

# 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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44<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Friday, 5<sup>TH</sup> April, 2013

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*Assembly convened at 1.19 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Noisiness during the reading of prayers**

**Mr. Speaker:** It is just to the press. As prayers were being read I was still hearing noises. Please accord the respect to the prayers and refrain from moving or speaking or fixing your apparatus or equipment while we are praying.

### **Apology for the late start**

**Mr. Speaker:** My apologies for the late start, but I took a late decision to divert to the hospital to visit with Member of Parliament Mr. Allen, and to speak to the doctor, and to be able to say that he is resting comfortably. Hopefully he will be back with us as soon as possible, but more importantly we want to make sure that he recovers fully and speedily. I thought I would divert and visit him, which I did at about five minutes to one o' clock.

### **Meeting of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply**

**Mr. Speaker:** The Members of the Business Sub-Committee of the Committee of Supply are reminded that we will have a meeting at four o' clock, during the recess. You know yourselves, so please assemble in Speaker's Chamber for that meeting to work out the days and times for the deliberations on the Estimates.

### **First Aid station established**

**Mr. Speaker:** Finally, some of you may have noticed, the Clerk, and the Parliament Office, has established a first aid station, which is nearby here, and I know that the personnel to - I would not say "to man it" because it may be females as well - attend to it are also going to be taken care of. The Clerk is attending to that but we know that should anything become more serious we will have to be medevacked, as it were, out of here. We do have the basic facilities and there are, I believe, sufficient medical practitioners and doctors to take care of any interim situations. Thank you to the Clerk and the staff for that.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

### **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:** The first speaker for today is our Deputy Speaker for the National Assembly, the Hon. Member Mrs. Deborah Jan Backer, who will address us.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]:** Thank you Sir, and to educate my colleague Dr. Ramsaran I can indicate that my full name is Deborah Jan Osman Backer or Deborah Jan Backer nee Osman.

Sir, I rise, like my colleagues on this side of the House, to make my contribution to the budget debate of 2013. I would immediately move to my remit which is that of foreign affairs.

A Partner for National Unity, (APNU)'s position on Guyana's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains constant. In other words, APNU continues to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Government, with the Alliance For Change (AFC), with civil society and, I suspect, with all Guyanese in defence of all eighty-three thousand square miles of this country that is ours and we love dearly. While we know, Sir, that the claims of both Venezuela and Suriname are unfounded we must redouble our diplomatic efforts to resolve them. They must continuously be with us, those efforts, as I said, to resolve them.

During the Budget 2012 debate we called on the Government of Guyana to move with dispatch to bring an end to the illegal Corentyne crossing. We posited then and we do so, again, that it is dangerous to life; it compromises our territorial integrity; it facilitates the movement of both people and goods, most recently some allegation of gold bars, perhaps, crossing our eastern border. In responding to that call, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs did say that, as recent as a

few days ago, a meeting was planned for the end of June 2012 to further discuss the systems. I understand that the Hon. Minister has the privilege of speaking immediately after me and she will, I am sure, give us an update on that issue.

We are aware that at the 201<sup>st</sup> observance of Venezuela's independence on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, of last year, both Guyana and Venezuela recommitted to the good offices process of the United Nations Secretary General to address the border controversy. APNU, Sir, like all of Guyana, is also aware that the late President Hugo Chavez was very instrumental in keeping the Guyana/Venezuela border issue on the back-burner. With his untimely death on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, and the rumblings in the recent past from the opposition in Venezuela about the need to determine this long outstanding issue, we urge this Government to continue to ensure that Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries are fully mobilised and stand behind us. We know that at every Heads of Government meeting, the most recent being the 33<sup>rd</sup> last year in St. Lucia, support was given and stated, but, Sir, APNU says this particularly in the context of the evolving world, and even, as we speak today, several of our CARICOM members belong to other regional bodies. For example, Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in which Venezuela is a major player and, of course, many of our CARICOM sisters, like Guyana, have PetroCaribe agreements with Venezuela. We need, as we continue to mobilise CARICOM, to be cognizant of that change in landscape and ensure that CARICOM re-commits, irrespective of its involvement with other bodies, on Guyana/Venezuela controversy and stands 100% alongside of Guyana.

It is worthwhile to note – I go now to our relations with Venezuela and Brazil - that the decision of the then Government of Guyana to establish an embassy in Brazil in 1969 drew the ire of the PPP. Indeed, in a press release in August, 1969, the PPP proclaimed, and I quote, "The latest waste of public funds is the setting up of an Embassy in Brazil." The PPP on that occasion also called for the condemnation of the Government of Guyana for aligning Guyana with reactionary foes.

We on this side of the House, and I suspect quietly even the PPP Government, now salute, even quietly and in dark places, our visionary leader, LFS Burnham, for having such outstanding foresight. In the field of foreign diplomacy, he stands, today, in Guyana, and I dare say in the

Caribbean, unmatched. It is, perhaps, no wonder that he was voted Caribbean's Man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Today, Sir, our relationship with Brazil is strong and we are happy that it continues that way. We note in that context, the recent meeting in February, 2013, of the joint working group on infrastructure between Guyana and Brazil, where such projects as the upgrade of the Guyana/Lethem road and the deep water port, which we see is now being moved to the Berbice River, and other projects were discussed. We want to also note that Mr. Winston Brassington of National Industrial and Commercial Investment Limited (NICIL) and Marriott fame is the chairperson of this working group.

There is already a steady trade between Region 9 and north eastern-Brazil. With Lethem being our "frontier town" it must be properly and systematically developed to enhance trade and tourism between our countries. The upgrade of electricity to a 24 by seven by 365 is therefore an absolute prerequisite. Presently Lethem is divided into three areas. Two of them get eight hours of electricity per day and one has 20 hours of electricity per day. We say upgrade Lethem, as soon as possible, to 24 by seven by 365.

April 14<sup>th</sup>, of this year, is important to Guyana for two reasons, and I turn now to Venezuela. First, on that day Venezuela will hold its national elections. This is important because should the Opposition be victorious at the polls our PetroCaribe agreement may well be re-evaluated and the Venezuela/Guyana border controversy may be moved to the front burner. We do not know.

The second reason why the 14<sup>th</sup> April is important to Guyana is because on that day I will be 54 years of age. I could not find my birth certificate, but I am sure I will be able to lay it over as an exhibit.

It is difficult for APNU to overstate the value of the PetroCaribe agreement to Guyana. Under this agreement Guyana receives approximately 50 % of its oil and pays partly by rice and by paddy. That is well documented on page 13 of the Budget 2013 presentation. I do not think anyone would want to dispute that. In that context, it is also worth noting that Venezuela is now Guyana's biggest creditor. Should the incumbent President Maduro win on 14<sup>th</sup> April – I said that it is an important day – our relationship with Venezuela *vis-à-vis* border and PetroCaribe may also change. We do not know. What we are saying is that we expect, and we hope, that, as

a responsible Ministry, our Ministry and expert staff are, even as we meet here today, discussing contingency plans.

The survival and, indeed, re-engineering of CARICOM remain an absolute prerequisite to all of us. We are all aware that foreign policy coordination is one of the guiding principles of CARICOM. We note that foreign policy coordination was an important agenda item on the 33<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Heads of Government held in St. Lucia in July, last year. The Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) is one of the organs of CARICOM. According to the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, COFCOR is among other things responsible for coordinating the community's foreign policy “in order to arrive at common positions in relation to third states, groups of states and relevant inter-governmental organisations.”

As the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Rudy Insanally stated in his book, *Multilateral Diplomacy for Small State*:

“By combining their individual strengths and unifying their representation developing countries can and, indeed, have been able to maximise their gains.”

The truth is that in recent years a coordinated foreign policy has not been, we respectfully submit, one of the success stories of CARICOM. There was the recent Falkland Islands issue where CARICOM has flip-flopped in the face of pressure, first from Argentina and ALBA and then from the United Kingdom (UK).

On this area of a non-unifying position on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2012, the United Nations (UN) voted on a resolution condemning Syria for its indiscriminate use of heavy weapons in civilian areas: 133 members voted yes, 12 against and 31 abstained. Guyana was among a few CARICOM countries which abstained while Barbados, Belize, Grenada and a few others voted yes. This vote is particularly glaring when one positions it in the context that it took place at about one month after the 33<sup>rd</sup> Heads of Government Meeting in St. Lucia. This is what heads in St. Lucia said: “Emphasising that foreign policy coordination was not only a guiding principle for CARICOM but a necessary tool to achieve effectiveness in foreign policy matters. The heads said that in July, and in August some will go so and some would have gone so. I do not know where the winners were. I believe none of us were winners.

Similarly, in November, 2012 on the issue of the upgrade of the Palestinian state to that of a non-member observer, 12 CARICOM countries, including Guyana, rightly, we say in this case, voted for and three abstained.

Let me say, unequivocally, that APNU is in no way seeking to either dictate or, in fact, to even interfere with the sovereignty of our sister CARICOM states. What we are simply saying is that CARICOM would be more effective on the world stage of foreign diplomacy as a single bloc. That is the point we want to make. CARICOM will observe its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Some may say it is on 4<sup>th</sup> July when Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed or some will say it is on 1<sup>st</sup> August, when it came into force. It may be a good time for all members, including Guyana, to pause and reflect on the goal, when forming CARICOM, which was “Unite their economies and give them a joint presence in the international scene.”

We support CARICOM. We have said that *ad nauseam* and we continue to do so, but we must be aware of its shortcomings and we must be... I cannot say be man enough. We must be woman enough and man enough... [Mr. Ali: We must be people enough.] We must be people enough - thank you very much - to stand shoulder to shoulder and accept that all are not perfect, but also to accept that we cannot do without CARICOM.

We always hear chants from the PPP/C and last night the latest chanter was the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill. The chant usually goes around this point that they are a moral beacon and the 33 miscreants are trying to... He did not use that particular word but, Sir, I want to draw to the House's attention how the Government has, on three recent occasions, misused international organisations for its own narrow political gains.

One is economic and the second two are political. The photocopying scam, that is what I call it. [Mr. Neendkumar: What happened to the Globe Trust scam?] Sir, I understand that my colleague wants to make a statement on Globe Trust, would we allow him now, Sir?

**Mr. Speaker:** Go ahead Mrs. Backer. He did not seem to take up the offer.

**Mrs. Backer:** Because, Sir, I wanted him to include family. Guyana is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organisation and is a signatory to the Berne Convention and the Universal

Copyright Convention. It also, domestically, has an existing Act of 1956 which altogether makes photocopying illegal - unlawful.

**Mr. Speaker:** One second. I may have the Clerk cover that photocopying machine that is outside.

**Mrs. Backer:** It is save and except when it happens in the National Assembly. Despite this, the Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Education, invited firms to bid and supply "pirated" text books. In justification of this abomination, Dr. Luncheon said this, *Stabroek News*, 13<sup>th</sup> September:

"We go to tender and the two things that we are obsessed about in terms of policy is about the quality and the second one, we are satisfied, is price.

We do not supply these things to ourselves."

If it was not so amazingly unlawful it might even be ridiculous. Dr. Luncheon said:

"You could be a publisher with a copyright and you could offer to sell me this book for one dollar. My friend is a good photocopy artist and he could sell me the book for ten cents. All of you are going to bid, but who do you think is going to get it?"

That was why he kept on stressing on the words quality and price. Basically, the honourable doctor was saying, "So what? Put the law wherever you want to."

This is the vintage PPP/C. Instead of running up and down the court steps, like *Wee Willy Winkle*, only to be rejected again and again, the Hon. Attorney General should have advised the Government on the law. [**Mr. Greenidge:** How could you call the man *Wee Willie Winkle*?] I said it is like... where one wonders was our dear subject Minister, Minister Manickchand, who is also a lawyer, when Cabinet made this ghastly decision.

Mr. Greenidge in a letter to *Stabroek News* of 28<sup>th</sup> October... [**Mr. Ali:** The Hon.] It is the Hon. the most honourable ... reminded us that what this Government should be doing is to encourage, as far as possible, locally written texts and he referred to both the late Professor Leslie Cummings and, our own, the late Deryck Bernard who both wrote geography texts for our schools. In Trinidad and Jamaica there is a vibrant local text books unit where their own



people write books. They do not have to photocopy and break the laws in their country, but Guyana is a strange place.

In December, 2005, the Hon. Minister, whose name I will not call, when he was shadowing the Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that there would have soon been the tabling of a modern Copyright Bill. But, Sir, you know our position. We do not really want to hear from him but that is another story.

To sum up this sordid matter, I can do no better than to quote the last paragraph of the *Stabroek News* editorial of 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2012, entitled, “Rabbit Hole”, which states:

“If Dr. Luncheon and the entire Cabinet have not fallen down the rabbit hole into a through the Looking-Glass world then the rest of us are all mad hatters.”

In which it would include you, Sir.

We go now to the second infraction, the second misuse - this one is our international regional body - the Organisation of American States (OAS). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 2012 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an autonomous body of the OAS, issued a stinging criticism of the state and police of Guyana over the killing of three protestors in Linden on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2012. That would have got some people, including their adviser on governance, mad. To try to save face, the Government hastily dispatched Ambassador Bayney Karran to Washington, in the second half of August, 2012, to brief the OAS Permanent Council on the Linden crisis and the shape of things since general elections.

The complaint was about the 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, but the Government went to talk about elections. Sir, I must let you know that both yourself and myself were featured in that address. We are stars. The *Stabroek News* of 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2012 stated [Mr. Ali: Who said that?] I am coming to the actual words.

“Whatever the reason for recourse to the OAS the informed and discerning Guyanese man/woman in the street will see it as a further recognition that the Government refuses to accept that it has lost control of the Parliament and its vast powers all in keeping with the provision of the Constitution. Why else would the Ambassador advise the Permanent Council about cuts to the budget by virtue of the one-seat majority? Why would he cite

the election of the Speaker of Parliament and Deputy from the ranks of the Opposition? Why would he refer to the domination of the Parliamentary Committees by the Opposition and...?”

[**An Hon. Member:** Who said that?] It was Mr. Bayney Karran.

The source was when he attended the OAS in late August. That is how the Government is beginning to use the international bodies that we are parties to. There is a last one, so it was not a mistake. It is the United Nations Rights of the Child Committee.

January of this year the Guyana's delegation appeared before the United Nations Rights of the Child Committee, represented by none other than the Government's adviser on governance and the Hon. Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Minister Webster, whom I suggest was a silent partner in this fiasco. I want to quote from the *Kaieteur News* of Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> February. The headline is “3,000 girls leave school annually because of pregnancy”, but somewhere in that leaving of school and pregnancy this is what I suspect the honourable adviser said:

“Meanwhile the Government told the UN Committee that the greatest threat to the protection and promotion of children rights and equal access to service is emerging from the threat of the Parliamentary Democracy threat posed by the Opposition dictatorship of one.”

The reason why there is the problem with the 3,000 girls leaving school because of pregnancy is because of the dictatorship of one in the Parliament. This is quotation. That is why my learned...

**Ms. Teixeira:** I do not have any problem with the Hon. Member quoting me and quoting any document that is publicly available, posted on the UN website, that has the exact record of what took place in Geneva. However, to quote *Stabroek News* as the paragon of virtue and truth in what I have said is not correct. The Hon. Member can go to the UN document, which is publicly posted, and quote from me or the Government of Guyana at any time.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, from the time that I was a Member of Parliament we have been using newspapers, and even during this debate newspapers have been used. What the Member

has been doing was quoting from what a newspaper is reporting. The Hon. Member was quoting from a newspaper and that is quite appropriate. I personally was sent a copy of the presentation from Geneva, but that could be made available. I see nothing wrong with quoting from one of the known established dailies in Guyana, whether it is right, it is just the opinion of the newspaper.

*1.49 p.m.*

**Mrs. Backer:** No Sir. It is more than just the opinion because it is in parenthesis. I have also seen the UN report and I am satisfied that it is the true and correct reflection. I challenge my colleague to prove me wrong.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mr. Speaker, the Mdm. Deputy Speaker is not just quoting from the newspaper, she is making a deduction. The issue, Sir, is that the link between teenage pregnancies and the quote on parliamentary democracy in the document are about 50 pages apart. *Stabroek News* has a right to make it look as if it is linked, but in the official document the reference on teenage pregnancy is 50 pages away from the final paragraph where that part is quoted.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, just a few evenings ago, when Mr. Trevor Williams was making his presentation, the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment did say that what was reflected in the *Kaieteur News* was not accurate and I allow the Minister to bring another document and to lay that. To say that we cannot read from what was reported already, I cannot uphold that but I will allow the official or complete record to be read into the transcript if that is desired.

