

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2013) 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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43<sup>RD</sup> Sitting

Thursday, 4<sup>TH</sup> April, 2013

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*Assembly convened at 1.13 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are several announcements.

### **Point of Order in relation to Dr. Norton's presentation**

**Mr. Speaker:** Last evening a Point of Order was raised with regard to contents of the speech of the Hon. Dr. George Norton and I did give a preliminary finding of my opinion but I undertook to have a review of both the audio and the written transcript, both of which have been supplied to me by the Hansard Department, and for which I am very grateful. Having had the opportunity to go through the contents of the speech I am of the opinion that the first aspect, as it pertains to Dr. Ramsaran levelling allegations and being, himself, careful, I did not find that that in any way violated the Standing Orders.

A reference was there after made to officials of a company and the words, and I quote them:

“...probably to convince himself and the rest of his party that the PPP/C Government still gave (sic) contracts to companies owned by Afro Guyanese. I can assure the Hon.

Minister that it has become difficult not to see some degree of race baiting by the accusation of being racist as a desperate attempt to whip up some degree of sympathy among a particular race of the Guyanese people (sic)”

I do find that last paragraph to be uncalled for. I believe that it does raise the spectre of racism within this House and it does suggest that a Member of this House practises racism. There is a specific Standing Order in which we are not to imply or seek, in any way, to suggest that any Member is less than honourable.

For that reason I would, Mr. Clerk, ask that that paragraph beginning with the word “naming” and ending with the words “Guyanese population” be expunged.

### **Letter of complaint from the Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a second ruling and that has to do with a formal letter of complaint that I received from the Hon. Member Mr. Keith Scott pertaining to news items carried by *INEWS* and thereafter by the *Guyana Chronicle* in which he was labelled or described as having a saying that mining was “destroying” Guyana and the environment was being raped.

I have had the benefit of both the audio and the written transcript of what Mr. Scott said, including the ability and opportunity to read the *INEWS* report and the *Guyana Chronicle* report. I do find that both have violated Mr. Scott’s privileges as a Member of Parliament because at no time did he use the word “destroying” and in both stories the word “destroying” is in parenthesis suggesting that he is being quoted directly and that mining is raping our society.

I had prepared a ruling, which I will circulate, in which I call on both publishers to issue an unqualified apology to the Member and to retract their stories and to give both apologies and retractions equal prominence to which they carried their stories against him, and that this should be done forthwith. I hope nothing else comes of the matter.

I wish to say as well that just before coming out this afternoon I have received a letter from *INEWS* of which it has acknowledged that the context was wrong, and so I applaud the publishers of *INEWS* for taking that stand. I believe that is the way and the direction we should be going, that if something ought not to have been said in a certain way we should recognise it, accept it and move on. I believe that this could be the end of the matter because I have, as I said,

received a letter. I applaud, in fact, the stand in which, I think is a dignified stand, it has taken, by *INEWS*, to acknowledge the manner in which the reporting was done, which left much to be desired. I do still find, as I said, that Mr. Scott's privileges, as a Member of this House, were violated. And Mr. Scott will advise further. Notwithstanding the letter written to me I still believe that published apologies and a retraction must be given and those should be given forthwith.

Those are two announcements pertaining to matters before us.

### **Death of a former Member of Parliament**

**Mr. Speaker:** The third is on a more sombre and solemn note and that is to announce and have the House observe that a former Member of this House, an esteemed Member of our society, Dr. Reverend Dale Bisnauth passed unexpectedly last evening. He was a gentleman, a man of the cloth serving the Lutheran Brethren of Guyana. I am informed that Dr. Reverend Bisnauth, a former Minister of the Government, has died, as I have stated.

He first became a parliamentarian in the Sixth Parliament of Guyana and was designated Senior Minister of Education and Cultural Development with effect of 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1992 following the General and Regional Elections of the 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1992.

Dr. Bisnauth also served in the Seventh Parliament and the Eight Parliament. In the Eight Parliament he was designated the Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security with effect from the 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2001, following the General and Regional Elections being held on the 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2001.

He ceased to be a Minister with effect from the 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2006 and we remember him for his contribution not only to this House, to the body of Christ, but also to academia, as he was also a renowned historian.

In honour of his memory I would ask that we stand and observe one minute of silence as a mark of respect for him.

May his soul rest in peace.

*One minute of silence observed.*

**Leader of the Opposition [Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger]:** Mr. Speaker, I hope am not out of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** You are not.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** I would just like to add to your tributes on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity.

Dr. Bisnauth, who died at the age of 74, was indeed a renowned historian, lecturer at the University of Guyana. He was the Dean of Studies at the Theological College of the West Indies. Not only was he an historian, but he was a theologian and his work on the Immigration of Indians to Guyana, I think, is a landmark study which should be required reading in all of our schools.

As a theologian he also wrote extensively on religions in the West Indies. The A Partnership for National Unity would like to extend condolences to his family and, of course, to the People's Progressive Party/Civic which he served so faithfully between 1992 and 2006.

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** We of the PPP/C would like to extend our appreciation to you, Sir, and to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition for the condolences extended to us. Minister, Dr. Dale Bisnauth had been one of the civic members now joined with the People's Progressive Party (PPP) answering the call of Dr. Cheddi Jagan to work together as the elections of 1992 approached and he had made very sound contributions to us as a Minister during those three Parliaments. We find his lost to be something that could not be easily replaced. We accept your condolences and your appreciation for his contributions to the Assembly.

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **[Written Replies]**

#### **1. IMPACT OF THE 'NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND POLICY'**

**Ms. Selman:** Could the Hon. Minister of Education inform this House whether an evaluation has been conducted to ascertain the impact of the 'No Child left behind Policy' on the delivery of education in Guyana?

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE 'NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND POLICY'

**Ms. Selman:** Could the Hon. Minister of Education inform this House whether the Hon. Minister considers an assessment of the 'No Child left behind Policy' a necessity in relation to the improvement of the quality of education delivery in Guyana?

## 3. PAYMENT OF CLEANERS BY PARENT TEACHER'S ASSOCIATIONS (PTA)

**Mrs. Hughes:** Can the Hon. Minister explain why Parent Teacher's Associations (PTA) are being asked to pay cleaners employed at senior secondary schools?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the questions are deferred and the answers, as indicated yesterday, will be supplied shortly as I have been so advised.

*Replies to questions 1, 2 and 3 were deferred.*

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

### DISPARAGING NEWS HEADLINE

**Mr. Speaker:** The Clerk has informed me that a Member of the House, Mr. Basil Williams, wishes to make a personal explanation. Mr. Williams please proceed.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, it appears that there is a concerted plan to disparage and undermine our proceedings in this hallowed House via the media. You have only just made two references to the *Guyana Chronicle* and *INEWS*, but in today's edition of the *Guyana Times* we have been assailed by these headline, "Speaker upbraids APNU MP for personal attack on Persaud". That attack was that I was disrespectful and made disparaging references to the family of a Government Minister, Robert Persaud.

Of course, I reject this out of hand, but, Sir, since the sixteenth century our right to speech in this Parliament has been protected and it seems that attempts are being made to sow seeds of discord in this House.

This article is obviously inaccurate and it libels me. I do not have a problem filing, in the morning, a \$100 million lawsuit for libel but this comes in the same outfit that has multiple allocations because it was on Channel 28 also. I am taking serious umbrage at this. It falls hard

on the heels of *Guyana Chronicle* itself. It published its retractions and I do not think that is enough for me and I will deal that.

Nothing such as this occurred. There was no allegation levelled against me in this honourable House yesterday because if an allegation was levelled against me I would have had a right to be heard in response. What I believe happened was that the Hon. Speaker heard the word “family” and he probably thought that he should interject at that stage before, maybe, anything developed. There was no question of my telling the Hon. Member, who I have never had a problem with - I do not have a problem with anybody on that side of the House – anything about his family. For example, it could have been “Mr. Robert Persaud has a nice family” because the words preceding family were not heard.

When we are proceeding in this House we cannot have certain elements taking what we say in this House and distorting it to sell their papers. The Speaker did not address me on this matter because I would have had the right to be heard. After my presentation the Hon. Member obviously was thinking, which had to do with the question of nepotism and corruption, and I had the impression that he was thinking, that I had attacked him and I said, “Look, I never reported anything about you or your family.” I do not know why he responded like that. That is what I said, because I had the impression that he thought I was...

**Mr. Speaker:** Just address the Chair, please, Mr. Williams.

**Mr. B. Williams:** There was no question... I think, Mr. Speaker, if I had done something, such as that, Mr. Persaud would have levelled the accusation against me or the charge. The charge would have had to come. As I said, the *Guyana Chronicle* has been doing this and it tries to impute criminal aspersions on me. On that side of the House, I think, *Guyana Chronicle* could look easily and find elements of that nature. It cannot come to me. I am going to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying, with respect, that I reject this out of hand and I am asking for the protection of this honourable House, that this is a wholly inaccurate article because no allegation was levelled against me and you have never put a charge for me to answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, as you will see in a ruling, which I will have circulated shortly, that it is an offence of privilege to take Members’ words and twist them or change the content or

context. However, last evening I did see the Hon. Member Mr. Persaud remonstrating about "...you have a problem with my family." I think that those were the words that he used but, indeed, I did not hear and had not heard Mr. Williams say anything, but it would appear that something happened. I sought to nip in the bud anything that wanted to tend towards the direction of our families. Mr. Williams was not cited and there was no allegation levelled against him, but it would appear that it was some banter to which I wanted to bring to a halt. I have not been able to study the article but Mr. Williams, as a Member of the House, does have rights which you may wish to invoke. I have not seen the article *per se* but I will read it.

As I said, I have already had the cause to deal with something pertaining to Mr. Scott who, I believe, was wrongfully treated. Members, let us understand that we have responsibilities.

I wish to turn to the press too. I see a sea of cameras here and everywhere. You are here as a matter of privilege of this House. The House has powers to take actions if it feels that you are abusing that privilege. You cannot come and show whatever it is that you want to show or change people's words or context. Maybe, you may wish to ask Mr. Williams' his view or Mr. Persaud of his view of what happened, but let us be very careful. We recognise the right of your right to report but it must be done fairly and accurately, if not, you will invite the coercive powers of this Parliament on to you.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, personal explanations, under Standing Order 23 (2), are done with your leave but it should not deal with a controversial matter or a matter that has to be debated. The fact that Mr. Williams has opened this door it opens the issue for controversy and debate because we have to now speak about what exactly happened yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, we all sat here and heard what was said by Mr. Williams. We all heard Mr. Minister's response and seeking your intervention to protect him and his family. You intervened, Sir, to also stop Mr. Williams from going in that direction.

I have not had the time to see what *Guyana Chronicle* said, but we are walking on very icy and thin ice in this Parliament if every time we are coming here we are coming to castigate the press. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you if you allowing this in the House we will then bring... We have been very thick skinned about the kind of reporting in certain media houses and we have dealt with it outside of this House in the way we thought best, but we can also do what the Opposition

is doing, and that is, everyday it is to waste time in this House discussing what certain media houses are doing. We will then use this privilege that you have so adequately allowed because we are also victims on this side of the House for misrepresentation, for misreporting by several media houses.

Mr. Speaker, as you have opened the door, the Government side takes the cue and it will now be presenting to you, for the rest of the debate, any such instances where it feels that the Members have been misrepresented or misquoted.

In relation to personal explanations I believe that Mr. Williams' personal explanation is not one, under the Standing Orders, that should have been entertained. It is controversial and it is open for debate.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, as Speaker, I have had to resort to the learning in *Erskine May Parliamentary Practices*. A Member, if he or she feels aggrieved by anything may raise it under "Personal Explanations." If it is that the Government feels that there are media houses that are impugning it has the right to come every day, because we are going to do this until we get it right. The press has no right to come, on either side, and to say things about any Members of this House, whether he is a Minister or she is an ordinary Member, or otherwise. Both sides, I am encouraging you to keep bringing this up, because we have to come to a right place in this country where we cannot say and do anything we want about people. It happens on both sides and it has to end.

We cannot say that a Member said that mining is destroying the country and raping when he never said so, and there were quotation marks quoting him. That is a blatant untruth. I, as Speaker, cannot sit silently, if a Member protested, and allow it to happen. If any Member of the Government feels offended by any media house I am encouraging that Member, in fact, to come forward, and personal explanations are, in my view, the appropriate place.

**Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. Robert Persaud]:** It is just for the record. The Hon. Member Mr. Williams' comment was, in fact, offending. That is why I paused and wanted to seek from him a clarification because, as you have rightfully defined, there are certain no-goes in this Parliament. Anyone who comes after my family, my ethnicity, my religion, I will very firmly defend and reject. I felt offended, at that time, by the Hon. Member's



comments. Perhaps you did not hear, Mr. Speaker, but I heard and there are others who heard that. I wish to thank you for your intervention and your protection at that point in time.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Sir...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Williams, you have given an explanation. This is not a debate...

**Mr. B. Williams:** Sir, if you bear with me...

**Mr. Speaker:** You can bring a substantive motion but I will...

**Mr. B. Williams:** Mr. Persaud is now telling you...

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. Williams, with the greatest of respect you have asked to make a personal explanation and I allowed it. A substantive motion may be brought when this debate is over and we can discuss it. We are not going to set about having a debate this afternoon on this matter.

*[Interruption]*

Hon. Members, should we rise? What should we do? *[Interruption]* The Clerk is attempting to...

*[Interruption]* Mr. Williams, what is going on? Dr. Ramsammy, what is happening?

*[Interruption]* Mr. Isaacs go ahead.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

#### **MOTION**

#### **BUDGET SPEECH 2013 – MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2013**

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 2013 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2013-03-25;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2013, of a total sum of **one hundred and ninety four billion, three hundred and forty three million, seven hundred and sixty four thousand, eight hundred and seventy three dollars (\$194,343,764,873), excluding fourteen billion, and four hundred and ninety six million, six hundred and seventy nine thousand, one hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$14,496,679,127)** which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the undermentioned 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:** Hon. Members, we will now proceed with the resumption of the debate of Budget 2013. I now invite our first speaker for today. I hope the Hon. Member is ready mentally and not ruffled, Mrs. Volda Lawrence.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** I rise to make my contribution to the 2013 National Budget and Estimates as presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh on March 25, 2013.

The Minister's presentation has outlined, once again, that several sectors have registered growth. It also tells us that in the areas of forestry, diamond and quarrying we have experienced negative growth. More significantly, the sugar industry, despite the injection of billions of dollars into a Skeldon Factory and a further four billion dollars in 2012 into the management of Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), is ailing. The several attempts and promises made to turn around this sector have failed miserably and Guyanese taxpayers have had to bear this burden for yet another year.

At the end of the debate on the national Budget 2012, and passing of several proposed appropriations, there was an undertaking by this Government to continue talks with the combined Opposition on several issues. The discussions, which began before and continued

during the passing of the 2012 Estimates, came abruptly to an end. We are now debating another budget presentation with no hint of the fulfillment of those promises.

This fact notwithstanding, the staff of the Ministry of Finance must be commended for their work in preparing this Budget 2013 as they are not responsible for the political blunders of this administration.

I note that many non-traditional sectors have recorded increased growth. Further, Sir, the increase of 20.8 per cent of tax paid by self-employed persons is also heartening. It is obvious that Guyanese are recognising their obligation to contribute to the national purse.

Despite all of the above, I am disappointed with other aspects of this Budget 2013. I am disappointed, Sir, that the Minister of Finance failed to utilise this opportunity to ensure that the budget confirmed with article 222A of the Constitution by listing amongst those entities under Local Subsidies schedule on pages 398 through 402, those entities which are listed in the Schedule to article 222A.

The Minister also failed to utilise this opportunity, Sir, to address personal income tax in a real way. Why, Mr. Minister, is personal income tax the same as the corporation tax? Perhaps Mr. Minister, you should inform the workers about the reasons why the Government is paying the 7.2 per cent employer contribution to the National Insurance Scheme as outlined in paragraph 6.13 on page 63

Address the increasing disparities between the haves and the haves-not within our society. The Minister failed to address his plans for job creation, and the employed poor.

*1.43 p.m.*

He also failed to utilise this opportunity to address the spiralling cost of living and the reduction of Value Added Tax (VAT); to address the payment of \$15,000 to old-age pensioners as promised last year of which \$10,000 was given in 2012 as an interim.

Mr. Speaker, I speak to this Budget 2013 as a Member of the Opposition, whose mandate is to examine it with a critical eye, outline its deficiencies in meeting the needs of our people and, where possible, make proposals. With this objective in mind, Sir, I wish to state categorically

that having examined this budget I have found it to be very anti poor. After registering several consecutive years of growth, as stated by the Minister of Finance, our Government has failed to share the wealth of the nation with those in our midst that fall within the poverty bracket or are falling through the cracks.

I am conscious that those in Government, who sit at the table, will fail to see the many that wait upon the crumbs, like Lazarus. Nevertheless, it is obvious that this Budget 2013, like others, continues to keep our working poor, unemployed and unemployable in a state of poverty.

The Minister, on page 4 in the penultimate sentence stated, “Prices for food commodities generally ended 2012 higher than one year ago...” Further on page 74, the consumer price index shows a ten per cent increase in food over the previous year and also a 10.3 per cent increase in medical and personal care. This critical situation begs the question: How are the people in the aforementioned bracket coping? What measures have been put in place to ease the pressure on the impoverished?

Food Prices: *The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Report 2012*, states that hunger remains a global challenge. The most recent report on hunger estimates that in the developing regions, children living in rural areas are almost twice as likely to be underweight than children in urban households. In the Caribbean, eight per cent of children in rural areas are underweight, as compared to a rate of three percent in the city.

Appendix one on page 70 under the caption “Health and Education” is a significant revelation. It shows. Sir, that despite a constant increase in budgetary allocation to our health sector we have been unable to:

- decrease the number of low birth-weight babies;
- to reduce the number of severely malnourished;
- and to significantly reduce those who are moderately malnourished.

Despite the Grow More Food Campaign, the cost of food items continues to rise. Plantains are \$180 to 200 per pound; eddoes \$120 to 160 per pound; sweet potatoes \$140 to 160 per pound; and Sir, chicken foot is \$300 per pound; chicken neck is \$200 per pound. If we are to look at the cost

for chicken, it is at \$380; beef is for \$460 and salt fish, Sir, is \$560 to 600 per pound. Sugar is \$90 per pound and flour, Sir, \$120 is per pound. All these commodities, except for flour, are grown, reared and produced locally.

Let us imagine a policeman taking home a net salary of \$51,000 per month. He is living at La Parfaite Harmonie and stationed at Alberttown Police Station, his wife, an untrained teacher on the TQM1 scale, receives a net salary of \$58,000 per month and they have two children attending high school in Georgetown and a mortgage payment of \$47,000 per month. I am sure that this family would like to be told how it can overcome the challenges it faces daily. Despite these challenges, the Minister told the poor within our midst that Budget 2013 is presented under the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*.

Allow me to highlight some of the other challenges which the poor in our midst would like to overcome.

Housing: The poor are asked to pay the following cost for house lots: \$300,000, \$400,000, \$500,000, \$700,000, \$900,000 and \$1.2 million. Payment of fifty per cent will get a buyer an agreement of sale; others are given a few months to come up with the money. Some of those who have paid, Sir, cannot begin to build due to their inability to meet the requirements of the banks to access a loan. Others have taken a loan to purchase the land and do not have enough collateral to have another loan, hence they must repay the first loan before obtaining another. Meanwhile, however, they are receiving several letters threatening them that their land will be taken away. Many of the persons who are asked to pay these sums are policemen and women, clerks, ordinary public servants, domestic helpers, vendors and teachers, to name a few. Their salaries range from \$35,000 to \$86,000 per month. Minister Ali, the Hon. Member, can attest to the several persons for whom representation is made daily to his office.

Despite talks about establishing an information centre to protect those who are first time builders from unscrupulous contractors and those posing as contractors and saw millers, to date, this has not materialised. This situation has resulted in many single parents and first time builders being left at the mercies of these devious con artists.

There has been much talk and propaganda about the thousands of house lots being allocated, but what provision is being made for the very poor who cannot afford to purchase those house lots?

We have not heard, to date, any plans by the Government to build homes for those persons who would never be in a position to purchase land much less build their own home. What about arrangements for building of low income housing schemes as was done in the past? Areas such as North Ruimveldt, Campbellville, Shirley Field Ridley Scheme, Tucburg in New Amsterdam and Wisroc Housing Scheme in Linden are useful examples. We cannot behave as though these people do not exist. For exist, they do and every effort must be made to address their concerns. I can assure this House that the saying “not everything that glitters is gold” can be otherwise worded “not every building with four walls and roof means that it is a completed house”.

These, Minister, are but a few of the many challenges which your government must seek to address so that this group in our society can overcome their challenges.

Value Added Tax: During the Budget 2012 debate, A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) asked that VAT be reduced by two per cent in the year 2012 and a further two per cent in 2013. This was refused by the Government which continued to insist that the reduction of VAT would not help the poor. It is our belief that any increase in the spending power of the poor would improve their quality of life as well as that of their offspring. More money means more food available, more food available means children can concentrate in class. More money means payment for transportation for work and school and less absenteeism. Regular attendance at school means a chance of acquiring an education. Acquiring an education, Sir, means more employable persons and an opportunity to come out of poverty and enjoy a better quality of life. Indeed, more disposable income ensures a better standard of living for the family as a whole.

On page 11, paragraph 3.22, the Minister indicated that Government revenue inflows grew by seven per cent to \$129.4 billion. Of these inflows 91.5 per cent represented tax revenue collections, of which VAT and excise tax collections increased by 7.2 per cent to \$56.8 billion dollars. Had the Government accepted APNU’s proposal to reduce VAT by two per cent or \$1.14 billion dollars, it would have resulted in an increase in attendance at our schools, more food on the table and more houses completed. Indeed, it would have had a direct impact on the ability of families to improve their lives.

In addition, the Government must be aware that a large part of home building loans goes towards VAT. Persons building must pay VAT on items purchased. Just as an example: Purchase of six

hundred and forty-eight feet of corrugated sheet costs \$199,422 plus \$31,903 in VAT; purchase of one hundred and fifty-two lengths of steel cost \$127,960 plus \$19,486 in VAT; the purchase of one thousand two hundred and eighty-feet of lumber cost \$230,400 plus \$36,864 in VAT. On these three items alone, Sir, the consumer must pay \$89,253 value added tax. With a two per cent reduction, the consumer would have had available thousands of dollars to accelerate their building programme. That is what the Government refused to give to the poor.

Allow me, therefore, Sir, to read to the Minister his own words on page 2, paragraph 1.6, of his presentation:

“I urge once again that, even after the most vigorous of debates, this House learns to speak more frequently with one voice inspired only by that which is good for Guyana.”

I trust that the Minister would understand that a preacher of the word must be a doer also. I, therefore, submit Sir, that our proposal of a gradual reduction of VAT by two per cent over two years would be good for the poor people of Guyana and Guyana as a whole. Would the Minister allow us to speak with one voice on this issue before this budget debate ends? We will certainly hear from him.

Senior Citizens: There is not one Member in this House who has not been adorned by thank you(s) from our senior citizens when they received \$10,000 instead of \$8,100 during the Budget 2012 debate. Likewise, Sir, I am certain that that our senior citizens welcome the increase of \$2,500 more albeit this is still some \$2,500 short of the \$15,000 that was proposed by the APNU on the list of negotiations last year and this year.

I am at a loss for words, however, Sir, that the Minister reneged on his promise of \$15,000 for old age pensioners this year; \$10,000 being an interim payment in 2012. I beg the question of the Minister of Finance: Is it simply because you do not want to be seen...?

**Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]:** Mr. Speaker, I believe I heard the Hon. Member accused me of reneging on a promise of a monthly old age pension of \$15,000. I wish to state unequivocally that no such promise was ever made either by myself or by the Government and the Hon. Member is therefore misrepresenting the facts and misleading the nation, in relation to this matter.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, the statement that the Member has reneged on a promise...

*[Interruption due to the sudden illness of a Member]*

We will adjourn for five minutes.

