in power, the same Minister in place, we learn from an article in the *Guyana Times THE BEACON OF TRUTH*, October 13, 2013 that:

“The second consultation for the drafting of the National Youth Policy saw a positive response from youths when it was staged on Saturday at the Regency Suites Hotel, Hadfield Street, Georgetown.... The National Youth Policy, which is currently being crafted to address existing and emerging youth development challenges, is likely to be completed by year-end. Consultation began in September and is expected to be completed sometime this month.”

The only difference is the external agency funding agency to this initiative. In 2007 it was United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) in 2013. We are in 2014 and still there is no actual policy document, no overall vision for youth development, although a draft, I have seen, makes no mention of the 2007 consultations, although it lists a 2008/2009 UN funded process. The Minister yesterday spoke about continuing existing programmes to benefit youth, and, apparently, he believes that repeating the same thing again and again with no actual result is progress. I can also remind the Minister that recognition of need for a national youth policy started in 1992, which means that a baby born then would have come of age while the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) has failed to implement such a mechanism.

When it comes to mechanisms for our young people to have input into national and regional policy decision making, there is the usual mismanagement and neglect. Earlier this year, there was Region 7 Chairman, Gordon Bradford, complaining that that region has been without a Regional Youth Officer for the past three years with repeated calls to Dr. Anthony to rectify the problem going unanswered. Similarly, Guyana remains without any representative on the CARICOM youth ambassador programme after several years. Of course, youth policy initiatives do not exist in themselves. Certain areas of the overall environment disproportionately impact upon youth development and the budget fails to adequately identify these.

Security among youths. Nowhere in the budget, for example, is the recognition that Guyana has the fourth worst suicide rate in the entire world, a national crisis problem that disproportionately

affects our young people and this was according to the World Health Organization (WHO) since 2008. Simultaneously, those were the years we have seen consistent economic growth. I quote my friends over there.

For this year, the suicide rate in Berbice alone is competing with the national homicide rate, and the young are disproportionately affected. Just today, tragically, a thirteen-year-old boy was found hanging in Enmore, while over the weekend a ten-year-old attempted to kill himself.

When it comes to murder and violent crime, our criminal justice system continues to fail our young people, from the Sheema Mangar case to the Kirk Davis case to the murder of Trevor Rose. Guyana under this PPP administration is not a safe place for our youth and nothing seems to be done about it.

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security sought to make the case that trafficking in persons is something that disproportionately affects young, poor women from marginalised communities and exists at some acceptable minimum. The AFC would like to recognise and applaud the tremendous work done by Ms. Simona Broomes and the Guyana Women Miners Association for continuing to tackle a problem that has proven to be an inconvenient truth to this administration.

Young entrepreneurship and employment. Apart from being rid of our best and brightest minds via the continuing brain drain scenario, Guyana's youths remain largely detached from mainstream development, mostly unemployed and underemployed. I take this opportunity to echo the call of the other Members on the Opposition side of the House asking the Hon. Minister Dr. Gopaul to kindly release the unemployment figure of this nation. Please do it, Dr. Gopaul; we beg of you. Please do it before the sun goes down today. We need to know the working status of our young people. It ought not to be a secret kept with the PPP. If we will work together, let us bring the facts to the table.

Young people remain objective in this nation and attempting what they can. One only has to obey or stop at a traffic light and one will see young men and women standing in the sun all day, running to one's car with bottled water or a daily newspaper. Our young people have a heart in this nation. I would have expected, particularly, in an electioneering budget, concrete programmes focusing on youth entrepreneurship from a policy level. A multi-sectoral job



creation programme, which links Guyana Office For Investment (GO-Invest) with the Ministries responsible for Labour, Education, Industry and Youth, would have been welcomed but it is, of course, conspicuously absent.

Absent also is an investment regime in which foreign investors should ensure that they create employment for Guyanese. There was the Marriott Hotel fiasco of recent. Now Bai Shan Lin recently announced that in its plan to invest in value added forestry products in Guyana over 300 skilled persons would have been needed, unfortunately, there was no indication that any could be supplied from Guyana. There was Vitarna Holdings, after acquiring Caribbean Resources Limited (CRL) from Colonial Life Insurance Company (CLICO), in Region 7, which promised Guyanese that it would invest in value added production, instead it was shipping away our logs and forestry in its rawest form. That, I consider, is to be ripping off the nation. We need an investment regime that will hold foreign investors accountable to creating jobs in this country.

The Minister of Labour spoke boldly, not so long ago, that he and his Ministry is ready to represent the interest of workers all across Guyana, and I applaud him for that statement. On my way to this debate today, I was called by a worker, very concerned and with very alarming news from one of our extracting industries in the natural resources and environment sector, stating that management hit a worker with a spade. Now, that is not the first time we are hearing such allegations but it did not stop there. The manager continued to stone the workers with hard hats, which are commonly called helmets. It did not end there. When that worker stood up for his right, he is, as of today, fired.

I call on the Ministry of Labour and the Minister to take action to investigate those issues of abuse and trampling on the rights of Guyanese. I will give to the Minister at the break, personally, the name and details of the company... **[Dr. Singh: Why did you not...[inaudible]?** It came to me on my way to the debate so I have the opportunity now. Thank you Dr. Singh.

Let us get back to the issue of the day because I sense that my colleagues are getting very excited over there when we speak about workers.

I forget to mention that I rise to give this speech in a very strange context because earlier I heard the fight and the clamour over there for the father of the nation, and then I got it from here, and then I realised that my party does not have any claim to any particular father of the nation. I

notice that we have two fathers who are Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Trotman, so I think the Alliance For Change (AFC) is on track for great things.

For the more serious business of the day, I turn my attention to sport and the mysterious synthetic track. I will speak directly to the most glaring aspects of the sports allocation although the Minister's programme, in this regard, is as flat as the rest. I have noticed that throughout his career, one of Dr. Anthony's favourite words is "soon". World Cup Cricket audit - soon, and that was way back in 2007, Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) audit - soon, national youth policy - soon, national cultural policy - soon, copyright legislation - soon, Caribbean Press, books by local authors - soon.

In September of last year, the Minister promised that the track would be laid by the end of 2013. In January of 2013, there was the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Mr. Alfred King, promising completion of the project sometime soon. Now, two weeks ago we learn that, with the latest contractor paid and costs inflated to multiples of the original winning bid two years ago, the track is yet to finish. If it were the case that anyone in this National Assembly made a deal with a contractor to build his or her house and that contractor kept inflating costs and changing the deadline for completion he or she would stop all payments on that house, yet the Minister expects us to approve close to \$1 billion to fund mismanagement, poor accountability, on the premise that he will deliver on what has to be the world's most expensive synthetic track - soon.

We now go to culture. The Hon. Minister spoke proudly about an initial consultation on culture industries recently held. What is strange is the only indication, which I have seen, that this meeting took place is a letter from one Mr. Barrington Braithwaite, seasoned campaigner for cultural industries in Guyana, published in *Kaieteur News* of March 9, in which he wrote:

"On Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014 a meeting, symposium or workshop was held at Umana... Of course, myself, Ruel Johnson and many others, who were earning and practising cultural industries and are critics of the Minister's miserable failings, were not invited... Minister Anthony [and] Dr. James Rose have all let the ball drop, they are afraid to engage the creative community as equals..."

The Minister, who urged in his presentation yesterday that people reach across political lines to work together, neglected, of course, to explain why a consultation on creative industries held by a Jamaican expert failed to invite some of the key people involved in creative industries.

Indeed, creative industries represent the area of entrepreneurship most suitable for our young people to take advantage of, yet as a basic component of a viable creative industry environment, proper intellectual property legislation, the executive continues to drag its feet. It was laughable to hear the Hon. Attorney General spoke with disdain about lawyers photocopying, at exorbitantly price, set of documents that were externally funded and should be in the public domain when the Government, to which he is legal adviser, not only refuses to move on IP legislation, but embarrassingly facilitates the illegal infringement of copyright by opening tenders for pirated textbooks.

The development of cultural industries, of course, only makes sense in the environment of a broader national cultural policy. Please permit me to read a few excerpts from a document relevant to this critical area:

- “Guyana does not have a well articulated national cultural policy and there is a great need for one to guide administrators, practitioners and other stakeholders.”

I will read another one:

- “...there is no up to date legislation in relation to archaeology and anthropology, film-making, copyright and patent and trade marks. Some of these are presently under review and it is hoped that the copyright legislation, for instance, will shortly be enacted”

**Mr. Speaker:** You have five minutes to conclude, Mr. Trevor Williams.

**Mr. T. Williams:** I will try to very soon, Mr. Speaker. I have to do some skipping, Mr. Speaker, and that really makes my case for the extra 10 minutes, from next year.

The Sports and Arts Development Fund. One worrying recurring allocation over the past five years has been the Sport and Arts Development Fund to the tune of \$100 million. This is listed under “Subventions to other Organisations” and has been particularly troublesome since it

creates the impression that the fund can be accessed by independent organisations when in fact every area of funding in 2012 was for Government managed initiatives, including CARIFESTA participation and the Caribbean Press which has attracted more than enough controversy over the past years to warrant far greater introspection.

For example, last year the Minister stated that \$9.25 million was allocated for film, yet CineGuyana, the entity originally established by Government, but now is a non-governmental organisation (NGO), has not received a cent since the original funding in 2010, the year before elections. Now the Minister suddenly sees the need to start over, piggybacking on the Loyola Documentary Film Festival instead of building upon the gains of the Government's original programme, unless CineGuyana was original funded by just electioneering.

I want to quickly turn my attention to the National Sports Commission. This is the National Sports Commission Act and I just wish to read to you that there are a number of obligations that the National Sports Commission must follow and are not, currently, fulfilled by how it is, currently, set up.

Point 6 states:

“The Commission may establish regional sports committees in all three counties across Guyana. Each regional sports committee shall have an office in the region in which it is established.”

The situation is that we have none. It states:

“The Commission may establish advisory units to assist in the performance of its functions. It must manage the secretariat and its commissions. The Commission shall keep proper accounts and other records in respect to its operation which shall be audited by the Auditor General.”

It also states:

“The Commission shall in each year prepare a report of its activities in the last proceeding year and shall furnish such reports to the Minister no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> June. A copy of the report of activities, together with a statement of accounts audited, shall be

printed and laid before the National Assembly no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> day of September in each year.”

This Opposition, the AFC in particular, will have a difficult time in allocating and supporting funds that are going to bodies and committees which are not legally, properly and functionally constituted and where there is a question over the accountability for such funds.

I want to close on this point. I have heard numerous things said about Berbice and the sugar industry and what we want to do with it. I have one small point to make on that, and it is that the AFC, for many years, has been calling for the Public Procurement Commission. Had there be the Public Procurement Commission in place we would have had a better factory today; we would have had GuySuCo pumps and we would have Amaila Fall road with “Fip” Motilall sorted out. We want the public to appreciate what we are doing in this House and we are trying to serve this country according to the constitutional demands and requirements. Therefore we stand by our word, that is unless they are accounted for and there is transparency we would have a very difficult time and that I consider to be “working together”.

*5.07 p.m.*

Mr. Speaker, I now conclude from my speech that the PPP/C Executive and its supporters with vested interest have sought to stress the continuity of the Budget as a good thing. But if it is continuity of poor vision, poor management and completely poor accountability, then this entire National Assembly, not just the Opposition majority, has a duty to ensure that this sort of continuity is brought to an abrupt end.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport portfolio, despite having what you would presume is the advantage of an eight-year continuity of leadership and institutional direction, has been visionless, stagnated and completely without innovation. I agree with one thing that the Minister said yesterday; people are tired with the politics of frustration. The youths are tired of being promised a cultural policy in one year and seven years later there is none in place. Artistic entrepreneurs are tired that a proper national cultural policy environment is being ignored with the Government refusing to honour its own promises to look at intellectual property legislation.