**Mrs. Backer:** Thank you Sir. This is in uplifted commas; it is a direct quote and I will repeat it.

“The greatest threat to the protection and promotion of children right and equal access to services and the potential for the reversal of the democratic and socio-economic gains is emerging from the threat of the Parliamentary Democracy posed by the Opposition dictatorship of one in the Parliament.”

We condemn, in the strongest possible language, this misuse of these organisations which are funded by taxpayers money. The flight of the Government, this is apparent flight from reality, were I in other place, I would refer to it in stronger language.

I want to turn to trade facilitation and investment. While continuing to seek trade and investment opportunities with our traditional trading partners Guyana, in APNU's opinion, quite correctly continues, to look both south and east for new trading partners. We are fortunate that in the case of China that economic giant has, if not come to us, met us halfway. We are aware that in recent years China has invested in several CARICOM states in the form of loans, grants and also in mega construction projects. While addressing the 33<sup>rd</sup> Heads of Government Meeting in July, last year, the honourable Prime Minister of St. Lucia said that China was on course to becoming the world's largest economy and a superpower in its own right within a few years. He said this: "The reality that beholds us is that global growth will be determined by decisions made largely in Beijing."

A united CARICOM approach, in terms of trade and investment, would, we believe, have been ideal. The reality is that with CARICOM not having a unified one China policy, we must negotiate on a country to country basis with China. Sir, last year we stated, and it is found at page 1564 of the *Hansard* the budget debates of 2012, this about China:

"We note the appointment of the High Commissioner, Professor David Dabydeen, in China and urge that in the implementation of our trade and investment agreements with China shared values, based on our laws, are central to all agreements with this great country."

I restate that. I say that the agreement between the Government of Guyana, through the company that was set up, and the Shanghai Construction Group, reference to the construction of the Marriott Hotel, did not proceed on these two principles. I know that, you, I respectfully submit, Sir, know that and in fact, I think, all of us here know that.

Sir, sometimes I worry - I wrote this out before the latest outburst - about my friend the most Hon. Member Ms. Gail Teixeira. Since 2011, she does not appear to be at her best and sometimes she not only misses the boat, she misses the entire river. Sometimes the boat is in the Berbice River and she is in the Essequibo River. I am glad that they are up. I want to say that we have no quarrel. The APNU has no quarrel with, and indeed welcomes, Chinese investors to our shores, and has done so since the PNC Government in 1972 established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China. China is now our second biggest creditor behind Venezuela and we

have the highest regard for that great country. Rather than shedding crocodile tears and speaking, I will go back to my favourite newspaper, my last quote, most Hon. Member Ms. Teixeira, the *Stabroek News*, Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2013, page 3. Adviser on governance said this:

“Everyone is up in arms but it smells stink because it smells of racism...”

These are her words. It is a nice picture, though, to kind of neutralise those very harsh words.

“...It smells of anti-nationality. We do not seem to have that problem with the companies that are coming in that are bringing non-Chinese.”

That is why, sometimes, I worry about her not only missing the boat, but the entire river. The fact is that we have been constant in our support for investment with the Chinese and we open that trade corridor just over 40 years ago. We want to say that if this Government is truly serious about foreign trade and large companies coming to Guyana then there is simply no way of avoiding the issue of industrial relations as a key facet of our investment promotion policy. We have to have a proper modern investment promotion policy that involves industrial relations. We cannot wish it away and go running here and there, helter-skelter, depending on who is bringing what to us.

The capacity of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I now turn briefly to. There are three programme heads: Development of Foreign Policy, Foreign Policy Promotion, Development of Foreign Trade Policy. Last year we asked about the Foreign Service Institute and the general training of staff and we were told that certain arrangements/agreements were hopefully going to be concluded with certain diplomatic academies. We hope that in her presentation, the Hon. Minister, whom I have the highest regard for and have never had the cause to say anything less than complimentary about her... [Ms. Teixeira: She has not missed the boat.] She grew up alongside, both sides, I suspect, and that is meant as a compliment. We are extremely happy that that Mr. Kellawan Lall has been replaced as Guyana's Ambassador to Brazil. We congratulate our new Ambassador Ms. Merlene Udho on her appointment. Last year we called, we begged, we did not cry, for the removal of both Ambassador Lall and High Commissioner Gagraj.

One of the two is gone. We look forward to when the bigger one, the Hon. Ambassador Mr. Gagraj, will follow suit. In the last year the Government launched several diaspora projects, but my colleague will deal with them, Ms. Africo Selman.

I want to turn briefly to recommendations. Just over a decade ago, on July the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the report of the Border National Security Committee was - I see, Sir, you are looking at me - submitted and that committee included Mr. Ralph Ramkarran, who was one of the co-chairmen, Brigadier (Ret'd) David Granger another co-chairman and, Sir, I see a Mr. Raphael Trotman, Attorney-at-law, I believe that is yourself. That committee made some very strong recommendations that I dare say, and we feel, are just as relevant or perhaps even more relevant now than they were. It spoke very briefly, I say, about a bipartisan approach on border issues which we are in complete agreement and we stand ready, as I have said.

They spoke about the engagement of Ministers and shadowed Ministers responsible for border and national security matters to be formally established. It spoke about a bipartisan process which could be supported by the technical-academic component in the form of an Institute of Border Studies, a strengthen frontier unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to review or consolidate existing institutions where they overlapped. Those recommendations are even more relevant, or just as relevant as they were, and we commit them for approval.

We need to enhance the foreign language capacity of the Ministry's staff. On a personal note - it is not an APNU belief; this is my personal belief - Guyana should be moving towards making Spanish its official second language by the year 2025. We need a long time, but we have to look at the future. As I said, this is my personal opinion, but I hope it will take fruit. We need to initiate a quicker negotiation with CARICOM countries on the possibility of sharing overseas mission, in terms of expenses. The Hon. Minister and His Excellency the President spoke about that when there were the Heads of Mission here last year. I think it was in July. We need to make Guyana...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time has elapse. Could someone ask for an extension?

**Mrs. Backer:** Five minutes Sir. Sir, we need to make Guyana the change...

**Mr. Speaker:** One second Deputy Speaker, the extension has to be made.

**Ms. Ally:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude her presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mrs. Backer:** Sir, had I not told the House my age, I would have called it youthful enthusiasm but at 54 years I cannot claim that.

**Mr. Speaker:** A *senior* moment, it is called.

**Mrs. Backer:** Sir, we need to make Guyana... Why cannot our Minister of Foreign Affairs be the change agent within the council for foreign affairs at CARICOM? We need, Minister, a synchronised foreign policy. Why Guyana cannot become - that is our challenge to the Minister - that change agent on behalf of all the people of Guyana?

We need to work inter-Ministry to make sure that the proposal of legislation, which we heard about in the budget, becomes a reality so that people wanting to do trade with Guyana will know where to go. We need to put, Sir, a rational rotation for our Heads of Mission. I am formally now, on behalf of APNU, asking the Hon. Minister to lay in this House a strategic plan for her Ministry. It will be a five-year strategic plan for this most critical and sensitive Ministry in this National Assembly. Lastly, we should seek to conclude arrangements with Suriname to bring an end to the illegal crossing between our countries.

I want to make one reference to something that was said yesterday by the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, "Government developing code of conduct", and he went through a whole thing. We, on APNU side, want to challenge him on one thing, on behalf of his Government, and it is to get the Ministers, individually, to submit to a polygraph test.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I do not know, maybe all of us...

**Mrs. Backer:** Sir, it is just a suggestion. The Guyana Energy Agency, Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) officers... We are suggesting a polygraph test for all Ministers of Government.  
**[Interruption]**

**Mr. Speaker:** I believe all Members will have to subscribe to that.

**Mrs. Backer:** I just want to slip that in before I conclude, because I want to conclude on a very serious note. That is serious, but I want it to be on a non-confrontational note, I should say. We, APNU, have campaigned on a system of government called “shared governance”. I believe, now, that this Government is beginning slowly to recognise the advantages of such a system. Sir, you remarked yesterday that everybody forgot who he or she was as we rushed to help our falling brother. Luckily it was only temporarily a fallen. Why we cannot, in this House, if Mrs. Backer, who people wrongfully say, if I may say, is very confrontational, genuinely say let us work together?

Let us start with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and let us go to the other Ministries - we do not know which Minister we will find if the polygraph test goes through - let us work together, so that together we can move this country, which we love so much, forward.

Sir, I rest my case. Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]:** Let me just assure the Hon. Member that on this side of the House we are ready for the polygraph testing. Just come with us.

It is with a sense of great pride and satisfaction that I stand this afternoon to make my contribution to this debate. Let me, at the outset, congratulate the Hon. Minister Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh and his team for once again remaining consistent and providing to us a people’s budget.

I did not mean it lightly when I said that it is with great pride that I stand to support the budget before us. Guyana does not exist in a vacuum and the global challenges that confront the world today or confront us all today will certainly have an effect to Guyana. We must not dismiss this lightly. As we assess our own progress and indeed the challenges, which we still have to confront, we must look at what is happening around us. In fact, many of us followed the news from around the world and are privy to the difficult times being experienced in several countries. While the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh can stand tall - yes, I can say that - with shoulders upright and present this budget to this House, his colleagues in Cyprus has just resigned. The headlines on Wednesday for instance, of the UK *Guardian* screamed, “Euro zone manufacturing slums worsen”, “Unemployment in Euro areas hits high”, and “UK factory output declines.”



Closer to home, our Caribbean neighbours are also facing dire times as the Hon. Minister of Finance said that the overall growth in the Caribbean in 2012 was less 1% with three economies posting negative growth over that period. Our dear land of Guyana was one of only four CARICOM countries which recorded positive growth. Several of those countries are still in recession. Let me be clear. We do not bask in the unfortunate situations of many of our neighbours. Indeed, we stand in solidarity with them because if we are to make this CARICOM integration work all of our economies need to be strong. However, I think that there are moments when we, as Guyanese, must eschew modesty - Mr. Basil Williams does it a lot, but not for the right reasons - and stop being bashful and speak about our successes and the positive things that are happening in our country. We must do this since traditionally we have been seen as a basket case of this hemisphere for more reasons than one, including man-made disasters that set back our country almost to 25 years.

What is the story today of Guyana? This is what the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) report, titled, *Preliminary Overview of the Caribbean Economies 2012 to 2013*, states:

“Guyana, Belize and Suriname will continue to post substantial growth rates buoyed by the high price in gold and agricultural exports”

In terms of the projection of all the Caribbean countries, Guyana is projected to grow the most this year at 4.9%. The Caribbean is projected to grow at 2.1%. This I believe, if we all put our shoulders to the wheel, we can achieve this. What does it state in terms of tourism? I know that our tourism industry is steadily growing. It states:

“The overall result...”

This is about the Caribbean.

“...is one of a weak performance except for Belize, Suriname and Guyana.”

Guyana had the largest percentage increase of arrivals of 17.9% and the report goes to on to state... I know many of my colleagues on the other side asked about unemployment. The report states:

“Except for Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, unemployment rates are likely to remain elevated for some time within the range in 2012 of being 12 and 20%.”

Guyana, again, features very well here.

Today we are an exception, this time around, for a good reason and our national self-esteem continues to thrive. We have much more to do, but we have gone a far way in restoring self-respect, I believe, in our national psyche. When I say “we” I do not mean the PPP/ Civic only, but all of our Guyanese brothers and sisters who have chosen, as I said before, to put their shoulders to the wheel and in their own way contribute to the development of Guyana - those in the private sector who continue to believe in Guyana and take the necessary risks associated with business; those in our banking sector that have come on board and provided loans to our people so that they can own their own homes and achieve self fulfillment; those in the agricultural sector whom, notwithstanding the erratic weather condition, continue to feed us and provide the necessary foreign exchange; yes, those in the mining sector who travel to the far reaches of our country; the mothers and fathers who send their children to school and the teachers who teach them and those in the public service who everyday come out to work so that the state’s institutions can go on. Of course, I have to say those in the foreign service who keep the flag of Guyana flying high and representing our country abroad.

We are where are today, as a country, doing no small part to the effort of all these people who continue, as Minister Ali said, to believe in the Guyana’s dream and who are determined to make that dream a reality and our country a better place. We are trying to build this Guyana, project Guyana, for us, for our children and for our children’s children. I am one of those who subscribed to the view that if our country is to progress, at the rate we would like it to progress, two things must be in place: good education and good infrastructure.

With an educated population we can move mountains. With the necessary infrastructure we can facilitate investments, trade, tourism, so that our people can have more jobs and that we will be able to generate wealth and ultimately improve the lives of all of our people. This is project Guyana and this is what we believe in, on this side of the House, and what we have been doing about it. As we speak in the National Assembly we should not miss the different pieces of the puzzle that come together to form this whole Guyana that we would like to see.

When we talk about the expansion of the new airport, at Timehri, we are talking about making Guyana a hub of the bridge between South America, the Caribbean, North America and Africa as well. We are talking about south-south cooperation. It is not only with the airport, at Timehri, but look at what is happening at Ogle. I am advised now that there are plans... Well, I have seen it, the lining up at that airport to depart now. It has never been like that before. Again, this is because of the people, all of us, who believe in moving Guyana forward.

Much has been said about the Marriott Hotel, but let me say this, right now, Guyana cannot host a major international meeting because it does not have all of the accommodation required. That is the truth. It needs to provide adequate facilities. There are a lot of smaller hotels. There are two bigger ones, but it still needs to have better and bigger facilities as well. I think we need to see this also as a part of that bigger of the puzzle of shaping the Guyana we want.

We are in discussion, and the Hon. Member Mrs. Backer spoke about this, with the working group on infrastructure, which is a technical working group, comprising of persons of state agencies from Brazil and Guyana. Yesterday, there was its second meeting here in Guyana, and what is it doing? It is discussing infrastructure projects that will be executed by Guyana and Brazil, namely the road from Linden to Lethem, hydroelectric and also the port that we hopefully would be having on the coast.

*2.19 p.m.*

Mr. Speaker, they are working on the proposals to submit to the two Presidents in June. I can say that these discussions are going very well. We are hoping that in the not so distant future this would be one of the biggest initiatives between two countries in South America. Again, this is about improving the infrastructure of our country, Guyana.

Minister Ali spoke about the competitiveness and what we are trying to do in terms of making it easier for people to do business in Guyana. This is another piece of that puzzle again.

The Low Carbon Development Strategy: as we move forward with these developmental projects, we must be able to create that balance between sustainable use of our environment and also realising the development of our country. The two, I believe, are not necessarily incompatible.

We are, right now, at the level of CARICOM, negotiating a trade agreement with Canada. Even as we wait for that agreement to be finalised, Guyana and Canada will be signing an investment treaty, because we have a lot of Canadian investments here. Also, our people from Guyana export gold to Canada; over 90% of our export to Canada is gold. We have to start preparing ourselves for even more business with that country.

I would like to say to the Opposition that these are all positive things. The Opposition has every right to provide constructive criticism but speaking about the positive things would not make Members disloyal to their party. In fact, if members only carry bad news, the people would ask, “What are you doing?” I think we need to recognise that there are good things happening as well.

In terms of Suriname - and I speak here about the relations with our immediate neighbours - Mrs. Backer, the Hon. Member, reminded about the presentations last year on the border crossings. We are ready to move with this issue. You would recognise that it would have to be done on both sides at the same time for it to work. So, we have begun those discussions with Suriname and hopefully we would be able to move forward with those discussions this year and hopefully implement that later in the year. Like I said, both sides would have to do it at the same time.

Mrs. Backer also mentioned, briefly, I think, about the Border Commission. I am pleased to let this House know that the Border Commission will start its work shortly. We have identified one of our seasoned diplomats, Ambassador Rudolph Collins, to head that Commission on our side. The first meeting should be taking place very soon.

I spoke last year about the decision by both countries to bridge the Corentyne River. We have since written to the IDB to conduct a feasibility study, and we have received a positive response. So, those things are moving.

In terms of Venezuela, we were all saddened by the death of President Hugo Chavez Frias, a true integrationist and a champion of the poor and the vulnerable. I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that our relations with Venezuela, under President Maduro, would continue to flourish. Of course, it is sensible to ensure that we cater for any eventuality. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I can tell you that we have been discussing this but, based on the relations over the last 12 years with Venezuela, like I said, I have every reason to be confident. Let me say this,

Guyana is willing to work with any Government of Venezuela for the advancement of the two peoples.

The Minister of Finance mentioned that we have benefited tremendously from the sale of rice and paddy to Venezuela and we are hoping to conclude, very shortly, a new agreement for the sale of additional rice and paddy. We will continue to work on other cooperation initiatives.

Minister Webster spoke about the opening of a homeless shelter here in Guyana. I am pleased to say that we received close to US\$2 million from the Venezuelan Government to complete that shelter. Very soon that will be opened.