*Sitting suspended at 2.01 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 2.15 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, before I invite Mrs. Lawrence to resume her speech, and I am grateful that she is in a position to continue, test went to her fortitude, I would like to just say that I would like to thank Members for the assistance rendered, particularly the medical practitioners on the Government side who responded. It is commendable. I have to remark openly that this is the way we should be living, and to the press for their cooperation. Thank you very much. To Members, we wish the Member as speedy recovery.

The Clerk and I will continue to look to ways to ensuring that the facilities in this House cater for every and any eventually. We did discuss certain possibilities but we will obviously have to go back to the drawing board, because, I think, it was Rev. Morian, only a few evenings ago, referenced the possibility of a disaster here. We have looked at fire escape and the Guyana Fire Service has been in. We have looked a security, and now we have to look at medical issues. By way of reminder, there are three rooms on the mezzanine floor, above the Members' lounge, that can be used for rest and relaxation and the Clerk has control of the keys. Any Member who wishes to spend some time there, please indicate to the Clerk.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** Mr. Speaker, just to endorse your statement and to express thanks behalf of A Partnership for National Unity, particularly to the medical doctors from the People's Progressive Party/Civic side who played a very important role in ensuring Mr. Richard Allen's recovery. I was about to mention the facilities in the House for emergencies, such as those. I would just want to record our thanks to all of the medical practitioners who helped Mr. Allen. We look forward to his speedy recovery.



**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much doctors and Members for your attention, I invite Mrs. Volda Lawrence to resume. I am thinking of us taking an early break. Perhaps if the food could get here before four o' clock we could take a break because some of us are visibly unsettled.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Before I continue to plead the cause of the vulnerable in our midst. I would like to intercede on the behalf of the Member that Jehovah Jireh, our healer, will take charge and will bring him back to us in good health.

**Dr. Singh:** Notwithstanding the gravity of the moment and the evident changed in every Members mood, given the falling ill of one of us, permit me, Sir, to draw your attention again to the concern I was expressing just before the very unfortunate medical episode. I invite you again, Sir, to consider asking the Hon. Member to withdraw the statement she made.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you for reminding me. Indeed Hon. Member, we were at that stage when the Member had raised a Point of Order that the words were that he reneged on a promise and the Hon. Member was saying that no such promise was made by him and or the Government, which he represents, and I believe you were to respond.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Sir, something went wrong if what the Minister is proposing is true because we were informed that during the negotiations, as we began the last budget Estimates, that it was indicated that the \$10,000 would have been given as an interim to our proposal for \$15,000 for old age pension.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, what transpired by way of negotiations we are not sure. We lamented the fact last year that there is no record of these negotiations and statements made in the negotiation would not be the same or equated on the basis of being promises or undertakings given. There are expectations and those who were involved in those negotiations know better than those who were not on what transpired. If the Minister is saying that he made no such undertaking or promise, I believe that his Point of Order is in order.

**Mr. Lawrence:** I am quite aware of the Government's attempt to further provide assistance for some of our seniors with the introduction of the old age pension Electricity Assistance Programme of \$20,000 per year. I was quite impressed until I read paragraph 6.11 which states:

“This assistance will reduce the electricity charges that will have to be met by each pensioner who is a GPL customer”.

May I repeat Sir?

“This assistance...”

That is the Old Age pension Electricity Assistance Program of \$20,000 per year

“...will reduce the electricity charges that will have to be met by each pensioner who is a GPL customer.”

This does not cater for the forty-two thousand pensioners of whom the Hon. Minister spoke of in his budget presentation, nor does it speak to all the pensioners as the Minister Human Services and Social Security yesterday, in her presentation, let this House and the nation to believe. Rather it does cater only for some twenty-nine thousand five hundred of the forty-two thousand pensioners registered. When we look at it I hope that the Minister will say to this House that this \$20,000 will not be aggregated over the twelve months and thus the senior will only get the portion for the next eight months. I hope that the senior citizens will get the full \$20,000 in this year.

Further, that it discriminates against those pensioners who are not customers of GPL but do pay for light. In this regard, I penned a letter to the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh.

Whilst I find the intent commendable and one that surely will bring a measure of relief to pensioners, nonetheless allow me to point out the inequity that this proposal, in its present form, creates. Yes, it is true that far too many of our pensioners are burdened with the high cost of electricity. It is also true Sir, that several thousands are not customers of the Guyana Power and Light. Therefore many pensioners will be disqualified, from the goodly intention of the Budget 2013, for the following reasons:

- Many pensioners who reside with family members, in many instances, are required to contribute to the electricity charges but are not customers of GPL.
- Many pensioners, who are tenants, are often charged one rental amount which includes rent, electricity and water.

- Many pensioners, due to their inability to pay the high electricity costs, as well as make available the several documents demanded, and the visits imposed by the Guyana Power and Light, whenever there are conflicts, have severed their relationship with the company and instead have a younger higher income earning family member replaced them as customer.
- Many pensioners, Sir, who are residents of indigent homes, are not customers of GPL.
- Many pensioners who reside in some of our far-flung regions, for example Region 8, do not have access to GPL, but they are supplied with electricity by private businesses.
- Many pensioners, Sir, who live in our villages, outside of the city, are, in most cases, provided with electricity to their small cottages by family members. We see them so often as we leave the city.

These, Mr. Minister, are but a few examples of those pensioners who will never enjoy the benefit of the proposed assistance. I recognise that in the Minister's planning he may not have taken account of the above mentioned realities which apply to many of our existing pensioners.

It is with the above in mind that I ask that consideration be given to add this assistance to the monthly old age pension of \$12,500, thus bringing the total pensionable age to somewhere around \$14,100 per month.

*2.50 p.m.*

In this way, Mr. Minister, each pensioner would definitely benefit from the electricity assistance programme outlined in your 2013 Budget. To provide the \$14,100 approximately to each pensioner, the Government needs to add a mere \$18 million more to the allocation of \$590 million. Can the Government do this? I believe, Sir, that the resounding answer will be "Yes, it can."

Guyana's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2011-2015 identified that almost half of all children age 16 and below are poor. It further indicated that this group represents more than a third of the population. Poverty, many times over, persists over generations and Government's effort to provide a decent life for its citizenry must be a priority.

Our Children: We note that despite the increased spending through our Child Welfare Division, the attacks on our children continue unabated.

In 2012, we saw some 2,030 cases of abuse as against 1,860 in 2011, coupled with a high increase of neglected cases in 2012, totalling approximately 2,252 against 1,877 in 2011. During the second half of 2012, we were told by the Hon. Attorney General that the purchase of furniture and advertisement for the staffing of the Family Court was on track.

We are now some four months into 2013 and the Family Court, which we have heard so much about, is still a white elephant. We believe that notwithstanding the use of the Magistrate Court for some family matters, the urgent establishment of the Family Court is necessary. So, I urge this Government to get on with the business of having our Family Court operational.

It is with much concern that I note the high incidence of abuse and neglect in Regions 3, 4, and 6. The numbers in Region 10 are also increasing. It is hoped that as we flag these Regions, some special attention will be given to the welfare of our children there.

What is more disturbing is that mothers are listed as the number one abusers, with father following closely behind. This brings me to the sore issue of violence against women. The UN Secretary General, in his message on the One Billion Rising campaign to end violence against women and girls, said:

“The global pandemic of violence against women and girls thrives in a culture of discrimination and impunity.”

It is my humble belief that women and girls are now endangered species. It is time for our Government to rise off their seats and give life to the many laws passed in this honourable House and assented to by the President, as well as the several international conventions.

Last Saturday, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television carried an insight into what is being done by the police in Strathclyde in the city of Glasgow in Scotland. Viewers were told that a reduction in domestic violence and violence as a whole was achieved by the Police identifying those persons who, during the weekend and holidays, perpetuate violence on others. These persons are visited on Fridays and through the weekends and given warnings by the cops. This may not necessarily work in Guyana but it illustrates the need for innovative approaches to

the problem. I hope the Police and the Human Services Agency will strive to be more innovative in dealing with this serious problem.

Further, I believe the time has also come when men and boys in our society should be our primary focus in the reduction of violence against our women and girls, since 99.9 per cent of the time they are the perpetrators. Let us seek out new approaches in this national scourge. Violence seems to become the Guyanese population these days. I wish to take the opportunity, Sir, to invite the House to support the Motion by the Hon. Member, Mrs. Deborah Backer entitled 'Interpersonal Violence'.

Our younger girls are also in trouble and are in need of our assistance. I bring to the debate the several adolescent mothers across the length and breadth of our beautiful country, Guyana. In every community, they can be found. They face the normal challenges of adolescence as well as early pregnancy and motherhood. They live in a world which makes several demands and conflicting expectations of them. In almost every case, the problems of adolescent mothers lead back to their childhood experiences. If one should investigate further, he or she will find that many may have been born themselves to an adolescent mother. So the cycle continues.

After a few minutes of chatting with many of these adolescent mothers, one comes to establish that many of them were never exposed to self-development nor told of the need to establish boundaries in relationships, the influence of attitudes on behaviour, sexual and reproductive health or abuse. Many adolescent mothers drop out of school before they acquire a level of education that would enable them to function effectively in society. In many cases, their illiteracy leads to them being ill-treated by health care and social workers and other persons in our society. Regrettably, time does not permit me to elaborate further but it is sufficient to emphasise that the relevant Ministry has to do more to alleviate the situation. I, therefore, would like to suggest to the Minister of Human Services and Social Security that a policy paper on adolescent mothers be presented and that some interim measures be put in place to assist this vulnerable group within our society.

It is my belief that sufficient is not being done for the differently abled in our society. The David Rose School in Thomas Lands is a neglected place. Most unfortunately, it houses most of our differently abled children. Yet, year after year, budgets are brought to this House and there is no

mention of rehabilitation works or upgrading of equipment. I expected the Minister, in her presentation, to tell us that these students at the David Rose School and those at other schools for the differently abled have benefited from the One Laptop Per Family Project, and further that special technology programmes were acquired for the differently abled children in our midst. My information, however, is that this has not happened to date.

The disability legislation speaks to buildings having access for the differently abled in our society. A check at all the newly built schools, however, would reveal that no such provisions have been made. It is obvious that the talk about integration of differently abled students into our regular school system is nothing more than talk. The Government must lead by example.

There is no doubt that we have a far way to go in addressing and bringing long-term relief to the vulnerable in our midst. Having heard the Hon. Minister of Human Service and Social Security, in her presentation which indicated that her Ministry has taken on board many of the suggestions proposed by me during several budget presentations in this House, I am encouraged.

In concluding, I wish to suggest the following to the Government:

- Seriously consider paying the public servants a living wage;
- Upgrade the schools which provide special education to the differently abled;
- Establish a national centre or division for children with disabilities, aimed at facilitating early diagnosis and detection by timely intervention and support services to such persons and their families;
- Consider providing assistance for our young adolescent mothers, which will provide them with counselling, skills training and employment;
- Construct housing units for those in our midst who are in the extreme poverty bracket;
- That the Minister of Public Service and Social Security seeks to provide training and scholarships for our social workers; and
- That the Minister of Finance gives due consideration to the points I made in my letter to him about the old age pension/electricity assistance programme and give the old age pensioners the additional money on their pensions.

Mother Teresa said, “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.”

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

**Minister of Labour [Dr. Gopaul]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The year 2012 has been an extraordinary one for progress, development and improvement of the well-being of the Guyanese people. As the Hon. Minister of Finance indicated, 2012 witnessed an enormous growth of 4.8 per cent and that is like several years before.

The year 2013 is projected to achieve 5.4 per cent increase. This Budget that has been presented by the Hon. Minister, at this point in time, is seen as the most complete budget ever presented in this House for a long time.

The Budget caters for pensioners, for the workers, for improvement in the living standards of our people, for the continued development of infrastructure and social services, and for improvement of our healthcare and education. As a consequence, I believe that it is because of that and the tax measures which have been taken in this budget that saw the enormous endorsements among social partners in this country and we are indeed happy that it has received these ratings by stakeholders in this country.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to traverse this country, you will witness real development and progress in the areas of infrastructure, health facilities, water, education, social services and housing. Our people live better and they live healthier.

At the cultural level, our diversity is so rich that Guyanese celebrate, happily together, the many national events. Just look at the way we celebrate Christmas, Phagwah, Easter, Eid-ul-Fitr, Youman Nabi and Diwali, among others. See the happy faces as we interface with each other to celebrate Emancipation Day and Arrival Day.

As we look forward to a healthy debate on these issues, I would come back to some of the criticisms which had been made earlier in this debate. Before I do so, I would like to give a brief review on the work which has been conducted by my Ministry over the preceding year. In fact, the Labour, Occupation and Safety Department, in 2012, reviewed and drafted new legislations

and amendments to existing legislations and recommended some of these changes to the Government. We reviewed, in conjunction with the Tripartite Committee, rates of wages, hours of work and other conditions of service for various categories of workers and delivered new rates for certain categories of workers in the private sector last year.

We examined workplace accidents and inspected workplaces to ensure compliances with labour and occupational health and safety laws. We conducted seminars to educate employers and employees on labour, occupational health and safety regulations, HIV/AIDS at workplaces and the policies with respect to industrial relations practices and principles. We also conciliated in disputes between employers and Trade Unions and we set up arbitration tribunals based on requests by Trade Unions and employers, as well as based on the Ministry's intervention. We conducted member surveys of polls and determined Trade Union recognition and we vetted and signed collective labour agreements between employers and employees. Several industrial establishments have been registered as well as inspection conducted to boilers and inspection certificates issued. We promoted the establishment of safety committees and joint work place committees in the areas of health and safety and we facilitated collective bargaining as well as the promotion of programmes to enhance productivity and increase production.

During the year, we conducted 25 conciliation meetings between parties with disputes and we have received 1,263 complaints from workers at various entities in the country. As a result of those complaints, we were able to retrieve in excess of \$32 million for workers who lodged their complaints and had their complaints investigated. The intervention of our staff resulted in those benefits being retrieved to those workers.

We also conducted in excess of 1,200 inspections at workplaces and prosecuted 34 employers for various violations. We also countersigned 16 collective agreements over the preceding years and we had been able to, as a result of these training programmes, train over 858 employees from various private sector workplaces, during the year, in several aspects of our labour laws and health and safety regulations.

With respect to the Central Manpower and Recruitment Agency, we are happy to report that while we have been able to place workers whom we received requests for from employers for



vacancies to the tune of 3,800 persons, we were able to place 2,945 workers in the private sector during the last year.

We have been able to increase our activities in a number of areas. The Central Manpower and Recruitment Agency has officers in Regions 2, 4, 5 and 6. Regions 3 and 4 are being served by our Camp Street offices. We are hoping to reactivate a Recruitment and Placement Agency in Region 10.

There has been, at the commencement of this year, much more requests from employers and we have been unable to attract persons to come forward to take up these opportunities.

At the public service level, we have been able to create 208 new positions while these positions attracted 796 new employees. At the same time, we were able to fill 573 vacancies in the public service, bringing a total of nearly 1,500. This has been at an unprecedented level in the public service when public services around the world have been declining.

The Board of Industrial Training also played a pivotal role for last year in the training of personnel. We have been able to train 64 apprentices. These are those who participated in the long-term skill programmes. For the last five years, we were able to train, under this programme, 249 apprentices. The National Training Project for Youth Empowerment also trained 1,302 persons for last year while the total number trained for the last 5 years amounted to 7,058 persons. The Single Parenting Training Programme yielded, for 2012, 408 persons while the number trained between 2009 and 2012 amounted to 1,274, a vast number of which are single-parent mothers who have utilised this programme.

In addition to the programme, we were able to give a number of those persons coming out of the training programme their own tools and working kit to put them in the world of work. More importantly, the programme saw training in heavy duty equipment operators, among others. Over the last three years, by the time the training programme had been concluded, all these persons were absorbed in many industries in this country. The heavy duty equipment operators earn as much as \$500,000 per month now. We are going to put emphasis on this training programme because there is a heavy need for operators in industries like the sugar industry. The gold and diamond mining sectors were able to recruit these persons. In fact, they poached them long

before they concluded their training, many of whom conducted their programmes in the sugar industry.

The year has been a successful one in terms of training, placement of persons and the conduct of industrial relations and maintenance of industrial peace and harmony at the workplaces. We can say that the workers have performed. We recognise the need for workers to pay more attention to the workplaces in the light of the new rates of pay which we have announced and inspections which are necessary. As a result, we have been able to secure the approval from the Ministry of Public Service and the Public Service Commission to recruit additional labour officers, eight in all, and additional cooperative officers within the Ministry. With the additional staff, we will be able to monitor these agencies to ensure compliance and to ensure that workers are not taken advantage of.

I now turn to some of the comments which have been made during this debate presentation, particularly one which addresses the issue of the Russian Aluminium Inc. (RUSAL) arbitration and the RUSAL dispute. The Hon. Member, Mr. Basil Williams, indicated that he was disappointed that action has not been taken over the last year to deal with the RUSAL arbitration. The fact of the matter is that the RUSAL dispute dates back to 2008/2009. It is not a simple matter. Arbitration can be dealt with, by and large, in three manners. Firstly, it can be dealt with by compulsory arbitration being set up in accordance with the law, based on the Essential Services Act. Secondly, it can be dealt with by arbitration by mutual consent and, finally, arbitration by the request of either party based on collective agreements.

The Ministry of Labour is not an enforcer, but a mediator. We only enforce the law so long as we see the violation as being critical and in breach of certain laws. RUSAL is not like the essential services of GPL. I was terribly disappointed when Mr. Williams, the Hon. Member, made that evaluation and said that we intervened promptly within a week at GPL but were unable to do so with RUSAL. GPL falls under the Essential Services Act, and, as a consequence, we acted within those confines. It has nothing to do with the National Association of Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Employees (NAACIE), but it had to do with the Act.

*3.20 p.m.*

With respect to RUSAL, it is at a complicated state, a very delicate state. RUSAL issues developed as a result of a strike. The strike was called and workers were dismissed. The employers also terminated the agreement because they said that the agreement was breached as a result of the strike and the manner in which the dispute started. Those dismissals and termination which occurred should have been dealt with differently. It is my contention that the trade union representing those workers should have moved to the court instantly to seek redress on those matters, both the violation of the agreement... It is not for the Ministry of Labour to intervene in that matter. It should have been the instance of the union.

When Mohamed Azzarudin was dismissed from the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) in 1977 because he refused to be a scab, because he refused to break the strike, he was dismissed and NAACIE instantly challenged that matter in court. It is strike law. Azzarudin got compensation and he got damages. Although he was not a NAACIE member – he was a senior staff – we saw that a violation had taken place.

I would have been happier if the trade union had filed a writ challenging those decisions and had given the court an opportunity to adjudicate on this matter.

Notwithstanding that, I tried to intervene. I believe that, in the intervention, we acted in a way in which we could have found a way out. The employers challenged that intervention; we sought to impose arbitration and, quite rightly, the union intervened. However, the union withdrew its intervention and, technically, withdrew the case with the view, as Mr. Williams indicated, that I should have signed the document and not the Chief Labour Officer (CLO). There has been precedence. Had that case not been withdrawn, I would have found grounds to continue to argue it. But having had it at this stage, continued interventions saw the company taking a very tough position, a position on which it expressed disappointment at our intervention in that an agreement ceased to exist, a relationship did not exist and, as a consequence, we ought not to have intervened.

That new development has caused us to sit back and examine a way forward. We believe that we can find some solution to this dispute but it has to be through dialogue. It cannot be through any other means.

The Hon. Prime Minister intervened and has been speaking with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) on this matter as recent as last month, two weeks ago, and we are trying to work out an arrangement where we might be able to bring this matter to a close. But, as I said, the Ministry of Labour cannot and should not compel an employer. It cannot be done under the law, except if it is under Essential Services. The only way we could have, also, invoked arbitration compulsorily in this matter was if the national interest was threatened. We could not do otherwise.

While I empathise with the workers who have suffered in this dispute, I believe... [**Mr. B. Williams:** Inaudible] The Hon. Member, as the lawyer representing the Guyana Bauxite and Workers' Union (GBWU), should have taken this matter to court. I can tell you that there was a case in which negligence occurred. The workers sued the union and the lawyers and got money. It was the case of Silos Bollers against the Guyana Labour Union (GLU).

Again, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member - I consider him my friend - made a veiled threat about a no confidence motion but he should know...

**Mr. Speaker:** Then you know that the threat has no potency.

**Dr. Gopaul:** Pardon me?

**Mr. Speaker:** If he is your friend, then you know that the threat has no potency.

**Dr. Gopaul:** I am going to tell him that "canoe don't bore punt". He knows that I am not afraid. I was not born a Minister, Mr. Speaker. Some of my colleagues understand. I have said many times that we have had very good relationships, although we disagreed bitterly on issues.

I want to say that with the intervention of the Hon. Prime Minister, the Union being at the meeting, along with me...we are working to see what we can do to resolve this matter. We are aggrieved, like the union. It is a delicate issue.

We would not want to see companies close their doors as a result of intervention and so we hope that we will be able to get the matter resolved.

With respect to the Marriott Hotel issue in which, quite justifiably, some concerns have been raised, we have investigated this matter. We are moving there. Far from what is portrayed that there are only Chinese labourers there, there might be only Chinese labourers at the plant, per se,

at times, but we have examined what is taking place there and we have been told – and we are satisfied that this has occurred – that there are 82 workers being employed by a private company, since the project started, directly everyday. They have been supplying 60,000 blocks per month. They have been supplying 5,000 to 1,000 cubic yards of mixed concrete per week. There have been local suppliers of sand and a local contractor is supplying security guards to the company.

Indirectly, there has been a tremendous local input but we do agree with the sentiments expressed with respect to making sure that there exists in contracts...to protect Guyanese workers. We understand the complaints that have been made and the concerns which have been raised about Guyanese workers being prioritised in these contracts.

Again, the Prime Minister has intervened and in those discussions with the labour movement, we have been able to come up with a formula which will see an end to any doubts, when contracts are being executed, that Guyanese workers will be prioritised in these areas. We agree with the concerns.

The trade unions from the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and TUC have expressed their concerns. We believe that a case has been made out. It has happened in countries like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in the past and they have also regularised it with these contracts, taking care of these eventualities.

I must also caution that there are times when it is difficult to have workers in certain sections working to complete tasks within a certain timeframe. If one examines what has happened with some of the big projects which we have had in Guyana, one would see that many have had shortages of skilled labour workers to the extent that they have had to go over a year beyond the scheduled period of completion. These include the Linden Hospital Complex, the Georgetown Public Hospital, and several schools in this country and several other large development projects. The banks – almost all of the commercial banks, the new buildings which have gone up in this city and even in the country areas, have had many aspects of shortage of labour and they have had delays as a result. We must be concerned about that.

I should mention, also, that in visiting the workplace, the site engineer also expressed a desire to train some of our local engineering students as well as engineers who may want to go and work on the project and witness what is happening so that there can be a transfer of skills. We have

taken up that offer and we are trying to get employers to send their engineers there on periods of assignment.

It is not that we are not concerned about what is happening in those sectors. We are working and we understand the concerns expressed.

While I said that, and while I am reviewing what some of my colleagues said – and we tried to find resolution to the matter – I must express a little bit of disappointment with the type of generalisation which has been made with respect to the Budget. They talk about issues of unemployment without having specific data at hand. **[Members (Opposition):** You have to give us the data.] They are talking about a number of issues, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that we have had requests from employers for workers. We have the opportunity to provide jobs in many, many entities but we are not finding the workers; we are not finding people coming forward to take up these offers. I want to throw out the offer here. If Members know of people who need jobs, send them to the agencies. The agencies can absorb them. I am serious, Mr. Speaker. GuySuCo alone has hundreds of vacancies. **[Members (Opposition):** Where should we send them? Should we send them to you?] Send them to the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency.

The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that these days a worker comes and says, “I just came out of the University and I cannot find a job,” but he wants to land an engineering job if he graduated in engineering, not wanting to start at a certain level.

We have the case here where graduates working as managers leave these shores and go to other countries such as the United States of America and they end up being security guards.