Sportsmen and women are tired of haphazard management, poor recognition and little political intrusion. To paraphrase one popular song, people are fed up with the same thing over and over and over, yet the same thing is what the Minister is offering today. I hope this soon comes to an end. I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we will take the suspension now and resume promptly at 6.00 p.m.

*Sitting suspended at 5.09 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 6.04 p.m.*

**Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture [Mr. Baksh]:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his team for a well prepared and presented *Budget 2014* under the theme, *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture in Guyana accounts for more than 33% of total employment and 25% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). There has been increasing investments in agriculture with support to farmer and domestic investors, thus creating an increase in production and improved living standards for all Guyanese.

The year 2013 was a difficult year for agriculture, taking into consideration the vulnerable weather patterns we experienced. As a result, the Ministry had to extend additional services in all regions of our country. This honourable House would agree that we faced many challenges in the sugar industry due to the recent cycles of dry and flood-like conditions, managerial problems, lack of adequate human resources and need for advance technologies.

Weather forecasting is even more important today because of the impact of climate change. Agriculture is very sensitive to weather and climatic conditions. An early warning system is being developed to make farmers more aware of weather predictions and how to apply these to agriculture planning of crops and livestock.

On the other hand, 2013 was a favourable year for rice production. The rice industry of Guyana experienced another record-breaking year in 2013 with a production equivalent to more than 535,439 metric tonnes of rice, a 26.9% increase over the 2012 production of 423,000 metric

tonnes. It was the first time ever that a Caribbean country recorded more than 500,000 metric tonnes of rice in a calendar year.

Guyana's rice export for 2013 almost reached 400,000 metric tonnes compared to 334,141 metric tonnes exported in 2012. This represents export earnings of US\$239,829,389 for 2013, compared to US\$196,226,960 for the year 2012, representing an increase in earnings of 22.2%.

The Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB), has provided support to the industry through a number of mechanisms, more recently, the importation of urea fertiliser, 5000 metric tonnes of which was sold to rice farmers. This programme resulted in the price for urea being reduced by other suppliers, allowing farmers to access fertiliser for their entire acreage at lower prices than previous crops.

It is worthy to note that Guyana had successfully hosted the 12<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Week of Agriculture, which was held under the theme, *Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development*, which was held during the period 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2013. This attracted participants from South Pacific countries, Canada and the Caribbean at large. During the week, intense discussions were conducted as it relates to agro-research to enhance agriculture production in Guyana and the Caribbean region.

Guyana is on the path of developing a viable and vibrant agriculture sector by being food secure, as we have commenced a sustainable shift from subsistence agriculture to a productive agricultural industry that allows farmers to take part in the market economy. Such a shift will involve far-reaching structural changes to boost production, productivity and, eventually, incomes for farmers and cooperatives alike.

With respect to climate change adaptation, we continued to promote shadehouse cultivation as a mechanism to intensify vegetable production on a year round basis. Demonstration farms were established at St. Ignatius, Sand Hill, Maraikobai and Tarlogie. Structures were also established at Onderneeming and at Hope Estate. Also, several schools in various parts of the country are involved in same.

In 2013, our National Agriculture Research & Extension Institute (NAREI) continued to empower farming communities throughout the country with the appropriate technology to

improve production and productivity of non-traditional crops. Emphasis was also placed on the management of Acoushi ants in Regions 1, 7, 8 and 10 as well as in other communities such as Maraikobai and the Soesdyke/Linden Highway. Support was provided to the Blue Flame Women's Group in Region 1 to enhance their value-added cocoa products. From other interventions made, there has also been an increase in ginger production, especially from Region 1.

In excess of 5,000 farmers benefitted from crop production practices, fertilisers and disease management and nursery practices training sessions. Three large scale cassava farms have been established in Region 9. Similarly, the facility at Ebini will be completely rehabilitated at the cost of \$66 million.

The non-traditional crops have also performed satisfactorily for the year 2013 as overall the production of fruits and vegetables increased. The Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) has worked arduously to promote the sale of Guyanese grown and manufactured products. As such, in 2013, the Guyana Shop through the Guyana Marketing Corporation organised various expositions such as the Coconut Exposition, the Honey Exposition and the Pineapple Festival. This helped farmers, organisations and individuals who manufacture coconut, honey and pineapples to showcase and sell their various products.

Our Sophia and Parika agro-packaging facilities continue to provide facilities for farmers and exporters to use to prepare their products for export. Additionally, the refrigerated trucks and refrigerated containers will continue to be made available for farmers to use to maintain the cold chain of products destined for export.

In the area of agro-business development, the Corporation provides business development services advice to agro-processors and other agro-food manufacturers. As a result, agro-processing has evolved. We are now producing as follows in the various administrative regions: cocoa sticks, farine, crabwood oil, cream and soap, cassava bread, preserved fruits, plantain chips, virgin coconut oil, ground provision, ground coffee, chowmein, green seasoning, pepper sauce, assorted achars, fruit jams, assorted vinegar and essence, fried channa and nuts. These are all products that are on sale locally and for foreign export.



In 2014, there are plans to intensify efforts to provide support to the export activities of Guyana's non-traditional farmers to agro-processors and exporters since it is our intention to expand market information and market linkages and continue efforts in facilitating and coordinating the development of quality non-traditional agricultural products for local and export markets. Moreover, these production increases are being conducted in an environmentally friendly and socially sustainable manner in the face of climate change. We acknowledge that our farm systems and techniques can benefit from modernisation, including the use of biotechnology.

The rehabilitation of the Ebini Breeding and Research Station is a priority.

Training of some 1,247 farmers in Regions 2,3,4,5 and 6 in the areas of calf management, signs of heat in cattle, duck production techniques, broiler management, swine improvement, foot rot management, artificial insemination, piglet management, *et cetera*, was done.

Some 661 farmers benefitted and 52,557 animals were treated across the riverain and creek areas in our country.

We recognise that food security and safety is important. Guyana has been leading the way in the region with respect to chemicals management. Several outreaches and seminars were held to educate farmers on the use of chemicals. This was a significant aid during the paddy bug outbreak in 2013.

Guyana has done a remarkable job in building and maintaining a comprehensive drainage and irrigation system. There are about 500 kilometres of main irrigation canals and 1,100 kilometres of secondary canals and, similarly, about 500 kilometres of main drainage channels and 1,500 kilometres of secondary drainage channels. There is a network of sluices and pumps to aid drainage and irrigation. These facilities help farmers a lot. To date, the National Drainage & Irrigation Authority (NDIA) has a fleet of 52 excavators, eight dozers, one 22 RB dragline, 10 pontoons, three aluminium boats, five outboard engines, 46 irrigation and drainage pumps and 15 motor vehicles. This is still very much inadequate for the numerous demands that farmers are making of the Ministry.

Further, the Ministry of Agriculture, through its National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, extended infrastructure services in several regions in the following areas:

1. The acceleration of the Conservancy Adaptation Project (CAP) for the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) and extending the adaptation initiatives to the Boerasirie and Tapakuma Conservancies and the irrigation canals of Region 5 and 6;
2. The construction of additional drainage channels, like the ones at Hope/Dochfour and Cottage in Region 4, Canal Polder, the Abary River drainage facade, Black Bush Polder and other associated structures such as sluices and pumps;
3. Completion of Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary (MMA) reconstruction of Cunha sluices to improve releases into the Demerara River from the East Demerara Water Conservancy;
4. Acquiring of more fixed site and mobile pumps;
5. Improving our equipment such as excavators and bulldozers for NDIA, the MMA and the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs);
6. Maintenance of approximately 67,643 rods of drainage and irrigation canals within Mahaica, Garden of Eden, Buxton and Cane Grove Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs);
7. Maintenance of drainage and irrigation channels and canals within CDC areas such as Greenfield, Hope, Anns Grove, Two Friends, Belfield, Nabaclis, Golden Grove, Haslington, Triumph, Friendship, Kuru Kuru, Mocha, Belle West, Friendship, Linden area and Lusignan;
8. Maintenance of 250,015 rods of drainage and irrigation channels and canals within Cane Grove, Golden Grove, Victoria, Blankenburg, Den Amstel, Vergenoegen, Naamryck, Lot 52-74, Black Bush Polder, Crabwood Creek, Vreed-en-Hoop, La Jalousie; and
9. Repairs to sluices, culverts, revetment, bridges, *et cetera*.

These are all works that are ongoing, Mr. Speaker.

The cycle of change in and around the sea coast are ongoing. Siltation continues to be a serious hindrance to the free flow of water through our sea sluices. Therefore, this continues to require extensive maintenance works. As such, projections for 2014 are as follow:

1. Proposal to rehabilitate a total of 300 miles and maintain a total of 1,000 miles of canals and drains in Region 3 at Canal Polder, Den Amstel, Blankenburg, Fellowship, Vergenoegen and Naamryck; in Region 4 at Cane Grove, Mahaica, Haslington, Buxton,

Friendship, Triumph, Soesdyke; in Region 6 at Crabwood Creek, Jappa, Black Bush Polder, Nos. 54 and 57 Villages in the Berbice area; in Region 10 at Victory Valley, Christainburg, Noitgedacht, Wisroc, Green Valley and Blue Berry Hill;

2. Maintenance and cleaning of 252, 565 rods of channels with Water Users Association (WUA) areas in Regions 3, 4 and 6;
3. Maintenance and cleaning of 67,643 rods of channels within NDC areas in regions 3, 4 and 6;
4. Maintenance and cleaning of 171,658 rods of channels within Community Development Councils (CDC) groups in Regions 2,3,4,6 and 10;
5. Maintenance of other infrastructures such as sluice gates, timber bridges, access dams, and culverts in all regions; and
6. Maintenance and operation, monitoring and securing of 65 excavators, 53 pumps, draglines, *et cetera*, and provision of fuel and lubricants for operation of same.

This honourable House would agree with me that there is much need for an increase in financial and material support for this sector. With all I am explaining to this House, I, therefore, ask that support be given to this Budget.

The Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA), with branches at Mon Repos, East Coast Demerara (ECD) and on the Essequibo Coast, is the oldest institution geared to promote agriculture development through education and training of young men and women. As such, additional sums have been budgeted for 2014 to support the following projects: rehabilitation of layer pens and fish ponds, vacuum packaging, semi-green house, construction of laboratory, small food processing unit, laboratory and composition units.

Residents of Region 2 can now access important services right on the Essequibo Coast as they have benefitted from facilities such as the construction of a death and marriage certificates office, a branch of the Guyana Lands & Surveys Department, a branch of the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA), a branch of customs department, a judge court, a revenue collection office, office of the Deeds Registry, a diagnostic centre and a branch of the Guyana School of Agriculture and a technical institute.

Other projects worthy of mention are the construction of Rip Rap Sea Defence at Maria's Lodge, Zorg and Johanna Cecelia and variation works at Hampton Court, Devonshire Castle and Jib-Walton Hall.

The Essequibo Technical Institute continues to play a key role in moulding the youths in various skills such as welding, mechanic, electrical, Computer Science, *et cetera*. Much was done in terms of assisting young people, not only in Region 2, but in neighbouring regions such as Regions 1, 7, and 3. Four dormitories were set up last year. Extension work was done in Anna Regina to facilitate 100 students. Approximately \$5,043,460 is being paid to maintain these students on a monthly basis. On a yearly basis, \$55,478,060 is being spent.

At the Aurora Secondary dorm that caters for 56 students, \$2,746,067 is spent on a monthly basis and \$30,206,737 is being spent on a yearly basis.

At the Charity Secondary School dorm which caters for 54 students, the monthly maintenance cost is \$2,317,797 and the yearly cost to maintain these children and keep them under safe and secure conditions is \$25,495,767.

Wakapau, which is 16 miles from Charity, now has a secondary school established there. It has a dormitory with 62 students. On a monthly basis, \$2,366,100 is being spent to maintain these children. On a yearly basis, it is at a cost of \$26,027,100.