In terms of Brazil, I just mentioned that the main thing we are working on right now is on these infrastructural projects. All our efforts are placed there right now, but we continue to cooperate with Brazil in other regional bodies as well.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) would always be part of my presentation in this National Assembly as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Minister Ashni Singh, in his presentation, reiterated Guyana's commitment to CARICOM. I am well aware of the criticisms of CARICOM. At 40 years, I think people expected that we would have been much further in the CARICOM project. I think that our founding leaders' aspirations were great. I do not think that their aspirations are unattainable, but I think all of us in CARICOM have to continue to put our political will where our mouths are. We hear all the time about commitments, but not necessarily the matching actions. Fortunately, if you take the scorecard of CARICOM, Guyana leads in terms of meeting its obligations under the Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Hon. Backer spoke about foreign policy cooperation. I would like to say a few words about this in terms of CARICOM. Let me let the Hon. Member know that there are several initiatives that Guyana brought to the coffer, in terms of foreign policy coordination. For example, this honourable House would be aware that the European Union (EU) was seeking a special status in the United Nations (UN) and it moved forward with that without consulting any of us. As an integration movement, we were concerned. Guyana asked CARICOM to look at this very carefully because Guyana believes that, we at minimum, it should be consulted. That resulted in a discussion with the EU. Our ambassadors in New York worked very hard and, at the end of the

day, we had a resolution that we all could have agreed with. That was one time when CARICOM, I think except for one, stood together.

In recent times, we have had some mixed signals. Some members said that foreign policy coordination does not mean unanimity. In other words, we could have different positions, but we should inform each other about our different positions. I and Guyana, like the Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, believe that if we hold together we would be able to benefit more and make a greater impact.

We are working on this on the Palestinian issue. All but, I think, two member states had some issues and we were able to – I should have said that the other way around... We should have been able to have a single position. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

On the issue of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, in CARICOM we had a united position in the sense that we called for dialogue at the Organization of American States (OAS). In fact, we were in the forefront of asking for the representative of the United Kingdom (UK) at that OAS meeting in Cochabamba to be able to make a presentation, which he did. However, the members of CARICOM were very clear that there were positions by Guyana and Suriname. And I would like to remind this House that these are not positions only from now. The issue of the Malvinas and the position of Guyana have been there since before I was born. We have ensured that we checked all the documents that we have, but let me say this: the one time that we found that we were not supportive of force being used, but were supportive of the Argentinians, let me say very clearly that Guyana's position is that. [**Mrs. Backer:** What?] It is that, very clear. We support Argentina. We have no apologies to make. We support Argentina in this cause. I want to make that very clear. We are not going to wobble on this. That has been reiterated in the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC); it is there.

I also want to say that in terms of the CELAC, Cuba has taken the presidency of CELAC from this year and Guyana congratulates Cuba on that achievement. This is very significant. This hemisphere is changing and, I think, we need to be in touch with that change. We know that Cuba is going to do a superb job during the next year in bringing Latin America and the Caribbean together. After all, Cuba's cooperation programmes span the hemisphere.

In terms of the OAS - the Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, spoke of the OAS - Guyana and the Government have every right to update the OAS on what is taking place in Guyana. The Human Rights Commission cannot make a statement without asking the Government what its position is. That is clear. The Commission has accepted that position that whatever it wanted to say about the Linden situation, it should have gone through the necessary procedures and inform the Government of Guyana. It did not do that. [Mrs. Backer: Owwww! Mmmm!] If you were sitting here, you would have had issues with that too.

We believe in the OAS and we believe that it has a special place in this hemisphere. For this reason, we have put forward the candidacy of Ambassador Bayney Karran for the position of Assistant Secretary General. We are hoping that Guyana will be successful.

We have had quite a lot of important things happening for Guyana at the level of the UN. You would be aware that we were elected as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee, which is the second committee of the UN General Assembly. Guyana's mission has been doing our country proud at that level. In fact, some of the bigger countries have been asking how small countries like us manage, given the resources at our disposal - as small states.

We have also been elected to the vice presidency of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We share responsibility for facilitating inter-governmental oversight and leadership of the work of this premier international institution. We were also elected vice presidency of the Second Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We have successfully concluded and adopted...an important part of the outcome document of that conference is the 2013 – 2018 work plan. Guyana played a major role there. Yes, the Arms Trade Treaty, CARICOM played a major role in that and Guyana was part of that as well.

In terms of the reform of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Guyana was appointed, along with Belgium, to serve as co-facilitators of this process. President Ramotar was one of ten member state champions appointed by the Secretary General of the UN to the Global Education First Initiative.

Closer to home, in the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), we had our own Sharon Austin who worked as State Project Coordinator at the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs installed as the Coordinator of Indigenous Affairs within the Amazon Cooperation Treaty

Organization. We had our former President, the former President Jagdeo, being appointed as Chairman of the Global Green Growth Institute, and, recently, he was among three former Heads of Government, along with former President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President *Fernández* of the Dominican Republic, appointed by the Secretary General of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of States to the Eminent Persons Group, looking at the future of the ACP.

Our own Ambassador, Patrick Gomes, in Brussels has been appointed to lead the Ambassadorial Group of the ACP, looking at future perspectives of the ACP. These are all very important appointments. Sometimes we do not sing our songs very loudly in foreign policy, but these have been all very important developments for us.

I would like to speak on the Diaspora Project. We have launched it, and let me say that this Diaspora Project is not about saying, "People living abroad, you must come back." If that is their choice, they will. It is mapping the skills that are out there so that we could then know the interests and skills, and what they are interested in, so that we can develop policies here in Guyana. It is a very important part of development now - the Diaspora - and we want to ensure that it is included in our development. Already, we have had more than 500 persons filling their complete survey. Another 1,700 persons were filling it, but not complete; we are assessing that right now.

Before I conclude my presentation, I want to speak in my capacity as the Member of Parliament of Region 9. I listened to the Hon. Member, Mr. Sidney Allicock, and, for a moment, I had to check whether it was he whom I was listening to. I just want to move directly to some of the things that he said that are not facts.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, before you do so, it would be a good time to take an extension.

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** Mr. Speaker, I propose that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member spoke about a number of communities being identified for teachers' quarters. He indicated that of the list submitted, the number one priority, Taushida, was struck out and, instead, the Minister of Finance inserted Sand Creek, a



stronghold of the PPP, to use his words. The whole Rupununi is a stronghold of the PPP so... The fact of the matter is this: Taushida had teachers' quarters built in 2011. So, a request was not made for teachers' quarters. So, that is the first – how do we say it – untruth.

Secondly, he said that Sand Creek was inserted; it was not requested. Mr. Speaker, they asked for Sand Creek to be included because this Government just built a brand new secondary school there. Already, we have teachers' quarters there but we want to make sure that the principal of that school is comfortable so we have included, in this year's Budget, quarters for the head teacher of Sand Creek.

The Hon. Member also spoke of the Amerindian land issues. He said here - and I would like to repeat what he said about that particular matter - "Today, after some 40 years of the passing of the Hon. Steven Campbell, who fought for the rights of Indigenous people, we are still here not settling these issues." The paragraph before that said, "We need to always be sensitive to the cries of the Indigenous people as it relates to land demarcation and extension. It is imperative that we do so failing which Guyana..."

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, have you been able to access the transcript already?

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** I have it, yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** You are doing better than us here in the Parliament Office.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** Mr. Speaker, we are very efficient on this side of the House. This is our transcript. This is not from the Parliament Office, Mr. Speaker; we did our own. [**Mrs. Backer:** Well that is not authentic.] I wrote, too, when the Hon. Member was speaking.

What is the story of land? Let me zoom into the Rupununi, because Region 9 is actually what we were talking about. One of the first communities to receive extensions in Region 9 was Annai, where the Hon. Member is from. That land was increased to over 300 square miles. In fact, it is double the size of Barbados - the first community in the set. Not only Annai, we have titled Katoka, Parikwarunau, Fairview, Apoteri, Rewa, Crash Water, and we have extended Yakarinta, and Massara. I am only mentioning Region 9. The truth is that we have moved the percentage of land owned by Amerindians from 6.5 per cent to 14 per cent. In fact, it is more. Minister Sukhai will speak about some of the additional ones that we have included.

The one part that really bothered me, which the Hon. Member said, was that the Garden of Eden surely must have been located in this magnificent region, but the lack of vision, will, skill, prudent management and, he went on to say, some other things, have combined to render the Rupununi one of the most backward places in the entire Caribbean. If there was a chance for the Hon. Member to withdraw that, I would ask him to do so. This is the story of Region 9. The Regional Chairman, the REO and the Vice Chairman are all born Rupununians. The medical doctor at Annai, Dr. Joseph Torres, was born in the Rupununi. The Electrical Engineer responsible for the Lethem Power Company, Mr. Silverious Perry, is a graduate trained by this Government, born in the Rupununi. Renita Casimero, Jason Johnny and Natasha Torres are all Cuban graduates, working in that region in senior positions, who were born there. Is Mr. Allicock saying that they do not have the vision, will and skill? No, he cannot be saying that.

He then spoke about the miniscule number of persons of Region 9 being able to attain higher education - the miniscule number. The list is too long for me to call out all the names, but let me call some of them. These are the ones who are in Cuba: Natasha Abraham, Melissa Phillips, Illona Spencer, Shellon Hamilton, Bernadine Foo, Teresa Mansingh, Raline Abraham, Gellisa D'Aguiar, Alex D'Aguiar - all right now in Cuba completing their degrees. We have an additional 25 students who are studying at the University of Guyana.

In the last five years, in education only, 95 teachers were trained from Region 9 and are in Region 9. What is the story of the backward place that was spoken about? [**Ms. Ally:** Where are they?] They are in Region 9.

**Mr. Speaker:** I would like to hear the Minister please.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** In the last eight years, this same “backward region” that the Member spoke about, of the Hinterland Regions, Region 9 led the number of scholars – these are people who wrote and passed exams. Region 9 led the Hinterland Regions in children being admitted under scholarship programmes. It presently has 77 right now under the programme.

Mr. Allicock would have done Region 9 proud if he had come here to say that we have these issues, but our region is moving. The Hon. Member, Mrs. Backer, just said that Lethem is a growing town, doing well. That is not backward.

I would like to end by saying this. There is a saying that goes, *if you do not tell the truth, somebody will tell it for you*. I just did.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Hon. Members, I invite the Hon. Member, Dr. Veerasammy Ramayya, to address us. Dr. Ramayya, before you proceed, we, again, collectively, as we did last week, express our condolences on the recent passing of your beloved wife. We offer our sympathy.

**Dr. Ramayya:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Kindly allow me to say thank you to you and all the Members of this National Assembly, especially my AFC colleagues, who have given me comfort during my recent bereavement.

I have read the Budget presentation and have followed the debate...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, give me one second please. I have omitted to mention that visiting us this afternoon is former Senior Government Minister, Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, a man who knows all of the ten Regions of Guyana intimately. Welcome, Sir. Are you leaving to come back? You are always welcomed. Thank you for visiting.

Proceed, Dr. Ramayya.

**Dr. Ramayya:** I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will grant me the extra two minutes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Of course.

**Dr. Ramayya:** I have read the budget presentation and followed the debate in the media. I say that as a Parliamentarian from Berbice, we are disappointed with this 2013 National Budget.

We note that Government is giving \$300 million subsidy to the Demerara Harbour Bridge in keeping it afloat and to keep the toll as low as \$100, which we support, but Berbicians and others using the Bridge continue to pay a minimum of \$2,200 as not a cent was set aside for a subsidy to bring down the toll.

Sugar workers, most of who work or live in Berbice, have been offered no relief. They are expecting ten per cent wage increase but they have to wait longer. Old age pensioners also have to wait, perhaps for the next five years, for the expected \$15,000 monthly.

2.49 p.m.

I share the views of Member of Parliament (MP) Jennifer Wade, from West Berbice, Region 5, that our regions are important for the agricultural progress of Guyana, yet they get substandard treatment. In Adelphi, Canje, just February gone, sugar workers brought me two bottles of water which were as red as blood. They have to drink this water, whilst the Minister boasts of safe, potable water in Guyana.

It is clear that the Budget is rendered meaningless as Guyanese do not get worth for money. For this reason, I cannot see how this House can pass the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure in its current form without adjustments to ensure better use of taxpayers' moneys.

Berbice is the Ancient County, but it is also an agonised County. We face blackouts, high unemployment, mass exodus of our best minds, drug and alcohol abuse, high crime rates, et cetera.

With regards to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the greatest failure in the Ministry of Home Affairs is that our people continue to feel fear and suffer violence as part of the general insecurity in Guyana. This Government pumped over GUY\$16 billion into the security sector in 2012 and, yet, 137 people were murdered.

In addition, there were 3,777 reports of serious crimes. That is a serious crime every two days. The Police reported that in 2012, there was a 21 per cent increase in robbery under arms. The source from which I quote is the *Kaieteur News*.

The more money that is put into the Ministry, the worse the crime record is. Criminals have taken law abiding citizens as hostages but we continue to throw good money after a malfunctioning security system with a discredited Ministry of Home Affairs. Does this make sense? I ask this honourable House.

No wonder the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) is without many friends among the working class in Berbice and elsewhere. Sugar workers at Bath on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, came out on the road to block the entourage of President Ramotar as he was heading from Babu John. They called for the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU) to go.

Less than a year ago, a robbery happened on Bengal Farm in Berbice and all of the phones for several Corentyne police stations remained engaged throughout the robbery, which lasted for over half an hour. When the family which was robbed finally got through to the Number 62 Toll Station police outpost, they were referred to Springlands Police Station. The Springlands Police Station then referred them to Whim Police Station. The Whim Police Station then referred them to New Amsterdam Police Station. This is a shame. This is only one example of the "royal push around" even whilst GUY\$16 billion was spent on the security sector in 2012. Long after the robbers were gone – some 45 minutes after the incident – the police arrived.

The Minister of Home Affairs has not offered any kind of effective leadership to the men and women in uniform but wants to come here year after year and collect more billions of dollars.

In layman's terms, for us to make progress with this National Budget on this allocation for security, the Minister must go.

This National Security Strategy must be crafted not only by experts, but with the experiences of the ordinary people like that family from Bengal Farm. No security strategy can work until and unless those people are served.

Once Mr. Rohee remains on top of this structure, the Security Strategy will fail, our \$17 billion will be squandered and wasted and we will no longer be better off. What was Mr. Rohee doing five years ago that distracted him from the National Security Strategy? Did he just wake up? Why only today?

From the first day he became the Minister of Home Affairs Minister, he should have been strategising, working to improve professionalism in the security forces, working to enhance the safety of our communities and, generally, should have been in the forefront of ensuring we have better public safety in the land of Guyana.

We, in the Alliance For Change (AFC), stand prepared to work constructively with a capable Minister of Home Affairs to reform and execute a five-year Strategic Plan for the security sector of this country. We, in the AFC, stand ready to work with a capable Minister of Home Affairs to operationalise an Integrated Crime Information System. We, in the AFC, stand ready to work with a capable Minister of Home Affairs to operationalise the Forensic Laboratory. We, in the AFC, stand ready to work with a capable Minister of Home Affairs to provide air and sea capacity to fight the pirates who continue to terrorise our fishermen, especially those in the Corentyne. We, in the AFC, stand ready to work with a capable Minister of Home Affairs to professionalise the Police Force and empower the Community Policing Groups (CPGs) to combat the criminals. But, we cannot, with a clear conscience, be aware of the failings of this Minister and still put \$17 billion in his disposal.

The Police Commissioner and the Police: We, in the AFC, want a substantive Commissioner of Police: not another Amitabh Bachchan or Clint Eastwood. This Government continues to micromanage and disrespect the Police Force by keeping “actors” in place for so long. This disrespect for our men and women in uniform must end.

Leadership is needed to stamp out the ‘fried rice tax’ that is extracted from drivers by some rank. Leadership is needed to stamp out rogue cops who rob miners and beat the wives and children of hand-working porkknockers. Leadership is needed to fight criminal practices in the security Forces themselves, like the destruction of firearms issuance book to hide fraud and collusion in armed crimes.

More importantly, security ranks should be freed from starvation wage which this PPP/C Government gives them year after year. We are only condemning our ranks to a life of beggary, extortion, crime and uncertainty.

We could have made a good investment in our national security by giving, in the 2013 Budget, an across-the-board wage increase of ten per cent. This should be our offer, also, to others in the public service.

At the same time, we must reform the Police Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to weed out torture as a method of police work. Have we already forgotten the 16 year-old boy whose

testicles were burnt? Have we forgotten police rebels in uniform who were caught on tape beating a child and his mother in the Marudi Mountains?