**Mr. Speaker:** Minister, certainly, if a person goes to the University to train as an engineer, he or she expects to find employment as an engineer. If not, a person would not study to be a teacher or an engineer.

**Dr. Gopaul:** A person can go into the discipline. A person cannot be appointed engineer immediately. The person has to go into the discipline. That is the point that I am making. The person has to go into the discipline before he or she moves up the ladder. A person cannot come into the public service and say, “I have a Degree and I want to reach certain levels.”

I am saying that there are opportunities but we want the people to come forward and we want a committed workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that statements which have been made during the course of the debate about slashing the Budget, cutting the Budget and rejecting the Budget will not do us any good. We believe that the time is right for us to discuss with all of the vigour and with all of the passion, expressing our views, but, at the same time, we should be objective.

We want to ensure that all of Guyana move forward. I do not think, in my lifetime, I have ever seen Guyana at this level of development. We do not want to take Guyana back.

The comments made by Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge and others with respect to the Budget...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your allotted time has expired.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Gopaul:** I was saying that some of the issues raised by the Hon. Members of the Opposition can be discussed. They are worthy of discussion. We believe that as persons who have this country's interest at heart, we should work together to ensure development and progress. We should not move back. Our country is at a stage where it is being looked at. When we were looked at with scorn by people in the Caribbean, our people have been harassed... Today, persons are coming to Guyana to do shopping. They are coming to Guyana to see what we are doing.

If we were to adopt an approach where we can dialogue and air our differences, rather than a confrontational one, we can achieve much more. I believe that that time is now. I am urging my colleagues not to take the path which they have threatened, but to work towards having this Budget passed, to highlight areas of concerns and let us work together to ensure that the next budget has a significant input from the Opposition. The input has to start from day one.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: over the last few days that we have had holidays in this country, I have seen our President and our Leader of the Opposition meet publicly at events. The cordiality that was splashed in the newspapers brings joy to people. I want to believe that if we

were to emulate a position where we can talk conscientiously and trust each other, we can get somewhere.

The position of fighting down the Budget, irrationally seeking to knock down the Budget, and trying to point to weaknesses where there are not any, would not solve the problem. I am not saying that there is not room. Always, there is room for improvement on issues.

I will end on this note, while appealing and ensuring that we end our differences: when the Hon. Ashni Singh was reading the Budget, I am told by a friend who was in Mahaica, an old pensioner said, “Ow, a young boy can do wonders for us. Ah hope APNU and AFC vote PPP.”

I want to appeal to Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Nagamootoo to come back home, to recognise that there are more values in us working together. [**An Hon. Member:** What about Mr. Basil Williams? Mr. Williams is ready to come home.] Mr. Williams, Dr. Roopnarine and I were in the same camp with Mr. Scott.

I want to urge my colleagues to let us try to discuss issues and analyse before we take any rash decisions. This is a crucial Budget for this country. Where we go from here can be uncertain if this Budget is not passed. All of us can be affected. The fact that there is a composition where a major voice is on the other side, a voice which cannot and should not be ignored, I believe that if we were to work together, the future of this country and the development of this country will be assured.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you for your sentiments, Minister. From what I am seeing here, your sentiments are shared by both sides. It is just a matter of who is not speaking. It looks like we are getting some place, which I hope.

I invite the Hon. Member, Mr. James Bond, whose presentation last year, I thought, was outstanding. I hope that he equals it, at least.

**Mr. Bond:** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to lend my voice to the debate on the presentation, by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, on Budget 2013.



Mr. Speaker, I recoiled when I heard Members of the other side speak of dreams, more so what they term the “Guyana Dream”. For my own part, my favourite poet is William Butler Yeats who wrote a poem that is the foreword for my manuscript, *My Father’s Shadows, My Mother’s Self*. His poem, *He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*, is very short and I will read it in its entirety:

“HAD I the heavens’ embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.”

Those immortal words, “But I, being poor, have only my dreams” are a testament to the life and times of our heroes, Cheddi Jagan and Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, who, from poor and humble beginnings in Port Mourant and Kitty respectively, sprang forth and became Caribbean giants with an indescribable and indomitable will to better the lot of the poor and to alleviate their plight and suffering in a cruel and uneven world.

When the Hon. Minister of Finance regales us with strides made in the judicial sector, he neglects, whether deliberately or capriciously, to provide a barometer as to how far we have come based on the Justice Sector Reform Strategy which was for 2006-2010. Indeed, the key indicators are:

- Adequate road safety statistics;
- A report of the number of police fatal shootings;
- Number of serious crimes reported;

- Percentage of serious crimes against women;
- Number of cases prosecuted as a proportion of case reported;
- Case clear-up rate;
- Proportion of successful Police and Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) prosecutions;
- Proportion of prisoners on remand;
- Proportion of High Court and Magistrates Court cases, including preliminary inquiries;
- Backlog of Court of Appeal cases;
- Average number of adjournments for more than one day of Magistrates and High court cases;
- Proportion of High Court and Magistrates Court cases referred to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR);
- Time taken for cost assessments in civil cases;
- Level of prison overcrowding;
- Prisoners' deaths and illness rates; and
- Level of client satisfaction with performance of AG's chambers in respect of legal advice and representation provided.

I must also posit that the aims of the Strategy are five-fold, encompassing:

Community safety which deals with the safety and security of people and property; criminal justice which deals with reporting, investigation, prosecution, court processing and sentencing of criminal justice cases; civil justice; administrative justice which is ensuring lawful exercise of their powers by public bodies; penal system which provides punishment, deterrent and rehabilitation. The aim is to provide a more humane and cost effective penal system. Government legal services for which the aim is to provide legal advice and representation to

Government departments. The aim is to provide timely high quality advice, representation and legal services by the Attorney General's Chambers to other Government departments.

These are the aims and strategies that the Budget, in totality, when speaking of our justice sector, should have focused on.

If we slide out of the PPP/C's rabbit hole, the majority of goals set have not been achieved and we have had seven years already to implement a five-year plan.

The Justice Improvement Programme has failed to deliver, in key areas, holistic improvements. These include:

- Upgrade and Capacity building of Staff;
- Juvenile Justice Programmes;
- Comparative remuneration, training and the provision of legal aids to members of both Bench and Bar;
- Access to records and data in registries and sub-registries and judgments of judges magistrates;
- Intertwining non-profit and non-governmental organisations with our criminal justice programmes;
- Citizen participation and transparency in the Judiciary;
- This Administration has failed to promote public oversight and awareness of the little reforms taking place;
- There is a marked absence of an infrastructure that protects the victims of crime; and
- There is a marked absence of a second chance policy that caters for the post release employability of adults and juveniles.

I want to call a spade a spade and say that the Hon. Minister of Finance was bluffing when he stated on page 48 of his Budget speech:

“More judges, better trained police prosecutors, increased capacity and expansion of the office of the DPP into the administrative regions and better sourced magisterial districts all have the potential of significantly improving the functioning of the criminal justice system in 2013.”

This statement is all hype but no substance. I dare the Hon. Minister to deny that it is the aim of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and the Modernisation of Justice Administration Project to phase out police prosecutions, among other things, to improve efficiency and competence in the criminal justice system, clearly showing that the Hon. Minister recognises some of the potentialities. But has he put adequate measures in place to realise those potentialities? I dare say that he has not.

Judges and magistrates are still writing their fingers off. They are still without research assistants. Yet, we expect our judges and magistrates to dream. The equipment needed for voice compilation...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Bond, one minute please. May I firstly recognise in our midst the presence of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana, Professor Jacob Opadeyi. We have guests and I...welcome, Sir. All of us have trained at the University of Guyana. Sometimes you may not know it, but we welcome you.

**Mrs. Backer:** Sir, I am just trying to caution Mr. Nandlall not to proceed in the way he was beginning to proceed...of the same issue that was raised against Mr. Basil Williams. I am just cautioning him very early. [**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** I do not want any caution.] Well then continue.

*3.50 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not know either, but whatever it is let us settle it outside of the Chamber and allow Mr. Bond to proceed unhindered. Mr. Bond, please, I hate to have to interrupt your flow.

**Mr. Bond:** It is okay, Sir, I am accustomed to *rabble rousing* in other areas. Judges and magistrates are still writing their fingers off, are still without research assistants, yet we expect our judges and magistrates to dream. The equipment needed for voice compilation rests in a

dusty room, but the judges and magistrates must dream. We are a long way off from the full and desired complement of judges and magistrates to service the sector, yet we expect the Guyanese population to dream. Dreams would not fix our problems; executing a vision will. Where does this administration find the gall to dare the young people of the judicial sector to dream? Where does this administration find the gumption to foist upon us in 2013 what it calls a “Guyana dream” when out of 302 staff in the judiciary, only one person is a trained attorney-at-law?

Further, in response to the question I posed to the Hon. Attorney General on the appointment of a registrar of the Supreme Court, Acting, he stated that the Deputy Registrar, Acting, was promoted to the post of Registrar of the Supreme Court Acting. He stated that the Deputy Registrar, Acting, satisfied the requirements of the job description, but she was then demoted to the post of Deputy Registrar then transferred to the Berbice Registry. The Hon. Minister states that the person who superseded her does not meet the standards required by the job description prepared and produced by the Public Service Ministry. Additionally, not only is he not a qualified Attorney, but at the time prior to her demotion, he was reporting to her. Is this how we treat our women? Is this how we treat our young people; our young professionals?

I must make this point less I be misconstrued. I have absolutely no objections to persons who are retired being brought out of retirement to train, equip, work and pass on their knowledge to the next generation. I have, however, every objection when instead of training and equipping the next generation, we stifle and frustrate them. The current Registrar, in my estimation, is as competent as they come and a gem of an individual. However, he should have been used to guide and nurture the young professionals in the sector to take over the reins.

That our men and women are locked away for 72 hours pending investigations for which no allegation is made against them is no dream. That most of our courts are crammed, stale and suffer noise nuisances, is no dream. There is a high incidence of police brutality, inclusive of shooting deaths of Damion Belgrave and Shakeel Grant among others; the beating of miners at Marudi and the residents of Melanie; the raids of Tiger Bay, Agricola, Sophia, and Buxton, that is no dream. That we have no Ombudsman to check the excesses of administrative bodies, even though last year we went through this, is no dream.

What has escaped the “Alice in Wonderland” on the other side is the fact that the greatest proportion of our Guyanese population live in squalor and poverty. It has escaped some “fly by night” dreamers that Guyana ranks only above Haiti in every erstwhile single category. The net migration for Guyana in 2012 was 12.7 migrations per 1,000 persons, the net migration for Suriname in 2012 was 0.96 migrations per 1,000 persons and the net migration for Trinidad and Tobago in 2012 was 6.76 migrations per 1,000 persons.

The unemployment rate for Guyana in 2012 was 11%; in Suriname it was 9.5%; in Trinidad and Tobago it was 5.5%.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2012 for Guyana was US\$3,000 per year, in Suriname US\$7,100 per year and in Trinidad and Tobago US\$18,000 per year. How do we expect our young people to resist the lure of the better life and good wages in greener pastures? I dare say this is the Guyana dream to the Hon Minister Irfaan Ali: the Guyana dream is to get the education you need then leave. That is the Guyana dream.

I may offer the Minister of Home Affairs some free Sunday school lessons being the son of a pastor. The prophet Joel at Chapter 2 verse 28 says, “Old men shall dream dreams, young men shall see visions.” That this young Hon. Minister is still dreaming is testament to the backwardness that is symbolic of this People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/Civic) administration. We do not need *wishy-washy*, watered down pipe dreams; we need comprehensive visions for our country that engages and benefits every single woman, man, girl and boy. There can be greater indictment on this administration than the visible widening, the dividing between the haves and have not. We have moved from a decade of politics of socialism to politics of democratic socialism, to politics of functional democracy, to politics of dysfunctional democracy, now to the politics of impoverishment. Access to information, health, education and justice is easy to some but impossible for others. We are not painting a dim and gloomy picture. These are the realities we hear and face in our constituencies. Maybe they are not in your constituencies but are in ours. Guyana appears more divided now than ever and Budget 2013 contributes little to bridge this gaping tear in our socio-economic fabric of our society.

I do applaud, by the way, the measures to bring relief to the middle class, but we must never forget the poor. I agree we can overcome whatever challenges we face only by togetherness, and in so doing we will accelerate the gains for our country. For this, I do commend the Minister of Finance and the staff for the Budget and the work they are doing.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you Hon. Member. At this point in time I suggest that we take a one hour suspension. We will get a report on our friend and colleague who is away. On return, I hope that we are properly refreshed and in good and better frames of mind.

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger:** Mr. Speaker, before we rise, I would just like to call the attention of this House to the fact that *INews* has already reported that the Hon. Richard Allen has had a cardiac arrest. Now, several doctors from this House looked at Mr. Allen and made no such diagnosis. He has been taken to the hospital and there is no such diagnosis, but *INews* has already published that a Member of the National Assembly has had a cardiac arrest.

**Mr. Speaker:** We will have to look at it. Mr. Clerk, I will need your assistance and guidance.

*Sitting suspended at 3.57 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.10 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members this sitting is resumed. Thank you.

Hon. Members we will now be hearing from the Hon. Minister Mr. Ali Baksh, the Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture.

**Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture [Mr. Baksh]:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members of both sides of the House I wish, like my colleagues on this side of the House, to thank and congratulate the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his team for a well prepared and presented Budget 2013.

When I listened to some comments from Opposition side of the House, the two days we were debating here I thought we were sending the Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Singh and his colleagues to some university and were bringing them back to this House at this time to mark their exams.

From all that was said on the budget there was little if not very much that could have been seen as a positive thought coming out from the Budget. If we are the examiners, I am certain in every aspect of the Budget if they were to be marked by the Opposition side would have been given zero, whether dealing with the infrastructure or health because everything coming from the Opposition is actually saying to us that they would have marked zero. From the positive side, this side of the House, I am certain they would have been marked with a star. I am certain if I was one of those examiners, I would have given them “excellent”.

It was good sometimes to hear from all the speakers so far about how we care for the poor, the needy and the destitute. It is good to hear that, but Comrades and Hon. Speaker, it is sometimes good to reminisce on where we came from and where we are today; where we came from and who were in office at the time when they were telling the same workers and the same poor farmers that they must tighten their belt; they must work harder and sleep less. It is the same thing that we are hearing today. Today, we are hearing about the care the people from the Opposition have for the same people they treated in such a manner when they were in government for 28 years.

Comrades, we have taken a principled position as a political party; from where we came from to this date, to always be on the side of the majority of people, the people who need to be assisted. And we have taken a positive position in the previous budget and the present Budget even to excel along the line to ensure the ordinary people are secure.

The world we are living in is faced with new global challenges. In Guyana, there is a role to be played by all of us, not only in this House but all of us as Guyanese. The State has its role to play and I hope and humbly believe if we are the leaders of the State, we can equally and collectively play that role to advance Guyana and the same people who we are talking about; the poor and needy, the destitute and the poor farmers and workers will be the main beneficiaries. That is the objective of the PPP/C. There is a role for the cooperatives, a meaningful role for the cooperatives, and also a role for the private sector.

It was mentioned here as if Guyana is being sold to a 20% person. This was mentioned by some people of the Opposition. 20% of the population of this country are living in heaven, while the other 80% are living in hell. That is what was actually mentioned by Members of the Opposition.



By that, they were saying the ordinary workers were being advantaged by the 20%.

Today, when you look around the entire Guyana, not Region No. 2, the Region that I am responsible for as a Member of Parliament, that Region was called the Cinderella County – today Cinderella is a princess.

The private sector today is growing, it is creating jobs. The private sector is helping also in a collective way between the state and small cooperatives; the bigger manufacturing institutions are assisting in creating jobs. Ordinary workers are being benefitted. If Guyana at any time, by any party, takes a position that foreign monopoly transnational corporations are to take over the economy I will be the first to oppose. We believe and always stand on the side of progressive entrepreneurs and we lend full support and that is why today our Guyana is flourishing. Overseas Guyanese alone with other foreign investors see Guyana as a place to invest all because of the prudent management of our economy. A lot of Guyanese today are coming back because they see Guyana as lucrative for investment. That is why many transnational corporations and huge businesses are looking to Guyana more than any other Caribbean country for investment. Because of the atmosphere that is being presented by the PPP/C Government they see investment in Guyana as lucrative.

We heard criticism about some industries that are coming in Guyana, these huge investments that are taking place. We are a developing country. Even the most advanced countries in the world like the United States of America (USA), England and Canada do not have all the technology in the world to advance their society the way they would like to in certain areas. Guyana as a developing country needs a tremendous amount of technology which we do not have at this time. That is why we have to import some of the technology; we have to. We need foreign technology to advance our development and growth as in the case of CGX, the Marriot Hotel, the Amaila Falls and others. Sometimes we fail to see what is taking place around us. Sometimes we have alluded to the fact that we would wish to take some Members of this Hon. House to visit some of the regions. I wish they can go and see what is taking place. I have been a root man, I have been on the ground for a number of decades, and I can tell you from my guts heart what is taking place in the various regions.

Let me just mention some areas that some decades ago were remote villages and are now moving

to townships. If you go to Port Kaituma in Region No. 1 you will see what is transpiring there; you will see hotels going up. Go to Kumaka, Mabaruma, Moruca, and Santa Rosa in Region No 1; Cotton Field, Anna Region in Region No. 2; Charity and Parika, Region No. 3; Bartica, Region No. 7; Lethem Region No. 9. I was there just recently. Investors will not go there to do business to the huge extent that I am seeing, that anyone could see, unless there are economic benefits. Go into those areas and banks are there. Never in the history would you have found banks in some of these remote areas. Go into to those areas you will find hotels being established that attract tourism; very good hotels. There are multipurpose shopping centres in these areas. There are supermarkets in these areas. There are vast growing housing schemes in these areas. These are positive tendencies that are happening in these areas. If we do have veils on our eyes because of our politics let us take them out and see Guyana first.

In agriculture, prior to 1992, the conditions of our infrastructure was atrocious in this country; lest we forget the conditions of our infrastructure such as kokers, sluices, drainage canals, rivers and sea defenses were extremely terrible. We overcame these challenges since the People's Progressive Party took office. We are proud as a Government to show to the Guyanese people and people of the world who are visiting Guyana that we have advanced in these areas. The Government of the day has spent tremendous amount of moneys in the last two decades. Budget 2013 will certainly enhance this process.

Several new pump stations and sluices were built in the following areas, and these are just the tip of the iceberg I am giving to you. Pump stations that were commissioned and are to be commissioned in 2013 are: Kitty, Liliendaal, and Lusignan; Dawa has already been operating; Anna Regina in Region No. 2; No. 19 and No. 42 in Region No. 6.

Rehabilitation of Pumps is ongoing in the following areas: Stanleytown in Region No. 3, Trafalgar in Region No. 5, Anna Regina and Cozier in Region No. 2.

The Greenfield Pump Station will serve from Mosquito Hall to Dochfour assisting in drainage. This is an area of thousands of acres of land that never had the opportunity for drainage systems and access to farm and market. This pump station with other road services we have built in the past years would assist over 350 farmers; mostly cash crop farmers will benefit. And as such about 1,500 acres of land will see the advantage of this project. Also, flooding will be eliminated

or curtailed.

At Black Bush Polder and Canal No. 2 there is a new sluice and a pump station presently being erected in those areas. Over 5,000 families and farmers would be beneficiaries.

For the major projects that are being undertaken in several regions I will begin from Region No. 2. It was mentioned in the budget that for the Aurora Land Development Project \$500 million was allocated. Work is ongoing on the 5,500 acres of land. Over 300 young families would benefit from this project. When we are talking about security for the young people these are the programmes and plans; part of it I have mentioned.

There is the excavation of drainage channels and the construction of embankment in Lower and Upper Pomeroon where more than six thousand acres are being empoldered and hundreds of poor farmers are the beneficiaries.

At the moment Region No. 2 is being blessed with a new pontoon with two long boom excavators to ensure the sea sluices are cleared.

The empoldering of farmlands from Grant Relief to Vergenoegen.

For the excavation of drainage channels in Supenaam Creek and Bethany Community Budget 2013 offers a great opportunity for expansion in these areas. These are linking main Amerindian communities.

Region No. 3, Revetment work at Canal No. 2.

Construction of new drainage outlet, sluice and pump station for Canal No.2 Polder.

Construction of sluice door at West Bank Demerara.

Construction of timber revetment at Boerasirie Water Conservancy.

Construction of embankment, concrete structures, sluice and installation of HPDE tubes at eastern and western Hogg Island.

In Region No. 4, construction of sluice at Grove/Diamond, East Bank Demerara.

Rehabilitation of drainage sluice at Garden of Eden.

Construction of sluice at Buxton.

Construction of pumps at Greenfield.

Construction of the East Coast Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) Northern Relief Structure.

Contracts were awarded for the construction of a heavy duty bridge, outfall sluice and head regulator.

Revetment works undertaken at Beehive.

Excavation of canals in Friendship. These are all works, and as I said it is just the tip of the iceberg that will be done in Region No. 4.

In Region No. 5, construction of sluice at Proffitt, Abary.

Construction of sluice at Cottage, Mahaicony. The outfall is being excavated and a canal is being linked to the sea sluice. All these are to bring relief and benefits to farmers and residents in those areas.

Construction of internal dam and embankment at left bank Mahaicony

In Region No. 6, Construction of sea sluice at Mara.

Supplementary drainage for Black Bush Polder.

Construction of sluice and pump stations also in Black Bush Polder.

In Region No. 10, construction of soak away structures and drainage system at Canvas City and Block 22, Linden.

Construction of Control Structures in West Watooka Phase 1 and 2.

Works were also done to develop cattle pastures in the following areas: \$10 million were spent on 20 acres of land to assist in cattle rearing in the Lenora area; in the MMA area approximately 2,500 acres of land were utilised for pasture development to assist cattle farmers.

We have expended a total cost \$26 million on our Beef Bull project, where 33 Beef Bulls were

purchased for distribution to farmers. There is a big demand for beef going out from Guyana because we are free from foot and mouth disease. For the Community Drainage and Irrigation Programme (CDIP) programme works were done to enhance both domesticated families and business communities. This programme is also creating employment for the poor and ordinary families.

Designation, number, monthly cost and yearly cost - labourers alone out of this one project by the Ministry of Agriculture is 1,640 persons at a monthly cost of \$41,000,000 and a yearly cost of \$492,000,000.

*5.32 p.m.*

Foremen – 126 persons are employed at a monthly cost of \$3,780,000 and a yearly cost of \$45,360,000; Coordinators – 10 persons are employed at a monthly cost of \$750,000 and a yearly cost of \$9,000,000. Out of this project alone 1,776 families are being assisted. These are very poor families and they are doing a tremendously good job to assist in all 10 regions in the residential areas, mainly, to assist in the clearing of drains and to give the residents living in the community better irrigation.

This Government is spending \$546,360,000 per year on this project. Is this not an area where this Government should really be applauded for the work that is being given to ordinary people to survive and exist and at the said time have a clean environment?

There is a cycle of change taking place in and around the sea coast, especially between Regions No. 1 and 6. Severe siltation is taking place in and around our sea sluices which sometimes lead to mud flats around  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles. This is creating serious blockages at our sea sluices and affects the free flow of water. This creates additional problems, especially, if there is a heavy rainy period and high tide. Anyone of us, if travelling on land or air or if you take a drive across between Regions No. 1 and 6, you would see about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile or a mile out there with mud flats, which are creating serious problems. The accretion is a very good and helpful process certainly to assist our sea and river defences. It is also giving us an opportunity to plant more mangroves plants so that we can protect not only our environment, but our sea sluices from siltation.

While that is so, it is also creating a serious problem, as I said, because of the siltation that is taking place. Within 24 hours those sea sluices can be cleared and it again can create siltation. As a result, from the 2013 Budget, for the moneys that are allocated the Ministry is not embarking on a programme to deploy at least one pontoon with two long boom excavators. Each of those pontoons with the two excavators will cost the Ministry approximately \$100 million. That is an investment to protect our environment, our farmers and the residents of every part of Guyana.