These are all investments in young people and we are proud to say that all nine Amerindian communities in those areas... I have heard mention from the other side about not having facility for transportation of children in the riverain areas. The children in the riverain areas are now going to Wakapau Secondary and they are now placed at Charity Secondary. The children from the Bethany and Mashabo areas are going to the Aurora dormitory and the children within the Tapakuma and Capoey area are all going to the Anna Regina Secondary dorm.

The facilities are there. There is no need, like before, for us to have costly transportation and security for these children. These facilities are really and truly helping the hinterland and riverain areas in Region 2 and helping children to intensify their education.

That is why I am saying that today with the conditions in the education system, there are no slow learners or high flyers. The same slow learners can be high flyers. I have experienced this in

Region 2 where children with two subjects at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate level are going to the technical institute or the Guyana School of Agriculture branch, doing one year certificate courses, moving on to the two-year diploma courses and some of them are moving from there to the University of Guyana (UG). That is the access we are giving to young people in the region.

The region also received additional assistance in agriculture, in health facilities, in education and in infrastructure. Recently, 71 road projects in various communities in the region were done. Four mini excavators were given to the region to assist with internal drainage of the communities. Work is ongoing to develop 5,500 acres of agriculture land in the Aurora area.

Further, with the collaboration of the Ministries of Local Government and Regional Development and Public Works, there have been improvements of access roads, construction of farm-to-market roads, dams, bridges, proper drainage and irrigation channels, revetment, head regulators, canals and drains with their associated structures such as sluices, box kokers and pump station, and flood mitigation structures such as empoldering structures are among the infrastructural development works slated for completion in 2014.

I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Bulkan, mention that the Regional Executive Officer (REO) and the Regional Chairman (RC), with regards to using the different types of vehicles, say that the RC is monopolising the use of the 4x4 pick-up. I just want to say that I had the privilege to travel across... I think I was one of the pioneers who travelled with an all-terrain vehicle from Yupukari, which is the first village from the Kaieteur Falls, right across the Region 9 in Chinowieng. It took us five days and five nights. If the Regional Chairman really and truly wants to know the terrain, well he must travel with an all-terrain vehicle. That is more appropriate. Certainly, the 4x4 vehicle can be used jointly by both parties, but I think it is more necessary for them to use it to give additional assistance to people who may be sick and so on. I had the experience during the 1980s of walking 30 to 40 miles from one village to the other. Today, fortunately, all-terrain vehicles and even 4x4 vehicles are travelling across Region 8. I have seen that with my own eyes. I, myself, have done it for five days and five nights.

My dear Friend, Mr. Keith Scott, asked why we are spending more moneys in the rice industry. That is the same problem we have had in terms of not spending much money on the rice industry

during the periods of the 1970s and 1980s and it caused us so many problems and economic hardships in our country.

It is the reason why when we took office in 1992 there was US\$2.1 billion in debt. It was because moneys were not being spent in the right economic ventures, especially in the areas of agriculture and the rice industry. The East Coast mill was sold during that time. The Wakenaam mill was sold during that time. The West Coast mill was sold out during the 1980s. The mill in Anna Regina was sold out.

Today, we are quarrelling about intake and about people not getting price. We are quarrelling about all kinds of things, but we are not talking about what the problem in the past was which caused us to sell out.

We were producing 600 bags of paddy per crop. Today, we are producing over one million bags of paddy every crop and that is because of the investment we are putting into the rice industry.

I have also heard that we should look about doing more for young people. I have seen in the Budget that money will be spent for many things. In the area of youth development in Region 2 and several other parts I have gone to, the cricket ground today is far better off than what we had in the past.

*6.32 p.m.*

I spoke to the previous Chairman when I took office in Region 2. He said that he gave me a good wicket to play on. I said, "It is true. The office might appear as the good wicket but if you want to score you have to hit six only. You cannot make strokes for one or two because the outfield was so atrocious." Today, it is much better than before.

The agriculture sector has already been the vehicle that has propelled Guyana forward and which will play a pivotal role in Guyana being a high middle income country by the year 2020. I wish to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying that much was done and we must be honest and we are certain that we should be honest politicians, honest social workers and, if we are really and truly honest to ourselves, moving throughout Guyana...everyone, even people coming in from Suriname, Brazil, Venezuela and North America are telling us that they have never seen while travelling through on the East Coast, on the East Bank, on the Essequibo Coast not only lights,

but the amount of new housing communities. Look at the new buildings that are going up. Look at the several banks that are going up. Look at the new infrastructure that is going up. Look at the amount of development that is taking place.

Today's children are not like the children of my days, several of us are more aged. When we were going to school, it was different. Today's children are growing up with what is called a middle-class mentality, thanks to this Government because they are having better access to education. They are not the ones who are going to the back dam anymore to cut rice or to bring out paddy from the field. They are the ones who are going to the technical institutes. They are the ones who are going to the multilateral school that we established. Those are the ones who are going to the University of Guyana. Those are the ones who are becoming dentex. Those are the ones who are becoming teachers. Those are the ones who are becoming nurses and so on. They are not like the children of our days when we were having difficult times in getting a sound education.

One should understand the psychology of this Government helping young people. The young people in the sugar belt are not going like their parents did before to cut cane; maybe 10% or 15%. Ninety to 95% of them are going to have a higher education. One can find them in every institution and this Government is giving them that opportunity. The Government is giving the private sector an opportunity to invest to widen the scope for employment of the young people. You must be honest my dear Comrades on both sides; opportunities are there; facilities are there. Every single community... This is not only the condition in Georgetown or in the coastal belt. If one goes into the riverine area, if one goes into the hinterland area, these are the same facilities children are having, young people are having, like others in Georgetown or the city area.

Going through the Pomeroon into the Region 1 area used to take two days, sometimes, to get to Mabaruma from Charity. Today, one can go both ways within eight hours and get back to Charity. One can travel and go to Kwabanna. You can come from Kwabanna and get to Georgetown, do your business and get back to Kwabanna. It should take us from two to three days because of the facility that we have provided.

The secondary school at Mabaruma is taking care of children from Parakeese, Waramuri and Hymacabra, and these are areas where never in the past children had opportunity to go to a

secondary school. The hinterland opportunities are wider today and transportation is much easier today than before.

I wish to say that the health sector in our region has been transformed tremendously with the assistance with the Cuban doctors. We do not have the same problems that we had in the past where we had to fly every single person to come to Georgetown to have medical treatment. We have surgeons there. We have more doctors there to take care of many kinds of illnesses facing the people in Region 2.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, my dear Comrades all, in this noble House, I wish to ask of us to be conscious Guyanese. We should have the heart to say that we are seeing development. There are problems; there would always be problems. Whichever Government comes into office would face problems. There are difficulties. There would be difficulties, but what I believe in is a collective understanding as to the approach on where we want to go – where we were, where we are and where we are planning to go. I think this Government, through this Budget and previous budgets, has always planned a direction to ensure that Guyana moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank you very much for giving me, again, this opportunity at this point in time to deliver my little budget speech here this evening. *[Applause]*

**Mr. D. Trotman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2014 Budget presentation by the Hon. Ashni Singh is the third which I have had the dubious privilege of listening to.

I had eagerly looked forward to the Minister's dissemination of information in respect to his plans for 2014 but sad to say the end of the Minister's monologue left me wondering what's new. I say 'what is new' deliberately because, to my ears, in the main, it was nothing but a regurgitation of the issues he addressed in the first and second years with the usual famous boast made at the end of each presentation which always indicate that the Budget for that year is "Guyana's largest budget ever". At this time, I wish to say a special thank you to my Colleague, the Hon. Carl Greenidge, for taking the time to put into context the issue of the largest Budget ever.

As in the case of last year's budget, I would like to make a small contribution to the debate in the area of Governance.



The three-paragraph section on Governance appears on pages 63 to 64 of the Budget Speech, but the treatment borders on the trivial and dismissive. One paragraph tersely refers to the impasse on the Anti-Money Laundering Bill; the second paragraph even more briefly refers to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption and then aimlessly states that “Guyana’s report and the report of the OAS Mechanism for the Implementation of the Convention Against Corruption (MESICIC) on its review of Guyana are now publicly available”. The third paragraph gives a few selected examples of ad hoc consultations with selected stakeholders. However, the Minister, in a moment of sober reflection, will want to agree that the issue of governance is a much more structural and multifaceted phenomenon.

Good Governance requires inclusion of the following:

1. Sharing of information and timely disclosure;
2. Transparency and accountability;
3. Recognition of Parliament and the Judiciary as sources of authority, besides the Executive;
4. A Capacity to compromise;
5. Establishment of key institutions and commissions;
6. Effective implementation and praxis of these institutions;
7. Integrity and public disclosure of parliamentarians’ assets;
8. Non-corruptibility in the issuance of contracts and conduct of ministers and public officials;
9. A less than overbearing central government system vis-à-vis local government; and
10. Meaningful power sharing and decentralisation.

I have listed some of the salient aspects of good governance to remind the Minister of Finance of what should also constitute the process and path, as he puts it, to “A Better Guyana for All Guyanese”.

In reference to his citing of the money laundering impasse, I would also like to inform the Minister, his Colleagues and the unyielding President of Guyana of a celebrated principle called a “Single Undertaking” that underlies international trade negotiations: Nothing is agreed until Everything is agreed.

The Minister of Finance is fulsome in his praise and trumpeting of the 5% growth rate achieved by the economy of Guyana, forgetting that this is what would be expected since the country is rising from a very low economic base, but permit me to state that if we were fortunate enough to have good governance, instead of the current perversion, the economy would probably have grown by 10%, no less. Such a stellar achievement is not possible in this current regime, partly because bad governance results in poor project choice, corrupt contracting of incompetents, distortion of economic decision making by cronyism and partisan political considerations and sub-optimal levels of capital investment by both foreigners and locals because of the uncontrolled levels of crime.

The Minister also wallows in self praise by saying that it is, “Government’s attention to stable macro-economic fundamentals and prudent public financial management, that has contributed to the economic resilience we have achieved...” This can be found on page 7. An objective observer can equally state that the 5% growth rates would have been achieved regardless of Government’s efforts. What indeed has been Government’s contribution to the following?

Firstly, drug proceeds have been pouring into Guyana and construction and other commercial activities have been the beneficiaries without any major arrests of the money launderers.

Second, substantial remittances from abroad have also helped to fuel construction and retail activity.

Third, and very importantly, the most high performing and export related activity has been...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Trotman, one minute please.

**Mr. Ali:** Mr. Speaker, a very important statement was just made, by the Hon. Member, that needs urgent clarification. He said that the construction sector is a result of drug proceeds and money laundering. If the Hon. Member cannot provide evidence to justify this false claim, I think it will be extremely irresponsible of him and it can be read out of context by many hardworking Guyanese who are building and expanding their businesses and their entities in our society. I am calling on the Hon. Member to provide the evidence from which he formed this basis. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Trotman, could you repeat what you said, please?

**Mr. D. Trotman:** Mr. Speaker, this is what I said: “What indeed has been Government’s contribution to the following? First, drug proceeds have been pouring into Guyana and construction and other commercial activities have been the beneficiaries without any major arrests of the money launderers.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, thank you. Hon. Member Mr. Ali, the Member did not name anyone. He said “into the sector”. He did not say whether 10% of the sector or 90% of it is affected. I believe that I have read sufficient data and analyses on Guyana which suggest, indeed, that there is some illicit proceeds of narcotics and other illicit trades in every sector in this country so I believe that the statement is general enough so as not to offend you. I know that you head the Government’s aspect of that sector but I do not believe that the statement, in any way, is offensive and, in fact, it reflects quite accurately what is an accepted fact - that narco-trafficking is indeed infiltrating into various, if not all, sectors of this country and whether it be the legal system...all. It is a known fact and I only yesterday read an analysis on our economy and that was quite palpably stated.