Region 6: In 2010, when Mr. Maxwell Semple, the President of the East Bank Berbice Hire Car Drivers Association, held a protest against the condition of the East Bank Berbice main road, the Government of Guyana became fully aware of the need for urgent action to bring relief to the 15,000 plus people who needed this vital road link as a transportation lifeline. Since then, it has been one excuse after another. Still, three years after, there is no relief for the people in Berbice.

Is this the action of a caring and fit Government which has billions for a banana republic project like the Marriott Hotel, Kingston, in the middle of the garbage city, but no money for the vital road link?

In 2012, Mr. Peter Ramos and his wife, Rose, appealed to President Ramotar, whilst he was on his way to Plantation Highbury, for help. A promise was made, but never kept.

This Government has billions to support a Ponzi scheme like the Marriott Hotel using 100 per cent Chinese labor, but it has very little money for Guyanese like the Ramos family.

Also, one of the Parliamentarians indicated that I have broken the fence of the Whim Community Centre Ground. That was something that I saw as malicious and stating a lie in this honourable House. It was something that the Regional Chairman had given permission for.

I want to say that the evidence will unfold itself in this House to show that this Government, because I am living in Whim, used this as a vote getting method. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, and this House that the work started at my expense. The Government only provided the hymac to start the work and to do the digging. For three years, I want this House to know, no cricket was played and there is no cricket pitch as the Parliamentarian indicated.

This is the result of my hard work. I will tell you that that is what brought this Government to a minority Government. It was because of my effort in Berbice. We have a new dispensation in this country because I am an honest citizen of Berbice, I have done my homework and I have proven to those very people that the truth will prevail and the truth has prevailed today because the Government is the minority in this House.

Skeldon Factory: The state of the Skeldon Sugar Factory is quite distressing to me as a Berbician. After spending more than GUY\$40 billion on a factory rated to process 350 tonnes of cane per hour, this factory is only producing at 56 per cent of its capacity. Did we pay the Chinese contractor 56 per cent of the money? We should ask ourselves this question. Apparently not, since the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Ramsammy, clearly stated in a *Stabroek News* article that the Chinese “have delivered what was in the contract”. Well, apparently, we paid too much money – the other 44 per cent. How much more delusional can we get? I ask this honourable House.

The Chinese contractor delivered what was in the contract. We paid over GUY\$40 billion for \$25 billion or 56 per cent of the factory. I want to repeat that: we paid over GUY\$40 billion for \$25 billion or 56 per cent of the factory; we did not pay for 100 per cent. So, the factory is producing at 56 per cent today. Where has the \$15 billion gone? We can ask that question. This is the reality in this country since, from all appearances and the Minister’s own confession in the press, the Chinese contractor got paid 100 per cent of the money to give us 56 per cent of a *white elephant*. And this Government has the audacity to come here in this House and ask for how much - \$208 billion. How about if we give them 56 per cent of this sum? This is the question. We must pay for what we are getting and this House...

Today, we have to pay more billions, finally, to the real professionals from South Africa to correct the flaws of the apprentice company that built the Skeldon Sugar Factory.

Berbice River Bridge: I come back to this matter. The AFC noted that in this budget, some \$300 million is provided as a subsidy to the Demerara Harbour Bridge to repair the pontoons and so on. While we fully support this subsidy to the Demerara Harbour Bridge to keep the toll down, we, in the AFC, must object to the high tolls to travel on the Berbice River Bridge.

We demand that \$150 million be voted in this Budget for the Berbice Bridge, thus reducing the toll for public minibuses and hire cars. This Government continues to give billions of dollars in contracts to its business friends, many of whom get billions of dollars without any competition in sole sourced contracts, but this uncaring and heartless PPP/C Government has no money to help the poorer class of people who have to cross the Berbice Bridge. Utterly merciless is this



political gang which controls the PPP/C these days. We, in the AFC, demand a subvention to be paid to the operators of the Bridge to bring relief to the people, especially Berbicians.

The AFC rejects this tendency of the Minister of Finance to continually blame the workers on the sugar belt for the state of the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo). He must get his facts right. It is the politically appointed directorates and those who saddled the industry with the apprentice Chinese builders who are responsible for the state of the industry today.

It is time to call them out. It was the Jagdeo regime and the GuySuCo Board, on which President Ramotar sat, which chose the apprentice Chinese contractor who built a *white elephant* that is the biggest threat to the industry today in Guyana.

Sugar workers are demotivated by the mass mentality of the top executive in the industry and the failure of the recognised Union to bring greater fairness and equity to their labour relations plight.

We call on GAWU to understand whom it serves. It is the workers and not the Office of the President (OP). Sugar workers have been calling for a new union, but the AFC advised them to struggle in their own Union and to demand better representation. We hope GAWU is taking note of the mood in the sugar belt, currently, where workers have to cut four beds of cane for one punt of sugarcane. Slavery has come back to this country in the sugar industry.

Cane-cutters are returning to slavery. They are asked to cut more beds to make a day's wage. They are asked to cut young canes and short canes. They are asked to work not 5, but 6 days a week. What has happened to the gains of 40 hours per week?

In the sugar belt, there are groups of young, jobless people. Yet, this Government finds work for people from other countries to work on projects such as the Marriott Hotel where 100 per cent of the workforce is from China. This is an anti-working class strategic move. It is an anti human development strategic move. It is anti-Guyanese. It discriminates against our own people.

Let me be clear. We welcome people of all nations into Guyana to work on any project but they must compete with Guyanese for the job and only if there is no Guyanese qualified for the role, then it can be offered to a foreigner. We have people in this country who can turn spades, fetch

bricks and who can work. Why is it that our people are jobless? The old people say that *charity begins at home*.

In truth, this 2013 Budget has little for the working poor, the unemployed and the vulnerable.

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

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Speaker, I ask for five minutes for the Member to conclude.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Ramayya:** This 2013 Budget has little for the mothers of Guyana, those at the bottom of the feeding chain in the sugar belt, and very little for Berbicians. In fact, this 2013 Budget, in its current form, does not deserve support from me as a Guyanese first and politician after.

The real danger if we, in the AFC, support this 2013 Budget...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is an entire, separate debate going on. It is not fair to the Member who has come and is trying to make his presentation, and there is another debate going on.

**Dr. Ramayya:** The real danger if we, in the AFC, support this 2013 Budget in the current form, as presented by the Minister, is that more billions will have to be borrowed in the name of the children of Guyana to fund many ill-conceived projects.

By the end of this Tenth Parliament, we are confident that the Guyanese people will pay back this PPP/C Government the favour it has done to them in leaving them jobless and exposed to oppression. They will be out but it would take many, many years to settle the unjustifiable new debts in the name of the future generation, and to rebuild this beautiful Guyana. We need to dream and to dream big. We must see that those who plunder the Treasury, give away contracts, sell out our airwaves, take bribes, forfeit the best lands, and are otherwise corrupt, are given justice.

For a start, we should not feed the appetite of this regime. We have to trim this Budget of excesses, and channel more money to the workers and pensioners. Therefore, we have to put the checks and balance in place today.

This Budget lacks vision. It is heavy on words and weak on delivery. This Budget lacks a conscience. This Budget does not address the main issues of job creation and a better life for our people.

As the last speaker said, *“If you do not tell the truth, somebody will tell it for you.”* For my Berbician Parliamentarians, who came to this honourable House and gave a misrepresentation of the reality of the situation, I want to repeat what the last speaker said. *“If you do not tell the truth, somebody will tell it for you.”* And that is a burden on that individual.

Thank you very much. [Applause]

**Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai]:** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to add my compliments to the Hon. Ashni Kumar Singh and the team from the Ministry of Finance for achieving, once again, the goal of presenting to the National Assembly Budget 2013.

The Budget theme, *“Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana”*, is reflective of the approach needed to attain the Guyanese dream. The allocation of \$208.8 billion targets improvement in all sectors and it also scores very highly when it comes to the welfare and development of Amerindians, while, at the same time, the Budget sets realistic projections for growth and development which is required to sustain a better life for our nation.

The state of affairs of Indigenous peoples in the world today reflects advancements in certain respects of human rights and development and, on the other side, it also notes the challenges yet to be overcome.

The incremental increases in our national income and the prudent management of the economy have resulted in positive growth rates, thereby enabling the People’s Progressive Party/Civic Government in solidifying efforts and measures aimed at alleviating existing vulnerabilities and expanding our achievements.

I feel proud of Guyana’s Constitution, the highest law of our land, which makes provision for Indigenous people to be empowered. Guyana sets the pace for inclusion and participation of Amerindians in many policy-making bodies, reinforcing the basic tenets of non-discrimination against Indigenous peoples.

*3.19 p.m.*

As we speak of Indigenous people's representatives playing a role in their development, I noted the Hon. Dawn Hastings' expressed opinion that the National Toshias Council (NTC) is not independent, justifying this by pointing out that it is housed at the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and does not have independent funding.

This Government recognises the profound role for the NTC. We recognise that this Council of elected leaders is working to strengthen the structure and build capacity to carry out its functions, we are aware, as a Government, that the village councils are still not paying up their subscription rates while the NTC too have not been able to mobilise funding through fundraising which is very minimal at the moment. With this being the case, the Government of Guyana makes an annual contribution to the NTC for its operational expenses and exerts no power or pressure on the NTC or its membership.

Government support to indigenous organisations and institutions is nothing new. The Government today provides funding to the operation of a constitutionally established rights commission with objectives to examine complaints of infringements of the law and rights related to Indigenous people. A criticism was made in this House about the Indigenous People's Commission (IPC) of not addressing the rights of Amerindians and not doing anything about it. Mr. Speaker, you are well aware that they have presented to you their annual reports since the establishment of the IPC, a mere two years ago.

Annually, this Government also financially supports the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB) and the Bina Hill Institute through the National Budget which allocates \$6 million towards the operational costs of this Indigenous institution. And just to mention that in 2011 and 2012, the Government of Guyana was the largest contributor to the Bina Hill Institute and the NRDDB paying in excess of \$21 million - the Hon. Sydney Allicock is fully aware of this - of which more than 80% of that \$21 million goes to salaries of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NRDDB, the Principal of the Bina Hill Institute, tutors and support staff.

Notwithstanding such generous contribution from the Government, I see it as an investment in the strengthening of Indigenous institutions and bodies led by Amerindians which, will, in the future be effective to carry out and continue the facilitation and empowerment of Amerindians,

making them objective bodies and institutions that will act in the best interest of the constituency for which they have been selected to lead.

The People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government continues to provide greater political space for Indigenous people. The Cabinet and the Parliament all speak for itself. For in this August House are seated Indigenous representatives exercising rights to bring to bear the calling of the Amerindian constituencies.

The freedom is ours to engage with the people, whether at the village level, with the elected leaders, their institutions or individuals who chose to bring to our attention existing needs that require our support so as to enhance livelihood and to continue the development of their villages.

However, what disturbs me most is the intent of Indigenous representatives in this House to seek to deny financial support for many of the projects slated for funding in the 2013 Budget. Here I specifically refer to Hon. Sydney Allicock who ended his presentation in the following words, and I quote from the transcript:

"Mr. Speaker, I am calling on my colleagues to vote against this apology that we have for a budget."

The Member also reinforced his call by saying:

"I cannot and will not support this document."

How does he expect to see improvements in the sectors he critically reviewed in his presentation? Why would he want to deny the Rupununi - the Amerindians- and the nation at large, governmental funded interventions aimed at complementing the efforts of the people across this nation including the Rupununi?

I suspect that he wanted to create conditions that would justify his utterances that the Rupununi is one of the most backward places in the entire Caribbean. Such are the words coming from an Executive member of Tourism and Hospitality Association of Guyana (THAG), representing Indigenous interests on that body, whose objective should be to work to enhance the tourism product of the Rupununi that will encourage and attract tourists to visit. Instead it appears that

he is working against the objectives of THAG, the objectives of Amerindian development, the Region and Nation at large.

This Government has no problem in putting Indigenous concerns first because we are aware of the difficulties and challenges we have had to face to eliminate the wrongs committed against Guyana's first people, and to eradicate the scars of neglect and marginalisation over the years gone by. And, yes, the People Progressive Party/Civic Government continues to rise to the challenge by making the necessary interventions for Amerindians who deserve to be put on par among all Guyanese.

It is from this premise that I refer to Guyana's consistent track record in addressing Amerindian rights and development. The Government of Guyana continues to commit financial investments in support towards attaining the goals set by village leaders and their communities.

I applaud the allocation provided in the Budget 2013 which offers pro poor measures that will benefit and address existing challenges and remaining gaps faced by Amerindians and hinterland residents.

Whilst many of the Indigenous peoples and minority groups in other countries painstakingly continue to struggle for their right to lands, Guyana can share beyond our borders the rich experiences and achievements in this area.

It is no secret that Guyana has legislated the process of granting lands to Indigenous peoples and the State covered the cost of demarcation. Currently, Guyana has 98 titled villages making Amerindians the largest private land owners in Guyana. This year's Budget provides \$77.9 million to cover expenditure for titling 12 eligible communities. I am only too willing to provide the go ahead to the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) to conduct cadastral surveys for an additional eight titled villages that have approved demarcation of their village boundaries.

The People Progressive Party/Civic Government must be commended for the significant decision to commit from the Guyana REDD+Investment Fund moneys for the Amerindian Land Titling Project (ALT) so as to bring closure to all outstanding titling and demarcation requests which will result in expanded ownership of lands used and occupied by Guyana's first peoples.

On the first day of our debates here on Budget 2013 I noted the concern of the Hon. Member Mr. Bulkan and his call for Guyana to ensure that the hinterland economies are put on a sustainable path. I wish to point out that Region Nos.1, 7, 8 and 9 are mostly referred to as Guyana's hinterland and in these regions the populations are mostly Amerindians. My response will therefore be confined to interventions and initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs in the context of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS).

The LCDS speaks to pursuing a low carbon growth path. Amerindians are awaiting in anticipation funding from GRIF notwithstanding that they have not committed their forests.

The Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) will make available investment funds totaling \$350 million that will capitalise community development projects to be implemented in villages over the coming years.

Of the 166 community approved projects submitted by village councils for funding this year 27 projects in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, services, forestry, mining, processing and infrastructure, will receive a total disbursement of \$135 million.

To give you a snapshot of the villages and the project to be implemented by the Amerindians, I wish to crave your indulgence in citing the villages that are going to be benefited this year. Barabina, Baramita, Hobodia, Kamwatta, Four Miles, Manawarin, Three Brothers, Waikrebi; all these communities, including Kamwatta which is a satellite of Santa Rosa, are located in Region No.1. Bethany, Santa Mission, St. Cuthberts, Maraikobai, Siparuta - a satellite of Orealla, Karrau, Itabac, Paruima; Kurukabaru, Kairisparu, Monkey Mountain, Annai Central, Bashaizon, Massara, Parikwarunau, Ruperti, Rupanau, Yurongperu and Sand Hills. These 27 communities and villages including satellites will stand to benefit in the initial phase of the Amerindian Development Fund Community Development Project.

I also want to use this opportunity to highlight that these projects were formulated by the local villages and were subjected to peer reviews at the meetings of the NTC, including final review by the beneficiary representatives just two weeks ago at the launch of the ADF and Inception Workshop at the Princess Hotel.

This bottom up approach is commendable and diffuses the comments I have heard in this House that consultation is lacking and that the Government dictates to Indigenous people. We should be proud of our village councils and the villagers as they have demonstrated that they are capable of identifying the priorities within their locations and are more committed to take direct ownership and lead in the process of community development.

Another initiative that speaks to sustained economic growth in Indigenous communities is the National Hinterland Secure Livelihood Programme where seven community projects were established and remains relevant for more than 200 farmers living in 15 villages in the Mabaruma sub-region. To date these projects combined have benefitted from allocations totaling \$91 million in the fields of apiculture, aquaculture, cassava processing, pineapple cultivation, ginger processing, crab fattening and a crab oil line of cosmetic products.

Over the last two years, I must admit that the communities encountered technical challenges, in the apiculture, aquaculture and crab fattening initiatives. We are working with the communities to correct and assist in this regard. Unpredictable weather conditions also, over which we have no control, of course, was a major constraining factor.

The Ministry continued to provide support which resulted in pineapple farmers successfully acquiring the renewal of their organic certification from ECOCERT in the latter part of 2012. This is an important requirement for entering the competitive export market for organic products. Later in this year we expect the beginning of process of chunked pineapples that will be exported from the Mabaruma sub-region.

The acquisition of technical support for the apiculture project saw the regrouping of the bees into hives, and this year the farmers will construct the honey processing huts.