Additionally, with the present allocation of the 2013 Budget, farmers will be much more secured with the ongoing additional work that will be done by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA). Furthermore, we are doing block drainage work in several areas in farming communities: in East Berbice, West Berbice, Mahaica and Mahaicony areas, Black Bush Polder, the Essequibo Islands and Essequibo Coast, Wakenaam, Leguan. What I meant by block system is, we have been hearing about flooding all the time, where farmers are being affected. The Ministry of Agriculture is blessed with 62 excavators, sixty two excavators in a country where its economy is based mainly on agriculture. We are doing as much as we can. Much of these excavators sometimes are more than 10 to 15 years old and when we come with a budget here for moneys to be spent... these excavators are to help ordinary poor people that we are talking about. I would like to ask that when we are doing consideration, especially for the agricultural budget that we have the full support of this House.

Budget 2013 will have a great impact in the Hinterland communities and the riverine areas with the expansion of rice cultivation, soya beans, peanuts, pineapples, spices, aquaculture and cattle rearing, more and more as I have said the last time. In Region No. 2 alone, prior to 1992, we were only producing around 550,000 to 600,000 bags of paddy per crop. That means twice a year with 1200. Today, because of the drainage and irrigation system in that region; because of the type of work that we have been doing to maintain our irrigation and drainage system, we are producing over one million bags of paddy per crop. Today, because of the blocked drainage that we are doing in both lower and upper Pomeroon, we are having at the minimum of 20 loads of oranges, bananas, plantains and other ground provisions coming to Georgetown. We are even exporting to Linden. *[Interruption]* **[Mrs. Backer:**

Linden is a part of Guyana.] You are in need that is why we are giving to you. We are humble people.

I have mentioned how much work we will be doing in Linden also. This will directly result in the creation of jobs, generate additional income and thus improve the livelihood of persons in these communities that I have mentioned. More markets are available that we need to grow more to satisfy the demands. Today, we are exporting 90 commodities to 19 different countries in the world. Never in history have we had that.

Also, with the introduction of shade house and drip fertilisation in different parts of the agricultural areas in our country, we have extended now on school farms. This would help to complement the Government's School Feeding Programme by cutting costs and helping families and communities to develop more rapidly. In Saint Ignatius and Lethem alone we have visited there and saw where this programme was implemented. The headmistress of that community said to us that they have been helping the school with the produce coming out from this farm cutting costs by 50% and they had \$140,000 in the bank. That in itself shows that it is a positive position that we have taken to assist these schools and communities with this type of activity.

Moreover, there are numerous developments taking place in other parts of Region No. 2. We are opening much more farmlands in areas such as Cozier, Underneeming, Siriki, Karawab, St. Monica, Karakaburi and Warapana. These are riverine communities linked to Amerindian communities and the block systems that I have mentioned before. People cannot farm the way they used to farm in the past. With the rise of the river, the river defences are becoming poorer to defend these farmers from flooding.

The health services in Region No. 2, including the Pomeroun, so far, these have decrease by approximately 30% from 1992. At the moment, there are 11 health centres and these health centres are in many rural communities: Eighteen health posts and one reporting centre. They have seven medexs now, 18 midwives, five nursing assistants, 34 community health workers. This stretches across the region that brings a lot of benefits, far way more than we have experienced prior to 1992.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you time has elapsed. You will need an extension.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Baksh:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the education sector in Region No. 2, which was mentioned before, in the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) results for the last examination Region No. 2 topped the Caribbean. Ms. Hakh from Golden Fleece Essequibo attended the Abrams Zuil Secondary School. She topped the Caribbean. That is to show that education is now moving not only before when we used to talk about Queens' College and Bishops High School and all of these top ranking schools in Georgetown. It is the very poor people we are talking about to represent, it is their children that are having the facilities and benefits in these institutions being established.

We have today and this has increase by about 30%, in the various areas: Nursery Education – 1,087 students; Primary Education – 6,433 students; Secondary Education – 4,485 students. Never before students, for example in the Wakapau area - for those who have ever been there would know the main, where the school is situated there are about seven to eight villages which are about ten to fifteen miles apart. Places like Mora, Miri, Harasherema, the children used to paddle in rain to get there. Today, there is an established dorm there where these students can stay and have three meals. They have dorm mothers and dorm fathers, cooks and security. The State pays for all of that.

There are other dorms for example in Pomona area, recently built and they house 60 students. Where did these students come from? Was it the Supenaam Creek? They are from the Bethany Amerindian Community and the Mashabo Amerindian Community. Ninety percent of them are staying there, 60% of them gets free meals, free security and gets to study in the same or even better atmosphere than some of us who are here.

There are other dorms at Charity that takes care of students from the Upper and Lower Pomeroun. Just at the end of last year a new secondary school was built and a new dorm has been established at Charity. [**Ms. Ally:** I will go and check it.] Go and check it, I would be grateful to go with you too, you are beautiful to walk with. At Anna Regina Secondary School there is also a dorm in Wakapau.



We heard some criticism about the question of the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF). 85 rural communities, to some extent the riverine communities and especially the coastal area in Region No. 2, they have received 3,659 laptops. This means a tremendous lot to ordinary poor people. They had trained before they received the laptops and now that they can receive it they can even train other persons and their families.

There is a programme also that we have established in Region No. 2 where centres are set up. We do not have at this stage the amount of computers that we can give to every family, but we give it to the schools, community centres, we have established clusters and the parents, guardians and ordinary poor people who cannot afford a laptop can go there to be trained. Also, they can have access just as any other person who can afford it.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you, with the free flow of electricity in Region No. 2, every single community, here again Hon. Member, Cde. Ally, I want to invite you to Region No. 2 to see where in every community there is a welder shop, barber shop, furniture shop, tire shop, a repair shop for something because of the free flow of electricity. Small entrepreneurs are developing, a middle class is coming up and restaurants are developing. We are talking about persons finding jobs. Persons with seven subjects CXC and persons who go to university today see a different way out. These are farming families and workers families they do not want to go to the big jobs in the offices sometimes. A lot of them are becoming good entrepreneurs because they see an opportunity to make more money. That is why they are establishing their own independence and that is the growing middle class we are seeing that brings benefits not only for themselves, they bring benefits to other persons within their community because they are creating employment for them and these are ordinary people.

I want to conclude by saying that I beg of all of us to look at what is presented in this year's budget. The Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh has done an extremely good job with his team. I want to again congratulate him. You have been doing this for Guyana some years now and I know that you will be continuing here and sometimes even in other places that will contribute to the development of Guyana.

I want to thank you Mr. Speaker for giving me this opportunity to contribute to this debate.

*[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we invite the indefatigable, Mrs. Joan Baveghems to address this House.

**Mrs. Baveghems:** Cde. Speaker, thank you. I rise to make my contribution to the motion for the approval of the 2013 Budget Estimates presented by the Minister of Finance under the theme, “*Overcoming challenges together, accelerating gains for Guyana.*”

My first observation is that the theme of the Budget is deceiving when the Minister speaks of “*Overcoming challenges together.*” Everyone knows that since November 2011, the PPP/C Government has done the opposite. They have excluded everyone else and struggled to do it all alone as though there are no other parties in this National Assembly. They have functioned as if they alone have the mandate from the people of Guyana to make decisions.

My humble advice to the Minister, therefore, is that if he is serious about, “*Overcoming challenges together*” then the PPP/C must recognise the true composition of this National Assembly, respect the will of the Guyanese people at the last elections and understand that they are no longer a majority in this House. If that is understood, I believe we have a better chance of overcoming the challenges and hopefully, “*accelerating gains for Guyana*”.

The Hon. Minister made a number of lofty statements in his budget presentation. In his introduction, he stated that the Budget gives us the opportunity to, “Review accomplishments and outcomes over the past year...” What accomplishments is he referring to?

As it relates to social services, there has been little or no improvement in the livelihood of most Guyanese.

“Prices for food commodities generally ended 2012 higher than one year ago...The world market price for rice and sugar declined... while that for wheat increased... by 29.3%.”

That quote was taken from paragraph 2.4 of the Minister’s speech. How can this be an accomplishment? When one juxtaposes the rise in food prices against the fact that the world market price for both rice and sugar – two of our main exports – have decreased by 2.6% and 18% respectively. We the citizens are not better off than we were a year ago.

This brings me to another statement found in the 2013 Budget speech at paragraph 1.8, where the

Minister stated that the Government will continue to provide, “high quality social services”. Is the Minister referring to the fact that Old Age Pensioners still have to spend the entire day sometimes in the sun and rain to collect their old age pensions? In some instances the buildings lack proper ventilation and seating. This is also the scenario where pensioners, single parents and other vulnerable groups have to wait long hours at the public hospitals then spend about five minutes with a doctor and in most cases prescribed ibuprophen and or chlorophan. If they have to get more than two sets of medications, they would get one free and have to buy the other one. It is buy one, get one free.

The Hon. Minister mentions giving \$20,000 per year to pensioners for helping with their water and electricity rates. That is a smart way in injecting more money into these entities since most pensioners are not customers of the Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL); how smart, dream on. Has the Minister carried out a study of how many house lots given to young people were resold, like the laptops he so boastfully spoke about? People are hungry and when they have a laptop and there is no electricity, they will sell it even if it is just to buy a loaf of bread and some sugar to make sugar water.

Has the Hon. Minister addressed the senior citizens who have to be standing in small offices with little or no seating where hundreds go for their pension? Some with walking sticks, some with crutches with no fans or drinking water available. How dreadful! These old people have served this country. At the General Post Office, it is painful to see those seniors struggling to access the birth and death departments. Seniors must climb all those stairs. When will the Minister address repairs to the elevator in that building? Perhaps the Minister of Finance, like the Minister of Human Services and Social Security are not aware of the call by the United Nations Secretary General’s message to mark International Day of Older Persons on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012; for the well-being of older persons to be insured and for nations to enlist their meaningful participation in society, so we can all benefit from their knowledge and ability. I believe he was speaking to Governments like the one we have here in Guyana; right here in this Parliament, where more often than ever poverty and near destitution are an outcome of the aged in our midst. Perhaps the Minister will tell us when they would heed the call for care homes for our aged in regions such as Region Nos. 2, 5, and 10.

Perhaps the Minister will tell us that he will ensure that request for supplementary provisions

will be sought for the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security whenever the budgetary allocations are depleted, just as he does for the many projects, which does not meet the requirements of the law. At least two months before the end of the year the moneys allocated to assist those who are in dire need to meet expenses such as, funerals, spectacles and food are exhausted and not further allocations are made.

At page 14, Chapter 4.1, in looking to the future, the Minister stated among his objectives, building:

“...a Guyana where every young person can find rewarding productive employment and where every elderly person can retire in comfort.”

This objective is laudable, but it is far from reality.

Young persons with the relevant skills were mysteriously debarred from gaining employment in the construction phase of the Marriot Hotel because alleged shady or irresponsible deal brokered by this Government and the contractors. The young men and women out there are saying that A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) should have a tour of that place and see what is going on there. They believe that shady businesses have been going on there. This is despite the assurances of the former President promising that the Marriot will create hundreds of job opportunities for Guyanese young people. How can the young people rely on these new assurances that jobs would be there in the future?

How do they know that further incompetence would not continue and the Government would not broker another lousy deal that would see foreign works coming to Guyana to management the Marriot and work in the enterprises being started by new investors?

This is not far-fetched as it is already happening in other sectors where foreign companies have brought from abroad their own workers, including truck drivers. Unless we have a Government with a vision and a concern for Guyanese workers, Guyanese, particularly our youth, have no genuine assurance for further employment opportunities under this Government. What then is the usefulness of all the alleged training of thousands of youths at Kuru Kuru that the Minister of Labour continues to boast of about? If that is true what then is the use of all the training which the Minister of Social Services boasted on National Communications Network (NCN) television

recently, that she would be undertaking this year with her Budget allocations. We are still awaiting the thousands of jobs which were promised to the citizens of Linden several years ago.

With respect to the statement of elderly persons retiring in comfort, well the Minister must take a night tour of the city of Georgetown and explain whether the pavement of the old Guyana Stores or the avenue on Main Street or the pavements outside this very Parliament Building are comfort zones.

Additionally, we just have to look at the number of elderly persons who have sought jobs as security guards, sorry, watchmen and watchwomen, because their retirement benefits are woefully inadequate to maintain them.

While the Government will boast of the increase in pensions, the reality is that there will be relatively no real increase because of the rising food prices, inflation and the continued rise in the cost of living.

*6.02 p.m.*

The fact is, with inflation, et cetera, the pensions would have had to be doubled, if it was to make any difference in the comfort or quality of life of the elderly. I would therefore wish to recommend to the Minister of Finance that he increase the allocation for pensioners so that pensions could be doubled. I assure him he would have my support for that amendment of the Estimates.

I would deeply appreciate it if the Hon. Minister could state in exact terms the number of “grassroots economic opportunities” which were created over the past year and the number of “at risk vulnerable” and small businesses that were actually able to access credit easier, which he alluded to in paragraph 4.37 of his budget presentation.

Most Guyanese, by now, realise that these initiatives are largely for propaganda and really benefit the few loyal party supporters of the PPP that promise to continue towing the line. Occasionally, they make an exception so that when they are accused of political or racial discrimination they can point to those exceptions as examples.

The Minister, at Paragraph 4.88, alluded to the services offered by the Child Care and Protection Agency. However, it is my view that in order for a proper evaluation to be done more information is needed. It is not sufficient for the Minister only to state the number of children who were reunited with biological families, removed from abusive situations or placed in foster care. We need to know how many cases were reported and how many favourably resolved. We need to know the number in these groups who were able to receive help as against those who required help. I hope the relevant Minister will provide this House with the details so that we can make a proper assessment.

At Paragraphs 4.90 and 4.91, the Minister boasts of the many programmes implemented to target primarily vulnerable youth and the thousands who benefited from training under several specific training programmes. As usual, this information is vague and unacceptable. We need greater details as this National Assembly has approved large sums for such programmes in the past.

Where did these trained persons find employment? Surely not at the Marriot construction site and surely not at the E-Governance project, so where are they employed? The truth is that many of those persons end up back in the ranks of the unemployed after these training programmes. Let us therefore have greater details from the relevant Minister. The youths out there have said that they have not heard, so far, anything in the budget for them. Perhaps, they say, they have a sneaking hidden agenda and they will have to continue “liming” at the shop corners begging somebody to buy a fish and chip for them, or something like that, and then the police will come and shoot them down.

As I conclude my presentation, I am forced to state that this 2013 Budget has come and gone as a damp squib. No longer is there the excitement in our population, as we witnessed yesteryear during “budget time”. Guyanese have resigned themselves to the fact that it’s the same old, same old. The Government will present one budget, then immediately thereafter do their own thing; unknown to either this Parliament or the people. It is only when a scandal breaks or some information is leaked or when they are forced to come for supplementary allocations that the people of Guyana find out what the Government is really doing.

However every long rope has its end and the people of Guyana will soon pass final judgment. I too have to agree with the reigning Calypso Monarch who was unceremoniously banned from

our national radio and television that “*God don’t sleep*”! To have my final say, I would say that God has sent David to free the Guyanese population from their worries. Please let our people go.  
[Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. I invite Mr. Joseph Hamilton, Parliamentary Secretary, to address us.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence and ask a request of you. After I am finished with the first five minutes of my presentation, could you allow the Hon. Dr. George Norton to rebut? I do not want him to carry the burden of one year to return to rebut me in 2014 for the 2013 Budget. It is an unprecedented request but I will leave it up to you to grant, if you will grant that request.

**Mr. Speaker:** If the request is made.

**Mr. Hamilton:** We, once again, come to discuss the National Budget. Yesterday we would have heard many speakers speak. Before I go into my presentation proper, I would want to clarify three matters:

1. This morning the Hon. Member, Mrs. Volda Lawrence in her presentation, indicated that in Guyana there is severe malnutrition and large numbers of children born underweight. The records regarding that matter suggest that low birth rate for live births in Guyana is 11.2%, under five years moderate to mild malnourished children is 7% and under five years severe malnourished children is 0.5%. Therefore it was total misinformation. If one goes on the net one will see the IDB, one will see the World Bank and the UN reporting on the figures.

The Hon. Member, Dr. George Norton, in his presentation, rebutting my 2012 presentation about him bringing his tears to the National Assembly... In his presentation he said that I am a “Johnny-come-lately” person to the healthcare system and he spoke about his longevity in the healthcare system, some decades, and he reminded me of two gentlemen in the whole book, the Bible; one Methuselah and the other being Jesus Christ. For Methuselah the only record is one line, “Methuselah lived 999 years and he died”, whilst Christ lived some 32 years and up to last week we were celebrating him. Longevity means nothing; it is what you bring to where you are

placed. When you hear the Hon. Member, a health practitioner, speak – the point man for health of the Opposition, the APNU – and comes to the National Assembly, what are we regaled with? We are regaled with an overflowing sink; no programme, no plan. This is a health practitioner. 30 years of service he boasts of.

The health facilities that are managed by the Ministry of health in this country is some 360 odd. It is expected that if one is managing 360 odd facilities there were plumbing problems. I have three bathrooms at home and I too get plumbing problems so the point is that instead of coming to the National Assembly, making a presentation to transform the health sector... [Mr. Greenidge: That is not his job.] Yes, that is his job. He is a health practitioner and he is a legislator and he must come to the National Assembly to speak to the issues of the development of the health sector. That is his job. That is what he should be doing and not regaling us about toilette and sink and plumbing facilities.

When one hears Members speak, they give their gloom and doom of the health sector. The fact is that everyday tens of thousands of citizens of this country journey to the public health sector and are serviced by Guyanese doctors and nurses and health professionals because they have the confidence in the health sector.

I must mention this to make my point because it was prominently featured and it was a national matter. Mr. Speaker, you would know that some two months ago, unfortunately, the General Secretary of the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) was injured via an *[inaudible]*. The reports suggest that when that happened he was rushed to a private facility, St. Joseph's Mercy Hospital. Within 24 hours he was transferred to the public health facility, the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. The point is if the General Secretary and his family did not have confidence in the public health system then he would not have been transferred into the public health system.

The other point is, we would know that some two weeks ago the Chairman of the Alliance For Change suffered a cardiac arrest in the Marudi Mountains. From Marudi to Aishalton to Ogle to Georgetown Public Hospital to Timehri International Airport it was the public health system that was responsible for that. If they were not confident in the public health system, I suggest to this National Assembly, they would not have presented themselves.



I am attempting to say to this National Assembly that daily thousands of Guyanese present themselves. The public health system takes care daily of their bodies, nourish them back to health, fix their broken bones, take care of these persons. When one stands up and suggests, as my good friend the Hon. Member Ms. Annette Ferguson that nothing has happened in the health sector and she read a letter about a person whose child wanted assistance from the Ministry of Health/Government of Guyana and that assistance was not granted. The fact of the matter is the relevant persons that she spoke to never ever made such a request to the Ministry of Health but the Ministry of Health, every year, assists citizens of all likes and strata with medical assistance. I have before me that the Ministry of Health provided \$136,737,000 to the citizens of Guyana to help them with health care; 394 citizens of Guyana, inclusive of 59 children who were helped by the Ministry of Health to deal with...

I am seeking to correct this falsity that the healthcare system is not delivering to the Guyanese people. I have in my hand the USAID Health Sector Assessment 2010 and they are speaking about Guyana's healthcare system. On page 17 this is what they talk about, "Service Delivery":

"The health sector is making significant strides in providing equitable services, skilled human resources, infrastructure and technology, particularly through the strengthening network of laboratories, the outlining of the package of public guaranteed services and the strong contribution to the strengthening of HIV/AIDS service delivery."

This is USAID speaking about the Guyanese health sector. Secondly, at page 15 of the same report they said:

"Guyana has seen significant health sector leadership that has supported innovative improvements over the past few years."

Therefore, when one comes to the National Assembly and suggests that nothing is happening as regards taking care of the health of the citizens of this country, it is erroneous; it is unfounded and it is total misinformation.

The Ministry of Health presently, as I said, supervises and oversees some 353 health facilities around the country. Presently there are over 500 doctors who take care to the citizens of this country every day. There are over 1,200 nurses who take care of the citizens every day so when

we come and we suggest via the attitude of denigrating their work... In my short sojourn at the Ministry of Health, I have seen these people climb the mountains, face the rapids in the creeks and the rivers to deliver healthcare to the length and breadth of this country and all of us, if we are honest, would know that presently in Guyana, wherever one resides, one can access healthcare. It has never been that way before.

The Member of Parliament for Region No. 9 could not be living in Region No. 9 and spoke that way; of course the Minister of Health dealt with that matter yesterday so I do not want to go over that matter.

The healthcare system, as I indicated, the public health system, will be staffed with more doctors and nurses this year. Presently we have 162 nurses who will be graduating in 2012. We have 21 medical laboratory technologists, seven x-ray technicians, audiology technicians rehab assistants, community health workers. Presently there are 314 registered nurses being trained, 110 nursing assistants, 29 basic midwives and 26 single-trained midwives that are being trained to come into the healthcare system.

To compliment the activities of the nurses and doctors, presently we have in training some 26 young medics who will be graduating in the next couple of years to compliment 89 medics that are had throughout the length and breadth of Guyana that are serving the Guyanese people, being helped by 314 community health workers. That is why I say every place in Guyana, whichever Region, whether coastal or hinterland, any citizen has the opportunity to access healthcare.

In the coastal belt it has never happened before where practically every health center in the coastal belt has a resident doctor; never in this country. In some instances the health center has a doctor and a medic. The healthcare system continues to deliver service to the Guyanese people.

The Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson, indicated and spoke to the issue that the fact that the national health care strategy of 2008-2012 came to an end. We are well aware of that and I could report to the National Assembly that the Ministry of Health has started, since last year November, working to put together the new national healthcare strategy that we call Vision 2020, running from 2013 to 2020. In the next month, the health care strategy should be launched.

Some of the ideas, some of the matters that the new strategy will attempt to deal with, which we have already started, are the issues of legislation, updating of legislation... I can report to the National Assembly that in conjunction with the Ministry of Local Government – with the Local Government Ministry being the lead under the hand of the Hon. Members, Ministers Ganga Persaud and Whittaker. We have already placed in the Attorney General’s Chambers a proposed Bill to establish a Solid Waste Authority. At the level of the Ministry of Health we have, at the Attorney General’s Chamber’s, the new nurses and midwife legislation. We have the optometrist legislation and presently we are doing consultation to repeal the public health ordinance that we will call the health protection and promotion legislation. With all of those legislations it is our intension to have them by the second quarter in the National Assembly so that we can update the legislative framework to deal with the governance of the health sector in Guyana.

On the issue of governance of the health sector, the governance framework of the new strategy will be broadened and will include a wider stakeholder group which will include the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Services, our donor partners, the Ministry of Natural Resources and stakeholders and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) because we want the widest involvement in the strategy that will drive Guyana in the next seven years regarding healthcare in Guyana.

At the level of training, recognising that there are some shortfalls in the way we dispense healthcare. Looking at the last strategy, the curriculum of the nursing schools are to be modernised to include training to deal with the issue of elderly care, to deal with the issue of mental issues, to deal with the issue of how one treats handicapped or differently able persons. The idea also is to make health centres what we call “Health and Wellness Centers” that would move beyond curative care and to involve ourselves in preventative care to teach and to train people about their lifestyle, about their nutrition and *[inaudible]*.

Where it is possible, where we have the expanse of land the plans are that the wellness centre will deal with the issue of exercising, will deal with the issues of children and their recreation because we know that obesity is one of the issue that we are faced with now among the population because of all of the junk food we do consume.

The other fundamental is making health centres “men friendly”. Health centres are not “men friendly”. If one does a census and one talks to 100 men, I am sure that 99 men would say to you that they believe to you that they believe that health centres are for mothers and children so we have to make health centres “men friendly” so that a man can feel that he can seek medical intervention before he reaches into a serious... The idea also is to open health centres later than we now have them open, at 4.30 p.m. so that it would allow for the ordinary man and woman who is unable to leave that job and go to seek medical intervention. That man riding home on his bicycle or coming out of that minibus, after 4.30 p.m. or after 5.00 p.m., would be able to stop at a health facility to seek medical intervention.