Go ahead, please, Mr. Trotman.

**Mr. D. Trotman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second, substantial remittances from abroad have also helped to fuel construction and retail activity.

Third, and very importantly, the most high-performing and export related activity has been as a result of hardy gold miners braving the elements in an unforgiving interior environment without Government provision of adequate road access or requested fuel subsidies to take advantage of fortuitously high international gold prices.

A good question is: what remedial governance related actions the PPP/C regime will employ when the gold price reverts to historical norms and the reserve pool of young unemployed swells again to alarming proportions? In this regard, also, it should be noted that receipt of worker remittances “declined by US\$141.1 million to US\$328.2 million”, page 7, probably reflecting a tapering off of the residential housing boom. Also, international foreign exchange reserves at the end of 2013 only amounted to US\$776.9 million, equivalent to 3.9 months of import cover, compared with the five months of import cover that obtained in the previous year. In addition, implementation of anti-money laundering legislation may reduce the flow of illicit funds. Storm

clouds are gathering and growth sustainability is in question. Moreover, Guyana has not seen it fit to establish a stabilisation fund unlike, for example, Trinidad and Tobago which, before the advent of the global financial and economic crisis, had built up in good times a Heritage and Stabilisation Fund in order to cope with inevitable hard times. So much for good governance and contingency planning.

One means of bolstering the country's resilience is ensuring that all economic and social actors are involved. In this regard, there is an important role for enhanced local governance. There is need for greater empowerment of the people and this can be achieved via a strengthening of the Municipalities and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils wherever they exist and active revitalisation of the economies in the more depressed communities with income and employment generation measures.

However, the current central government regime, imbued with the socialist tenets of democratic centralism, has seen it fit to wage war against the local government organs by displacing, dismantling and disembodying same, refusing to make available expected fiscal subventions and declining to give permission for revenue raising measures. It is instructive that an opposite process of decentralisation and devolution of power is taking place in other countries. For example, In the European Union, as shares of total government expenditure in 2012, central government accounted for 37%, state government for 8%, local government for 23% and social security funds for 32%. With respect to total government expenditure in 2012, relatively high shares of local government expenditure are observed in Denmark - 61%, Sweden - 49%, Finland - 40%, Norway - 34%, Netherlands - 32% and Italy - 29%. This can be found in the Eurostat European Commission May 2013 Report. The figure in Guyana is probably less than 5%.

The assault on the local government system in Guyana must come to an end. Presidential assent to local government reform legislation must be completed. Elections must take place this year.

I wish to turn my attention to the performance of the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and, in the process, address the proposed allocations earmarked for the regional administrations.

Mr. Speaker, on this let me begin by saying that without a doubt, the performance of the Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government in 2012 and 2013 left a lot to be desired. This

trend continues in 2014. To my mind, there seems to be a lot of confusion on the part of the persons charged with the responsibility of overseeing the functioning of this Ministry.

I note that the Ministry's Mission Statement enunciates the following tasks: supervise and maintain the legal regulatory framework of the system of local and regional administration, encourage and facilitate the economic development of the Regions, promote the continued integration of the hinterland communities into the wider Guyanese society and encourage self-sufficiency and social development in the hinterland regions. What is implied in these tasks is that development must take place within the legal structures of the system and for the benefit of all of the people who live, work, play and die within Regional Administrative and Local Government communities.

I submit here, Sir, that when one examines the functioning of the Ministry, the inescapable conclusion which will be arrived at is that the Ministry has not been operating within the boundaries of the law and for the equal benefit of all of the people who fall within the respective communities. Too often we hear complaints of the relevant Ministers using the resources of the state to advance the partisan political interest of the party in Government and imposing their will on certain non-PPP/C administrative bodies while, at the same time, ignoring the pleas of elected officials in these bodies to facilitate their functioning in keeping with the law.

If truth be told, the reason why every year the Auditor General is forced to issue his scathing comments on the operations of the Regional Administrations has to do with the fact that the Regional Administrators are doing their own thing as a result of the restraints placed on elected Councillors by the REOs and, by extension, the Minister.

The Minister may wish to deny being involved in any way in the harnessing of Councillors in carrying out their legitimate functions. However, until such time as he can justify why the several calls to him by Councillors from Region 4 and 8 RDCs, just to name two, to be provided with the resources to monitor the works which have allegedly been done on behalf of the people, until he can to the satisfaction of members of this honourable House provide us with an answer to this riddle, he will continue to be accused of collaborating to prevent Regional Councillors from carrying out their duties, the Auditor General will continue to make his scathing remarks and the people will continue to be denied value for money in the execution of projects.

We have had cause on several occasions over the last three years to speak in this honourable House to the obstructionist methods of the Regional Executive Officers. The Auditor General himself has provided numerous instances of payments for shoddy work, overpayments of money for work done and payments for work not done in the regions. Members of the Public Accounts Committee from both sides of the House have expressed alarm, disgust and anger at the regularity at which these offences are being committed and yet nothing has been done or is being done to bring a halt to these scams. Yes, scams are what they are and I dare the Minister to say differently. No one has been surcharged and there has been no instance of the police being called in to examine this escalating criminal situation. We cannot and should not ignore the fact that the people are being poorly served, not by their elected officials, but by those persons employed as administrative officials within the system. All of these things are happening while the Minister tinkers with a system that, potentially, if given the opportunity to work, can play a meaningful role in the development of people.

Let me, at this time, remind the Minister that in carrying out his functions, he has a duty to ensure that the people can contribute to a system of governance which they have confidence in. The people are allowed, under the aegis of Local Government, the right to elect their own officials and not to have people foisted on them. Sir, I wish to reiterate something I said when we debated the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill a few weeks ago:

“People want garbage free communities; they want qualified administrators capable of quick, efficient responses to flood and deteriorating health situations and they want to elect their own officials. What they do not want are hand-picked hacks and dunderheads who are incapable of recognising their nose hole from their posterior, and, more importantly, they are fed up with the Minister’s presence and his micro-management of the system.”

That position is as true today as when I first said it. I, therefore, wish to use this opportunity to call on the Minister to abandon...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Trotman, you have five minutes within which to conclude.

**Mr. D. Trotman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, therefore, wish to use this opportunity to call on the Minister to abandon the insulting ridiculous position he holds which says that people are not

ready for local government elections and I urge him to move with haste to appoint the date when local government elections are to be held in Guyana. That is what the people want and it is what they must have.

I have looked at the allocations made for the regions. My Colleague, Mr. Hon Ronald Bulkan, has eloquently dealt with them and I do not believe that I need to add very much to what he has said, but I want to say one thing in relation to the allocations for Regions 1, 7, 8 and 9, in particular Region 8, which provides the greatest logistical problems in relation to the delivery of services to the people in that region. To my mind, the proposed allocations for those regions fall far short of what is required to meaningfully impact the manifold problems which plague these communities.

Additionally, the reduction of expenditure with respect to public works in Region 8, bearing in mind what the situation on the ground is, is, to my mind, worrying and frightening. What are the reasons for this reduction? Does it have to do with the inability of the Administration to spend the voted provisions in 2013? If that is the case, the thing to do is not to penalise the people by reducing the allocations, but to remove the administrator and replace him with someone who is competent and who understands the need to get things done in a timely fashion.

In spite of the contributions that Region 8 has been making to the country's coffers, it continues to be denied the degree of financial support from Central Government which is required to lift it out of the doldrums. The reality is that life in that region, especially for people in Sub-Region 1, is a far cry from what it should be. The Government should, therefore, move to adapt a more even-handed approach in respect to the developmental needs of the people in that and other hinterland regions.

Finally, I believe the inadequacies, the weaknesses, the failings, of the 2014 Budget have already been and will continue to be appropriately addressed by those of us on this side of the House as we continue to engage the debate of this year's Estimates. I believe the efforts of pointing out the shortfalls in Minister Ashni Singh's proposals for this year should be seen for what they are - comprehensive, objective criticisms by those of us on this side of the House. The views expressed have nothing to do with spitefulness or vindictiveness, but are formed out of a desire to take Guyana beyond where it is presently. The criticisms provide us with an opportunity to

reflect on and to reformulate some of the proposals and to re-present them in a more acceptable form. I hope Government is capable of doing this because, if it is not, those of us who represent the APNU and, I daresay, the AFC will join in ensuring that the Budget will not go further than where it is at this particular point in time.

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

**Minister of Public Service [Dr. Westford]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Permit me to take this opportunity to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, and his hardworking officials for yet another well crafted budget for 2014. This Budget reflects the Government's commitment to the most vulnerable, with particular emphasis on our children, youth, older persons and people with disabilities.

*7.02 p.m.*

During the current financial period, we will embark on a nationwide frontline service delivery improvement initiative, focusing on the quality of the services we render, which is geared at providing a better life for all.

There are a number of elements of the developmental equation that are often very hard to quantify, yet are fundamental to achieving the outcomes we seek. The first of these is the quality of the services that Government delivers. When people experience poor service delivery, our projects fail. Then not only are citizens denied those services to which they are entitled, but in turn, their capacity to contribute further to the development process, is undermined. Unless our policies are implemented efficiently, courteously, honestly and enthusiastically, we will achieve far less than we intend and which our people surely deserve.

Our growing economy and rising standards of living have resulted in increased demands for new and better roads, more ports for mooring, increased and improved water, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure.

Over the years, this Government has invested in infrastructure that was either woefully rundown or non-existent in some cases. This 2014 Budget seeks to maintain that trend and also increase the sums allotted on much needed social infrastructure, such as I mentioned before, water electricity, schools, roads, health facilities and housing among others.



It must be noted that specific emphasis was placed on returning Georgetown to its long lost grandeur by the allocation of \$500 million towards a clean-up exercise. Surprisingly, there were lots of adverse reactions emanating from some Members of this House. It is my view that the unsightly state of our beloved city must be of grave concern to all proud Guyanese, more so, to all of us in this House. I, therefore, urge my colleagues on the other side of this House to not only criticise this initiative but to also present their ideas in making this exercise a success so that together we can restore Georgetown to its long lost coveted title of the Garden city of the Caribbean.

We have heard the criticism that there is nothing for poverty alleviation in this Budget. This is ludicrous. The reality is that all of the members embodied in this 2014 Budget are geared towards alleviating and ultimately diminishing poverty in our country to negligible figures.

It is widely acknowledged by research that paid employment is the best way to lift vulnerable families out of poverty, and that is why this Government is focused on helping those vulnerable families by creating conditions for investors to open new businesses which will create much needed jobs. The Hon. Minister Irfaan Ali during his presentation yesterday explained how every new dollar invested through this Budget will translate into income for families.

Not only are we creating the enabling environment for investment, the Government through its social welfare policies is equipping vulnerable groups to become self-sufficient. We heard presentation from the Hon. Minister of Human Services on the Women of Worth and Single Parent Initiatives where persons are given the skills and financial assistance to create employment for themselves and as such assist in alleviating their state of poverty.

For the financial year of 2014, the total Budget available for the Public Service Ministry is \$830 million. We have accepted that there will always be pressure on the resources availed to us to undertake the work before us. This propels us to seek greater efficiency and prudence in the use of our allotted resources. We are not deterred or overwhelmed; instead, our resolve is toughened.

The Public Service Ministry will this year call on all public servants to embrace discipline in the implementation of their various projects; to comply with all established norms, standards and statutes, and so disallow for the several complaints we get coming to this House from the Public

Accounts Committee. They should also have compassion for the employees and the public we serve, and ensure there is efficiency in all our performances.

Hon. Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, a highly productive, efficient and disciplined Public Service is not a luxury nor is it a matter of intellectual and political pontificating. It is a primary ingredient towards the achieving of sustainable growth and development of our country.