Similarly, a cosmetic scientist from the United States of America was engaged to enhance production of a safe value-added cosmetic products line which includes lotions, soaps, and oil from crab wood seeds, increasing the potential for its marketability, both locally and for export. Currently these products can be obtained in selected stores in Georgetown, in the Craft Shop at the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, and several shops in the Region - Kumaka and Mabaruma among other locations.



The Yarakita Cassava Producers have commenced mechanised processing and production of value-added products, meeting the market demands of the Mabaruma sub-region.

The ginger farmers in Arukamai will see the installation of the ginger processing machinery in advance of the harvest later in this year.

Last year's budgetary allocation under this programme also supported the aquaculture project in the sum of \$2.6 million for repairs to the fish ponds destroyed by the floods, and \$1.7 million for the purchase of an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) for monitoring purposes.

This brings me to the Presidential Grants Project which supports economic activities in villages throughout the rural, coastal and hinterland regions. Village Councils continue to build management capacities that support implementation of the small and economic social projects. Available grants for 2010-2011 amounted to \$353.6 million, and of this amount \$262 million has been released to 169 community projects. Under the Presidential Grant Fund funding is provided and made available to 187 villages including their satellites, communities and settlements combined.

I wish to take some time to provide the details on one region, Region No. 8, which I find during the debates has been the most mentioned region thus far.

If we go to Kaibarupai in Region No. 8 we have provided investment funding to the tune of \$6 million. If one visits that community one will see there is a community centre and a rest house which is in operation. One will also see the community village shop which is providing basic services and goods to the community.

Moving to Micobie, one will also see the establishment of their Guest House. The Guest House has already earned \$222,000 in profits. In the same community one will move to the poultry farm. The poultry farm has in its account \$685,000 in profit. In the same community one will be taken to the fuel station, and that small fuel depot is also providing basic services in the provision of fuel to the community.

I could go on to list Monkey Mountain, Kanapang, Kamana, Itabac, Kopinang, Tuseneng, Kato, and Kurukabaru. I am willing to share all these successful presidential grant projects, small as they be, which are existing in communities. Of course, we do not have 100% success. Basically,

we did have a few and I could count them on my fingers, failures in some communities. The failures are caused by highly influential attitudes that are placed as a burden on the backs of Indigenous people. I would like to rest that away from this House. We can deal with the influences that caused a few of our villages not to be careful about the investments and the time they spend to culling their energies to make these projects successful.

Overall, the National Secure Livelihood Programme, the Presidential Grant Fund and the soon to be implemented Community Development Project will cause a transformative and sustained approach to small enterprise development in agriculture, services, forestry, mining, and social and productive community infrastructure in villages that once had little or nothing.

The transformative social and economic shift are most visible already in villages such as Santa Rosa in Region No. 1, Paruima in Region No. 7, Kato in Region No. 8, Woweta and Karasabai in Region No. 9, just to pick the few that immediately on landing one will notice this transformative effect of the investments that communities have been making complemented by the Government of Guyana providing investment funding to these communities.

We must also remember that capacities are being built, skills are acquired and jobs are created. And I wish to salute the village shop attendants, the boat captains, the drivers for mini buses and pick-ups, the tractor operators, guest house attendants, the farmers and even the vaqueros who contributed to the success of the village enterprises.

I must admit that there are specific needs for increased technical support, for agriculture, processing, packaging, tourism and marketing strategies and, of course, governance to consolidate the many emerging economic initiatives in these activities. The Ministry is hopeful that the support component for training will have an impact on strengthening the management capacities and capabilities of the Indigenous peoples to ensure that all the projects are sustainable.

The People's Progressive Party/Civic Government is all too willing to provide the support to partner with the Amerindian leaders to propel forward by making available those investment funds to assist the growth of enterprises, with potential for expansion and sustaining existing initiatives. Sustained economic projects will spearhead the movement towards less dependency,

and as the sectors develop realising the full relevance for community development, income and capacities.

Our task is far from over and we need to maintain the momentum. The comment made by the Hon. Bulkan on Tuesday that hinterland programmes identified in the Budget are not good enough for hinterland development and that Government needs to ensure that hinterland economies are put on a more sustained path, clearly reflect his inattentiveness to the new dispensation that obtains in the many villages, communities and settlements that abound in the hinterland.

I dare the colleagues of the Hon. Member Allicock to vote against Budget 2013. I dare you to vote against Budget 2013, an act that will deny more than 15,000 Amerindian households vital interventions and investment funds aimed at consolidating efforts towards greater productivity, community food security, consistency in product availability and opportunity to market their indigenous products.

Expose your true intentions behind the shouts of concerns for Amerindian development.

I wish to assure this August House that the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government has, within the levels of resources available, continued to progressively direct investments in changing the economic and infrastructural landscape of the hinterland, moving it from a status of a once backwardness in the years gone past to current buoyancy.

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

**Mr. Hinds:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given another 15 minutes to conclude her presentation.

*Question put, question carried*

**Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai:** A lot was already said about education. However, I wish to highlight the increasing access to education by hinterland students. Approximately 30,000 school-age children access nursery, primary and secondary education. This is an unprecedented in the history of Guyana. Students continue to receive substantial support enabling them to enjoy this

basic right even as resident settlement pattern proves to be challenging both to the student and the Government.

Today, Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 can boast of having access to 12 secondary schools over and above the single existing secondary school located in Region No. 9 in 1992.

*3.49 p.m.*

The problems raised in the educational sector by the Hon. Member Allicock were, of course, way out of line and yet the Hon. Ms. Hastings ... *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, allow the Hon. Member to address the House.

**Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai:** Thank you Mr. Speaker for your protection. Today, Region Nos. 1, 7, 8 and 9 can now boast of having access to 12 secondary schools over and above the single one existing in Region No. 9 since 1992. The problems raised in the educational sector by the Hon. Member Allicock were, of course, way out of line and yet the Hon. Ms. Hastings raised real challenges existing in the sectors. I wish to assure that Government's effort to address the need for additional class rooms and dormitory spaces is on the agenda. At Kato, the PPP/C Government has committed \$728 million to establish a State of the Art secondary school. Again, this will be done in the most popularly mentioned region in this House during this debate, Region No. 8.

Transportation needs of our students continue to be a challenge and we continue to address it. Every year both land and water transportation are provided towards improving access to transportation in villages which have an impact on school children, health emergencies and transporting produce. The last three years have seen an investment in the sum of \$23.6 million for water transport and land transport of \$90.6 million investments.

To alleviate the burden of parents in providing uniforms to school children, the School Uniform Distribution Programme benefitted 30,000 Hinterland students, this cost \$76 million and this is a significant sum.

The Hinterland Scholarship Programme now offers for eligible students to be able to attend the secondary school where they have been placed as a result of their achievements. This year

allocation provides \$66 million for the Hinterland Scholarship Programme, benefitting 388 students, an eight percent increase over last year's scholarship numbers.

I am proud to announce that 62 students graduated from the Hinterland scholarship Programme in 2012. Currently, Hinterland scholars are offered a minimum of nine subjects at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations and 80% passes are achieved. I say this is commendable, as it equals the successes of their counterparts in the school that they attend.

The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs continues to grant direct subsidies to students through accommodations, boarding and pocket allowances to hinterland students to facilitate better learning conditions and access to schools that they have worked for and achieved. The impacts of these initiatives in the educational field will no doubt ensure that Amerindians benefit from the Government's investment in human capital.

It would be remiss of me not mention the opportunities to tertiary educational for Amerindian students. My Colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Carolyn Rodrigues provided already, quite a snap shot of what obtains in one single region as it relates to student of Indigenous parentage who benefited from tertiary education.

Whilst the entrepreneurial initiatives in the Villages are taking place, the current focus and continued development of economic infrastructure, such as improved water, provision of electricity and transportation will facilitate better competitiveness for village products.

The road constructions and rehabilitation has been a process in development and the PPP/Civic Government has been endeavouring to continuously undertake. The \$2 billion Hinterland Road Programme for upgrading the main roads network will see the central connection of Linden to Lethem improved; Lethem to Aishalton extended into Region No.8 and Region No.9 into the North and South Pakarimas. I beg that the Member, who asked when, should take a visit to these areas and speak to Minister Benn on these matters.

Infrastructure is a positive indicator of development. The hinterlands' topography and geographical location makes it difficult for transportation and communication. However, with the continued intervention on Amerindian development impacts on the following and we are not afraid to mention.

The Hinterland Solar Electrification Programme has taken off successfully. The Ministry collaborated with the Office of the Prime Minister for the distribution of solar panels to Amerindian villages. A total of 10,858 solar panels were distributed during this second phase. A question was asked sometime on Tuesday in this House on how the solar panel units are distributed and if they are working. I open an invitation to those who asked the question. When you take a sojourn into the Hinterland, you will enjoy the evening, as each house in the villages that have received such panels, light up as the evening comes in. It is a sight to see whereby today, when it was farfetched for our Indigenous population to ever consider owning a solar panel or enjoying lights in their homes, it is a reality today.

Investing in the people's health – the truth of the matter is that the Ministry which oversees the Ministry's hostel has accommodated, last year, 1,229 patients. This is still a concern with our Government. Therefore, I wish to assure this House that the allocation provided to provide such a service has been well spent. Today, we have introduced various protocols for the operation of that hostel. I wish to say that today, while the numbers have remain high it is not all patients included in that number because today we still cater for patients' relative to accompany them to assist during the time when they are out of hospital and when they need very soft caring from their families.

Cultural and Heritage is also a focus of this Government. This year we will once more be showcasing Amerindian Heritage in its splendour. We have over the years moved this event to one that now is much an attraction to all Guyanese. While it may be one of the main events that highlight Indigenous culture, it is an event that brings to life in this Nation the recognition that Indigenous people is a focus in our country. Many countries do not afford their Indigenous people such an opportunity to showcase their culture, heritage nor tradition.

Our Welfare Services also provide great assistance to communities and residence, which over the years were not able to access any form of opportunity to register themselves, but with the advent of our Government, this registration for birth certificates has been a great challenge.

While I rush the ending of my presentation because I realise the time is going, I want to say that we have completed, over the 20 years that we have been in Government, more than 30,000 birth certificates for Amerindians. A poor legacy left by the proceeding Government which our

Government has had to address. If in the time of the Opposition they could not even afford the basic opportunity and courtesy to Indigenous people to provide them with a document of identity, then that tells a sad story on their part.

I end here by saying to my colleagues on this side that we will stand firm and that we will provide the support to the Minister of Finance to channel this budget that obtains in this House today for the benefit of our Nation so that our Guyanese people can start to live the Guyanese dream, which my colleague, Irfaan Ali has so very well put to this House.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister thank you for your presentation. Members, it is exactly 4 o'clock according to my watch and so we will take the suspension for one hour.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

By way of Announcements:

### **Wake for former Minister of Education Dr. Dale Bisnauth**

- (1) More information will be forthcoming, but there will be a wake, for those who will be interested, for the former Minister of Education, Dr. Bisnauth on Sunday evening at the Umana Yana. That way it can be hosted by the Ministry of Education and those under his charge formerly. I believe information as to the funeral and so forth will be provided. The Clerk may advise whether or not we may have something here and in what involvement we will have, if any at all, if not we coordinate it with the family.

### **Sharing the responsibilities of presiding over the National Assembly**

- (2) As part of the arrangements between the Deputy Speaker and I for the sharing of the responsibilities of presiding over the National Assembly, the Deputy Speaker will be presiding after the recess and we will be working out some of the days when she will be presiding as well.

Thank you very much.

*Sitting suspended at 4.05 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 5.25 p.m.*

*[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Members, I would just like to apologise for the delay. The Business Committee of the Committee of Supply had a somewhat extended meeting as we tried to sort out some matters. I believe that the next speaker is Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon. I now invite him to proceed.

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** Thank you very much Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, your accession to office as Speaker this afternoon would have caused some significant changes in my presentation, since I was prepared to address Mr. Speaker. Be that as it may, I rise to make my contribution to this 2013 Budget Debate. A budget presented by Dr. Ashni Singh on behalf of the PPP/C Administration.

I have heard a Hon. Member on the other side of the aisle state that the Opposition has failed to pinpoint weaknesses in the budget and that no strong criticisms of any of the measures have been made. This has been the fundamental problem of the PPP/C over the last two decades, they have not been listening. The people spoke in 2011 and they are still not listening.

This budget enjoins us to overcome challenges together while accelerating gains for Guyana. In terms of a theme, in my respectful view, it represents a departure from the previous themes of *Remaining on Course, Staying steadfastly on course* and so on, which course, of course, went off the way a long time ago.

This year we are told by the Dream Weaver to share the dream of the PPP/C for another five years. This dream is 21 years too late and the Guyanese people will not wait another day beyond the next election to say to the PPP/C Government that they have to deal with reality. The reality is that unemployment in Guyana is 12% or more. Among young people it is at least 25% and among young women it is even higher. **[Mr. G. Persaud: Source.]** You will get all of that. The reality is that violent crime and corruption, drugs and gun-violence are now part and parcel of life in Guyana. The reality is that our young people cannot get employment while the Government signs off on contracts which allow for foreign companies to operate in Guyana and not hire Guyanese labour. It is a reality that the army of the poor is being swelled by unwilling



volunteers, while the small group of friends and relatives of the Regime becomes super wealthy. We cannot afford another dream; the PPP/C's dream has become a nightmare.

We noted a curious development in the speeches of my Friends on the other side, specifically the Hon. Member Mr. Irfaan Ali. We are now hearing of continued improvement and growth for the last seven years. I am really sorry that the two gentlemen are not here because it seems as if this continued growth started immediately after the Hon. Minister became a Minister. He became a Minister in September of 2006 and all the growth started after that. Is this not an admission that all of those figures about growth and the rosy picture painted by previous Finance Ministers were all but fluff? Fourteen years before that we had Finance Ministers such as Bharat Jagdeo, Asgar Ally and Sasenarine Kowlessar. What were all of these people doing, giving us fluff? Now we hear that everything started seven years ago and everything is about seven years. **[Mr. Greenidge:** Because that is when they started cooking the figures.] Yes, figures started cooking then.

The exhortations by the Government to overcome challenges together appears to us to be no more than a slogan, as overcoming challenges together pre-suppose the need for partnership in overcoming challenges. On this side of the House we believe in partnership. The name APNU is A Partnership for National Unity; the Alliance for Change is an Alliance. Both of these political organisations have embedded in the names they have chosen, a recognition that partnerships are essential to the growth and development of Guyana. But the record of our Colleagues on the eastern side of the aisle, over the last year, clearly demonstrates that working together means doing things their way or no way. It is either their way or the highway.

So what did the Nation hear coming from that side of the House? That we are a one seat dictator; that the Government will make our one seat majority meaningless; that the President will not assent to any Bills, unless the Government side of the House agrees with it. This aggressive non conciliatory tone has been exemplified especially by the Budget Speech of the Hon. Minister of Finance and more recently by his erstwhile junior Minister, the Hon. Member Bishop Edghill, who, in my humble opinion, has done the greatest harm so far in this debate to any notion of working together by his bombastic presentation in this House last night. Happily we detect from the presentations of many others on this side of the House a desire to work together; we determined that. However, our desire must not be to just work together just to get the budget

passed in this House. The desire must be to work together for the good of Guyana, to give a good life to all Guyanese. So this kind of rhetoric coming from the Government has in large measure informed their action when dealing with the Opposition.

Hence, the Government that now seeks the Opposition's support in overcoming challenges together is doing the following; some of these things. Even while the debates are going on and even before we have had a consideration of the Estimates, they have gone to meet stakeholders and all sorts of people that were spoken about by the Hon. Member Bishop Juan Edghill last night. Again, stealing a march or attempting to steal a march, but as my friends say, "that is fluff". It is a Public Relations (PR) exercise designed to create a favourable atmosphere for the reception of the budget.

If the Government is so concerned about the involvement of the citizens in this process let them agree to put the big screens outside of this National Assembly, so that the real stakeholders can see live the proceedings of this House. *[Interruption]* **[Mr. G. Persaud:** We have it in the homes of the people; it is in the homes of the people.] That is the National Communication Network (NCN) that is not the people's home.

This Government that now asks that we work together has for the last year ignored the legitimate request of the Leader of the Opposition to pay the rent for the building in which his office presides and to furnish it with items that were previously purchased and disposed of by this Government in November 2011 only days before the Elections. These are legitimate concerns. This is a right which is enshrined in the law, yet, after one year, we cannot get a decision made to take those things into consideration. You cannot ask a partner in development to work together and you do not give him the resources with which he has to work and with which he is legally entitled. **[Hon. Member:** It is called abused.] It is abused. Thank you.