The Berbice Regional Health Authority has lead the way and we hope to utilise some of the things that they have done, especially the issue of home visits by doctors. We hope to replicate that in all of the regions of the country where the elderly can be visited by our doctors and our health care professionals.

*6.32 p.m.*

Berbice Regional Health Authority, as indicated by Dr. Mahadeo, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of that, has led the way in that regard.

These are some of the matters that will be foremost in the new health strategy. Of course, the Minister spoke to the issue of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). That is one of the fundamental issues also in the new strategy. Some of the priority areas and strategic building blocks are to ensure that we have health across the life cycle.

Family health, a man’s role in pregnancy: Today pregnancy is the woman matter, how do we get a man to participate...?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time has elapsed. Could someone move that he be given five minutes to conclude?

**Mr. Hinds:** I move that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Hamilton:** The building blocks, as I said, in the strategy will deal with the issue of health right across the life cycle. One of the fundamentals we have to pay attention to is the issue of elderly care. Whilst the health sector did well and is allowing people to live longer, concomitantly we have not put in place a programme to deal with the longevity of persons and therefore, the new strategy will attempt to deal with. How do we deal with the issue of geriatric health care?

Non-Communicable Disease, as I indicated... Mental health is one of the issues I have heard many persons speaking to but what they have failed to understand is that presently it is not that simple to pick up someone of an unsound mind and have that person committed. The law presently does not allow. The lawyers will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a family member who has to go to a magistrate or a judge and swear to commit that family. That is the law. If we want the laws to be changed then let us have a debate and a discussion about how we amend the law.

One of the recommendations can be, as the same way as how a citizen can make a citizen arrest, to talk to a health personnel or who believes that the person is a danger to himself and society, that personnel can seek to swear to an affidavit to have that person... As it stands, it is not that easy. Whilst we understand the problem and... [Ms. Teixeira: It is a human rights issue.] That is the other issue. Many of the persons who are saying today let us go and sweep up and pick up all of those people and commit them to Canje would be the same persons who will be with their placards the next day saying that we are breaching their fundamental human rights. The issue of environmental health, as I said, is a fundamental issue that we ought to pay attention to and, as I said, holistically, we are attempting to deal with that matter by bringing into play a solid waste authority to pay attention to that matter.

It is said that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. Therefore we are delighted that, recognising the job that we have to do between now and the year 2020 with the new health strategy, the Ministry of Finance and the Minister have seen it fit to raise our budget, or to accept our budget presentation that we have presented, moving it from \$17 billion to \$19 billion dollars. There is a lot to be done, because there are new things to be done. There are innovations; there are recommendations: How we deliver health care to the people of Guyana? How do we ensure that our nation is healthy? How do we ensure that our nation is productive? It is by ensuring that our nation is healthy.

I would like to close by saying that I commend the Minister of Finance and his team for the budget that they have presented to the people of Guyana and I have no difficulty supporting the measure.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Hastings:** I stand to make my presentation on the Budget 2013 which has the theme “*Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*”.

I hasten to say, after listening to the presentations made by my colleagues on the other side of the House, that I am not convinced that truly this was their initial intention in the crafting of this Budget 2013. For if, indeed, they were so much into working together with all the stakeholders, including the Opposition, why then the idea proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Member Mr. David Granger, to have a meaningful engagement as a tripartite party in planning this Budget 2013, was not accepted in good faith?

I can recall, as a junior teacher, I was taught how to plan a lesson in order to teach effectively. I remember clearly that in planning I must take into consideration the condition, performance and criterion. Given the condition that we are in a situation where the majority of seats in Parliament are occupied by the Opposition. That is the condition. One should have then decided to go about planning the budget and to involve the majority, but this was not done. Now for the Members on that side of the House to come in this august House persuading me and my colleagues on this side of the House to accept and bless the budget, as it stands, is unacceptable.

I will now make my comments on some of the measures used to validate this Budget 2013. I recall clearly saying to the Minister of Amerindian Affairs during my contribution to last year's budget that which cannot be measured cannot be improved. Today, as I examined some of the measures presented by the Hon. Minister of Finance, I must commend him and his staff for their hard work in putting together this budget, but this does not merely state that it is a good budget, but their efforts must be recognised.

I am looking to see what provision has been made in this budget under the heading “Mortgage Interest Relief” for our teachers nurses and other government workers who work and live in the hinterland communities of whom do not own individual titled lands or house lots. Owing to the

fact that they live on a communal land, which is an Amerindian community, hence, they are not able to access loans from the commercial banks or any other agencies such as DPF without a transport. I have known of incidents where teachers travelled to the city to transact such business and were turned down because of this pending situation. I am therefore asking the relevant ministries to implement and adopt policies to promote home ownership to such hard-working individuals serving in our hinterland.

This brings me to another important point: Amerindian land rights and other current issues of concern to our Amerindian brothers and sisters. Indigenous leadership and decision making at the national level are often constrained by Government interference. For example, the National Toshias Council, which is housed in the Ministry of Amerindians Affairs building, has no independent funds to carry out the business of the council. The Indigenous Peoples' Commission, which is an independent body established to look into the matters that affect the lives of the indigenous people, has a lot more to do or in fact has not done anything to this day as it is mandated.

I have been mandated by the pupils of Kako Primary School to highlight the challenges that confront them on a daily basis. More so, as they are being currently challenged with the mining activity that has began up the Kako River. They are struggling, along with their parents, to keep their only main source of drinking water, which is the Kako River, in its pristine state. Hence, I will repeat the words of their song:

“Come on all you people  
Stop this destruction  
Let us join and fight to stop discrimination  
Don't be led astray my friends  
Seek God's inspiration  
A little effort from you my friends  
Can change this situation.”

The residents of Kako are eagerly waiting on the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment to quickly satisfy their request that was made by a statement presented to the visiting team. We must be sensitive to the cries of our indigenous people.

As it relates to the safeguarding of their rivers and traditional lands, we must remember that they are our first people and are entitled to their rights as any other Guyanese. When I heard the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water Mr. Irfaan Ali vigorously saying that this Government puts its people first, the Guyanese first, I could not have agreed when he and all of us can allude to the fact that this was not the case with the people of Isseneru, in the middle Mazaruni, when in January of this year in which a court order was passed to have the miners continue mining in their titled lands. Let the voices of our brothers and sisters be heard and let something be done to solve these problems.

I believe and I know that in your good offices we can “together”, as the theme states, find solutions to these problems. I wish to remind this august body that consultation is always the proper thing to do. Consultation must be done first with the people. Whether they are on the mountains or in the valleys, irrespective of their locations, we need to go and meet with the people, consult them before any policy is implemented. Prevention is always better than cure.

Education: With \$28.7 billion being budgeted for this sector, I was hoping to see, somewhere in the capital expenditure, moneys being allocated to build a technical school, which I had requested for during my last year budget presentation. I had also requested that a School's Welfare Officer be employed, who will be based at the Kamarang Education Office, to assist in curbing the accelerating pains or issues of teenage pregnancy and delinquency of students at the primary tops and the Waramadong Secondary School. I was hoping to see moneys being allocated to establish a science laboratory, Home Economics Department or a ICT labs which the people of upper Mazaruni has been requesting ever since I came into this Parliament in 2010.

When this Government boasts about, as saying, the children in the hinterland now having access to universal secondary education, it is not true in reality. Yes, they have access to a secondary school building but not secondary school education. For those buildings are still without trained teachers; they are without Home Economics Department, no science labs, equipment, text books.



Those continue to be in dire need for each school in the hinterland. Many schools are still far from being child-friendly.

The question is then asked exactly happened to the \$26.5 billion which was expended in this sector in 2012. Did our children reap the value for money spent? One is left to wonder what will be done with the \$28.7 billion dollars allocated for this year. I must inform this honourable House that the Jewella Village Council, in recognition of its role as a partner in education, decided to take upon its shoulders to erect and complete the construction of a new nursery school building. It must be commended for its efforts. After making the request and thinking that it was the State's obligation to build schools it could not have awaited any longer when the eighty-eight nursery children were cramped in a classroom. The community is asking the Ministry of Education to ensure that the school is equipped with outdoor playing equipment, such as slides, swings and other equipment, that the children can use to play. The building is also wired and a request was made to the regional administration to find a source of electricity, but to this date there is none.

Teachers' incentives: For too long the teachers in the hinterland, or what we call remote areas, have been receiving an incentive of seven thousand dollars which was intended to ease the problem of high cost of living. This programme began in the year 2006. From the year 2006 to present, we all know that the prices of food items, fuel have been on the rise year after year. Just to name a few, one pound of chicken now costs from \$750 to \$1,200. When one goes to shop at places such as Kamarang, a teacher goes to buy chicken, flour, sugar in Kaikan or Phillipai, the further one goes away from the city, higher the cost of items one will find them to be.

I therefore ask that this Government considers the raising of the rural area incentive allowance from \$7,000 dollars to a reasonable to meet the demands of these basic needs.

Physical infrastructure - Roads and Bridges: I have seen in this year's budget that the five miles Bartica/Potaro road has been allocated some sums of money. I did ask this National Assembly to ensure that the Barticians have access to a proper heavy duty road. Mr. Speaker, if you go there, to travel from Bartica to Bartica airstrip, which is about five miles, you have a very bad experience of *hippity bump hippity bump*. The road in its present state is very bad. It is worse than last year and I have been told that the aviation service has indicated to reestablish the

scheduled flights in and out of Bartica to other locations. As such, Mr. Speaker, we need to hasten in construction a proper road not only for the Barticians but also for our visiting friends.

Let me come to GPL. With the allocation of \$11.2 billion for this sector, I hope and on behalf of the residents of Bartica make a request that the power station there is in dire need of new engines. When the engines are being started there is a lot of smoke around the market area and it was jokingly said that maybe a new pope was being installed there. Every time the white smoke or black smoke is seen that is what comes to the minds of the people. Indeed, the residents of Bartica should be now treated, not with fairy lights, today on tomorrow off, with lights that they can be able to enjoy as anyone else on this coast.

Water still continues to be a problem to the residents. Just as the lights go on today and off tomorrow that is exactly what is happening with the water system in Bartica. Please, Mr. Speaker, I am asking this Government to look into this matter too so that the Barticians could have access to clean potable water.

In conclusion, I must say that this Budget 2013 indeed is bigger but not better in any way for it has not been... As I go through the measurement, which the Hon. Minister of Finance used, it has not in any way alleviate the poverty of the poor people in this country. People that are in the hinterland, remote areas, even on the coast, there is still a lot more to be done for those people. Remember they are the people who voted for us and therefore we must serve and satisfy their basic needs. As a Government, as a parliamentarian, whatever capacity we find ourselves in, we need to look after the welfare of our people.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

*7.49 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 7.49 p.m.*

**Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]:** Budget 2013, which this honourable House is presently considering, is situated in a particular context, a context of continuity. Government's policy must be predictable as it relates to financing and financial environment in order to ensure that investors have confidence, in order to ensure that programmes are developed in a sustainable manner over a long-term period. This budget comes hard on the heels of Budget

2012 and a series of other installments that would have come to this honourable House for consideration and approval, which obviously would have indicated that something is being done right, because for seven successive years, based upon these presentations and policies and interventions that have been made by this PPP/C Government, we would have seen the economy maintaining sustainable growth of an average of almost five per cent. We must recognise that this budget comes within that particular context.

I have my own views about how I would describe this budget but I prefer to subject my own views to the views of the one hundred and six stakeholders who gathered yesterday at the Office of the President for a stakeholders' meeting that discussed Budget 2013. One hundred and six persons attended from forty organisations. By no means could it be said that all of those people are, what is being described from the other side of the House, cronies of the Government. Listen to the views expressed by these stakeholders - "excellent," "a peoples' budget", "a consumers' budget", "something for everyone", "the best budget I have ever experienced." These were the views of the one hundred and six stakeholders that were gathered at the Office of the President.

It would appear to me, Sir... because I have been across this country carrying out my ministerial functions, meeting with stakeholders, interacting with communities and over the last week I have been around this country attending several meetings interacting with hundreds of Guyanese at a time. I have not heard one Guyanese who spoke negatively of Budget 2013. The first time I heard a negative word about Budget 2013 would have been in speeches and television comments coming from the thirty-three Members who sit on the other side of the House. That is the reality of what we are talking about.

I shared the views of these stakeholders from private sector, from labour, from indigenous communities, the youth representative from the University of Guyana Students Society. I share the views of the people of the Amerindian communities. It would be helpful for me to tell the Hon. Member Ms. Dawn Hastings, who spoke before me, when she spoke about roads and bridges, that the head of the National Toshias Council said, just yesterday, Sir, "I am grateful for the intervention for roads and bridges in the hinterlands because we have vehicles." He was speaking about the kind of prosperity that would have come to the villages and communities. They want bridges and roads in their communities because they have their vehicles to park.

I think that this is the right and appropriate time for me to publicly salute my colleague the Minister of Finance for crafting and producing such an excellent budget that would have brought hope to the people of Guyana. Minister Singh, I salute you in this honourable House, Sir.

Budget 2013 Sir, inspires hope; it encourages the building of dreams; it ensures future for our young people.

I will like to turn to what the Hon. Minister of Finance described to this honourable House in his budget speech at paragraph 4.90.

“...as with our children, Government remain (sic) committed to ensuring that all our youth are prepared to take the rightful place in society and are equipped to take meaningful and fulfilling contributions to society.”

We have a view, Sir, on this side of the House, that development is not based just on doling out aids, it is about providing opportunities. When we say that there is something in the budget for every Guyanese, it is not just about who is getting a few thousand dollars and who is getting this and who is getting that. It is the enabling environment that is being created to ensure that every category, every class, every Guyanese, whether rural, urban or hinterland, is now receiving opportunities to ensure his or her development, and the youth of this country is ensuring development.

When I read Budget 2013 and listened to the debates, which are going on here, it reminds me, Sir, of a time in Guyana when our young people were not getting married. Why? It was because they did not have their own homes. Family life is being encouraged because young professionals are coming back after studying overseas and they are going to get married, Sir. They are not only going to be married and living in their parents' home, but they will be living in their own homes. That is one of the things that the young people of this country are excited about. No amount of ostracising, no amount of crying to cloud the realities of Budget 2013 will dim their hopes. I see the brightness in the eyes of the young people of this country. I see the smiles on their faces when they realise that they could take a mortgage and they can be able to repay that mortgage and they will be able to have rebate from the interest on that loan that they will be paying. It gives them a reality of staying at home in Guyana, and not only staying at home, but staying at home in their own homes. That is what is very important about Budget 2013.

At the stakeholders meeting yesterday, I also listened at the representative of the small business community. This is a very important segment of society. Sometimes we hear about the big businesses and we have some of our colleagues who particularly think that only the big names are the people who really matter in business, but they are thousands of small businesses in this country which employed two, three, five and six persons who run a cottage industry and they are very excited about Budget 2013.

Listen to what is in Budget 2013 for small businesses, Mr. Speaker.

The Small Business Development Fund will be fully operationalised through the Collateral Guarantee, the Interest Subsidy and Low Carbon Grant Schemes at a cost \$370 million, thereby increasing small business access to financing. Over 100 training sessions on business management, agro processing, food handling, packaging, labeling, marketing and information technology are scheduled for this year targeting 1,000 business owners.

It is wealth creation, the enabling environment - not just only doling aid, but providing opportunities.

When we were a Highly Poor Indebted Country (HPIC), aid was on the minds of the people, but this PPP/C Government has created the financial architecture to give people hope for the realising of their dreams and what people are asking for is not more aid but it is opportunities and that is what this administration has responded to when it crafted and produced Budget 2013.

The Amerindians, our indigenous people, welcome Budget 2013. I sat in the stakeholders meeting and I listened to the elected representatives of the Amerindian communities coming through the National Toshaos Councils. It is not assumed representatives; it is the elected representatives of the people. I listened to their views. Five hundred million dollar is being made available to Amerindian communities to have access to Information Communications Technology (ICT) in every Amerindian village in this country. We are doling out that. I am sure that the Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs will be speaking about this in her presentation, Sir, but let tell you why this is important. I have had the opportunity of going wide and far across this country, not only since I am a Minister, but in my previous life, both as a Minister of Religion and as Chairman of the Ethic Relations Commission, and I heard and saw the dreams and the desires of our children in the interior. They wanted to do their School Based Assessment (SBAs),

just as my daughter and my son in Georgetown. They wanted to be able to have access to the internet so that they could get grade ones and distinctions at Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (CSEC) and be able to do Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination (CAPE). It is because they did not have access to that world of possibility of research and studies many of them could not really do what they wanted to do.

This ICT programme, an e-Governance, which the Government is talking about and it has started to finance since Budget 2012 and there is provision again in Budget 2013 to ensure that there is connectivity from Crabwood Creek to Charity with the various stations, which are being installed, to give internet access to the ninety thousand families that will receive laptops through the Government One Laptop Per Family programme, is to ensure equal opportunity and equal access to all of our children, whether they live on the coast, whether they live in the city or they live in the hinterland. Budget 2013 assures such work.

Guyana is going somewhere; it is going in the right direction. Guyana is moving forward; Guyana is being transformed. Last year, in my budget presentation, I indicated that we are not where we want to be, but certainly we are not where we used to be. Guyana has advanced. I understand my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. In politics, as it is, they have to be able to criticise. Politics, as it is, they have to be able to oppose and seek to provide alternatives and present themselves as the people who could form the alternative government. But I think, at the bottom of the heart of all of my colleagues on the other side, they have to admit that Guyana has moved on. We are moving forward and Budget 2013 provides another opportunity to accelerate Guyana's growth and development.

Those transformational projects, which we are talking about, in this country, are not just things that are wishful thoughts and dreams. The Amaila Falls Hydroelectric programme is coming closer to becoming a reality, Sir, where this country will be provided with cheaper, reliable and renewable forms of electricity. We are working towards that. Provision is made in Budget 2013 to realise that dream. Every Guyanese... It is not just what I heard that caused some concern, because, maybe, I have to respond to this and describe for the nation who are the cronies that the Members of the Opposition are talking about. When the Amaila Falls Hydroelectric programme is in place, the cronies, who will benefit, are all seven hundred and fifty thousand plus Guyanese who live in Guyana. They will have reliable, renewable and cheaper forms of electricity. That

means, manufacturing. The manufacturing sector of this country will get a boost - a shot in the arm. Things will be able to be manufactured in this country at a cheaper rate. Mr. Speaker, because of the cost of electricity, right now, it is cheaper for the imported soft drink, which is manufactured in another country, to come into Guyana and compete with local soft drinks. [Mr. Nagamootoo: Amaila will change that.] Amaila will change that, and that is why we are supporting it.

The expansion of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, the extension of the runway, yesterday at the stakeholders' meeting they commended these project. I am pleased to say that one of the things they raised yesterday..., and these are the views of the people of Guyana. They said these projects are very important projects but they have a concern, and perhaps we on this side of the House must take responsibility for that. We have not done enough in giving out the necessary information to get the buying of all Guyanese, because these programmes are not just for cronies and friends. These are things that will benefit every single Guyanese. The PPP/C Government has provided visionary leadership. We have engineered through strategic action, I would call it, a self-fuelling blaze. A fire that is not quenched and it is evident in every community.

When roads are built and electricity is put in place, look at what happens after - little cottages turn into mansions. That is what happens [Mr. Nagamootoo: *Pradoville.*] That is one example, but you can go through the length and breadth of Guyana, it is happening. Mr. Speaker, when schools are built, what do you see happening? The private sector is coming on board and it is opening businesses in the same areas where schools are built. When the infrastructures are provided, and the enabling environment, people get hope and they start investing. They invest, first of all, in themselves; they take on a sense of pride; national dignity is showed forth and people are moving in a direction of a progressive Guyana. That is what we are seeing here Budget 2013.

I heard a term. It is not mine and I will not take glory for something that is not mine. The term that is being coined is "*negaholics*". People who spent time focusing on negative things - prophets of doom! Mr. Speaker, I am sure that it is quite gratifying to the Minister of Finance, my colleague, that even with all of the *negaholics*, who are bounded in the society, not one of them has been able to come out and find an objective criticism of Budget 2013 because it is

something that provides hopes for the Guyanese people. Mr. Speaker, our public sector...

**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Speaker:** I googled it. I found it. One minute Bishop. Could we settle down please so that I could hear?

**Bishop Edghill:** Thank you for your protection, Mr. Speaker. I started my career as a young evangelist on the streets preaching in very hostile environments, so I am accustomed to speaking in hostile environment. When we talk about our public sector investment programme... I heard Members of this honourable House saying that this budget is big on projects and on infrastructure and short on people. I want to remind us that when schools are built, who is it they are built for. It is not for sheep and goats. There are people who attended those schools. When roads and bridges are built, they are for the people. When drugs are procured and put in our health centres, they are for the people. When we ensure that we open up five thousand more acres of land at Aurora in Region 2, who are we thinking about? It is the people. It is three hundred families. When the process is gone through of ensuring those young, bright, intelligent young people get their house lots through the proper processes, and they walked away from the one-stop-shop smiling with their titles in their hands. Do you know what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker? It is people. When \$1.9 billion is spent to improve waste disposal in the city and to ensure that our sanitation is taken care of, when over \$1billion is provided to Linden to ensure pure water supply and proper maintenance and distribution, we are not doing this for contractors; we are doing this for people. That is what the PPP/C presents, Sir. We are dealing here with people. I want to assure this nation, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the PPP/C Government, every day, works for the betterment of the people of Guyana. That is what it does.

I do not want to bore this honourable House but the public sector investment...

**Mr. Trotman:** Shut up.

**Mr. Speaker:** Who is that?

**Ms. Teixeira:** It is Mr. Trotman.

**Mr. Speaker:** Come on allow the Minister to speak. We have to respect the fact that other people have views and represent different parties and constituents.



**Mr. Trotman:** Mr. Speaker, I was just responding to the statement that he did not want to...

**Mr. Speaker:** We are doing relatively well, so far. I would like us to maintain this rhythm, and atmosphere, without soiling it. I note that the Minister anticipates a smooth run, but at the same time I think we will battle through this one.

**Bishop Edghill:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask that my time is being given back to me with these interruptions.

**Mr. Speaker:** The process is handled independently of the Speaker.

**Bishop Edghill:** I understand that Mr. Speaker. When we talk about revamping the Central Recruitment and Manpower Agency it is because we recognise that... Whilst we are hearing about people not having jobs, we are hearing from the private sector that it is not finding people to work so we want to be able have a central clearing house. Just yesterday, the private sector indicated, when it applauded Budget 2013 about Government's skills training programme, that it needs many skilled and semi-skilled workers in which it is not getting. As a matter of fact, a leading light from the private sector said, Sir, that Caterpillar, which is sold a lot, of the heavy-duty equipment in Guyana, that it is prepared to train people free in the use of that equipment and it is not getting people to come forward.

I have before me today's newspaper, Thursday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of April, and I choose *Stabroek News*, because it is in other editions as well, Bai Shan Lin is advertising for one hundred and sixty-two persons. There are jobs for the people. This is what we are doing, creating the environment. Listen to the jobs - bulldozer operators. The Hon. Member, who are from Regions 7 and 8, I am sure, can tell this House that bulldozer and excavator operators are now making up to a half of a million dollars in the gold mining industry per month. The contractors on the coast, who I interact with for from my desk, because it is my responsibility, said that many of their projects are falling behind because they cannot find operators for heavy-duty equipment. We are hearing "No jobs, no jobs". Do you know what we have done, Mr. Speaker? Government is moving from training one thousand seven hundred at the Board of Industrial Training to two thousand five hundred this year. We have it in Budget 2013. That is what we are talking about.

When the Government made provision to the University of Guyana with an initial sum of \$50 million to create online education, it is a start of ensuring that our children who are from the far-flung areas, who cannot come to Georgetown, rent an apartment in Cummings Lodge or Industry, who cannot give up their lives where they are to come to Georgetown to study, from the Essequibo and our people who travel from Linden every day and go back home to attend the University, could have the same education available to them in their own home. It is the people we are talking about.