What I request from the populace is simple: where the public servants do good, please affirm them. A great deal that we take for granted is done by some hardworking, dedicated people. When they fall short of their responsibility do not hesitate to complain and insist on proper treatment. Do not tolerate mediocrity, because we are not a people who celebrate mediocrity.

Mr. Speaker, may I voice my disgust at the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman's reference to a selected few members of the Public Service when he referred to them as not being able to determine their nose hole from their posterior. I think we need to have regard and respect for our public servants. And as I said before, when they do wrong and make mistakes let us not condone them; let us say so.

The reforms we have embarked upon in the public sector will ensure that we build a public service, capable and oriented towards meeting the developmental aspiration of our people and our country. It is a constitutional imperative that we dare not fail in realising.

Mr. Speaker, Colleagues, imagine a world where every worker felt appreciated, respected and supported; where every worker is dedicated, committed and gives eight hours of every day to working productively. [Mdm. Speaker, Sir, I am accustomed at this hour the Hon. Member Mrs. Deborah Backer normally takes the chair. I am wondering if Mr. Williams will do so.] The Hon. Member Mrs. Volda Lawrence during her presentation, to the concern I would want to feel of everyone in this August House, spoke about our young children who were exposed to alcohol, drugs and prostitution in some instances. And, Sir, I wondered where were their parents. But as a Government, and I agree to some extent with Ms. Lawrence, we ought to fill that void where the parents do not live up to standard. And as such we have been in 2013, and will continue in 2014, training a cadre of psychologists who will be assigned to the Ministry of Human Service and the Ministry of Education. **[Mr. B. Williams:** You said that two years ago. They are finished

training yet?] For the Hon. Member's information it takes four years and six months to train a psychologist. I said psychologist; I did not say a technician.

Imagine a world where every child was taught in an environment that is conducive for learning, where every child feels cared for and every child will give the best of his childhood, learning in the full knowledge that his efforts are the most important investment this country's needs; imagine a country where every parent and adult takes their responsibility for the education of their children; imagine what a foundation we would build for this country.

We have gone a long way in addressing the social needs of our people by providing decent shelter, water, electricity, healthcare facilities, schools, social security services, housing, roads and other infrastructure; the list is long. A lot still needs to be done, but with our prudent and sound economic policies we will see the job through. We could not have done these things and we could not do more if we did not have responsive, dedicated and committed public servants who are motivated, willing, and capable of carrying out our developmental mandate.

In order to improve the academic prowess of our human capital the Public Service Ministry will continue its aggressive scholarship and training policy in the fields of health, education, agriculture, water resources, engineering and information technology. More emphasis will be placed this year on the training of specialists in the medical field, in specialities such as obstetrics and gynaecology, neurology, paediatrics, oncology and pathology. Already we have five such specialists in training. Also, we will be training most needed specialists in the field of hydrometeorology, as we just heard from the Hon. Minister of Agriculture when he lamented the need for skilled staff in that area. This aggressive training and upgrading of skills will ensure that we maintain a constant availability of highly competent staff.

The Public Service Ministry and the Guyana Public Service Union have recommenced meeting this year to discuss workers issues. We are now piloting an arrangement where we will restore our negotiations formations and will soon introduce a dispensation on how we deal with salary increases. I have heard two speakers on the opposite side of this House mentioning that there is no salary increase for public servants in the Budget. This is misleading and inaccurate. If I remember well it was the very Members of the Opposition who chastised the Government for unilaterally imposing salary increases. We are therefore allowing the outcome of the collective

bargaining process between the Government and the Guyana Public Service Union to determine the percentage of salary increases.

This administration shall continue to support any scheme that would improve the welfare of the entire workforce. We will continue to work with the trade unions to ensure that staff are accorded maximum available employment benefits. And I repeat, available employment benefits.

We are confident that we are on course to rebuild the trust seemingly lost between us and organised labour. A test case is in the way we manage negotiations to conclude bargaining processes. We will set deadlines together.

Hinterland development is of paramount importance to this administration, and it is for this reason that over the years tangible funds have been allocated to augment this developmental process. In this 2014 Budget the regional administration of Region 7 will receive funds to execute the following projects: funds are available for the rehabilitation of administration building at Bartica; there will be the completion of two schools, one at Itaballi and one at Kaburi; rehabilitation and extension of the primary schools at Chinowieng and Imbaimadai in the Upper Mazaruni and Karatabo; there is going to be construction of teachers quarters at Issano in the Middle Mazaruni; construction of sanitary blocks at Paruima and Itaballi primary schools; there will be construction of two health posts, one at Winiperu and Kartabo; the rehabilitation and extension of health posts at Kaburi and Batavia; installation of solar systems for health posts at Winiperu and Karatabo; also installation of solar systems at primary schools at Paruima, Kwebenang, and Kanguruma; there is going to be the purchase of an x-ray processor and film hopper, haematology machines, blood storage refrigerator, diathermy pads, infant warmers, drip stands, beds, and filing cabinets to equip the region's health facilities. There is going to be the purchase of an ambulance, an ATV, boats and outboard engines for the health sector; purchase of furniture and equipment for the schools; purchase of boats and engines for the regional education sector; there is going to be construction of the river bank revetment at Byderabo; there is construction of the bridge which is in disrepair at Phillipai; there is construction and rehabilitation of roads at Agatash and Tract X, Caribese Hill.

Much needed rehabilitation will also be done on the Bartica/Potaro road through the budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Public Works. And needed works will be done at the airstrips at Paruima and Phillipai since these are in dire need of repairs.

It is expected that the aforementioned interventions will enhance the livelihood of the residents of this Region and improve their tourism attractiveness. The Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott said that the Hon. Member Irfaan Ali mentioned last year that he was expecting yachts to visit the Essequibo River, and was querying whether there were any such appearances. May I inform this Hon. House that in 2013 there were 50 yachts visiting the Essequibo River, and they spent an average of 21 days. In 2014 plans have already been made for the visits of 75 such yachts of which Bartica and its environs will be the recipients of much needed resources.

When this 2014 Budget is objectively perused its holistic approach to poverty alleviation is blatant. We have heard this Budget being described by a Member of this House as a "repair and maintenance" Budget, but it must be understood that in order not to disrupt the infrastructural developmental progress that has occurred under this PPP/C administration over the past 20 years, repair and maintenance of structures is vital. It must be noted that simultaneous to the maintenance and repair of existing structures, new installations such as schools, health facilities, roads, bridges, airports, and hydro project dams will be constructed.

Budget 2014 must not and cannot be viewed in isolation. It must be viewed as a link in the Guyana social and economic developmental chain. There is no denying that through the PPP/C Government's prudent macroeconomic policies, Guyana has experienced seven years of uninterrupted growth and is poised to continue that trend.

Over the next 12 days everyone in this House will expound on their interpretation of this Budget but it must not be lost on any of us that we are seen as leaders by our respective constituents. Once again for emphasis let me say that we are regarded as leaders in this House. So let us conduct ourselves and our business as such. Let us make constructive criticisms where it is warranted and, simultaneously, let us make objective recommendations for improvements. Let us leave a legacy of meaningful engagement for our future leaders, our young people, to follow.

There is a popular song that was sung by, if not all of us, most of us while we were at school. Were I to be speaking at a different forum I would have requested all present in this House to

joint in singing this song. But seeing that I have the floor at the moment I want to seek the indulgence of yourself and my colleagues, not to sing the song since I am not artistically endowed, but to repeat the words of the song. The name of the song is “*Let us Co-operate.*”  
*[Noisy Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, okay. It appears you got your song, but you may still proceed with the words.

**Dr. Westford:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. I will still read the words. I will read the first verse only. It says:

Let us cooperate for Guyana;

Let us cooperate for our land;

Let us resolve to fight together;

See we do it right together;

Can we do it?

Yes, we can.

Each man must do his best for his comrades;

Each man must do his best for his land;

Each must resolve to help another;

Learn to call his neighbour brother;

Can we do it?

Yes, we can.

Each group must do its best for the region;

Each group must do its best for the land.

Each group must sacrifice a little;

Learn to do without a little;

Can we do it?

Yes, we can.

The regions must unite for the country;

The regions must unite for the land;

Each region has its chosen mission;

But they all have one ambition;

Can we do it?

Yes, we can.

Let us cooperate for Guyana;

Let us cooperate for our land;

Let us resolve to fight together;

See we do it right together;

Can we do it?

Yes, we can.

We have lots of challenges to overcome but we can only surmount them if we do it together. What we need is more productive collaboration to the benefit of all our people, should we fail history will judge us harshly. So let us move this country forward together. Once again I am asking as one people, one nation, aspiring one destiny.

I thank you. [*Applause*]

7.32 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we are at that point in time when we could take a suspension.

**Members:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** I said “could” take, but I suggest that we proceed. I will invite the Hon. Member Mr. Winston Felix to make his presentation. However,... [*Interruption*] One second Hon. Members. Hon. Members given the facts, I said today that I will try to impress on Members that I be given some discretion. Mr. Felix is the Shadow Minister of a very important and critical sector – the security sector. [*Interruption*] You may and you may get it. So I am going to ask that Mr. Felix be given some extra time. I am also prepared to suggest that if there be any frowning on the fact that he be given some extra time that he makes his presentation from the front benches, if a Member is prepared to give up his or her seat, to allow Mr. Felix to make his

presentation from the front. *[Interruption]* If not, I would say Mr. Felix, I sense that you may, given the excellent admonition that just came from the Minister about collaboration and cooperation and what can be achieved by working together, I sense that the House is prepared to allow you to make your presentation.

Mr. Felix, you can stay there and speak, I suspect. Go ahead, stay there.

**Mr. Felix:** Mr. Speaker... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay Hon. Members, please settle down. If not, we will take the break. Go ahead Mr. Felix.

**Mr. Felix:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes please.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Indicated to you the discussions with the Chief Whip and myself, Ms. Amna Ally, we had agreed, in fact she had proposed and we agreed, to the front benchers and the Ministers having a total of 50 minutes. There was no recommendation to do with any shadows that are not in the front bench. In fact, Ms. Ally was extremely strident and forceful in her views. Mr. Felix is a back bencher and therefore, for him to get the 50 minutes, someone in the front bench should relieve themselves of their seat and let him move into the front bench. It sounds foolish, but it is an issue of principle. I think the next time Ms. Ally and I discuss the budget, we will have to have exceptions to the exceptions. We cannot be saying that front benchers only and Ministers and then all of a sudden switch course.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we have agreements and this was never raised in the agreement.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well thank you. May I be heard Hon. Members. I would like to say a few things. I have been given every Member who has spoken more time than has been allotted. Secondly, given the configuration of the Opposition's benches, a person who holds a portfolio would ordinarily be seated here. If you look at the Government's benches, yes the Government's benches goes around. That is the second point I wish to make. The third point I wish to make ... *[Interruption]* Well these are shadow Ministers. The third point I wish to make is that last year I



remember I defended Ms. Teixeira and her right to go beyond the 20 minutes because I felt that her portfolio of governance necessitated her speaking. Ms. Ally did exactly as you did, she objected. I sought to prevail and Ms. Ally said that the portfolio that Ms. Teixeira holds dictates that she speaks for 20 minutes. I found that she should not be restricted to 20 minutes. In the instant of National Security, and Home Affairs, I am asking. The forth point I want to make is that the Standing Orders prohibit a Member from speaking outside of their allotted seat. So by inviting it may look, for appearances, altogether right, but I would be knowingly violating or encouraging the violation of a Standing Order.

I am asking in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that was so nicely adumbrated a few minutes ago, that we make this exception as I intend to add to the extension we made for Ms. Teixeira, when the time comes for her to speak, I will be doing as I did last year. I do not know if there is going to be an objection, but I believe that given her portfolio as the Government's advisor, she should not be treated as an ordinary back bencher, whether Ms. Teixeira wishes it or not.