In spite of this display of minority power our Members of Parliament have sought and in some cases have been able to work with Ministers of Government on issues that affect the People of this great country. I am happy to see my friend, the Hon. Minister of Housing here because I have had the opportunity of working with Minister Ifraan Ali on several projects and I must say that some of these project have been successful. I want to acknowledge that. In fact, on the 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2012, Minister Ali and I issued a joint statement itemising some of the matters which

we discussed and what we needed to have done for the benefit of the Guyanese people. These discussions were not about the Budget 2013. These discussions centred around the priority areas such as, taking actions on the Squatters' Regularisation and Relocation Plan. We discussed and agreed on developmental information as it relates to new housing developments and expansion of housing developments. We discussed and agreed on a mechanism that will ensure that all the impediments that act as a barrier to regularisation of the Angoy's Avenue area, were removed. The issue of materials shortage also we discussed. The fact that some of the contractors who had actually complained to the Leader of the Opposition that they were being starved of resources, we discussed that and we agreed to make a public statement about the use of stone and cement. We endorsed a statement made by the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources that these quarries had to extend their working hours to allow for stone to be given to all of the contractors. So we have had some amount of cooperation and we believe that partnership is important.

In my contribution to the debate in 2012, I said this:

“Mr. Speaker, like the Hon. Minister, we also believe that physical infrastructure plays an extremely pivotal role in transforming a country. However, where we parted company is in the methodology.

We in the APNU believe and we still do believe that this pattern of development which sees large sums of the money spent on projects which have the appearance of providing jobs for the selected group of persons.

We believe that this sector is critical enough to demand a national conversation on the network of roads and bridges necessary to develop our hinterland. We believe that the talent for doing so resides right here in this country and we should develop such a plan.”

*5.40 p.m.*

That was last year and now I repeat and rely on those sentiments which were expressed, but I am not alone in this demand on the Government. Only last week Mr. Michael Correia, the Chairman of the Ogle Airport Inc., had a very beautiful ceremony held at Ogle to mark the Ogle Airport's certification as an international airport said this to President Ramotar who, along with the Hon. Minister of Public Works, was present at the head table. He said that we must put in place a

comprehensive long-term infrastructural development plan to support growth in Guyana and in this economy. He said that national development and expansion inevitably will create its own chaos for traffic jams which get worse, particularly on the East Bank Road and in our city.

We in the APNU believe that, as a nation, we need to confront the serious challenges together; we agree with that, but in identifying those challenges the choices which we make in allocating resources must be sensible and practical.

Let us, therefore, now look at the budget and the provisions that have been made for issues in the area of infrastructure. I call this the “infrastructure challenge”.

On the area of sea and river defence at page 28, paragraph 450 of his Budget Presentation, the Hon. Minister identified the challenge as follows, he said this:

“Mr. Speaker, we are in a constant battle to protect and maintain the structural integrity of our sea and river defence structures and to develop sustainable shore zone management systems to contain the ravages of the ever encroaching Atlantic Ocean.”

He said:

“We have a porous or weak sea defence structure...”

We agree with the Minister and we are only too concerned with the damage done to the livelihood of our citizens along the coastland of this country. Only recently, in Georgetown, we were reminded of the fragile state of our sea defenses when all of Kingston and part of Main Street, including the residences of the President and Prime Minister, were flooded. This is not just about the malfunctioning of one koker. It is about a pattern of neglect in this vital sector. That is what it is.

In this Budget the Minister allocates \$1.9 billion for sea and river defence; \$143,392,000 to deal with critical works, while a heavy reliance is placed on a mangrove restoration programme. This five-year mangrove management action plan is not enough to satisfy the majority of Guyanese who live along the coast who are affected by this plan if it is in place. The Hon. Minister should have to say to us how effective this mangrove development plan has been and whether the black and/or the red mangrove seedlings that have been planted so far are effective.

What are we doing? We are predicating our sea defenses and the safety of our homesteads on a mangrove development plan. This is what we are doing. This, in addition... *[Interruption]* Just wait. You are so anxious. Citizens can take very little comfort in the quality of what is known as critical works being done to sure up our defenses and this is where the money has been allocated – \$143 million for critical works.

The quality of these works, outside of the works supervised by the international lending agencies, is generally of a very poor nature. I have some photographs here taken by a gentleman by the name of Mr. Stanley Ming a few months ago that show the quality of work which is done on our sea defense on what they call critical work. These are parts of our sea defenses that have been damaged by overtopping of the Atlantic or in some cases the sea defense, itself, had been washed away. Do you know what they are patching it with here? Mud. This is in the area of Buxton. These are photographs taken in the area of Zeelugt on the West Coast of Demerara. It is the same thing. They are patching it with mud.

We have to be concerned when the safety and security of our homesteads are treated in such a very casual manner or cavalier manner, as my friend advises me. This is the reason we are concerned that the critical works to be done and the allocation of funds in this budget for critical works is far too little. It is far too small an amount of money for the challenge which we face by overtopping and flooding.

In the area of air and river transport, there is more glaring evidence of poor choices that we make in the budgetary allocations in this sector. This sector represents the economic and commercial life of Guyana. In 2012 the Government expended amounts totaling \$5.4 billion; the bulk of which went to mobilisation advances for the Cheddi Jagan International Airport expansion. This year another \$5.3 billion has been budgeted for this project. \$248 million was allocated to rehabilitate airstrips in Region Nos.1, 2, 7, 8 and 9. Let me here add that the \$4 billion made available for the completion of a four-lane access road to the Cheddi Jagan International Airport... Then we begin to see the vast sums of money spent on what this flagship project is all about. For 2012 - \$5.4 billion, for 2013 another \$5.3 billion and then one throws in another \$4 billion for the road that goes to the airport – the four-lane road. This is not a road that is critical at this point in time and this is why my contention is that we have made bad choices in how we allocate funds – bad choices.

This is a road, of course, that has been stalled for a long time because we could not address issues such as the removal of the telephone posts. We could not address issues of the squatters that were on the road. We could not address of the pipes for Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI).

I cannot understand if a major project such as this is contemplated, why all of these issues are not dealt with even before one breaks ground. [Mr. Ali: It was dealt with.] Why was it held up for so long? Something is wrong about that. Something smells about it. We are doing all of this to create an aviation hub for flights to Africa. On which rationale I am prepared to debate the Hon. Minister and I am prepared to say now that that rationale cannot stand the scrutiny of an experienced time. It is again fluff. That is a hub.

If we were to factor in the developments that are taking place at the Suriname International Airport, they have been saying the same thing and they have actually spent the money already and extended their airport and all of that so we have missed the bus and we still continue to pour money into this project when we cannot even organise airlifts for Guyanese residents and citizens who want to go to North America, Canada or the Caribbean. We are now going to Atlanta in some little group to see whether we can encourage another airline to come here. We still have to understand the reason why Delta pulled out – the full reason – but that is another matter which I shall have to discuss with the Hon. Minister of Transport.

The hinterland is Guyana's El Dorado. This is what the Minister Robert Persaud said, this is what Minister Ali said. All of these persons who speak good things about Guyana who came here – the birdwatchers, the people who speak about Kaieteur Falls – all of those platitudes were about the beauty of the hinterland, all of them. [Mr. G. Persaud: Are you disputing that?] I do not dispute that. From this said hinterland, Minister Robert Persaud said to us that in 2011 363,000 ounces of gold were declared... [Mr. G. Persaud: Public knowledge.] ...almost \$10.2 billion. That is public, but in 2012 he said that 438,645 ounces of gold were declared – \$13 billion. When we add this to the other precious and semiprecious stones, the rare earth that is being discovered in the Rupununi, the rice cultivation in the Rupununi, timber and all of these things we recognise the dynamic nature of what is happening in the hinterland.

Interestingly enough, the vast majority of flights that go into the hinterland take off from Ogle. While we are saying that the hinterland is important, while we are saying that this is where El

Dorado is we are trying to build an airport to take people to Africa; that is what we are trying to do.

The Ogle Airport has been built and is extended and expanded to the beautiful structure it is and according to Mr. Michael Correia, who spoke at that ceremony, after all of this work was done there is no debt for the Government to repay. He said that he estimates that the Government of Guyana, therefore the people of Guyana, will benefit from over 50% of the future profits of Ogle Airport Inc.

What I am saying is we have a development at Ogle where the majority of the flights go into the hinterland that we say is El Dorado and yet we are trying to pour over USD\$150 million into an expansion that we do not even have air lift capacity for right now. This is why I am saying that we have made bad choices in the allocation of resources in this budget.

I would like to look next at the development of our port – Port Development. This is another area that is the life blood of this country. The largest volume of business, the largest volume of trade is done by the sea. It is not done through the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, apart from... I should not even say that. The largest volume of trade is done through the ports of Guyana.

Again this year the Government has not allocated any funds, the Government has allocated not a cent, for port development, but this is what the Minister said in his analysis of the situation. He said, “Government remains cognizant of the need to keep our commercial riverine passages passable by ocean going vessels; in particular, access to the Demerara port by optimally-sized vessels is a critical prerequisite to trade activities”. Do you know what? The Minister has not allocated a cent to this fiscal activity.

Last year I addressed several issues in this sector which the Government continues to pay no attention to. In May, 2012, the Chairman of the Shipping Association of Guyana...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Harmon, before you tell us about Shipping Association you would need to get an extension of time.

**Ms. Ally:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude his speech

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed, please.

*Question put and carried*

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in May, 2012, the Chairman of the Shipping Association of Guyana, Mr. Anthony Astwood, presented a financial proposal for the improvement of the operational efficiency of the Demerara Harbour to the Government, to the Hon. Minister, Mr. Irfaan Alli. The Hon. Minister said to the Shipping Association of Guyana that he will take this plan to the Cabinet Subcommittee on Infrastructure and they will get back to the Shipping Association of Guyana. The next time anything was heard was last night when Bishop Edghill came out and said, "Oh, we just met with the Shipping Association of Guyana and we are going to have a public/private partnership". This was since May, 2012, and this is not the first time that this matter has been raised; since 1995 when Mr. Anthony Xavier was the Minister of Works there was a document which they called a *Compendium of Reports and Surveys* done by an international organisation that ranged between 1961 to about 1995 and in that document Mr. Anthony Xavier, who was the Minister at that time, recognised that the development of a port authority was a crucial and important issue to the development of this country in 1995. Since May, 2012, the Shipping Association of Guyana gave their framework plan to the Hon. Minister and nothing was heard since. They said that they gave it to you. May, 2012, I have the report of the meeting, Minister. Yes, I have it.

**Ms. Teixeira:** Sorry but just the point about the Hon. Member. Minister Xavier became Minister in October, 1996.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Thank you for the correction, Mdm. Teixeira. It would have been 1998. The fact of the matter is the story was there for a long time. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, you can see where the bulk of the money is going. It is going on the flagship projects – Amaila Falls, Cheddi Jagan International road and other areas – were the PPP is preparing to pump money into it for an election which they feel that they can win.

My colleagues here, on this side of the House, Mr. Sydney Allicock, Ms. Dawn Hasting, Mr. Ronald Bulkan, Mrs. Valerie Garrido-Lowe have all spoken about the inadequate allocation for roads in the hinterland with the particularly sorry state of the roads and bridges in Region No.9.



I want to put here on record that the announcement made by the Hon. Minister of Transport about a bridge across the Demerara Harbour is one which we fully support. We believe that it is necessary for there to be another bridge across the river.

Several months ago when the bridge had broken down, I said that we need to have a better bridge than the Marriot. That is where the money should be spent; not on the Marriot. Build a bridge that would affect the lives of more people than a Marriot Hotel. We did not want that.

In the issue with relation to housing and the impact of the Government policy on housing to the poor has been adequately dealt with in my respectful view by my colleague, Mrs. Volda Lawrence. However, what I wish to say is that I agree with Mrs. Lawrence that the price of land for building of houses is still too high and that the Government keeping the price of land so high that they are riding on the backs of poor people in this country. We have to do something about this and make the land more accessible and cheaper. We have to look at – this is a matter which I discussed with the Minister – the question of building housing schemes and things of that nature. We had a discussion on that and we need to see it done.

In relation to water, this year \$2.7 billion is being spent to increase the level of quality of potable water in certain areas, but I do not want to go too much into this but I would again say to the Minister that even though we spend so much money on water there are people in Sophia, up to now in Fields A, B, C and E, who still do not have access to potable water and in cases where they have access to it is only done for a very short period of time. There are people still in Dazzel Housing Scheme, at Blairmont Estate who still do not have water on a 24-hour basis.

The water in Georgetown, I am willing to bet that the Hon. Minister would not put a glass under his pipe and drink that water. [Mr. Ali: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am willing now to take from any tap in Georgetown a glass of water and drink it.] Have somebody go and bring a glass...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Gentlemen. Mr. Ali, if you do not... Mr. Harmon, please be seated.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Yes, Mdm.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** This is not a house of worship so I do not expect silence, but it is also not a bar.

**Minister of Housing [Mr. Ali]:** I stand...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Ali, I am speaking. It is not a house of worship nor is it a bar nor is it a rum shop so I would expect that I would not see two and three men seeking to exchange glasses with each other, hence my reference to a rum shop. Mr. Harmon, could you please continue?

**Mr. Ali:** May I stand on a Point of Order, Mdm.?

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** What is the Point of Order, Sir?

**Mr. Ali:** The Hon. Member issued a challenge and I wish to accept the challenge.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** That will be done at the end of this sitting.

**Mr. Ali:** I would want to do it in the presence of the media.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Ali, I am not Mr. Trotman. I will not adjourn the House. I will adjourn you, outside of the House. Mr. Harmon, please continue.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Thank you very much. We have been asked by my friends on the other side of the aisle to dream but I do hope that when the Hon. Minister goes to sleep he does not dream about the youth from Builders Beyond Borders and the pipe that they turned on the brown stuff which came out which they thought was blood. I hope he does not have a nightmare of that nature.

So far as communication is concerned... I have such a wide berth I shadow at least three Ministers so I do have to have some time. The allocation of radio frequencies by President Jagdeo, shortly before demitting office as President, in the manner and the numbers given to his party comrades is wholly unacceptable and the APNU views this as an improper exercise of his discretion.

I believe that the Speaker of the House, Mr. Trotman, was moved to describe that decision as obscene – this is the publication here. He said that it was an obscenity and I agree with him. Much of the information about this matter is already in the public domain and therefore I need not go over it again but what I would wish to say is that the persons who have been issued with

these licenses must be subjected to the same scrutiny with which the persons who are now applying for licenses have been subjected to and those who have been asked to reapply. The chairman of the board must act and be seen to be acting on this matter. Equity and justice demands it. [**Ms. Shadick:** The Chairman alone...] The Chairman and the board, everybody. If they cannot get it right let them resign.

In this Budget the Minister allocates \$81 million to National Communications Network (NCN). This is an entity whose allocation we will not support. The Minister of Communication, who is the President, Must release the report of the investigation into the wrongdoings of this entity; a matter over which the Office of the Leader of the Opposition has written the President's Office twice and all he got back from him is 'we are considering the report'. We need the report. The public needs it.

In conclusion, I wish to say that this Budget fails to address the true realities of Guyana in 2013. The choices made by the Minister in allocating the resources of this country does not reflect the urgent priorities in physical infrastructure. The flagship projects – the Marriot Hotel, the CGI expansion, and Amaila Falls – all suffer from one fatal defect, public buy-in. These projects were conceptualized in secret and their executions still contain certain elements of secrecy. As such, I wish to reiterate APNU's position on these matters. Bring all of the information on these projects to the National Assembly and let us have an open debate on them.

While we appreciate the efforts made by Government to share some classified information to a small group of persons we believe that anything short of bringing the information to Parliament is unacceptable we must have a broad stakeholder involvement in infrastructural development of Guyana. A revised National Development Strategy would be a useful starting point in this regard. For the foregoing reasons I believe that this budget has given the wrong priorities to allocating resources and requires rework. As such I would not support its passage in its present form. I thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. The Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony.

**Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]:** Thank you very much, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members I join with my colleagues in commending Dr. Ashni Singh and his team for this budget. I want to praise him and his team for their stewardship of our economy. His

tenure of prudent management has ushered in a period of steady growth in our real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and while the economy expanded, inflation was contained to a tolerable single digit.

*6.10 p.m.*

When these achievements are put into the harsh world context, where we are constantly bombarded with bad economic news, and as the headlines around the globe screamed of a European economic crisis, first exemplified by the Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain (PIGS), now by the banking crisis in Cyprus. There might be more to come. These are the realities of our world.

Professor Nouriel Roubini, a leading commentator on the global economy, predicted in an article titled, *The Economic fundamentals of 2013*, stated:

"Global growth will average about 3%, but with a multi-speed recovery, a sub-par, below- trend annual rate of 1% in the advanced economies and close-to-trend rates of 5% in emerging economies."