Life is not just about education. Life also encounters entertainment, sports and recreation and this Government recognises that. That is why this year there is an allotment of \$1 billion to the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport to ensure that our young people have access to sports of all kinds and descriptions. The day in Guyana when certain sports were for the middle class is long gone. There is a public squash court now, Sir. That is what the PPP/C Government does. Sir, we break down walls and we build bridges, giving people equal access and equal opportunity.

I have heard a lot being said in this House about corruption - Corruption! Corruption! Corruption! Corruption! It seems to be the mantra of some Members... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, is it we are discussing squash or finance and people? There is a debate as to where the squash courts are. You better settle it before...

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Speaker, I have since moved on.

**Mr. Speaker:** Move on please. Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** I have started to speak about public accountability and transparency.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, try and take the others with you, as you move on.

*8.19 p.m.*

**Bishop Edghill:** Public accountability and transparency: I would like the nation of Guyana to know that the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government views corruption as something that must be abhorred. For us, it is repugnant. It is something that must be vehemently resisted. It is within that context that we have put measures in place. One, among our Members of Parliament and Cabinet, we have a code of conduct and a code of ethics.

At the Ministry of Finance, we have moved forward and we have now established what is called an Internal Audit Division. There have been significant legislative reforms over the past years, aimed at strengthening Guyana's public financial management system processes and institutions.

During 2003 and 2004, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, the Procurement Act and the Audit Act along with their accompanying regulations were passed. Accordingly, Section 29 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) of 2003 provides for the establishment of an internal audit function, which is a key aspect of good governance by ensuring accountability, transparency in public institutions, and checking on the adequacy and reliability of accounting and managerial control systems within Ministries, departments and so on. At the Ministry of Finance, we have established that internal audit division which is staffed by an audit manager with four audit supervisors and nine auditors. It would be interesting to know that there is a permanent presence of the Auditor General's Office at the Ministry of Finance. The Auditor General is not just checking after the fact; while the transaction is taking place, the Auditor General is present along with an internal audit section.

Procurement: Transparency, efficiency, economy, accountability and fairness are important elements. Every day we hear about these things in the public spaces. The National Procurement and Tender Administration Board (NPTAB) insists on the use of open tendering. As a matter of fact, I can stand and report to this National Assembly that 80 per cent of all funding that comes from the public treasury for projects, open tendering is the method that is used for procurement – 80 per cent! The country needs to know that.

We are strengthening this. Last year, 2012, we hosted a forum to strengthen public procurement. We invited all the Permanent Secretaries, the Regional Executive Officers, the Ministerial Tender Board Representatives, the district Tender Board Representatives, the Tender Board Officers from the NDCs and the Evaluators, and we worked with them to ensure strict compliance to ensure that systems are followed. Right on the heels of that, Sir, do you know what we did? We invited almost 450 contractors, consultants, engineers, and people who bid for public projects, who provide goods and services, and educated them on the public procurement system and of their rights as it relates to the law. We believe that when people are properly informed, it helps the system to be more open. They will know that if they are not treated fairly, they can make appeals. They have been provided with standard bidding documents. They have

been assured of objective criteria when projects are being evaluated. It is not subject to subjectivity; it is objective evaluation to be carried out in this nation.

I am not going to stand here and paint a picture that everything is 100 per cent perfect but what I want to assure this National Assembly is that the Administration is providing the architecture, the framework to ensure that the systems work in keeping with the law. People work the systems. If every time a contractor or a bidder does not get a contract, we have politicians and lobbyists splashing the front pages of the newspapers saying ‘corruption’ without providing the evidence, then we have a problem in Guyana because that is a form of corruption! That is a form of corruption! Mr. Speaker, I use this debate tonight to cry out to this nation to let fairness, objectivity, transparency and public accountability be the order of the day in all of our dealings. That is the assurance that the PPP/Civic brings to this debate.

Proverbs 18:13 inspires us by saying, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” How could you answer a matter before you hear it? How could you judge before you have all the facts? How could you pronounce on a budget before it is read? How could you indicate your actions before you know what the measures are? This is a matter for consideration according to Proverbs 18:13, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”

While some of my colleagues are interested in the Proverbs, I will probably offer another one. Proverbs 26:27 says, “He that diggeth a pit shall fall therein and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.” Be careful with the pits that you are digging and be careful with the stones that you are pushing at other people. It is something that you might want to consider.

This issue of the old age pension....

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time has elapsed. You will need an extension.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Bishop Edghill:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing a lot about the issue of old age pension. I have addressed this matter before. I would like to put on public record that the old age pension is a non-contributory pension. It is something that all Guyanese get. Out of the 42,000 Guyanese that will benefit from the \$12,500 that is proposed in Budget 2013, about one per cent of that amount would probably not need the pension. They would be the people like the Hon. Members who sit on that side who are of pensionable age, some of our more influential people in society.

We have noticed that since we would have raised the pension to now \$10,000, the list of persons enlisted for pension is expanding. Even the man who is making \$1 million is still collecting his pension now.

The pension is not the only thing that somebody who would have achieved the age of 65 would live on. If that pensioner was a school teacher, a military officer, a police officer or somebody who worked in the public service, he or she would have already been getting a Government pension. The minimum Government pension today is \$18,883 per month. If the pensioner would have contributed to the NIS, which I hope that every responsible Guyanese would do, he or she will get, even if it is the minimum pension from NIS, \$18,829. When one adds the Government pension with the NIS pension and the old age pension plus the subsidies that the pensioners are getting in finances, cash in their hands at the end of every month, it is a minimum of \$50,162. That is what one of our young people is working for in Guyana today. It might not be all that they should be getting, but a young man at 22 years or 23 years is probably earning \$50,000 and making a living, applying for his house lot and quarrelling with the Ministry of Housing and Water that it is taking too long. He wants it quicker. People are impatient when it comes to development; they want development to happen all the time.

Do not let us paint this issue that the old age pension has old people bad after all. May I say this, Mr. Speaker, and we all in this honourable House know it, many of the people who are getting pension are even still employed. They are employed and earning while they are getting this pension. Do you know what? They deserve that and they deserve more.

What we, at the Ministry of Finance, are seeking to do is, when we are finished analysing the performance of the country and we look at the fiscal space that is available to us, implement

measures to ensure that they are sustainable. We must be responsible, and that is what we are doing. We are not going out there just trying to capture the imagination of the people. We are doing what is right, what is rational and what is responsible. That is what this PPP/C Government is doing.

Guyana Revenue Authority: We are continuing to work with the Guyana Revenue Authority to ensure that it performs to its maximum. A number of serious interventions have been made. I would like to speak about one. Just yesterday the members of the Shipping Association of Guyana made a passionate appeal to the Minister of Finance and the President for us to be able to dredge the Demerara River because they indicated that containerised shipping is on an increase. Over 85 per cent of all the exports that leave Guyana leave through that port. We have put in place the container scanner where thousands of containers are being scanned, and we are now moving to a mobile container scanner to ensure greater efficiency.

Monitoring and Evaluation: While we make investment in the public sector and while we spend moneys in various areas, it is not just about spending; it is about impact, and it is about outcomes. It is about ensuring that objectives are met. We have trained over 250 public officials of the highest levels across the Ministries and departments in the art; we have provided them with the tool for effective monitoring and evaluation and we are continuing to do that.

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, which you will discover from the Budget, attracts the largest allocations. Those two Ministries are being used as pilots to ensure that we institutionalise, in our Government system, monitoring and evaluation. We are ensuring that the people of Guyana get value for money.

I would like to close my presentation by indicating to this honourable House that this Budget that is presented before us, Budget 2013, which I now hold, entitled, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana...* We are better together. We might be doing well as a country. We might be growing at an average of five per cent but I would like to challenge every Member of this House that if we had done it together, we would have seen growth in this country that would have been over five per cent. We must do it together. We must ensure that the image of Guyana is preserved across the world by the way we behave and by the things we say, and we must inspire our young people.

I would like to make an appeal that, while we seek to find reasons to cloud the minds of the Guyanese people, we still have a conscience to live with; we still have a heart and a soul. I am sure every one of us who held in our hands...and who have listened to the three hours plus presentation of the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, was shivering in our boots, thinking what we will tell our people when we get out there. This is not a Budget that you can appose. This is a Budget that you have to support! The only people that would not support Budget 2013 are the people who, for political purposes, cannot come out publicly and say, ‘Dr. Ashni Singh, you have done a good job.’

Mr. Speaker, I commend Budget 2013 to this House and call upon all the Hon. Members to be magnanimous, to rise above the pettiness, to rise above petty politics, to rise above self-interest and to rise above whatever would have affected them last year and ensure that we pass Budget 2013.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Felix:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members of the Government and Members of the majority, I rise to take this opportunity to present APNU’s response to the Government’s Budget presentation by the Hon. Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, the Minister of Finance, made on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2013 under the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*.

This Budget pretends to bring relief to the poor and to those whose incomes are small but, when the measures proffered in this 2013 Budget were examined, they were found to be lacking in any serious attempt to ameliorate the lives of those intended to benefit from it. In fact, the Budget proposal for 2013 lacks a human face as it gives a subtle hint at easing the burden on the poor, but does not do so. As an example, all the recruits in the services earn salaries just above \$50,000. These recruits would not benefit from a three and one-third per cent income tax reduction rate. Instead of considering a living wage for all Guyanese, service members included, the Government continues to hand out, at year end, a miserly five per cent sweetener – remember sweets for the kids – to members of the joint services without any consideration of the unfulfilled needs which poor pay creates. While a pay increase is denied to some workers, GuySuCo and

GPL will receive over \$12 billion as compensation for their inefficiencies, emphasising the point that this 2013 Budget is about bailing out large corporations viewed as too big to fail.

The security sector consists of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), the Guyana Police Service, the Guyana Prison Service, the Guyana Fire Service and the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU). The essential role of the GDF in our national security pursuits requires the organisation to maintain adequate assets in the infantry, aviation and maritime arms of the service in order to maintain a state of preparation to defend our territorial integrity.

Allocations to the GDF in this 2013 Budget do not inspire confidence that the basic needs for a well-equipped Defence Force would be met in this Budget. The Government, through this Budget, does not demonstrate any care which it owes to the people. The Government boasts that this is the largest Budget ever and that they have been making increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but it was lacking in a humane approach to the men and women in uniform who are responsible for maintaining our public safety.

The salaries at entry level are a little above \$50,000. This amount offers no satisfaction to the recipients simply because a basket of goods per month for a small conservative family would cost more than \$40,000. When this is added to the rent and light bill, the remaining cash in hand would be negligible.

It is a small wonder that the wastage rate in the services is so high. As an example, the figures for the Guyana Police Service for years 2001 to 2003 and from 2007 to 2009 indicate the following: in 2001, three hundred and seventy-four officers walked out of the job; in 2002, three hundred and forty-five officers walked off the job; in 2003, three hundred and twenty officers walked off the job; in 2007, two hundred and forty officers walked off the job; in 2008, three hundred and eighteen officers walked off the job; in 2009, two hundred and thirty two officers walked off the job. With the wastage rate running on occasions at one man each per day, it hampers staffing and, consequently, the performance of core police functions.

The Guyana Police Force between 2001 and 2003 was operating with shortages between eight per cent and 15 per cent, while between 2007 and 2009 the situation was between 17 per cent and 21.5 per cent.



The Police now seem to be under fire from no other than their own Minister who has recently expressed his unawareness of the number of unsolved crimes on record in the Guyana Police Force (GPF). In an article in *Stabroek News* dated 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, under the caption “Rohee dismayed at long list of unsolved crimes”, the Hon. Minister expressed his dismay in the following terms:

“I have noted, with dismay, the long list of unsolved serious crimes particularly execution type murders that remain on the records of the Guyana Police Force. We have reached a stage where some members of the public and the press have tended to insinuate that the Force lacks the ability or will to solve these high profile cases. The Ministry of Home Affairs is far from happy with this state of affairs. The Force will have to review its current investigative capacity and take corrective action.”

I find it strange that the Hon. Minister could now express his feelings, as he must be aware of the actions taken by the Police in the late 1990s after Sanichar and other high-profile murders, to apprise the Government of shortcomings in the Force, occasioned by the loss of certain hard-earned skills through retirement.

In the event that he has forgotten, I would provide a chronology of events as a reminder. The Government of Guyana agreed to secure the assistance of the Government of the United Kingdom to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Guyana Police Force. Chief Police Superintendent Paul Mathias, as he then was, visited Guyana and conducted a study of the GPS. **[Member: Who was the Commissioner of Police then?]** It was Mr. Laurie Lewis. A report on his findings with recommendations was submitted to the Government. In 2000, the British Department for International Development-funded consultants, Symons Group Ltd., released their report on the Guyana Police Force after reviewing it between October and November 2000. Still in 2000, President Bharrat Jagdeo promulgated a menu of measures claiming that they will improve the Police Force’s crime fighting capacity. Still in 2000, President Bharrat Jagdeo, as he then was, actually went to London to meet with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to seek British assistance.

In 2003, the British Government sent the Defence Advisory Team to Georgetown to conduct a study of the security sector and to produce a report which recommended ways in which the Police Force's capability could be enhanced.

In 2004, the Disciplined Forces Commission, under the chairmanship of Justice Ian Chang, presented its Report to the National Assembly, containing 164 recommendations for the Police Force and other security sector reforms.

In 2005, the British Scottish Police College conducted a series of management training programmes. It presented the Guyana Police Force Strategic Plan in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank as part of the Citizen Security Programme.

In 2006, the British Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Baroness Valerie Amos and President Jagdeo agreed to a statement of principles which formed the basis on which the British Department for International Development proceeded with a first consultancy. A new British Funded Security Sector Reform team visited in October 2006 and integrated various local and foreign initiatives into a holistic strategy. The PPP/C Administration instead adopted a Citizen Security Programme (CSP) which was to be funded by a US\$19.8 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

*8.49 p.m.*

In August 2007, the British High Commissioner, Fraser Wheeler, and the Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr. Luncheon, signed an Interim Memorandum of Understanding (IMoU) for a Security Sector Reform Action Plan.

In 2009, the British Government decided to abandon the negotiations with the Guyana Government for the £4.9 million Security Sector Reform Action Plan in the face of unprincipled resistance by the PPP/C Administration to previously agreed guidelines contained in the Statement of Principles agreed with Baroness Amos.

The Government moved to secure the services of Bernard Kerik to train and reform the Guyana Police Force. This attempt failed as he was imprisoned in the United States of America (USA).

In 2009, there was the promulgation of the Liliendaal Declaration on Crime Prevention by Mr. Clement Rohee. [Mr. Ali: The honourable...]

In 2010, Mr. Clement Rohee stated at an Inter-American...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, when referring to another Member, you will say either mister or honourable.

In 2010, Mr. Clement Rohee stated at an Inter-American security conference:

“Guyana has no desire to have any resident experts in our country at this point in time [nor] ...in the not too distant future either...We have enough experts here in Guyana in the police force, in the security sector...So we don't need a foreign expert to come and tell us... In fact we have already gone a very far way with the reforms so I don't know what we need an expert to tell us about...when it comes to bringing experts to Guyana for the security sector that is a no go.”

The British consultancy firm – Capita Symonds – presented the final draft of the strategic plan for the modernisation of the Guyana Police Force to the Home Affairs Ministry on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2011.

Mr. Clement Rohee made a statement at a press conference, on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2012, outlining recommendations contained in the Capita Symonds Report.

This effort became known as the Security Sector Reform Project (SSRP).The main measures were designed to:

- Enhance intelligence gathering, analysis and dissemination, developing the forensic capacity of the Force;
- Create a specialised training centre to train ranks in modern crime fighting systems and tactics;
- Improve the material capacity of the Force in the short to medium term by procuring new weaponry, transportation equipment and protective gear;
- Review and update the crime laws to increase penalties for certain criminal activities and facilitate easier prosecution of certain types of crimes;

- Create a special trained “crime crack force” similar to a SWAT team to respond to these new criminal manifestations and domestic terrorism;
- Enhance the community policing structure through training and provision of equipment;
- Closely monitor certain categories of deportees;
- Accelerate the issuance of gun licences to qualified citizens, particularly members of the business community; and
- Ensure that provisions are made for the families of police men and women killed in the line of duty.

Simultaneously, the Government was introduced to the Citizen Security Project. It became enamoured by and gravitated to it. And, as was stated earlier, in 2009, the Government abandoned the SSRP and continued with the Citizen Security Programme. Under this Programme, the GPS is to be modernised through computerisation of the entire organisation. A Strategic Plan – at one time it was from 2011 to 2015; now it is for 2013 to 2017 – is to be launched and a leadership team is to be appointed to manage the process. On 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2012, the Hon Minister launched the project which was available since March, 2011.

According to a *Guyana Times* article of 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011, under the caption, “Rohee receives new plan for a modernised police force”:

“After almost a year of consultations and planning, UK consultant agency Capita Symonds on Thursday presented to the Home Affairs Ministry the final draft of the strategic plan for the modernisation of the Guyana Police Force.”

The Hon. Minister only released it after the no-confidence motion was passed in the National Assembly and constant pressure on the Hon. Minister from A Partnership for National Unity (APNU). His delay in commencing the Programme in a timely manner has set back the modernisation which should have started about one and a half years ago. During the Minister’s launch, he addressed four areas: Administration, Succession Planning, Probity/Integrity and Public Relations.

The SSRP would have addressed, among other subjects, the development of skills and abilities of ranks in the hard-core policing subjects of crime and intelligence gathering, while the Citizen Security Programme would get there, hopefully, through the Strategic Plan.

Nothing said in this presentation should create the false impression that the Programme has no place in Guyana's plan to effectively manage the crime situation. In my view, it is a necessary intervention but not a sufficient answer to Guyana's crime problems.

Crime is still having a negative effect on the population, whether in their homes, on the streets, at sea, or in the mining areas. Therefore, lack of urgency in implementing the Citizen Security Programme could be regarded as unconscionable and a criminal act against citizens. The figures displayed for murders and robberies demonstrate my concern.

The evidence of the rising rate of criminal violence in Guyana, derived from the Police Force's own daily bulletins, indicates an increase in the incidence of armed robberies and murders. Reports show that there were 1,701 murders and 11,602 robberies under arms in the decade from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2000 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2009. There are, on average, about three armed robberies every day and two murders every week.

Maritime piracy along the waters off the coastland and banditry in the Hinterland has been other sources of criminal violence which affect economic activity.

The Government must develop a highly motivated work force within the GPS to patrol the streets to prevent and detect crime and eventually make the streets safer. The training and nurturing of well trained detectives to investigate serious crimes must be given priority in the preferred Citizen Security Project.

The Government has established Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in several spots in Georgetown, but, despite these, crimes are committed; the usefulness of these cameras is questionable and one wonders what purpose they serve. For example, there are cameras at the corners of Homestretch Avenue. These cameras serve no purpose. They have not detected one crime there.

There was a robbery on Regent Street when the Hon. Minister was surprised and made comments about a store operated by Chinese being robbed. Where are the cameras? Millions of dollars were spent to set them up but the cameras are not serving the desired purpose. Similarly, when the Chinese manager of Celina's Resort was attacked, shot and robbed on the seawall a few weeks ago, again not a camera could have helped to identify the perpetrators. The millions

of dollars expended on this project is another Government failure to protect its citizens with one of its ill-advised pet projects.

The Government has misused the system of community policing and citizens use the Government to get firearm licences, and then they get scarce and groups flop. Community policing is a local arrangement between the public and the police in the area but it has been so bureaucratised that it is now morbid. [**Mr. Nandlall:** Mr. Felix, that is not in the Budget. Get to the Budget now.] You are wasting money on community policing. [**Ms. Teixeira:** You never liked them, anyway.] I never liked how they were administered.

I question the need to have a Community Policing Coordinator at the Ministry of Home Affairs. This is a function properly performed in Berbice but every year the Hon. Minister comes to this National Assembly seeking allocations to support this morbidity. Last year, under Capital Expenditure, the Minister sought \$28 million to acquire boats, vehicles, outboard engines, furniture and equipment. Again, this year, that request is repeated at a cost of \$19,723,000 for the same items. For a voluntary organisation, why is so much resources allocated?

Last week, while driving alongside a police vehicle, I saw it without a horn. The police vehicles are defective.

**Mr. Speaker:** Did you say that you saw it without a horn?

**Mr. Felix:** The horn piece at the steering wheel was missing. The vehicles were of the PHH and PLL series. They are old and decrepit vehicles. The police are made to perform their duties in these vehicles which should be hoarded, while the Community Policing Groups, the support organisations, are getting, every year, new vehicles, new boats, and new engines at the expense of the Guyana Police Force.

The problem in Guyana with its extensive and unpatrolled borders is that drugs and guns flow into the country easily without any serious effort to arrest the flow. The apparent tolerant attitude of the Administration to transnational crime does not aid our cause. The unchecked trafficking in narcotics, trafficking in firearms, petroleum smuggling and trafficking in persons add to our problems. [**Ms. Teixeira:** Why did you reject the Bill then?] I will deal with the Bill. Though trafficking in all the cases to which I have just alluded must be regarded as serious, trafficking in

narcotics and trafficking in firearms are by themselves and together areas of serious threat to our safety and security. Guns kill and maim our children and families, and contribute to an estimated three armed robberies per day.

There is also the question of CANU. Does it have a structure? What are the laws which govern its operation? Is CANU given the resources to deal with its mandate? What has happened to the previously released Drug Master Plan and would there be an update of the last one which was launched in 2005?

These questions are being asked because there are many issues to be settled before Guyana's response to narcotics trafficking could be organised in a manner that gives credibility to our counter narcotics effort.

There are issues to discuss. Let us deal with the much vaunted Bill No. 21 of 2012, the Firearms (Amendment) Bill 2012. Let me just quote for you clause 2, Trafficking in Firearms and Ammunitions, of the Principal Act.

“17A (1) If any person knowingly imports, exports, acquires, sells, delivers, moves, diverts or transfers any firearm, or its parts and components, or ammunition to or from another country, as the case may be, without proper authorisation, he shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) If any person purchases, acquires, or has in his possession any firearm, or its parts and components, or ammunition for the purpose of subsection (1), he shall be guilty of an offence.”

That is all that is in this Bill. This Bill does not tell what the penalty is. Trafficking in persons and trafficking in firearms are serious offences – very serious offences. How can the Government bring a Bill like this without an offence? Who does the Government want to vote for it? It must have a penalty. For this Bill to mean something, it must have a penalty.

If the Government thinks that it will bring this piece of paper for us to waste our time and vote for it and then come back for another amendment, I am sorry. [Mr. Nandlall: The penalty is in the Firearms Act.] Let me explain that part. [Mr. Nandlall: Talk to the Budget.] This is part of the Budget because crime affects... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you are out of time and I would advise that you direct your comments to the Chair and not get distracted.

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Felix:** With all the hype created in the Budget pronouncements, optimistic about increased arrivals of visitors, the crime situation could have an adverse effect on the growth of the Tourism Industry. This issue had been addressed by the Prime Minister of Bahamas, Mr. Perry Christie.

In an article entitled “Crime could cripple regional tourism”, which was published in *Stabroek News* of 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2013, the Bahamas Prime Minister argued that this was a problem that was being underestimated at the region’s peril. “It is a major problem for us all,” he declared.

Noting that the problem did not only manifest itself in crimes against tourists, which he said has statistically remained limited, he argued that the stigmatisation of entire nations or tourism destinations as crime-ridden enclaves was destructive.

I now turn to some suggestions I have. This Government is not dealing with this issue of crime in a manner which brings safety to the public. How could the Hon. Member have an area as important as law enforcement, the improvement of the organisation... Over a year and a half, the Hon. Member has been sitting on it and then he comes back and berates the ranks for not solving crime. Solving crime comes from training and it comes from experience. A detective is not trained today and tomorrow becomes the best detective. He has to be nurtured. It is incumbent on the Minister not to sit idly by while Rome is burning and twiddle with his fingers.