Hon. Members we have made excellent time, this is an exception that I am asking for, not Ms. Ally.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, one correction. The issue of me in the last two budgets had to not be in relation to me being Presidential Advisor, it had to be with me being the Chief of this Parliament. Secondly, Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** With respect Ms. Teixeira, I did say that you were the governance advisor and I believe that you should speak.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Felix is free to speak, no one is stopping him, but his side will get up and ask for the extensions, as per norm for anyone in the back benches.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well.

**Ms. Teixeira:** But it is unfair for us to have a decision of Ministers and front benchers, no representation made and then in the middle of this, suddenly the rules change.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well you can blame me.

**Ms. Teixeira:** I am not blaming you Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you because the representation was not made by Ms. Ally. I am saying that at the beginning and I have been giving each Member, on both sides and my trusted assistant can attest to this, I have been giving extra minutes because some Members have been in a good flow and I have been giving extensions. So I ask that we proceed. Mr. Felix, do you understand the cloud under which you operate? But I know that, as an elected member, you should be able to discharge your duty.

**Mr. Felix:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker for your intervention. I promise to make every effort not to overshoot the time span allotted to me. I rise to make my contribution to the 2014 Budget Debate under the theme, "*A better Guyana for all Guyanese.*" Hardly any difference between this theme and the motto of the partnership I represent. I sincerely hope our motto is not used as a mere slogan, but to give meaning to it by making such allocations that would be of benefit to the poor and needy and departments in need of resources.

Having examined what has been provided in the budget, to be expended this year, I harbour a strong sense that this year's budget has little to offer citizens of the middle and lower classes of this society. It is about big spending on capital projects of the Government's taste. This budget is devoid of any consideration of increases of salaries and allowances. Although, it is without doubt that the public sector workers of the non-contractual grouping, must exist on meagre wages and salaries, which are at subsistence level and is insufficient in many cases to put three meals on the table for a month.

We are painfully aware that corruption is rife among public sector workers, but who can blame them? The Government had simply said to us, "Not a cent more". We have to build a modern eight gate airport terminal building, Amaila Falls Hydro Power Project and provide subsidies to those inefficiently run public institutions. Those we will take care of first, you must take your time whenever that comes.

The joint services, which the Government relies on to provide safety and security for the people of this country, must suffer another year with no improvement in their emoluments and consequently, no improvement in their lifestyle. I have taken notice of the Minister's indication that the collective bargaining agreement between the unions and Government will resume. I am

weary of the Government's antics to start these talks and then for some inexcusable reason they abandon it and pay their own unilateral increases.

Their allowances are horribly low in the face of high costs of rent, mortgage, light bill – which is unstable, telephone and water bills. These are the very people who must put their lives on the line to prevent and detect crime, control traffic on the streets, confront armed and dangerous criminals, fight fires and maintain security of those criminals who are confined by a sentence of court to a correctional institution.

The very important function of the Guyana Defence Force in our national security architecture makes them available for our national defence and to provide support to law enforcement in areas such as narcotics trafficking and piracy. In this regard, three metal shark patrol boats have been received through the Caribbean Basin and Security Initiative (CBSI). Government is urged to ensure that the Guyana Defence Force is adequately resource to execute its mandate, without being sacrifice at the altar of expediency for specious capital projects.

The Guyana Fire Service with its impending name change to the Guyana Fire and Rescue Service has always had a very essential and protective role to prevent fires and to respond when there is an outbreak. There has been an increase in the location of fire stations outside of Georgetown, which is not a bad idea in its self, but like Georgetown and New Amsterdam, auxiliary water sources have provided a challenge.

Fires occurring deep in these new housing areas will, if the situation is not corrected, encounter unavailability of water once the tenders and tanks run out. Public water supply is unavailable and in few cases the nearest canal would be out of the reach of the hoses available to the ranks at the scene. Georgetown and New Amsterdam continue to be without hydrants. A fact known to the Government, but it does not appear that Government is willing to solve the existing problem, to find a successful owner for the facility, since the now defunct Georgetown Sewage and Water Commission has given up.

There is another deficiency in the Fire and Rescue Service. The department is weak in the water because they do not have a boat. This is an issue which is also well known to the Government, but which they seem to ignore. With Georgetown being the principal port of entry and exit, for most of imports and exports, it is not difficult to comprehend why this need is expressed.

All bonds are at a point on the Demerara River and the fact that yachts and other pleasure boats are arriving here, a boat to fight fires in the river or in our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is a necessity. But it does not appear that Government is interested in having this need satisfied, unless something goes awfully wrong.

The Guyana Police Force is the principal law enforcement agency in Guyana and should be resourced according to the wide responsibilities to provide protection for life and property, the maintenance of law and order, the preservation of the peace and the repression of internal disturbances. Last year the Hon. Minister of Finance on page 45 of his address, on Public Safety and Security, said that:

“Government has embarked on a comprehensive programme of reform to the security sector. Government sees this as a long term process, and has designed a strategy which articulates a holistic approach, to citizen security and safety and public welfare.”

He went on to explain that:

“The strategy focuses on key areas dealing with developing and strengthening administrative competencies, imposing professionalism, strengthening accountability and integrity, deepening inter-organisational linkages for greater cohesiveness and impact, expanding on safe neighbourhoods and pilots, and establishing houses of justice to allow greater people participation and involvement in public safety and security issues.”

I must ask after one year has elapsed, what has been the benefit derived from this intervention? Have there been a reduced number of robberies under arms, murders, trafficking in narcotics? A reform of the security sector requires such changes that would impact on those crimes which negatively affect the lives of our citizens.

Crime statistics issued by the police intermittently has given no reason to feel comfortable that the situation is improving. The Hon. Minister of Home Affairs announced in the final days of 2011, the sermon from the Mount at Eve Leary, that under the Capital Simmons Group, work could be done in several areas of the Guyana Police Force, including administration, succession planning, probity, integrity, public relations and communications. He also said that 10 persons would be employed to hold key positions in the Strategic Management Department, which would

become a department of the Guyana Police Force and they will work together with the Police to ensure that the plan will be implemented. For months now, nothing has been heard of the Capital Simmons Group and there have been three resignations from among the 10 persons employed with the Strategic Management Group, in such areas as communications, research and risk management because of an apparent fall out in relations between certain members of the group and certain senior officers.

I am certain had the Hon. Minister exercised the foresight to ensure that friction between the two groups were minimised, the suspicions which members of the Guyana Police Force harboured about a group, which was formed to aid the development of the organisation, would have been removed. I should ask the Hon. Minister whether officers and other ranks are aware of the roles of the Strategic Management Department; has the Strategic Management Department produced any change, what is the Guyana Police Force doing with the product and is there a relationship between change management and the Strategic Management Department? What has been the impact of the change on society and are crime prevention strategies documented? I see no change setting in place in the Guyana Police Force, there is much of the same.

Investigative tactics employed by the police have not changed. When investigators cannot solve crime we eventually hear of allegations of brutality or torture. We recall in 2009 the highly publicised incident of a young man who was held during an investigation during into the death of a man known for his long association with the PPP on the West Demerara. The publication revealed to us that the man's private parts and pubic area were burnt during an investigation into the man's death.

In the midst of the reform process there was the despicable Colwyn Harding case. He was detained at the Timehri Police Station pending a charge of theft when he alleged that a baton was forced up his anus, injuring him.

*Stabroek News* of 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 published recently a spike in armed robberies occurring on the Corentyne between 49, 55, 56 and 57 Villages during the last part of 2013, when five families were attacked during the last quarter of the year, the residents complained of police indifference to their report, frequent blackouts and bush not being weeded. The choice of the five or four mentioned areas for the reform of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) was poorly thought

out, as they do not deal with the core issues affecting the police delivery of an efficient service to the public it serves. It explains why at this point there is no discernable change in police performance. For any quick impact on performance the Government ought to have followed the recommendations of earlier work produced in the Security Sector Action Reform Project.

In October, 2006, a team from the African Security Section Network (ASSN) visited Guyana at the invitation of Department For International Development (DFID) and the United Kingdom Government to advise on the Security Sector Reform Implementation Strategy. That visit resulted in the Security Section Action Plan, which was negotiated with the Government of Guyana and adapted by the National Assembly on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2007. The ASSN took a follow-up mission to Guyana in 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2003, to update and further develop the action plan. This report is the result, its main objective is to provide a discussion paper, laying out an analysis of Guyana's security sector and its current challenges, proposing options of reform and providing a road map of detailed implementation actions for the future.

The report also identified key issues underlying and facilitating the overall strategy, mainly the development of a National Security Policy Framework and National Security Architecture, capacity building for key actors and the perceived links between the Security Sector Reform (SSR) and gender poverty issues. In the process the report attempts to take note of both international best practices in SSR on the one hand and Guyanese reality is on the other. What emerged in the report are recommendations designed to guide discussions between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Guyana.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard me saying on several previous occasions that Government ditched this report and as a result, they have clung to a very soft form of police reform, which is not serving to improve the Guyana Police Force. The report I referred to listed eight areas: crime intelligence, I am sure we would recognise that crime intelligence is important to the improvement of the Guyana Police Force and an anti-crime unit, the forensic laboratory, traffic management, a strategic review of the Guyana Police Force, community police relations, police accountability and transparencies, national security policy, management and legal framework, national security policy and legal framework continue.

If I were to repeat the five areas which the Hon. Minister has been championing you would recognise that no perceptible change would be seen in a long while because they do not deal with the core issues which are required to develop the Guyana Police Force. They deal with more clerical work. One of major importance, which could be attached to this eight that I just mentioned, is the one with probity/integrity. I am sure that the future of the Guyana Police Force would have been well served with the implementations or the recommendations of the SSRP.

I read in the 27<sup>th</sup> March issue of the *Stabroek News* comments attributed to the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs to the effect that there were significant criticisms prior to the launching of SWAT, most of which were unwarranted. I must inquire from the Minister whether he is ever present when members of the Guyana Police Force are allegedly uncouth to members of the public; brutalise and torture members of the public; fail to attend to their reports promptly and efficiently; do not investigate crime efficiently; or either absent from court or fail to summon witnesses to testify. Members of the public are fed up and disgusted by the failure of the police to prosecute their mandate to bring justice to those offended. The people at Number 48 Village were similarly disgusted with the crime situation in their area when they gave vent to their feelings unfortunately on the hardworking policemen who responded promptly to a report of robbery. I empathise with those residents and the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) calls on the Government to provide vehicles to Springlands and Number 51 Village police stations to service the needs of the people on the Corentyne, rather than the rickety vehicle the Number 51 Village police had to use from Number 62 Village toll gate.

Narcotics is a growing problem in Guyana for the 20 years the PPP has been in office ... [**Ms. Shadick:** Not before?] Not before. When the PPP came to office marijuana was the substance...

**Mr. Speaker:** Do not forget in 1988 Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Act.

**Mr. Felix:** No, I will not forget that. For the 20 years the PPP has been in office they have not been able to subdue and control the spread of the narcotics trafficking throughout Guyana. I can recall that in 1985, we had developed the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act. We then had a booklet- "*Guyana's strategy for dealing with the drug problem*", which detailed the areas in which [**Mr. Nadir:** *[Inaudible]*] Yes, a very powerful booklet. It detailed the areas in

which Government would deal with the drug problem and as a matter of fact, had started to proceed according to the guidelines of the booklet.

Unfortunately, in 1992, when this Government came they abandoned all the structures which they Guyana Strategy for dealing with the drug problem had promulgated. We had organised meetings called Joint Anti-narcotic Operations Committee (JANOC) between the services and National Drug Law Enforcement Committee (NADLEC), headed by the President and all stakeholders attended that meeting monthly. I can assure you Mr. Speaker that that meeting was no walk in the park under Desmond Hoyte, those who knew him.