He went on to say:

"Painful deleveraging - less spending and more saving to reduce debt and leverage - remains ongoing in the most advanced economies, which implies slow economic growth. Fiscal austerity will envelop the most advanced economies this year. Another year of mediocre growth could give way to outright contraction in some countries."

It is against this harsh global backdrop that our budget is being presented, but instead of scaling back on our people's oriented programme, we have increased the allocation. Foreign-funded programmes, whose life came to an end, are now continued with Government's funding. As if this was not enough, the measures, which were announced, are going to bring a significant ease on our hard-working people.

This is a most people-friendly budget; it is providing tangible benefit to every Guyanese man, every Guyanese woman and ever Guyanese child.

This budget is not just a people-friendly budget, but also a youth-friendly budget. Rightly so, Guyana is literally a young nation, with a large percentage of its people are below the age of 25 years. With such a bulging youth demographic it is important that we invest in our young people.

The PPP/C Government has never shied away from this responsibility. We have embraced a true multi-sectorial approach to youth investment, because youth is too big to fit in any one ministry.

- The \$28.7 billion investments in education is a real investment in our youth. It is maintaining universal primary education that we all spoke about. It is expanding secondary education to bring us closer to universal secondary education. It would also expand technical vocational Education and it would continue the subsidy on tertiary education.
- The \$19.2 billion investment in health is an investment in our young people. Reducing neonatal, infant and under five mortality and morbidity is ensuring that our children get the right start; reducing adolescent morbidity and mortality by preventing infectious diseases, such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), is giving our young people the right start; reducing the incidence of behavioural disorders, such as substance abuse, is giving our young people the right start; and reducing the risk factors for chronic non-communicable diseases is also a major investment in our young people.
- The \$3.1 billion investment in housing is an investment in our young people. Through the young professionals housing programme many of them will own their own homes. Mortgage interest relief, where interest payment for mortgage to up to \$30 million to be treated as a tax-deductible expense, is an investment for first time homeowners, many of who have young families.
- The \$2.7 billion investment in water is also an investment in our young people. Children are most susceptible to waterborne diseases. By providing access to clean water, it is helping to reduce morbidity and mortality.

- The \$234 million investment in human services is a direct investment to protect our young people from child abuse and child neglect.
- The estimated \$1.8 billion worth of personal income tax reduction to 184,000 working people is also a substantial investment in our young people. Many of them will benefit directly as young workers or indirectly as the family income increases.
- Reduction of property tax on individuals: The first \$40 million net property at zero tax, thereafter 0.75. If the current regime was applied to a \$40 million net property, the person would have to pay \$231, 250. With this new measure the property owners will now keep \$231, 250. This is certainly more moneys in the pockets of young homeowners.
- Of course, the \$2.5 billion investment in the culture, youth and sport is a direct investment in our young people.

On behalf of the young people of this country we welcome these measures.

The Ministry will continue to maintain its regular youth programmes, which include the training programmes at Kuru Kuru Training Centre, Sophia Training Centre and Smyithfield Drop-in Centre. These have, over the years, provided both residential and non-residential training in various skill areas, allowing young people to get a second chance at an education. We give them an employable skill with which they can go out and get a job. We will continue to do this.

At the New Opportunity Corps (NOC), the Ministry continues to work with young people to give the skills to make a better a life. When the President's Youth Award Programme is looked at, which got a Medal of Service for working with young people,...This year the Ministry will train another 2,000 young people in the areas of leadership, capacity building and community development. Over the last 14 years this programme benefited close to 20,000 young people directly and even many more indirectly.

Another innovative programme is the National Volunteer Platform. The National Volunteer Platform brings together several Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to volunteer on various projects. Through this initiative many persons volunteer their time at national events and some have taken on special community projects. This year the Volunteer Platform would be

channelled into schools and more communities. In schools, we want to create volunteer clubs to encourage young people to do voluntary work and to recognise their efforts. The volunteer programme, which is currently ongoing in five city schools, will be expanded.

At the community level, we will continue to work with the 450 registered youth groups across Guyana. This year the Ministry will be working more closely with these groups to implement various community initiatives, such as the National Camping Programme in which about 4,000 young people participate annually. It has also been working with them and helping communities to fix and upkeep their playgrounds.

Another innovative programme is the After-school-activities Programme. This year the Ministry, in partnership with other stakeholders, will start an After-school-activities Programme. This community-based programme is primarily aimed at providing to young people an opportunity to learn a sport, to get involved in the arts or both. For this programme to work there will be the need for many adult volunteers at the community level. I would therefore urge all persons who have an interest in helping young people to enrol with us at the Ministry. By doing so, the Ministry will be able to assign you to be coaches or mentors to our young people in the various communities. The more volunteers that can be got, the bigger would be the impact on the young people across this country.

The Ministry has concluded its discussions with the Ms. Katherine Ellis, the Director of Youth Affairs, Commonwealth Youth Programme, and that organisation has agreed to fund a consultant to update the national youth policy. Very shortly, the consultations on this document will start. It is my hope that through these consultations we will address issues such as male underperformance in the education system, youth health, youth violence, youth employment and giving youth a voice in decision making, teenage mothers and young families among others. We anticipate, when the consultations starts, that youth groups and other stakeholders will play an active role in making submissions for inclusion in this policy.

Again, this year the Ministry will finalise the structure on national youth award scheme, which would be implemented in the year 2014. This scheme is intended to recognise leadership, excellence, and innovation by young people. We would also recognise the coaches and mentors who have volunteered their time to working with those young people. Let us not just talk the

talk, but let us do the talk.

We have placed a lot of emphasis on our young people. Yet, I feel that the best investment in our youth is yet to be made. If we truly believe in our young people, and want to bequeath them with a precious investment for the future, then let us come together and end the divisiveness, this pettiness, that has blighted our interactions. Let us rise above the fray to inspire the youth and empowered them with a common vision, with that patriotic fervour, so that they can come together and build our beautiful Guyana. This is an investment that this House is yet to make. I remain optimistic that the concern manifested by the Opposition will become a commitment to work with us for the common good of the Guyanese youth.

When we look at culture, our country's culture is one of its most important assets. We are often defined and identified by our culture. Guyana, by the circumstance of our history, is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, comprising of our Amerindian, European, African and Asian traditions, each with its own unique characteristics. These traditions have encountered and commingled, have crossover to produce some uniqueness that gives us this distinct Guyanese flavour.

When we look from our prehistory to now there are several historic milestones, as a nation, that we can remember. I just want to single out a few that we can highlight this year:

- The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berbice Slave Uprising. This is one of the most important uprising in the western hemisphere,
- The 190<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Demerara Slave Uprising,
- The 179<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Essequibo Slave Uprising.
- The 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery.

To highlight the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Berbice Slave Uprising, the Ministry held several events, including the distinguished lecture series, in which three eminent scholars were invited, Professors Hillary Beckles, Alvin Thompson and Verene Shepherd, to speak to us on this period. There were two exhibitions at the National Museum and a commemorative coin will be made. Also for the year, Anna Benjamin's book on the 1763 Berbice Slave Uprising will be published. I



would like to recommend it as good reading for every Guyanese.

For the 190<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Demerara Slave Uprising, the Ministry would unveil the 1823 Monument. As it is customary, it will be working with and funding a number of national and community stakeholders for the emancipation celebrations.

This year, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, Arrival Day, we will be remembering all the ancestors who arrived as indentured immigrants. This year marks 178<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Portuguese who came to British Guiana. It marks the 175<sup>th</sup> year since the first Indian indentured immigrant came to British Guiana and, of course, it also marks the 172<sup>th</sup> year since the arrival of the first indentured African immigrant to Guyana. We also, earlier in the year, mark 160<sup>th</sup> year since the arrival of the indentured Chinese immigrant, and to highlight that the Ministry joined with the Chinese Association and other stakeholders at a special ceremony at Windsor Forest. In addition, it is our hoped that during the year Guyana can establish a Confucius Institute.

The Ministry is working with all stakeholders to mark Arrival Day and, in particular, it will join several groups in marking the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since the arrival of the Indian indentured immigrants and it wants to make it a memorable occasion. For that occasion, the Ministry will host a distinguished lecture series with another set of eminent scholars - Professors Brinsley Samaroo, Kusha Haraksingh, from Trinidad and Tobago, and, of course, would be inviting a young Guyanese woman, Gaiutra Bahadur, who would be talking to us in May. A final calendar of activities is currently being finalised.

I am also happy to report that in the area of music there is a new vibrancy. The National Music School, in its second year, has already recorded 100% passes at the Royal School of Music Examinations. With this success rate, the Ministry has seen an increase in enrolment at the school. This year, to cater for this expansion it would be buying more musical instruments with our capital vote.

For a second year the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport sponsored Dr. Ray Luck's international piano workshop in performance and pedagogy master classes. This workshop is providing valuable guidance to our music teachers and students, and we should see an excellent cadre of musicians emerging from this programme.

This Ministry has several ongoing music outreach programmes. The Youth Marching Band is being developed at the West Demerara Secondary School. It also trained 500 children in Regions 4, 5, 6, 10 and in Georgetown. They were all taught how to play the steel pan. In preparation for this year's Guyana Music Festival, the Ministry hosted a series of training sessions, where more than 400 hundred persons participated, including 28 teachers from the rural districts. This, of course, we hope will get more young people to participate in the Guyana Music Festival. During this year the National Music School will offer courses on traditional African and Indian musical instruments because we feel that that will help us to keep our tradition alive.

The first ever national song festival for choral groups was successfully completed. It included groups from Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10. The competition was held at the National Cultural Centre and this competition will continue in the year 2014. During this year we will be doing a different type of music competition. We want to start an indigenous song competition. This is a competition where the songs would be written and sung in the various Amerindian languages. This, we feel will help us to keep these languages alive.

There was a major breakthrough, in terms of visual art, with the start of the Guyana Visual Arts competition and exhibition under the patronage of His Excellency President Donald Ramotar. This competition attracted 204 entries, after prejudging there were 164 pieces that were selected for competition and exhibition. The competition was in six categories. There were 60 pieces in paintings, 52 pieces in exhibits and photography, 25 pieces in drawings, 33 pieces in sculptures, 8 in pieces textiles and 16 pieces in ceramics. There was Mr. Stanley Greaves, one of Guyana's foremost artists, as the chief judge and was ably supported by the Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine as a member of the judging panel. By all accounts it was quite a successful exhibition and competition. I am happy to report that the management committee, under the capable leadership of Mr. Alim Hussain, has already started to work on the 2014 edition.

We have also started discussions with the private sector on the development of the art fund which would be used for the acquisition of Guyanese art that would then go into a public collection. These are very important developments and our artists laud these developments.

Drama is alive and well, not only in this House, but in Guyana. The National Drama Festival is making a significant contribution to the development of drama and theatre arts in Guyana. In

2012 this festival attracted 51 entries, of those 40 new plays were specially written for this festival. Before this festival the National Cultural Centre would have had about 15 plays per annum. Last year it had 66 plays. This is the impact of the festival. With more theatre groups being formed we expect even more plays will come to the National Cultural Centre.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2013 the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport launched the National School of Theatre Arts and Drama. Formal classes began with 25 students in two programmes. There is a beginners' programme and there is an intermediate programme. This school, which is based at the National Cultural Centre, will also be doing quarterly productions of plays in which schoolchildren would normally do for Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) so that they can get a better understanding of the material. Because of the upsurge of dramatic activities at the National Cultural Centre, this year the Ministry has budgeted for a new lighting system and that is in the capital budget.

The Government supported the University of Guyana CineGuyana project with an allocation of \$20 million dollars to train 188 young persons in filmmaking. Through this project it supported 11 short films, namely: *Hope, Backyard, Three Cards, Tradition, Beached, Luck beat Handsome, the Encounter, the Bottle, Ruth, To the Night* and *Choices*. Those films were made in Guyana and shown right here but they were also taken to various film festivals around the world. They were shown in the UK, in the USA, in Barbados, in Belize, in the Bahamas and in Trinidad and Tobago.

There have also been some noteworthy private initiatives. I want to single out Mr. Mahadeo Shivraj who has made four full-length movies - *Till I find a Place, A Jasmine for a Gardener, Brown Sugar too Bitter for Me* and *83 Million Gees*. These are encouraging signs and we must support the growth of this industry.

The National Dance School and the National Dance Company continue to entertain Guyanese audiences. There is a growing demand for similar schools across Guyana. During the last year a number of satellite schools were piloted. A school was started at Mainstay in Region 2, another one at Uitvlugt in Region 3, in Vryman's Erven and on the Tain Campus in Region 6, also at Kuru Kuru in Region 4, and this expansion effort will continue this year.

While we continue to expand many of its existing programmes, we want to improve them both

quantitatively and qualitatively. As I said last year, when I spoke in the debate, our ultimate aim is to establish an Institute of the Creative Arts. To this end we have a group of experts...

*6.40 p.m.*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Dr. Anthony, before you tell us about the experts, could someone move the necessary...?

**Mr. Hinds:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. I move that the Hon. Minister be granted another fifteen minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Dr. Anthony:** ...headed by Professor Dr. Cambridge and we are working right now to set up this institute. We have also seen vibrancy in our literature.

Last year, there was the good fortune of hosting a literary giant of Guyana, Mr. E.R. Braithwaite, CCH, who was also the patron of the inter-Guiana Cultural Festival. I am sure that the young people, who have had an opportunity to interact with him, would have been inspired by his many presentations during the period.

Government has also over the last year allocated \$19 million to fund the Guyana Prize for Literature. As a lead-up to the prize, several workshops were for young writers and this year the prize will be awarded. This has also been managed by the University of Guyana.

I also would like to say that in the literary arts we have seen a lot of new writings coming out from both our local writers and from our diasporic writers. This shows that there is a remarkable vibrancy in our literature. Through the Caribbean Press alone there was the completion of the Guyana Classics Series, which comprises 36 books. Another 24 more books have been done, which include the parliamentary speeches of various presidents. During the year, as I had promised, one will see the first volume of President Burnham's speeches being made available.

In total there are 60 books that have been completed by the press, which include 27 dealing with history, one on Guyanese folk songs, 20 novels and 12 on poetry. A full

list, of course, can be seen on the website: [www.caribbeanpress.org](http://www.caribbeanpress.org). While those books are made available to our libraries and public libraries, there is also a limited amount that is on sale at Austin's Bookstore.

This year another set of publications will be done and another 10 books were earmarked to do. But we also want to start another series on Amerindian language dictionaries. The seven existing dictionaries will be updated and an additional two will be developed. The seven to be updated are the Arawak, Karina, Wapishana, Macusi, Warrus, Akawaio and Arecunas. While we will have to study and compile the other two, Patamona and the Wai-Wai, we have already been talking to several persons to help us in this endeavour. It is important to preserve our linguistic heritage, and publishing these dictionaries is one way of doing so.

When the Walter Rodney National Archives is looked we have started a strong collaboration with the Dutch, which would have seen us get more experts coming to Guyana, and this year we are able to get copies of the letters that Cuffy wrote to the then Dutch Governor, Van Hoogenheim. Those letters are now at the National Archives. Later in the year, we will receive another 2,000 digital documents relating to the Dutch period and those will be handed over to the Guyana National Archives because of the collaboration that is there. There will also be the digitising the National Archives. The first phase has already started. We want Guyanese to be able to go online and go to the National Archives web portal and there they can search the records, which would be there. This, we hope will be completed later in the year, and by doing so the archives will be brought into the modern era. The moneys for this have been budgeted in our capital budget for this year.

When we look at museums, there have been some fantastic things happening at our museums. Over the last year more than 70,000 people would have come to the museums. During last year we hosted an exhibition from the Ministry of Culture, from India, and that exhibition was called "India: A Culture of Science." During that exhibition, an interactive exhibition, there were more than 35,000 people who were coming to the exhibition, and most of them being children. We were also able to train more than 100 science teachers to make teaching science into fun. I think most Guyanese who went to that exhibition were in a way treated to what they saw.

Right now, at the National Museum there is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) exhibition that deals with the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We know of course, this is one of the most horrible trade happened in our history - human history. It has the dubious distinction of being the largest forced migration in human history where more than 20 million people were displaced. It has another dubious distinction of being the greatest maritime tragedy, in which 7 to 9 million persons lost their lives during this voyage. I encourage all the Hon. Members to go the National Museum and view this exhibition that tells the story of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

We continue to do these types of work. At the Walter Roth Museum we continue to do research into our prehistory. Some more work was done in the Pomeroun, at Siriki, where a shell mound was unearthed that date to about 7,000 thousand years ago. This has given an insight into Guyana's prehistory.