That is why we showed that we had no confidence in him. That is the basic reason. It was because he did nothing when something was required. [Ms. Teixeira: Is that the proposal?] He must work. [Ms. Teixeira: You cannot beat him to work.] Well, move him.

The fire department is another area of concern. As one visits areas like Bath Settlement, there is a fire station at Onverwagt but heaven help the residents living in the centre of Bath Settlement. If the fire tenders run out of water, there is no subsidiary supply – none! Heaven help them



behind there. Similarly, it is the same for the Diamond Housing Scheme. There is need to have subsidiary water supplies, whether they are hydrants or so.

For years, the Guyana Fire Service (GFS) has been crying out for a fire boat. If those wooden structures, God forbid, go up in flames, there will be another great fire because there are no boats out there to fight the fire. If the fire is to be tackled from land, there are no hydrants. Ever since the Government got rid of the Georgetown Sewage and Water Commissioners, the hydrants are without parent. **[Member:** That is not true.] Nobody is responsible for it. There is no water coming from the hydrants. In terms of the wharves, fires could be fought from land or from sea, if the hydrants run out of water.

The building codes need to be revised to give the Guyana Fire Service more clout in dealing with building violations. These issues need to be dealt with. Security is not about simply arresting and charging thieves. It is a total package concerning the houses in which people live.

The prisoners need to be addressed. There is overcrowding in the prisons and we should examine why that is so. Is it because in the prison system persons are being detained when they can be otherwise dealt with? Women are being sentenced for ‘small joints’ and, similarly, some young men are in prison for little or nothing at all. Should there not be alternative ways of dealing with these issues so as to reduce the problem of overcrowding and all the other attendant ills which visit the prisons as a result of that?

There was a catastrophe in August last year in Essequibo. Because the inmates complained of abuse by Ministry officials, they revolted. It was the worst revolt there has been at the New Opportunity Corps (NOC). Once there was that revolt, we must take it that those in Georgetown took notice. **[Mr. Nandlall:** That is not a matter for the Ministry of Home Affairs. That is for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport.] Do not tell me what is for the Ministry of Home Affairs, AG. **[Mr. Nandlall:** The NOC does not fall under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs.] It is a disturbance of the peace; you must understand that. The peace was disturbed in a manner that the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport could not deal with and the Minister of Home Affairs, his colleague, sat on his hands again. Persons went a second night – this is what is disturbing – and burned the building.

These are issues of national security which we must deal with as a National Assembly and as a nation. We cannot have idle people in charge of our security.

I will now join my other colleagues who did not support this Bill. To those who want us to talk about the Budget, this Budget is to supply the inadequacies of inefficiencies. It is to deal with capital projects. I want to join my colleagues now and say that I do not support this Budget. I see no reason to support it. The Budget must take care of the needs of the people before we can talk anything about support. I close on this aspect of the matter. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Chand:** Cde. Speaker, I rise to support the 2013 National Budget, the Budget of the majority party, so ably presented by the Minister of Finance. Several of the measures outlined in this the second Budget, since the November, 2011 Regional and National elections, I welcome as they would certainly impact on the well-being of Guyana's working people.

I, moreover, hold the view that the Budget must be assessed from the perspective of continuity as well as against the backdrop of continuing economic crisis at the international level and our own domestic circumstances. These measures in the Budget, I am particularly drawn to, represent, I believe, a purposeful effort by the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government to give attention and bring much needed relief to the working sectors, the vulnerable and the poor in our country.

It is my intention to focus on a few measures of the Budget and one or two other related issues within the timeframe I am allotted. My colleagues are undoubtedly reflecting on the varied and numerous measures contained in the Budget and which would need greater attention.

**Our Social Sectors:** It is heartening that the expenditure in the social sectors remains significant. This testifies to the Government's commitment to ensure that a sizeable proportion of the Budget is devoted to meet the needs of the people, especially the ordinary Guyanese. Thus, from the budgetary allocations, it is discerned that allocations towards education, health, old age and disability benefits, water and housing, and poverty have attracted approximately 32 per cent of the Budget or G\$66.2 billion of the G\$208.8 billion Budget.

*9.19 p.m.*

This represents a per-capita allocation of \$83,134, accepting that our population is 796,300 persons. 32% to the Social Sector is about four times or 400% more than the aggregate budgetary allocations to these sectors when compared to 20 years ago.

However, as recognised in the Budget Speech, it is necessary to ensure that properly managed systems are always in place in order to realise the full benefits of the social sector expenditures and to ensure those benefits reach easily to the people and in an efficient manner.

Emphasis on education, the extended reach of health services, the expansion of potable water, the continuation of various housing Projects, the improvement of the physical infrastructure in various communities, plans for more projects in Amerindian and hinterland communities, and increases in pensions, are all indicative of the critical and indispensable role of the State, in respect to human resources development, the economic well-being of our population and, generally, the country's progress. Sometimes, there is a tendency to downplay or pay scant attention to the State's role in the socio-economic development of a country. And when one considers, additionally, that the State continues to be the largest employer in Guyana today, then I feel constrained to advocate that the State must have a growing and not a diminishing role in our economy.

I hold the view too, that the State needs support and encouragement to carry out the multifaceted tasks effectively and more efficiently. That support can be derived from the genuine, democratic organisations, namely, the trade unions, the farmers' organisations, women and youth bodies, and professional groups whose members are, in truth, stakeholders as well as beneficiaries of the various tasks the State engages in. Involvement of democratic organisations will, moreover, serve to ensure, whilst enhancing, the state's role in safeguarding and promoting the interests of the poor and powerless, of our womenfolk, youth and senior citizens.

I am disturbed by my colleague Cde. Neendkumar to announce that Guyana just won the cricket match at the Providence Stadium.

Let me continue. Diversion from a pro-working people's orientation onto a path leading to another direction is fraught with unspeakable dangers. Just look at the painful experiences in several of the countries in Europe and in North America today. Not so long ago, those were the very countries that were held up as economic success stories of a neo-liberal model of

development urged upon developing countries worldwide. Failure to recognise those realities and learn the consequent lessons will only be to our detriment and those countries that have been induced or pressured to tread that path.

The Minister of Finance reminds us that we have completed another year in which growth of the economy was experienced. Given the political challenges of last year, this was indeed a remarkable feat; 2013 promises to be another year of economic growth. Clearly, stagnation and decline in our economic performances belong to a bygone era. Today, our steps are taking us onward and we are looking forward to an increasingly better future.

The Guyana Millennium Report 2011 speaks eloquently to the progress we have made as a country. As Guyanese, we should all take pride in these achievements indentified therein. The report is testimony that we are set on a course to the realisation and complete fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. Our gains show what we in Guyana are capable of. They call to mind how much more can be attained with a political will, by placing our unshakeable confidence in the working people and through our united efforts.

A distinguishing feature of Budget 2013, in my opinion, is the Minister's effort to be innovative. My attention has been drawn, for instance, to a measure that would positively impact the housing sector. To quote the Finance Minister's words:

“I now wish to announce that, with effect from year of income 2013, first time home owners who are holders of mortgage loans of up to \$30 million granted to them by commercial banks or the building society will be permitted to deduct the interest they pay on such mortgages from their taxable income for the purposes of personal income tax”.

This mortgage interest relief initiative is a big surprise to many, I am sure. And what a relief it would bring to those qualified home owners and future home owners. Our citizenry is being encouraged and are given yet another incentive to fulfill their dream of having their own homes.

When assessed alongside the other budgetary measures aimed at bringing relief to the vulnerable, then one can conclude that these would greatly assist in our on-going fight against poverty in our country.

Although there is still more to be done, it is rather remarkable that the past two decades, the PPP/C Administration has removed a significant proportion of our population from dire poverty. The programmes and actions outlined in this year's Budget would be a further step in that direction. A country like ours, with an abundance of key natural resources must ensure that exploitation of those resources redound to the interests of our people and significantly contribute to the country's development. With such resources at our disposal, the goal to eradicate poverty or bringing it down to an insignificant proportion by the end of this decade is certainly "realisable". I welcome the measures that the administration is focusing on. At the same time, I believe that we need to redouble our efforts to drastically reduce further the 36.1% of those living in moderate and extreme poverty that has been recorded in the 2011 Guyana Millennium Development Goal Report.

Turning to the sugar industry let us not fail to underline the importance of the industry which has more than three and a half centuries of history, which is making a major contribution to the economic life of our country, and which is linked to almost every citizen of our land. The industry, we must remember, is our patrimony. It is our sugar industry which, let us reflect, is linked to several of our national milestones which we are proud of and which we celebrate.

As in colonial days, and forty-seven years after independence, the sugar industry keeps serving our country in a multi-faceted way. Allow me, Cde. Speaker, to identify some of the pertinent data that shows its importance to our country:

- It employs, at peak periods during the year, as many as 18,000 persons.
- Many of the seven factories facilitate the canes grown by about 1,500 farmers.
- It is estimated that about 120,000 Guyanese whether as employees, cane farmers, suppliers of materials, service providers and their dependents benefit tangibly from the industry.
- As a net foreign exchange earner, the industry accounts for a significant proportion of our country's annual foreign exchange.
- A significant proportion of the industry's approximate multi-billion dollar revenue is circulated locally thus enhancing all businesses.

- The industry's expansive drainage network throughout the sugar belt facilitates the drainage of many surrounding villages. A pertinent question is what would be the state of the drainage system in certain areas on the coast without the sugar industry?
- The yearly training of skilled graduates from the Port Mourant School benefits not only the industry but many enterprises and others.
- Our internationally famous Demerara Rum, will be history without our sugar industry

The plight of the industry after the beginning of its recovery in 1991 to the period 2002 – 2004 when its average annual production was 319,587 tonnes of sugar, became manifest from 2005. In that year, production dipped to 246,089 tonnes sugar, rather than being sustained between 275,000 and 300,000 tonnes. The new Skeldon Factory and the significant expansion of the estate's cultivation and the farmers' cultivations should have seen sugar production nearing 400,000 tonnes, a production level which the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) has set itself, but, unfortunately, is yet not within reach.

Last year's poor sugar production of 218,064 tonnes hopefully will not be the pattern and be repeated this year. With focus and pursuit of certain corrective remedies the Minister's stated 240,000 tonnes target as announced in the Budget is not "unrealizable". However, all is not gloomy for the industry, a bright future awaits. The price for our exported sugar is encouraging and stands today at about US18 cents per pound in the world market and the prognosis is that the price will hold or even reach higher levels in the period ahead.

Cde. Speaker, permit me to examine the production performance of the industry in five-year intervals over the last twenty-five years:

- In the period 1988 to 1992 average production was 173,294 tonnes.
- In the period 1993 to 1997 the average production 264,549 tonnes.
- In the period 1998 to 2002 the average production was 292,834 tonnes.
- In the period 2003 to 2007 the average yearly production was 279,963 tonnes of sugar.
- In the year 2008 to 2012 it was down to 227,077 tonnes of sugar

Certainly, in view of such performances, one can justifiably conclude that the industry has the potential to recover once again to its high production point as it did from 1991. In fact, its challenges today are not as daunting as it was in the period 1988 to 1992. Thus, it is gladdening to learn of the Government's commitment to once again make the industry one which will regain its pride of place in our country's economic life. Workers from this industry, I am sure, will heartily welcome the investments the industry will receive expectedly. The resources are there to turnaround the beleaguered industry. The target is to get the work done and to do it in a short span of time.

It is the agronomic aspect of the industry that has been fundamentally responsible for the depressed sugar production and not, as some pointed out, the six old sugar factories which, I can say, are adequately maintained. The new Skeldon factory, the seventh, was not helpful to higher production since it was commissioned in 2008. But we are told that it has been put almost right after a number of remedial works have been done in several areas. I am pleased to learn that during the first week of the factory's operations in the crop on week-ending March 30, 2013 the factory performed favourably. Indeed, over a longer period of operation, a proper conclusion will then be possible to draw and to determine whether the factory is performing in accordance with its design and expectations. But the signs are positive.

Labour Turnout - given the importance of the industry, allow me to briefly refer to an issue that keeps popping up in recent times. This issue relates to the poor labour turnout in the sugar industry and its retarding effects on sugar production. Such an observation is not fully correct. As the industry mechanises, especially with respect to cane harvesting and the mechanical loading of canes, the need for yesteryear's cane cutting labour force, which is unavailable in adequate numbers, is no longer of grave importance. With the cane cutting labour force at the disposal of GuySuCo, the Corporation managed to produce 72,316 tonnes sugar, an average production of approximately 9,039 tonnes sugar per week in favourable weather, over an eight-week period during last year's second crop.

Nevertheless, I must observe that there is indeed competition for the available workers. Thus, GuySuCo's wage rates must be more competitive to avoid a further threat from the other employers looking for workers from a common pool.

Recovery of the Industry - much has been said of the challenges facing the sugar industry but I remain confident that they can be overcome. The return to sustainability, however, must see action by the management in several areas.

Among these are: more attention in nurturing growing canes and the care of the fields; an evaluation of the skills and competence of those managerial staffers employed in the fields; full utilisation of the Enmore Packaging Plant, a value-added source which can increase the revenue of the industry; expanding the cultivable land in keeping with the requirement for planting canes at Skeldon. Those measures, I submit, as well as others will go a long way to achieve our desired objective, which, at this time, is the turnaround of the sugar industry.

I must comment as a Member of Parliament (MP) for Region No. 3 about that region. I wish to refer briefly to some developments in that region. As elsewhere in Guyana, progress and development continues in that heavily-populated region. Many roads, schools, bridges, and health centres have been rehabilitated or constructed. Several housing schemes, including the larger ones at Parafaité Harmony and Tuschen, are providing greater housing accommodation to people within and without the region. The many and varied farming, fishing, construction, infrastructural and business activities have resulted in the steady qualitative improvement in the residents' lives. Those activities have also had a transformative effect in the region, and more and more its past ugly features are relegated to history. In pursuit of its developmental agenda in 2012, the regional authority expended \$250.5 million on capital works and \$2.79 billion on current expenditure which turned out to be a great boost for its ongoing progress.

Last year saw a great emphasis placed on the health sector resulting in the extension of the Wakenaam Hospital Laboratory, rehabilitation of the Sand Hills Health Post, construction of the Greenwich Park Health Post and the construction of a health centre at Parika. Significant attention was also paid to drainage and irrigation, and in the course of the year we saw the construction and repairs of some kokers, revetments at Sisters Village and Leguan, drainage structures at Leguan, Hague, and De Kendren.

This year, other projects are in the pipeline and on the drawing board. Without doubt, Region No. 3 can be considered one in which the state's initiatives and the residents enterprising spirit combine to make steady progress a continuing reality of our region.



Income Tax Adjustment: Last year, workers across our country were delighted with the 25% adjustment of the Income Tax Threshold from \$40,000 to \$50,000 per month. This year, they will undoubtedly happily welcome the reduction of the personal income tax rate from 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  percent to 30 percent. It is small, but hopefully, just a start. This reduction in the rate, in fact, represents a 3 $\frac{1}{3}$  percent wage/salary increase of all those who are required to pay income taxes. We hope that in another year or two the Government will further lower the percentage significantly. In this respect, I wish to again urge a reform of the tax system to reflect a fair system which requires all to contribute. I see the benefit and fairness of a progressive tax system which should be put on the table for discussion.

At this time, I also wish to urge that the Minister of Finance sees that the Tax Reform Committee get down to business and within an acceptable period it should be mandated to pronounce on its recommendations.

National Minimum Wage: May I take the opportunity to say that the intention of the Government to announce a National Minimum Wage will be a laudable step and will, in all likelihood, be supported by our Guyanese working class. It is no secret that there are unscrupulous employers around and this can be one way to curtail the advantage they take on sections of the working class. I look forward for the early introduction of this measure.

In conclusion, I would not like to conclude my address without congratulating the Minister of Finance, Dr Ashni Singh, and his team and many others, for the long, dedicated and productive work they would have done in providing us the 2013 National Budget.

The Budget is interesting in many ways. Its weighted perspectives signal where we are going and, I believe, its perspectives will continue to be discussed beyond the Chamber of this Parliament. The Budget underscores the buoyancy of our economy and more importantly, recognises that there are the poor and exploited still in our society who require the state's assistance and it sought to lend a caring hand.

As we go forward to trying circumstances, the Minister of Finance says in Budget 2013 that we need to face the challenges ahead together. I agree. Let us then forge the unity and struggle for a future of greater prosperity.

Thank You, Cde. Speaker. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much Hon. Member for that presentation which was objective no doubt; very objective and commendable.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Hon. House to make my contribution to the 2013 Budget debate under the theme “*Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana.*” I would like to thank the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh and his team for their hard work in producing this Budget.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reflect briefly on our first year in this Tenth Parliament which we so proudly refer to as the “new dispensation.”

In the 2011 General and Regional Elections, Guyanese went to the polls with the intention of changing their circumstance for the better, of course, and so created history. The result was a minority PPP/C Executive and a majority APNU/AFC Opposition - the new dispensation. It was an exciting time. Guyanese from all walks of life were excited and expected this Tenth Parliament to make decisions producing results that would affect them in a positive way. We have failed them miserably in our first year and should apologise to them. We spent most of 2012 squabbling with each other and causing Guyanese to be unhappy and discouraged with us. The Opposition after nineteen years of being voiceless stepped forward bravely to create the change that was promised to the people of this country while the Government on the other hand resisted change with all their might, refusing to compromise in any way. I would think this was because change was imposed upon them with no time for them to get used to the idea or to prepare for the consequences. But leadership is about change and rather than feel they have lost control of their territory and dwell on who has power, or who has more power than whom, the Government should have proceeded to be smart leaders and invited the Opposition into the planning of this Budget earlier and giving us ownership for what we bring to the table.

This is a new year and I am happy to hear that most of our colleagues in the Government are calling on us to work together for the development of this Nation. One Hon. Minister even invited us to put on our jeans and go along on weekends on outreaches with her. We would appreciate that Hon. Minister providing you foot the travelling expenses since the travelling allowance for Opposition MPs is a meagre \$8,000 per month.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are you saying the Speaker or the person giving the invitation?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** No, not the Speaker, the person who issued the invitation.

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** I will foot the bill.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you so much Minister. I hope also that this is a genuine invitation and not budget show-talk. But most of all, for this new year onward, I would like for us in this Honourable House to embrace change and work together towards the happiness and prosperity of our people of this Nation.

This Budget is being presented by the Government as a Budget for the people, a little of something in it for everyone. I beg to differ for there are many this Budget will not touch in any way and many lives will remain the same as it was for decades. I am not speaking about new buildings being constructed in the indigenous communities. I am referring to limited revenue earning opportunities causing our indigenous brothers and sisters to struggle on a daily basis to provide basic necessities like clothing, educational supplies for their children, especially the ones attending secondary schools, and housing.

I am also referring to all communities that do not enjoy basic necessities like electricity, potable water, a health post with qualified medical personnel, an adequate stock of drugs and telephone facilities. Communities like Maruwa, Red Creek and Taruka in Region No. 8; communities like Waikrebi, Chinese Landing in Region No. 1; communities like Achiwuib in Region No. 9; communities in the regions across Guyana like Ms. Wade's hometown that do not receive electricity.

*9.49 p.m.*

Our Indigenous brothers and sisters, whose many hardships are documented so often in the media and yet somehow manage to be viewed as normal in the interior continue to be of great concern for us. Nothing is normal about these hardships suffered by residents of Indigenous communities or any hinterland community for that matter. They are absolutely abnormal and totally unacceptable to us here on this side of the August House and should be to my colleagues on the other side of the House.

It is absolutely abnormal and totally unacceptable for Rosalind Stephen, from Parishara in Region No. 9, to travel on a motorbike, while pregnant and hemorrhaging, to the Lethem Hospital to try to save her life and that of her child. It was absolutely abnormal and totally unacceptable for Euphemia Francis from Nappi to die at home while she could have been treated at the Lethem Hospital. If there were good roads and at least, a village minibus in each village, both Rosalind and Euphemia may have been alive today. There are countless other emergency cases across the hinterland and in all the Amerindian villages where residents suffer similar fate - the stories are heartbreaking when we hear them. It is heartbreaking to hear or see our young men and women dying from malaria and maternal complications; accidents that could have been treated on time in the regions' hospitals if they were adequately equipped; it is heartbreaking for three children to die from the gastro outbreak in Port Kaituma. As stated by my colleague, the Hon. Dr. George Norton, it was only after the death of three children and the number of cases reaching a total of 525 that the authorities took proactive action. It is unacceptable for the residents of the Moruca sub-region to suffer from recurring dengue and nothing being done to try to halt the situation. Aged persons, weakened from getting dengue so often, succumb before their time. There are many cases we do not hear about, where our hinterland parents and children are left with nothing but grief from the unnecessary loss of loved ones. Losses that could be avoided if the Government and relevant organisations have more care for the people who reside in the Hinterland.

I can remember in the 70s when Aishalton Village boasted two doctors, one of which was a Roman Catholic priest who was a surgeon. According to the Hon. Sydney Allicock, now they have none and the Lethem Hospital also needs a surgeon. This will save lives and millions of dollars spent on medivacs, which, as mentioned by the Hon. Dr. Norton again yesterday in his Budget Speech, totalled more than \$15 million in 2011 and \$19 million in 2012. These moneys saved could be going towards paying our doctors decent wages so that they will feel comfortable working in a public hinterland facilities. We need improved healthcare in our villages across the hinterland; we need qualified doctors and specialists, especially surgeons in our hinterland hospitals. We need qualified nurses and midwives in all our health centres and health huts in our Indigenous villages. We need to be stocked adequately with the necessary drugs.

The Nursing Schools train hundreds of nurses every year. Where are they? Many young persons were trained as doctors for the past years in Cuba. Where are they? We have to pay these professionals decent wages for them to stay and serve in our hospitals and health centres across this country.

In hinterland communities, we have to equip every health centre and health hut with generators since most Indigenous Communities do not have electricity and the small solar panels that were distributed to some communities are not reliable sources. Delivering babies with the aid of a “flambo” or a fireside are not acceptable health practices.

There is much to be done in the health sector across this country and more so, in the hinterland communities with more emphasis being placed on the training of quality medical personnel and the care of people.

Education: One Minister mentioned that there is equal access to education for all. I beg to differ. Secondary schools in the hinterland do not have science labs, for example, Mahdia and Paramakatoi Secondary schools in Region No. 8 and Santa Rosa Secondary School in Region No. 1. These young people who graduate every year cannot pursue higher learning in the science field, even if they wish, without spending at least two extra years in a school in Georgetown to acquire the science subjects. Being able to afford this is another matter. Hinterland Secondary schools do not have Home Economic Departments or Information Technology (IT) Labs, like most of the schools in Georgetown. There is no technical and vocational institutes in Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 that train hinterland youths in plumbing, mechanical and electrical engineering, carpentry and joinery, masonry and civil engineering.

Only last year the students of Paramakatoi Secondary School prepared to write their CXC examinations, after studying very hard at the various subjects. They did get to write the examination, but only because the head of the school and others in authority decided they would be too disappointed if they did not write them. Unfortunately, the examination papers arrived late in Paramakatoi and although the children wrote the examinations, they were not marked. Is this equal access to education?

Housing and Water: With the costly price of gasoline to saw boards, the high price of nails and other building paraphernalia and the scarcity of traditional building materials, proper housing

remains a challenge in many hinterland communities. I hope the dream of the Hon. Irfaan Ali will become a reality and not remain a dream and the housing drive extends to Indigenous communities. *Stabroek News* published a family home in Nappi a few months ago and the stark poverty that was portrayed in that photograph is a living reality for many residents of the hinterland.

Potable water remains a problem and the Minister should focus his energies towards alleviating this problem so as to prevent water borne diseases like the recent outbreak of gastro in Region No. 1.