That is why the drug problem, though it was growing, it was subjected and subdued because the first occasion we were able to detect narcotics going through the airport was through our organisation, from NADLEC. The National Drug Law Enforcement Committee gave us the inspiration to run certain operations and if you could remember the “hot pants cocaine”. That was as a result of Hoyte’s polices and there were several of them... *[Interruption]* **[An Hon. Member:** Cocaine in soap powder.] Yes, that was with Taps who is now dead. We also had several other instances. We had Aunt Aggie; Aunt Aggie had a maze of security features to defeat the police, but yet we were able to enter.

That is the type of policing activity we on this side of the House would like to see of the police now. What has been happening? The police have been starved of the necessary resources, even though my friends on the other side would tend to say or would say that they are giving the police more resources. It is not the giving of the resources; it is where the resources are put. They need vehicles right now – Springlands and Number 51 Village and many other stations – no vehicles.

*8.02 p.m.*

When the residents from the Corentyne decided that they would rebel against the crime situation there, the Hon. Minister said, “clean sweep”, most insensitive statement to men who, in a rickety vehicles, visited the scene and did so promptly. **[Mr. Ramjattan:** What did he say?] It was “clean sweep”. All the commissioner had to do now was sweep – move everybody - much to the embarrassment to the policemen and their families who were in that area working honestly.



As a matter of fact, I recall that in 1993 there was an aircraft flying from some part of Central America and depositing 250 pounds of cocaine up the Demerara River. Luckily, we were able to recover that drop; luckily, we were able to arrest and prosecute all of them; luckily, we were able to prevent, by putting into the prisons, a number of people who would have accelerated drug trafficking in this country. Unfortunately, the problems, which existed then, exist now. There is no surveillance equipment. Government would not give us an indication that it will provide aerial surveillance for aircraft in our area without reporting its presence. That is why, now, drug trafficking is so rampant in the interior locations because, now, all the aircraft has to do is to fly - come low - drop the cargo and it is gone. By the time there is a response there is someone waiting, who collects the stuff and is gone. [Mr. Rohee: *Inaudible*] Well I wrote your Prime Minister on that and he has not answered.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, Mr. Felix...

**Mr. Felix:** He wrote me and I wrote him...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Felix.

**Mr. Felix:** ...so you must know what you are talking about.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Felix, you will direct your comments to the Chair. Do not get drawn in.

**Mr. Felix:** There are airstrips built in the hinterland community and there is nothing... [Mr. Rohee: I met the lady the last... *inaudible*]. She is coming to Guyana soon. *The story gun bruk out.*] You could reach her 99 times because you can hardly question yourself. The airstrips built in the hinterland area, no one has ever been discovered or prosecuted. The fallout from drug trafficking are a large number of unexplained murders, gun smuggling, money laundering, export of cocaine in various forms of concealment methods. Every conceivable item being exported from Guyana is tainted with cocaine, the last being *awara*, pepper, lumber and it does not appear as though the Government is taking seriously the effects of drug trafficking in this country.

The inability to investigate narco export in various forms of concealment, the Government always claims that it needs more information when the information is right here. Recent investigations, involving two foreign countries, revealed cocaine in coconut milk, allegedly

originated in Guyana, according to the investigation out there, and ended up with an international criminal organisation with propensity for enforcing their will violently.

Now we see the need for the Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) team. There is no need for a SWAT team under our current circumstances - absolutely none. A SWAT team has particular role and functions. What we need is to develop the Guyana Police Force. We need to look at all of the areas of weaknesses, the inability to investigate crimes, narcotic trafficking and the inability for us to deal with the traffic problems. Those are areas which we need to develop.

We need to solve several law enforcement challenges such as the efficient investigation of crime, the prosecution of cases and the prevention and detection of crime. This budget has not done much for the Guyana Police Force. There are marginal increases allocated to certain areas. The big increase is under training and that is to take care of the expenses incurred with the SWAT team, of which two of the trainers still remain here, obviously, to ensure that the officers are in shape or that they are properly looked after in the early stages. That is an expense on us because millions of dollars have to be paid. **[Mr. Rohee:** If I were you I would have lie low.] I do not have to. You have to lie low.

Community policing has been spoiled by this Government. Community policing is intended to be an interaction... **[Mr. Greenidge:** Political policing.] That is right, political policing. It is not community policing. There are community policing groups which have now been turned into a police force. In the incident I related on the Corentyne recently, the people had to protect themselves by forming themselves into vigilante groups when, on the very Corentyne, there are a number of persons, reported to me, who have community policing vehicles in their homes and do nothing with them. According to the reports I have received, this Government pays them \$20,000 to \$25,000 per month.

That is why you will notice in this year's budget, community policing gets more than the Guyana Police Force - \$413 million... **[Mr. B. Williams:** Are you serious?] It is if I am serious. Look, it is here, page 447. It is more than what the police will get, at least, I think, \$33 million more. That is one which ought to come under the axe.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you will require some further time.

**Ms. Ally:** I move that Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Felix:** I now move to an important area and that is the rule of law. During a recent question I had asked it was said that the entire question affected a personal matter. I accepted the agreement then and still do now, but what we have to recognise now is that this Government seems to have one law for it and another law for other people.

Around 2007 and 2008, a certain Minister of Local Government and Regional Development had committed a crime [Mr. Rohee: Central executive...*[inaudible]*] Yes. So what! He should have been arrested and he should have been charged and placed before the court because the offences he committed were clear criminal offences.

**Mr. Speaker:** These were allegations, Mr. Felix.

**Mr. Felix:** Well, the allegations made against him.

**Mr. Speaker:** And the Constitution states that one is presumed innocent...

**Mr. Felix:** ...until proven guilty.

**Mr. Speaker:** ... until proven guilty.

**Mr. Felix:** I subject myself to your corrections.

**Mr. Speaker:** It is not mine; it is what the Constitution states.

**Mr. Felix:** There is still another issue. If anyone of us is found to have committed a traffic offence – jump the major road or any such offence – we have to be charged unless the discretion of the police operates in our favour. It is not so over there, we can be drunk like a fish, we can crash into any other person's vehicle and we can just walk away. Where is the rule of law? [Mr. Rohee: Mr. Felix, do not talk.] I am talking, Mr. Rohee.

The road corners, on our roads, are becoming more than a source of concern. There are so many vehicles, the drivers are indisciplined and there are fewer policemen. What the Hon. Minister ought to pay attention to is how to support the Guyana Police Force to retain staff. This Minister

has a “dead hand” on the police force and nothing will move. That is why the no confidence vote is so important.

The no confidence vote ought to have seen Mr. Rohee somewhere else, but he remains with his “dead hand” on the organisation and literally stifling it. The micromanagement of the Guyana Police Force is becoming more and more obnoxious. When the Minister cannot get his way he calls on the commissioner to transfer and that is true – “I do not want this man here”. Whenever Mr. Minister has anything concerning the organisation, there are serious problems and as such, I think, the no confidence vote should now be ramped up so that we see him, finally, to allow the Guyana Police Force to breathe.

Finally, my view is that this budget has not brought any goods for the Guyana Police Force. It has brought only extra money to be used anyhow, having been passed to community policing there is little control over it. That is one area I think, when the hammer falls, or when the hatchet falls, it should fall right there.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Shadick:** I rise this evening to make my small contribution to this debate on the budget for the year 2014, a budget which was presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh to this honourable House on Monday March 24 of this year. The theme under which the budget was presented is *A Better Guyana for All Guyanese*. Here I would like to pause to assure the Hon. Members Mr. Scott and Mrs. Lawrence that any resemblance between this theme and the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) manifesto title is purely coincidental.

I have heard comments attributed to the Opposition that this is an election budget, and I wholeheartedly agree, but, I must point out that all People’s Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C)’s budgets, from the time the PPP/C assumed office as Government in 1992, have been elections budgets. This is because they all seek to fulfil our manifesto programmes and policies as promised to the electorate at every successive election.

There is a definite path which this Government is travelling upon, a path which is designed to place this country firmly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while ensuring that every citizen, including my

friends on the opposite side, benefits from improved infrastructure, social services, and all those other amenities which are considered absolutely necessary for a happy and productive life.

Before I continue, since my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, has already made his presentation and there are certain issues that seem to have the Hon. Member Mr. Trevor Williams in some amount of difficulty, may I try to enlighten this House, lest people go away with false ideas. First of all the rental fees for the National Cultural Centre has been fixed since 2008 and it has not been changed since then. The rents for the National Cultural Centre are subsidised by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. At present the recital hall that has... [Mrs. Chandarpal: It was Christopher Jones.] It was Christopher Jones. I am sorry Mr. Trevor Williams. It was my fault and I apologise. These were issues raised, so let me just address them.

The recital hall has 500 seats and has a rental of \$30,000 plus 15% of ticket sales; the auditorium, with 1, 086 seats, has a rental of \$60,000 and 20% of ticket sales and the entire theatre of 1,975 seats attracts a rental of \$80,000 plus 20% of ticket sales.

The Theatre Guild on other hand, which is run by a board and which receives a subvention from the Ministry, has a smaller space, less seats and charges higher rental so people naturally choose the National Cultural Centre, it is not used that much.

With regard to the national youth policy, there is an existing national youth policy which is currently in the process of being upgraded. The upgrading process is far advanced and may I remind the Member that a Guyanese saying “soon” means in the shortest possible time, unlike a Jamaican saying soon - when that Jamaican says “ ah soon come” - it can mean next year or the other year.

There have been numerous consultations. A draft document is in the hands of the consultant for finalisation. That is soon.

A youth officer for Bartica, yes, there is none but the position was advertised. There were no responses to the advertisement, so nobody could have been appointed and the position will be re-advertised.

The national synthetic track. This is a project which is not a year or a couple of months, it is a multiyear project. Those of us who sit on the Public Accounts Committee understand that. Several components of this project have been awarded to different contractors because of the skills, and so on, that they have. The different contractors have different but specific deadlines. They do not all have the same deadlines. To say that a completion deadline for this project was 2013 would be misleading. In fact, the Minister, I think, said that the north stand, the club house, the synthetic surface and the football field are to be completed in 2014. The south stand is still to be built so there is no completion date yet.

The culture creative industries. There is a claim made that there were no critics of the Government present at a workshop which was organised by Mr. Burchmore Simon. Nobody in Guyana will think that Mr. Ruel Johnson is a friend of the Minister or this Government and I assure that he was present at the workshop. To say “no critic of the Government was present” is not entirely true.

There is another issue that I have been hearing from several speakers and that is that the budget makes no provision of wages and salaries. Now, for all of the PPP/C budgets, which have been presented in this House since we came into office in 1992, they have never ever made an announcement for an increase in wages and salaries. There is always an allocation in the Ministry of Finance’s budget for wages and salaries revision. To say something such as that is trying to interject something new which has never happened and I have heard many speakers say this.

This Government likes people who bargain. The National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NACCIE) bargains for workers in Guyana Power & Light (GPL). Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) bargains with the sugar industry for its workers. Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) has a retired public servant as its president so it does not bargain anymore.

Mr. Speaker, last evening, the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo very disparagingly referred to the residents of Leguan as grass cutters. While grass cutting is honest...

**Mr. Nagamootoo:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Minister Irfaan Ali was giving what he considered to be a projection or an assumption if certain moneys were spent in the island of Leguan it would

create so many jobs. I asked what the specifics were. What would they be doing with the money in Leguan? The people there, would you be asking them to cut grass? I think that it is a gross distortion and misrepresentation of what I had said and the Hon. Member Ms. Shadick should withdraw that comment. It is aimed at mischief and politicising what I had said for chief propaganda purposes.

**Mr. Speaker:** We cannot have two Members addressing the House at the same time. Hon. Members, as has happened in the past, I will simply request the Clerk to have the Hansard Department pull up the *Hansard* record...