Sports: It is well known that hinterland communities possess some of the most talented athletes in this country. The hinterland has produced quality footballers, both male and female who are not recognised because no emphasis is placed on these shining stars. The hinterland has produced track and field athletes, like Doretta Wilson and Hezron Simon and others. What are our sports authorities doing to support and develop the natural talent of our hinterland athletes? These athletes, once given the chance, can easily place Guyana on the world map. Where is our Sports Policy Hon. Dr. Anthony? I remember my team and I working on a proposal which we presented to you at your Ministry and that was several years ago.

Culture: It is my firm view that Indigenous languages, at least one, should be taught in schools throughout this country so that the rest of our Guyanese brothers and sisters could come to understand and appreciate the culture of our indigenous people. We must not wait until someone translates the languages into writing for us to teach it. Writing is not how Indigenous peoples, for centuries all over the world, preserved their languages and traditions - it is an oral tradition.

Roads and Bridges: The condition of the roads in most of the hinterland areas of Guyana are in a deteriorating state. Most of these trails need to be upgraded in order to provide better transportation services for residents of these communities. These are some of the roads in Region 8 that need to be upgraded urgently - Mahdia to Princeville road, Brian Sucre Junction to Tumatumari and Maikobi; and from Kurukabaru to Kopinang. In Region 1, there is the Kumaka/Kwebanna road that is in a deteriorated state most of the year, even though millions of dollars are spent to upgrade it every other year or every year. The residents of Kwebanna would like the Hon. Minister of Public works and the Hon. Minister of Local Government to know that

they can work to fix their own road, but they must get at least half of the contract moneys which at times totals up to approximately \$70 million. The other half can go to the contractor who owns the bulldozer and grader, but the communities themselves can work towards building their roads; they have the skills and they are willing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member one second. Hon. Prime Minister, may I invite you to move the motion for us to go beyond 10.00 p.m. to complete tonight's agenda.

**Mr. Hinds:** Yes Sir. Mr. Speaker, I propose that we suspend Standing Order No. 10 so that we can continue and finish the listed speakers this evening.

*Motion carried*

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. The rehabilitation of the San Jose/Kumaka Bridge, a \$28 million Capital Project, had commenced late last year, but had to be halted because of shoddy work and bad engineering. The women of Kumaka said that if they were given the contract they are sure that they would have done a better job. The bridge now stands as an eyesore to the community and the Regional Executive Officer (REO), to date, cannot give a definite date as to when the correctional works, including revetment, will be resuming. The Ministry of Local Government should monitor these capital works since millions of dollars of tax payers' moneys are being spent on these projects.

**Amerindian Development Fund:** The Amerindian Act states that the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission shall transfer 20% of the royalties from the mining activities to the fund designated by the Minister for the benefit of Amerindian villages. Many Amerindian/Indigenous people would like the Hon. Minister to tell us if this fund is the same fund that is called the Amerindian Development Fund. The Indigenous population of Guyana would also like know when, actually, this fund was established and how much money is in this fund? If money was spent from this fund, what was it spent on? We need public accountability for these moneys Hon. Minister.

**Information Technology:** I must commend the Hon. Dr. Singh, Minister of Finance, for the \$500 million allocated this year to Indigenous communities for Information Technology. How can I not? Information technology is what this world is about today and Indigenous communities must not be denied their chance to be part of this exciting world. Most of us, however, are

apprehensive. We are wondering how much indeed would be spent on this project for the Indigenous people and how much would go to consultants.

The One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) programme is also a good programme and it is our hope that the students of the University of Guyana, who cannot afford to purchase a laptop to assist in their studies, each receive a laptop. It is our hope that the students of secondary schools who cannot afford to purchase laptops receive their laptops. Our Hinterland students would also welcome their laptops along with the necessary training in basic Microsoft programmes. It is our hope that our Indigenous youths will be able to access the internet with their laptops to assist in their studies, that is, provided they receive one in the first place. We, in the Alliance for Change will be following this allocation carefully to make sure that our youths in the hinterland get what is allocated to them.

Mining: Traditional mining in our dear land of Guyana has been going on for as long as the Pork Knockers were in existence. These fearless Guyanese from all walks of life and from every ethnic group pioneered a way for our country to begin to see mining as a huge revenue earner. The Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh in his budget address said that mining has been playing an increasingly important role in the domestic economy with production reaching unprecedented levels. This is good news Mr. Speaker and Dr. Singh.

However, what is not good news is when miners are chased off lands because they have suddenly become illegal when they were allowed to prospect and work these lands before, without complaint. It would seem that as soon as the owners of these claims gets a better deal than the small miners can afford to give them, they try to get rid of them as quickly as possible without adequate notice. If the miners do not comply because of the short notice, then their equipment are being destroyed. Equipment that they saved to buy one piece at a time while risking their lives working in the back dams of the interior. For example, Marudi Mountains, where the miners there were beaten and most horrific of all a woman and her child was beaten. Another example, the miners in Port Kaituma who were given Cease Work Orders (CWOs) at short notice and because they did not move, some of their equipment were destroyed. Some of them still owe for these equipment.



While it benefits our country to enter into large scale mining agreements with foreign companies, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) and Government must recognise the importance of the contributions of small miners towards the development of communities and ultimately towards the development of our country.

Small miners generally sell their gold to licensed dealers and do not airlift it out of the country leaving only 5% for us. Their contributions can be seen in better housing in communities. They support local stores and shops, restaurants and small food vendors, hotels, schools and generally uplift the standard of living in communities. Indigenous communities get to sell their cassava bread, farine, ground provisions, fish, etc. to the miners and earn much needed moneys which help them to improve their standard of living. These parents also get to support their children attending secondary schools, many of whom are staying in dormitories and the inflow of sustained revenue eases the burden of parents and children alike. Many of these miners are Indigenous persons and are happy to mine.

Workshops for Miners: GGMC should have at least two workshops per year on good mining practices to help educate these small miners on good mining practices... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your allotted time has expired. Can someone move that the Member be given an extension of five minutes to conclude please?

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to conclude her presentation.

*Question put and agreed to*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have an extension of five minutes.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mr. Speaker, I will go over this again. GGMC should have at least two workshops per year on good mining practices to help to educate these small miners on mining the land in an environmentally friendly and healthy way. Mining inspectors should insist that latrines are built, garbage is disposed of properly and that the mercury water does not run directly into the creeks, thus, contaminating the water and killing the fishes. Trees that are felled, while cutting roadways, should not go to waste but should be used to make camping sites clean and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, I have lots more to say, but I do not know if I have time so I will just stick...

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member has five minutes, so all of those who are encouraging her to say it, you can say it but marshal your arguments and take your time and wrap it up. Thank you.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Mr. Speaker, our vast hinterland is the richest part of this country with unique eco-tourism attractions and home to first citizens of this country – our Indigenous brothers and sisters. It amazes me and bothers me that from the amount of wealth – gold, diamond and lumber – that are extracted from the Hinterland that only a tiny trickle of it is reflected in the hinterland itself and almost zero in most Indigenous communities. Something is terribly wrong here and we in this August House should hasten to fix it.

The Hinterland and our Indigenous peoples are part and parcel of each other. Policies and legislation for one affects the other. The two are synonymous. It is my strong belief that instead of having a Ministry for Amerindian Affairs, we really ought to have a Ministry for Hinterland and Indigenous Affairs. This way we can make plans for the development of the hinterland and pour some of the extracted wealth right back into this area which will have positive effects right across the spectrum and in every Indigenous community.

Roads in the hinterland for instance, which all traverse – business owners, miners, Indigenous, tourist and Government - will then become priority for hinterland development. Indigenous and other stakeholders will then have a seat at one table in the discussions for the development of the hinterland and Indigenous communities. With development will come jobs for hinterland residents which will naturally include residents from Indigenous communities.

Extracting natural resources and boasting how much the country has earned from them, must not be the sole aim of the Government for the hinterland. Instead a sound developmental plan is needed for this rich and very important fraction of our country. The little projects earmarked for Indigenous communities each year by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs must not be the only source of revenue for these residents. Many of these projects fail anyway. Instead, they should be encompassed in the wider developmental plan where they will benefit from more opportunities for personal and community development and their general comfort and well being.

The situation right now with the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs serves to isolate the Indigenous community from the rest of Guyana, stagnating growth and causing unwarranted suspicion on both sides. There is no Ministry for African Guyanese brothers and sisters nor is there a Ministry for our Indian Guyanese brothers and sisters. [Mr. R. Persaud: Should we scrap the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs?] No, we add hinterland to it and make it bigger. They are in the hinterland, it is their home. *[Interruption]*

Social Services: It is commendable that emphasis is being placed on the continued empowerment of our women. It is never too much since many of our women today single parents and with the high cost of living a working mom cannot afford to provide for her family adequately without extra funds coming in from another source. We prefer that the extra funds come from acceptable sources.

Attention must also be paid to teenage pregnancy on the coast and in the hinterland. Last year in Region No. 3 there were teenage pregnancies and one of the young mothers was only 12 years old.

Hon. Minister of Human Services has to find ways to deal with prostitution of young girls' right here on the coast. I can give you an instance, a shocking one – I have to close, but let me give you this in the mean time. Some hinterland colleagues of ours came down and we had to find a hotel to accommodate them. Naturally we wanted to find an affordable hotel. I took them to this hotel and the room was adequate for the money and I thought that was okay. Two days after my friends came and told me that, “Oh my, Ms. Val” I was so shocked, I was coming down the stairs and I stepped out onto the balcony and I saw a big man with a little girl about 9 or 12 years old going to the room. She was an Indigenous woman and she was so horrified. This is happening on the coast and with our coastal people; our coastal brothers and sisters, it is actually happening here. *[Interruption]* Minister, we have to find solutions for this, it is terrible and it is grave and it is happening right here in Georgetown.

Time does not permit and I must conclude. Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** I think the last story that the Hon. Member talked about, I do not think that she was blaming anyone; she was bringing it to our collective attention. She said this is our problem and we all have a duty to protect those children.

Hon. Members, we will have the last presentation for today. Representing again East Berbice, Corentyne, Region No. 6, Hon. Mr. Jaffarally.

**Mr. Jaffarally:** Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues on this side of the House in congratulating the Hon. Minister of Finance and his technical team for the 2013 National Budget as presented by him. This budget shows our Government's commitment to our people.

Whether you are in business or mining; whether you are an ordinary worker or a taxi driver; whether you are a market vendor, there is something for everyone in the National Budget 2013.

*10.19 p.m.*

The PPP/C Government and the Hon. Minister of Finance should be commended for their work in presenting the 2013 Budget without any new taxes, while governments all over the world are forced by slow or negative economic growth to cut back. We in Guyana have been able to present a budget which is, once again, the largest budget in the history of our country.

This is possible only because we have a caring Government which believes in a people-oriented approach to development. This country, in the face of a global economic slowdown, maintains a path of steady economic growth over the last eight years and we need to commend the Hon. Minister, Dr. Ashni Singh, for steering the economic ship of this country for the last eight years. At the same time, inflation has been the lowest in many years.

In the past, when the PNC Administration presented their National Budget to this National Assembly under the distinguished Former Finance Minister, the Hon. Carl Greenidge, we hear a number of the slogans *tighten your belt, austerity measure, devaluation*. Those were the expressions of the past.

This PPP/Civic Government...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this is the last presentation for the night. The Member is entitled to be heard. I am asking for quiet and order, please.

**Mr. Jaffarally:** The Amerindian Communities of Orealla and Siparuta, like all of the other Amerindian Communities across Guyana, have benefited significantly in term of development by the PPP/Civic Government over the years. In Orealla and Siparuta demarcation of the land has

been completed. A revolving fund has been established in Orealla and Siparuta for the benefit of the citizens of those communities and managed by the people of Orealla and Siparuta.

In healthcare delivery a medics' station at Orealla and Siparuta and periodic visits by medical outreach with doctors who go to Orealla and Siparuta... an Information Technology lab has been established in Orealla. Pure water supply is in Orealla. Electricity is at Orealla.

Recently, the road from Orealla to Siparuta was done by the people of Orealla and Siparuta, themselves, thus creating employment. Revetment at the waterfront was done by people of Orealla and Siparuta.

In 2013, I am being advised by the Hon. Minister within the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Alli Baksh, that a boat and engine to bring the produce out of Orealla and Siparuta will be purchased for the people of Orealla and Siparuta.

Our brothers and sisters of Orealla have been benefiting significantly under the PPP/Civic Government.

My Hon. colleague, Mr. Trevor Williams, in his presentation, he remarked about what took place at the Whim sports ground. I am being advised by the Regional Chairman that what transpired at Whim with the removal of the fence is a malicious act by the Hon. Member, Dr. Ramayya.

In 2011 and 2012, \$3.2 million was spent to upgrade that ground which includes the rehabilitation of the pavilion, land filling, shaping and grading of the ground. Presently the pitch is being laid and the drains around the ground are being cleaned. My colleague also mentioned that no sport ground is being developed and asked what the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport is doing. In Region No. 6, recognising the importance for sports and creating an environment for our young people that can use their energy in an efficient manner, thus enabling us to build a health nation and prepare themselves for the competitive world of sports, a number of grounds were rehabilitated in 2012 which include the No. 53 Sports Club, Line Path Sports Club, Stanleytown Savannah Community Center Club, Fryrish Cricket Club, No. 48 Cricket Club, Sisters' Cricket Club, Number 54 Cricket Club, No. 71 Cricket Club, Belvidere United Cricket Club, Sports Club of No. 43, Glasgow Community Sports Club, Young Achievers Sports Club of

No. 60 Village, Auchiyne/Lancaster Sports Club, Young Achievers Cricket Club of Canefield and the Whim Cricket Ground.

In addition, a number of sports grounds were provided with sports gears and I want to thank my colleague, the Hon. Neendkumar, and the National Sports Commission for providing these sports gears to a number of clubs which include No. 48, No. 55, No. 61, No. 68, Skeldon, Fryrish. All of these grounds were provided with sports gears during 2012.

I am pleased to announce to this National Assembly, like the Providence Stadium, Albion Sports Complex will be having floodlights. The contract is already signed and in another three months the lights will be assembled at Albion Sports Club, thus we can have night cricket, foot ball and other cultural events at the Albion Sports Club.

I am pleased to announce also that a school of dance has been established already in New Amsterdam and in the Corentyne.

Our sugar workers are hardworking people and they are making a significant contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of this country and we need to commend our sugar workers. The 10,334 sugar workers at Rose Hall, Canje, Albion, Port Mourant and Skeldon have produced 157,000 tonnes of sugar in 2012,

Too often we refer and believe our sugar workers are not important people but because of the opportunities made available by the PPP/Civic Government. Today we find that our sugar workers' children are doctors, engineers, professionals, lawyers because sugar workers are hardworking people and they are contributing to the growth and development of this country.

Our sugar workers, over the years, have benefitted from improved cane cutting incentive schemes. During normal working weeks, workers enjoy a 90% prorate weekly production incentive, improved payment for breaking and loading bell loaders, bundle when in-field conditions are wet.

Training on the Job: Indoor training on safety, substance abuse and quality of work are given to sugar workers.

Increased wages and salaries, job evaluation average an increase of 67%.

Education: Our Government recognises the importance of education to the growth and development of our country and over the years we have seen an increased budgetary allocation in this sector. Driving by the mission to realise equity and increased access to quality education, the Regional Administration of Region 6, through the Department of Education, has placed every emphasis in in-service training of our teachers at all levels. Supervision and instructional programmes, and monitoring of resource utilisation for efficient school management and curriculum delivery and greater effectiveness in the education system.

In 2012, the total budgetary allocation was \$1.8 billion for Region 6, where approximately 90% went towards wages and salaries.

The performance of our students in Region No. 6 at CXC, grades 1 to 3, has been sustained over the years and has been about the national average over the past three years. In 2012, we netted 63.50% passes in grades 1 to 3, which is 5% above the national average. A total of 11,156 students wrote the CXC Examination.

The National Grade 6 Assessment results yield 93% access to general secondary school across our region.

It is worthy to note that our teachers' motivation level has risen, measured in extremely low absenteeism. This is due to an increased remuneration for teachers graduating from the University of Guyana and at the Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) and the release of hundreds of teachers annually to attend these institutions during working hours. In Region No. 6, at present, we have a total of 1,416 teachers employed across the region and more than 70% are graduate teachers.

The University of Guyana, Tain Campus, established by the PPP/Civic Government, continues to provide an opportunity for our young people to acquire higher education in various fields of study. In 2012, 231 students graduated from the University of Guyana, Tain Campus, in the field of Agriculture, Social and Natural Sciences, Education and other fields of study. In 2012-2013 the total enrolment at the University of Guyana, Tain Campus is 757 students.

Recognising the importance of information and communication technology and the need to prepare our next generation for the participation and access involving the information super

highway, we have ensured that all of our secondary schools and a limited number of our primary schools in the Region are equipped with state of the art IT labs.

We have also been involved in the distribution, in Region No. 6, of laptops from the One Laptop Per Family. In 2012, 8,368 persons received their laptops from the Government of Guyana. At a simple calculation of four members per family, it means that some 33,472 persons will benefit from the laptop distribution in Region No. 6 in 2012. This represents recipients coming from 153 communities across Region No. 6, including Haversham, Liverpool, Manchester, New Amsterdam, Corriverton, Black Bush Polder, Albion, Chesney, Canefield, Goed Bananen, Gangaram and other areas. The list is available. **[Mr. Neendkumar:** Whim too.] Whim also.

In 2013, we are expecting to distribute a further 6,966 laptops across Region No. 6 including Orealla and Siparuta.

**Mr. Speaker:** Excuse me. Ms. Selman, are you trying to make a Point of Order?

**Ms. Selman:** No, Sir.

**Mr. Jaffarally:** Pure water supply: In this area of pure water supply there has been a tremendous improvement over the years since our Government has been in office. Over the last five years or so Region No. 6 has been in excess of \$6 billion in capital investment across Region No. 6. This will benefit some 122,000 persons across Region No. 6, which has included the construction of two state of the art water treatment plants at No. 52 Village and Queenstown.

Rose Hall Improvement Water Project: Installation of transmission mains at Skeldon, No. 74 and No. 75, No. 61 and No. 62 Letter Kenny, Adventure to Alness, Fryrish, Black Bush Polder, Canefield, Manchester.

Upgrade and distribution of No. 51 and No. 73 Villages, No. 1 to Whim, Whim to Bush Lot, Banana Land. Drilling of a new well in Canefield in excess of \$50 million. Drilling of a new well at Rose Hall, distribution of grades at Angoy's Avenue in New Amsterdam. Mibikuri to Lesbeholden - transmission main. Canefield to Reliance - transmission main. No. 76 to No. 78 - transmission main. In 2013, a new well will be drilled at Lochaber, West Canje.



Region No.6 is an agriculture producing area. In 2012, 55,000 acres of land was under rice cultivation across Region No. 6. In Black Bush Polder, 17,215 are under cultivation. No. 51 Loan Field Frontlands with 19,000 acres under cultivation. No 52, 74, 15,400 acres, Crabwood Creek at 3,500 acres. No. 19 at 500 acres and for the first time we are breaking new ground. Rice is now being cultivated at Barakara on the Upper Canje River and at Orealla and Siparuta.

I am happy to note that my Hon. colleague, Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj visited Orealla and Siparuta and provided technical help to the people of Orealla and Siparuta and very shortly the Hon. Member will be going to Barakara. The average production per acre is around 35 bags in Region No. 6.

Very shortly, we will commission the \$164 million seed facility plant at No. 56 Village, which is ready for commission. With the commission of this plant farmers in Region No. 6 will be provided with a better quality of seed, thus enhancing production and productivity.

The two-door sluice that is presently under construction at No. 42 Bengal... installation of that pump will provide additional drainage to 4,000 acres of land in the Joanna/Black Bush Polder Area. This is some of the development in terms of the rice sector in Region No. 6.

In terms of cash crops, we have 15,000 acres of land under cultivation -at Crabwood Creek, Nos. 52, 74, East Bank Berbice, Black Bush Polder.

Region No. 6, itself, in terms of cattle and meat production, is self sufficient and we are exporting to other Regions, including Georgetown and to Caribbean countries.

In terms of poultry supply, we are also self sufficient. In 2012, we spent \$122 million in our capital programme under Drainage and Irrigation across Region No. 6 which includes: the main drainage canal at number 51, Manarabisi cattle pasture was de-silted at a cost of \$7 million. Reconstruction of the Joanna Cattle Bridge, construct RC regulator and timber revetment at Manchester Village. Construct timber revetment on the East Bank of Berbice. Construct timber revetment at Plegt Anker Access Road. Construction of structure at Highburg on the East Bank. These are some of the infrastructural works that were done in Region 6.

Housing is another success story in Region No. 6. We can start with Little Africa on the Upper Corentyne Right down to Glasgow on the East Bank of Berbice and we will find thousands of

young Guyanese, ordinary Guyanese, teachers, public servants, market vendors, who are able to acquire their own homes under the PPP/Civic Government.

In 2012, we have distributed 927 house lots to young Guyanese. A visit to these communities one will see more than 70% occupancy at the various housing schemes across Region No.6 and this is because of the PPP/Civic Government working with the financial institutions, ensuring that our home owners are provided with loans at a very low cost of interest. In many of these housing schemes and squatting settlements, I am very positive colleagues, we have the basic necessities – roads, drainage and irrigation, electricity, potable water. We will continue to provide these facilities across our region.

Under the Citizen Security Programme, six police stations were equipped with computers and internet connectivity and linked with integrated crime information centre and continue to provide reports on crime and data centres to the Guyana Police Force Head Quarters, the Ministry of Home Affairs for the use of operational matters. Some of these police stations that were rehabilitated during 2012 include Reliance, Albion, Whim, No. 51, Springlands. These police stations are now equipped with computers. Under the community component some 600 young people were trained under the Citizen Security Programme; 600 young people who were given a second chance in life. They were trained in computer science, auto mechanics, garment construction, cake decoration, fabrication and welding, computer repairs, auto body repairs and jewel craft. These young people came from communities of Angise Avenue. They came from communities of Fryrish, Port Mourant, Chesney, Edinburg.

A recent survey conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs' Citizen Security Programme found that 80% of these young people who were trained were either employed or self-employed, thus creating a positive image in our community.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time has elapsed.

**Mr. Jaffarally:** Mr. Speaker...

**Mr. Speaker:** One second.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Member be granted five minutes to conclude his presentation.

**Mr. Speaker:** Approved.

*Question put and carried*

**Mr. Jaffarally:** Mr. Speaker, under our Justice Improvement Programme we have seen that our magistrates and members of the legal profession are now having a better building to work in. The rehabilitation of the New Amsterdam Magistrate Court and the Black Bush Polder Magistrate Court were rehabilitated under the Justice Improvement Programme.

We continue to work with the various communities across Region 6. There have been constant outreaches and engagement with various stakeholders in the communities across Region 6 by the Regional Administration, by Members of Parliament for Region 6 and our Cabinet Ministers and the President, himself, from time to time, who would visit and interact with communities.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to part of the 2013 Budget Presentation by the Hon. Minister of Finance, and I quote:

“With this constantly in mind the People’s Progressive Party/Civic Government remains firmly focused in building a better Guyana for all Guyanese and firmly committed to working as closely as possible with all like-minded stakeholders, both within and beyond the hallowed walls of this honourable House. In pursuit of that objective we continue to value our ongoing stakeholders engagement and we continue to receive these engagements as important inputs into our national policy-making deliberations. I urge once again that even after the most vigorous of debates this House learns to speak more frequently with one voice, only that which is good for Guyana.”

As I have said at the start of my presentation the budget is about the people of Guyana, which our Government represents – all the people of Guyana. 2013’s National Budget will give us an opportunity to improve the quality of lives of the people of this country. I now recommend this budget to the Members of this noble House and look forward to the year ahead to see its implementation. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I wish to thank and commend all Members for getting us through. Today it was somewhat difficult, sometimes tense. We have come to the end of our proceedings for today. I would like to ask that you have a good night's rest, stay in good health. Our colleague, I am told, is resting comfortably and is okay and hopefully he will return to his post. Hon. Prime Minister, please move the motion.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the House be adjourned until tomorrow at 1.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** We adjourn until 1.00 p.m., Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> April.

*Assembly adjourned accordingly at 9.48 p.m.*