**Ms. Shadick:** It was an off the cuff remark, Sir. It was not made when he was standing on the floor.

**Mr. Speaker:** It may be caught. Well, should it be given official...? I do not know.

**Ms. Shadick:** Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** Go ahead. I am not stopping you.

**Ms. Shadick:** Thank you Sir. I continue. While grass cutting is honest dignified labour, I wish to say to this House that grass cutting was for a time when a family had one cow and grass knives were used to cut grass and rice. Today, on the proud island of Leguan, rice is reaped with combine harvesters and cattle farmers have substantial herds which graze in designated pastures.

The people of Leguan heard this exchange on television. They texted and sent messages and in today's *Guyana Chronicle*, on page 6, there is a letter which refers to the Member's unfortunate utterance...

**Mr. Speaker:** You are saying, Ms. Shadick, that from the time that statement may be made last evening, by Mr. Nagamootoo, that a resident of Leguan was able to get a letter into the today's papers.

**Ms. Shadick:** By email, yes, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** That is amazing.

**Ms. Shadick:** I will tell you why...

**Mr. Speaker:** I compliment the editors.

**Ms. Shadick:** I will tell you why, Sir. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Could we hear Ms. Shadick, please? She is entitled to be heard. Hon. Members, I need to hear Ms. Shadick. Ms. Shadick, please proceed.

**Ms. Shadick:** The letter refers to the Member's unfortunate utterance and it was written by a person born and bred in Leguan. Lest it be said that she does not exist, I invite the Hon Member Nagamootoo, and all those who can use an internet search engine, to discover that she is a published writer and one of her novels, which is four or more times as long as *Hendrik's Cure*, is being considered for a television series. Hon. Member, the descendants of grass cutters have moved on to bigger and better things, but they never forget from whence they came. [*Interruption by Mr. Nagamootoo*]

While I am on the subject of Leguan...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo, Ms. Shadick is entitled to make a presentation with the minimum of interruption. I am unable to hear her. Please let us settle down and finish our business for today. Settle down please.

Go ahead, please, Ms. Shadick.

**Ms. Shadick:** While I am on the subject of Leguan and its residents, grass cutters though they may have been, enough income is generated to allow for the payment of electricity rates applicable to Georgetown and other parts of this country, except Linden and Kwakwani, for which the sum of \$3.2 billion is included as electricity subsidy for this year as against the sum of \$3.7 billion for the whole of the rest of Guyana.

In Linden and its environs there are 10,500 customers of electricity and they pay a residential rate of \$5 per kilowatt hour and a business rate of \$12 per kilowatt hour, this encourages an average household there to use 300 kilowatts per month as against an average of 150 kilowatts per household in the rest of Guyana. While this wastage of electricity goes on unabated, an attempt to incrementally increase tariffs last year served as an excuse for mass protests resulting in three unfortunate deaths, but, Mr. Speaker, Leguan residents do not resort to such protest



actions, as they have the good sense to know that *if you go a crab dance you bound to get mud*. They work hard and live well, and this Government is committed to help them as well as all other Guyanese, to continue to do just that.

By the way, I have not yet heard mention, if the Opposition is finally prepared to acknowledge, that the annual Linden electricity subsidy is in fact a handout, more so than the subsidy being proposed for GuySuCo which is meant to help fix an industry vital to Guyana's economic well-being, and which benefits directly or indirectly, over almost 200,000 Guyanese. I invite the Opposition to call a spade a spade, but then I am not sure that the Members recognise the difference between a spade and shovel, which Members such as the Hon. Member Mr. Ronald Bulkan may insist are the same, in the same manner, that he lumped the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) with local authorities.

8.32 p.m.

There really is a huge difference, Hon. Member, not that I think you will ever appreciate that, even though Mr. Bulkan seems to be the best that APNU can offer as a shadow local government minister.

According to the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramayya, the sum being allocated for the Specialty Hospital should be used to fix the ills of the New Amsterdam Hospital. Well, Mr. Ramayya, you yourself seem to admit that those ills such as no oxygen in a ward and so on are not due to poor infrastructure, but instead to workers' inefficiency. To improve that, training and/or disciplinary action may be needed.

The Specialty Hospital, on the other hand, will be at the top of a pyramid of health care facilities in Guyana, beginning with health huts, and moving upwards to health centres, health clinics, polyclinics, district hospitals, regional hospitals, diagnostic hospitals and, finally, the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation (GPHC), which presently houses the Caribbean Heart Institute (CHI) in a private/public partnership. More than one member of the Opposition, I am sure, is acquainted with the CHI. **[Ms. Ally: Inaudible]** Mr. Speaker, if Ms. Ally would stop making noises like someone other than herself, we can benefit from what I am saying.

The Specialty Hospital will obviate the need for ordinary Guyanese to have to publicly beg for funding to travel to India or Trinidad or other overseas destinations in order to access medical interventions for their sick relatives or themselves. Such interventions will be available at nominal costs right here in Guyana, benefitting from family support, which is so necessary, but lacking when patients have to go overseas. Persons will never again have to sell or mortgage property or beg for funds to meet airfares and other expenditure.

Who, except, of course, a few misguided Members of the Opposition, can reasonably and rationally question, refute, deny or ignore the many benefits brought to Guyanese by the establishment of the Ophthalmology Centre at Port Mourant, or the diagnostic hospitals at Diamond, Suddie, Leonora and Mahaicony, or the new hospitals built at New Amsterdam, Lethem and Linden, coupled with upgrades of hospitals, polyclinics, health centres and other health facilities in every region of Guyana, all of which are staffed with doctors trained in Guyana as well as young Guyanese doctors who have returned to serve after successfully completing studies in Cuba? This is testimony to this Government's commitment to provide free health services to all Guyanese.

Why should Guyanese not benefit from cheaper electricity, generated by hydropower? Or why should they not benefit from the revenues which will accrue from a better tourism product which will result from a hospitality institute, an up-to-date international airport where large aircraft can land and passengers can deplane safely, then travel in comfort along a smooth four lane highway to be accommodated in a comfortable five star hotel built with a view of the Atlantic?

I turn briefly to Agriculture. The Hon. Member Mr. Scott questioned why there is need for the allocation of \$500 million for the rice sector if the rice industry is doing so well. Well, sir, this industry, which contributes about 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and accounts for more than US\$240 million in export earnings, is doing so well due in no small measure to the hard work of the rice farmers who do not need, ask for, or get, handouts. However, this Government will continue to provide funds to cushion the high cost of acquisition of fertilisers, maintaining and expanding research, seed and storage facilities all of which serve to enhance and increase yields.

On the subject of agriculture, last evening I listened to the Hon. Member, Vanessa Kissoon, as she listed all the financial support Linden needs for the betterment of that community. It sounded to me like the Member was advocating for more handouts for Region 10, but, perhaps, I can be convinced otherwise. However, it struck me as strange that if the Hon. Member really lives in that community and does really advocate for its betterment, how could she not know about the very recent forum with the RDC to develop agricultural plans for the region or that there is a full complement of extension staff, some resident at Kwakwani, providing technical support and working on bean and shaded cultivation with farmers groups or that shadehouses were built at Kwakwani and Sand Hills to promote vegetable cultivation and that farmers in the Berbice River area have been provided with seeds such as corn, red peas and peanut from Ebini because the agriculture building and nursery in Linden were burnt down?

How could the Hon. Member have missed the visit of the Hon. Minister Ramsammy and team, headed by Retired Major General Joe Singh, who are presently working in the region to increase agricultural production there? She must have been on leave away from the region.

I must address the issue of the old age pension and the increase for this year that is being called “paltry”. It has been criticised as merely an increase of \$625. But strangely, no one mentioned the increase of the electricity subsidy for pensioners from \$20,000 to \$30,000. That has not been mentioned at all. No one has mentioned the continuing water subsidy to pensioners. Why not? That is my question.

Why stop there? What about the provision of \$10,000 per child attending public nursery, primary and secondary schools? I just heard that tonight but it was not mentioned before. I ask the Hon. Members on the other side to read the document. Read this thing! It tells that everybody is catered for. Just read the document, please, before you speak.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of my limited time allocation, which you have generously said can be waived, but I must make mention of the clamour of the Opposition to try to impose the National Assembly as an agent of the Executive or, in fact, take over the functions of the Executive.

This National Assembly has many Committees and since the 2011 Elections, after which the Opposition has been talking boastfully about its one-seat majority in the House, it has insisted that it has a one vote majority in every single Committee of this Parliament.

There is the Committee on Appointments and that Committee is chaired by the Hon. Member, Dr. George Norton, and that Committee is responsible for the selection of the members of many constitutional commissions to be appointed by the President. I refer to the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Police Service Commission (PSC), the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), and the Rights Commissions of Women and Gender, Indigenous Peoples, and the Child. Added to that, the Local Government Commission is a new one. I do not know when that will be touched.

Since the Elections of 2011, over two years, as somebody said, halfway in the term, this Committee, chaired by the Hon. Member George Norton and with a majority of Opposition Members, has not completed consideration of even one of those Commissions. Requests to extend the life of the Rights Commissions have been refused. The Rights Commissions are operating without any legal authority.

**Mr. Bulkan:** Mr. Speaker, I heard the Hon. Member refer to the Local Government Commission. To the best of my knowledge, that Commission is awaiting a Commencement Order from the subject Minister, which has not been given.

**Ms. Shadick:** Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the fact that one member of that Commission has to be nominated by the National Assembly.

**Mr. Speaker:** What Mr. Bulkan is referring to is that the Commission is not yet extant; it does not exist.

**Ms. Shadick:** It has been added to the list.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Commencement Order has not been issued for the Commission to work.

**Ms. Shadick:** I concede. Thank you. No request for the extension of life of the Rights Commissions has been granted. They have all been refused. Therefore, no policeman or public servant, except if he or she is employed on a contract, or judicial officer can be appointed because these Commissions do not exist. All are forced to act in positions. We are calling for Local Government Elections and the Order, even if it is made, and it must be made before the Local Government elections are held, at this rate, will the Local Government Commission ever be appointed during this Parliament? I have my doubts.

Now, the National Assembly is being touted to be responsible for even more work – for appointing the Anti-Money Laundering Authority, The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA) as well as its governing board, while at the same time being responsible for the functioning of the Authority and exercising oversight. If I heard right, last night, the Hon. Member, Mr. Scott, seemed to be suggesting that, perhaps, the National Assembly should also craft the national budget. Need I remind the Hon. Members of the Opposition that the Members of the National Assembly do not serve full time?

Allegations of corruption in the award of contracts abound. The list of instances of shoddy work by contractors keeps growing, yet, the Public Accounts Committee, chaired by the Hon. Carl Greenidge, cannot complete examination of the Auditor General's Reports for 2010 and 2011, much less begin examination of the 2012 Report. This is in the context that long before the 2010 Report was presented on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, the Auditor General's Report for 2009 had been examined and the PAC's Report to this Assembly had also been completed. Of course, the chairperson at that time was a woman. It was the Hon. Member, Ms. Volda Lawrence. But, why am I surprised, after having lived through the Hon. Member's tenure as Minister of Finance of this country?

Region 3, for which I am responsible, is one of the better run regions in this country. There are not too many complaints. I await the outcome of the consideration of the Estimates to see whether the Opposition will rob Region 3 of the only two large capital projects listed – new buildings to house the Zeeburg and St John's Secondary Schools.

I am not unaware of the Hon. Member Carl Greenidge's promise in Linden of a nasty bloody war. I hope no blood will be shed on the region which I have the honour of representing.

Opposition speaker after speaker, talked the talk of putting Guyana first. Now it is time to walk the walk. With that, Mr. Speaker, I commend this all inclusive 2014 Budget for unanimous passage by this House. *[Applause]*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, that brings us to the end of our business for this evening. I, therefore, invite the Hon. Prime Minister to move the adjournment motion.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned to tomorrow at 2.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we stand adjourned until 2.00 p.m. tomorrow, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2014.

*Assembly adjourned accordingly at 8.51 p.m.*