Last year I told the House about our findings in the Berbice River. We have been able, during the year, to demarcate these important areas, and later on we will be working to develop a document so that we can bring to preserve these archeological sites which should be not only for ourselves but to protect all Guyanese. As we dig into our past, I am confident that the knowledge that would be unearthed will not only give us the insight into our heritage, but it will also contribute to humanity's knowledge of our collective prehistory. I talked a bit on that last year.

As a nation, we have made significant cultural advances over the years. There is a new hope; a new sense of vibrancy among many of our cultural practitioners, and with their creativity they are living the moment, painting, writing, singing, dramatising, filming the new Guyana story. By these expressions we will be known, and by them we will be defined and this is the power of our culture. This is how we will shape that better Guyana.

Just briefly I want to turn to sport, because sport is very important to our nation. We want every Guyanese to embrace this vision of being involved in sports, not just for recreation but those who want to take it up as a career. We want this National Assembly to send a strong message to embrace a sport lifestyle as against a sporting lifestyle. This is very important because it is the cheapest way that we can get rid of the chronic non-

communicable diseases. There is a disease, which is spreading around the world, that is caused by too much sitting and we can easily get rid of it if we do more sports, and that is the prescription for every Guyanese person.

This year we will also renew our emphasis in our communities. While, over the last two years \$200 million was spent on community grounds, this year \$300 million will be spending in our communities. That is here in our budget for sports.

We will also be developing the warm-up pool at the National Aquatic Centre and Ministry has been allocated \$52 million to do this. The synthetic track is at the stage now where the stands have to be developed and \$360 million has been allocated to complete these stands by the year 2014. These and other facilities are what we are developing because by putting the sports infrastructure in place we know that we will create the champions for today and in the future. We are also looking at getting coaches to come to Guyana. We have already employed two Cuban coaches who are working in swimming and in boxing and we intend to get more coaches to come and to work here in Guyana.

Later in the year the resource centre at Woolford Avenue will be opened and our intention is that, from this resource centre, it would also grow to become a national sports institute because if we are serious about sports we have to teach sports and this institute would serve that purpose.

In Berbice, of course, by now it would be known that we are doing the lights at Albion and, yes, there are many community grounds that would be done. I will be looking more closely at the ground in Whim.

In this long march of our history, there have been many ups and down, bright spots and, as we have heard during this debate, we have had black holes, but throughout these tough times we have been held together by our people's resilience, by our common aspirations, and by our common dreams.

We must not squander this goodwill with tough talk and mean acts. We must close this sad chapter and collectively and collaboratively write a new one where we will work together to help every Guyanese, man, woman and child, not just to dream, but to live the Guyana dream of prosperity. This budget is the ticket to that better life; it is the way to more prosperity

for all. Let us embrace it; let us support; let us work for this better Guyana.

I thank you. [Applause]

**Ms. Selman:** I rise to offer my contribution to Budget 2013 as presented by the Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, under the theme, *Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*.

If we are to indeed “Accelerate Gains for Guyana”, we have to put aside party politics and work together to achieve consensus. Consultations and consensus are critical to the country’s survival and growth and should not simply be bandied about.

I wish to turn my attention to Guyana and the diaspora. A nation's diaspora is that part of its population that has emigrated overseas and is permanently resident in foreign countries. These emigrants may or may not hold citizenship in their respective host countries. Whether or not they do, they often seek the services of their home country, directly or through its representatives abroad: embassies, high commissions, consulates, in respect to their own needs and those of relatives and friends. Many of these emigrants may eventually form households, involving persons from within or outside their national group, and create families of second and subsequent generation members who by extension become nationals of the ancestral homeland.

I believe that the budget is somewhat deficient, in terms of allocating resources to facilitate economic foreign policy. The national budget must be used as the economic tool to facilitate the enhancement of diaspora engagement.

My research has indicated that many countries which are subject to development constraints of one type or another have looked to their nationals’ abroad as an effective means of overcoming their financial, investments, technological and human deficiencies. It is worthy to note that His Excellency President Donald Ramotar has recognised these constraints and the need for assistance. This is illustrated in a *Stabroek News* article dated Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, on page 6, captioned, “Ramotar urges diplomats to tap diaspora for development – South African Mission to be set up”. In that article, His Excellency was quoted as saying that:

“Guyana does not have all the resources to have all investments that will be needed to develop the country and there is a need to attract investment from abroad.”



He further pointed out that:

“Guyana’s image should be one of a country that is efficient and much can be learned from nationals that live in various parts of the world.”

I support these statements but I would like to inform the Government that this would remain an ideal if we do not design a policy that speaks to a coherent system of engagements with members of that community. A tremendous amount of things are happening in a piecemeal fashion. The mere launching of the diaspora project without specifics and how it will be implemented would not suffice. Projects must be used to achieve policies. I wish to pose the following question: Is the Government’s diaspora policy only about selling land to that community? If that is true, it is clearly doomed to failure.

Guyana must be willing to make the social, political, organisational and technical effort to mobilise the diaspora. The budget must open the floodgates for creating structures that could be used to establish the links through which Guyana could effectively and productively be connected with the diaspora. Some members of our diaspora play a key role in many aspects of our society, such as in health care and education. In many instances, it is voluntary. I would like to personally commend the directors of Health and Educational Relief Organisation (HERO) and their tireless core of volunteers who are continuously working on a number of health care and education related initiatives that are designed to improve the quality of life for the Guyanese people and encourage them to continue to do more for the country.

Mr. David Granger, the Leader of the Opposition, has recognised the importance of forging formal partnership with the diaspora to achieve the goals of Guyana’s national agenda and has made a commitment to set up a diaspora unit so as to engage members of our diaspora, those concentrated in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and other parts of the world.

Our foreign ministry, that is, our consulates, embassies, and high commissions, must be the bridges to the diaspora. They implement diaspora strategies and programmes in the host countries. Guyana’s budget has to make provisions so as to ensure that our consulates and embassies can indeed serve as the bridges to the diaspora, if our diaspora’s policy is placed on a weak foundation, as the bridge was at Supenaam, it will sink, it will float away, as of the wharf

at Charity. I believe that economic diplomacy is on shaky foundation because the allocation is inadequate.

My research has shown that the Government of Jamaica is already underway with a broadly-based approach to harnessing its diaspora in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and in Canada as part of a planned, overall development programme. Similar efforts, though not as far advanced, are underway in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is time Guyana gets on the move in this direction too.

I wish to turn my attention to remittances. I am appalled that the Minister of Finance did not consider it as appropriate to develop a policy on remittances. Remittances have become a major phenomenon in finance. The World Bank estimated that in 2005 migration sent home approximately \$167 billion, up to 73% from 2001. In 2006, the World Bank reported that remittances grew to approximately \$206 billion. These flows have led analysts to conclude that the growth of remittances has exceeded private capital flows and official development assistance to developing countries. This is supported by a statement made by the Minister of Finance in his budget presentation on page 9, paragraph 3.12, where it states:

“Net current transfers increased by 1.1 percent to US \$419.2 million due to higher receipts of worker remittances which increased by 13.9 percent to US\$ 469.3 million...”

As these numbers indicate, remittances have developed into an important source of income for many developing countries, including Guyana. Transaction cost is however, a significant constraint for small, personal transfers. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimated that the average cost of sending remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean was approximately \$4 billion in 2002 in total. The costs typically include both a fee transmission and a currency conversion. The World Bank has indicated that reducing remittance costs and improving the infrastructure would be beneficial in several ways. It also indicated that by reducing costs remitters will have more disposable income, which may lead to more being available for remittances. It is instrumental to note that other countries, such as Mexico and Nigeria, are trying to lower cost of remittances. I wish to ask: What is Guyana doing to reduce remittance cost?

I would like to focus now on Guyana's foreign relations and foreign policy as a platform for achieving economic prosperity in our country. The foreign policies of small states are often dominated by economic considerations, both in relation to the general lack of diplomatic resources and the fact that economic development is the main goal of foreign policy. It is my humble opinion that, at this stage in Guyana's development, a major objective of our foreign policy should be the achievement of prosperity, particularly if we still uphold, as sacrosanct, article 14 of Guyana's Constitution which states:

“The goal of economic development includes the objective of creating, promoting and encouraging an economic system capable of achieving and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage in the context of a global competitive environment, by fostering entrepreneurship, individual and group initiative and creativity, and strategic alliances with domestic and global business partners in the private sector.”

A Partnership for National Unity supports a foreign policy that would facilitate economic growth and development. The questions which loom large are:

- Where do we focus?
- With which countries should we have a stronger relationship?
- Where would sound foreign direct investments come from?

The Minister of Finance, on page 49, paragraph 4.117, of his budget speech, stated:

“Also in 2012, there was sustained dialogue with our immediate neighbours, Brazil, Suriname and Venezuela, as we sought to consolidate efforts to achieve well defined programmes of cooperation. We will continue to work with these countries to advance current initiatives and to identify additional areas for further strengthening of relations. Government will also continue to consolidate relations with countries with which Guyana has had traditional ties while fostering the development of new strategic alliances.”

In view of the way forward, Guyana needs to consistently apply a pragmatic approach to the formulation of foreign policies, emphasising the need to translate agreements into concrete economic benefits, thereby using its limited diplomatic capital to the most beneficial end.

May I ask the Hon. Minister of Finance what have been the specific benefits of these cooperation programmes for the Guyanese people? While we seek to foster the development of new strategic alliance, how about Guyana's role in ensuring that existing alliances, such as CARICOM, function in accord with the commitments made by its members? We have to bear in mind the fact that some members of CARICOM observed some of its objectives in the breach and in this instance I cite the Shanique Myrie's case, a landmark case, in which the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) is being asked to interpret the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and to provide a clear position on rights and privileges for Caribbean nationals when travelling in the region. We have to be concerned over the fact that Guyanese are frequently denied entry into Barbados, a member nation of CARICOM. Only a few weeks ago, in the *Stabroek News* newspaper, in an article, dated Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, on page 9, observes that "Guyana topped list of CARICOM nationals denied entry to Barbados"

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should publicise the existing complaint and appeal mechanisms so that affected Guyanese travellers would be able to lay their complaints when they suffer similar treatment. No Guyanese should be denied entry to any CARICOM country in defiance of the rules of the regional treaty. Underlying a common market is free movement of factors of production, including people. Guyanese should be allowed the same easy entry into member states that Guyana affords foreign nationals.

The last few decades have witnessed a variety of efforts to encourage the multilateral degree of political and economic regional integrations now being seen in South America. The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is the most recent to which Guyana is a participant. In committing ourselves to these initiatives, we should ascertain the benefits. What economic benefits flow from our involvement in UNASUR? The UNASUR's stated objectives include the creation of a single South American market by eliminating tariffs and promoting the increased development of the region's international infrastructure such as the inter-oceanic highway now under construction between Brazil and Peru. What has actually materialised so far?

We, in APNU, would like to see Guyana move beyond the point of merely attending conferences and signing agreements. We also want to see evidence of cooperation resulting in future benefits for the Guyanese people. We should concentrate on partnership agreements which would see the establishment of joint economic ventures with members of UNASUR. There has been an

exceptionally large influx of Brazilians in Guyana, perhaps as a result of Guyana being a member of UNASUR

*7.10 p.m.*

The question which must be answered is whether there has been any Brazilian investment in sectors apart from mining or the explosion in our entertainment sector. Also, are these legal mining ventures which exploit Guyana's natural resources and add to the coffers of Guyana Government? The Government should be seeking to encourage all Brazilian entrepreneurs to provide employment opportunities for Guyanese rather than Brazilians exclusively.

As part of the policy of regional integration, our education curriculum, for example, ought to be redesigned so as to ease communication with the new migrants. For example, Portuguese should be taught in all schools in Regions 8 and 9 and Spanish in the schools of Region 1, which is close to Venezuela.

As we seek to deepen regional integration, foreign policies should be fashioned to support our economic development process. Since the PPP/C has no such policy, I wish to urge the PPP/C Administration to adopt the policy of APNU. That policy, as outlined in its 2011 Manifesto, which states that the overarching focus of Guyana's foreign policy will be Guyana's national interest, principally the security of the State and its people and the social and economic development of all its citizens.

Let us work together to formulate a foreign policy that supports our economic development and aspirations and brings benefits to all the people of Guyana. Yes, a growth rate of 4.5 per cent may set Guyana apart from its neighbours in these times of sluggish growth, but we have to translate that number into meaningful benefits for the man in the street, the ordinary people, the poor.

In concluding, let me say that APNU wants to see the following:

- Equality of opportunity and equity;
- A willingness by the Government to accept constructive criticism, suggestions and proposals so that the challenges the country is faced with can be overcome;

- An arrangement to lower the cost of remittances and, more importantly, the identification of the Diaspora policy and the establishment of a Diaspora department; and
- A foreign policy that would provide a framework for growth and development.

Instead of suggesting that criticisms and expressions of concerns are unpatriotic, Government and the PPP/C would be better advised to take seriously the recommendations that have been made here and across the country; failing to do so guarantees that the people of Guyana would not benefit fully from the full development of our resources and the realisation of our potential.

APNU is interested in the progress of all the people of Guyana. We urge the Members on the other side to help us make a reality of our motto, *One people, One Nation, One destiny*.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Damon:** Thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Before I go into my speech, proper, I would like to notify the Hon. Member, Ms. Selman, that the Brazilians have brought new techniques in mining in this country and they also created employment for Guyanese. Furthermore, the Wharf at Supenaam is serving us Essequibians, and it is serving us well.

As I stand here today in this National Assembly, there are some Hon. Members I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate for doing what I think or assume to be a fantastic job, and sometimes beyond the call of duty.

First on my list is the Hon. Member, Dr. Bheri Ramsarran, in his capacity as Minister of Health, for being able to medivac Mr. Nigel Hughes from the Interior and to make sure medical arrangements were put in place at the Georgetown Hospital. Hats are off to you, Mr. Minister.

Second on my list are the Hon. Minister Robert Persaud and all those other Members who were influential and helped make the breakthrough for a committee agreement for the restoration of Georgetown to the Garden City.

I congratulate the Speaker because it is not easy, as the Speaker, to reverse his decision pertaining to the Hon. Member, Mr. Clement Rohee, against the decision to gag him against the hostile demand of the Opposition. The Commission of Inquiry has spoken that Minister Rohee is

not responsible and we are fully aware as to those who are responsible for the situation which occurred some months ago.

On Wednesday last, the Hon. Member, Trevor Williams, in quoting from his speech, did refer to past President Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo as “Jagdeo”. I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Lumumba, shouting his disgust. Let us, as Members of Parliament, give kudos to where kudos must be given. After twelve years as the President of Guyana, President Jagdeo was instrumental in the development of Guyana and continues to be recognised worldwide, receiving more honourable doctorates than, I think, any other Guyanese except one. Former President Mr. Jagdeo is the first Chairman of the directors of the prevention of greenhouse gasses which can deplete the ozone layer. What more does the Hon. Mr. Jagdeo, the past President, have to do for some of us to recognise him. Past President Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo is a hero and all of us on this side of this House are very proud of Mr. Jagdeo’s achievements.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, did challenge Mr. Jagdeo in the Court of Law. The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, ended up being \$50,000 poorer. The President is the Executive President, Hon. Member, just like the other Presidents of Guyana, past and present. The Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, I think, was wrongly advised, legally.

From 2012 to date, we did little work in this Parliament. This was because of the approach of the Opposition which failed to cooperate with the Government side of this House which has the people out there at heart, and continue in this vein through the presentation on our 2013 Budget, *“Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana”*.

The Hon. Minister of Finance, Mr. Ashni Singh, and his team have done a fantastic job in compiling this 2013 Budget which speaks about the development of the Guyanese people, be it infrastructure, roads, housing schemes, core homes, agriculture, training, education, medical, mining, tourism, airport development and others.

I heard one Member, in his presentation, state that the Budget is dead on arrival. I wonder if that Hon. Member was serious, because this Budget has benefits for every area in Guyana, be it Buxton, Anns Grove, Plaisance, Agricola, Linden, Dartmouth or Queenstown. Surely, as also mentioned by the Member on that side of the House, this Government does not spend moneys only in the areas where we got large numbers of votes. We are not a selfish Government. We

care for all the people of this country and we will continue to do so. Guyanese are our brothers, our friends, our neighbours, our villages and our regional people. We do not separate our people.

The Hon. Member, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon, some months ago, took his time and categorised the various types of Marriott Hotels. If I remember, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, some seven types of Marriott Hotels were mentioned, and the Hon. Member further stated that instead of the Government looking at the possibility of a cheaper Marriott Hotel, the Government went after one the most expensive types. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let me say this: some 200 plus persons would be employed, and all or almost all would be Guyanese. Further, I appeal to the Hon. Minister to make sure that when the Marriott Hotel is completed, the Hon. Member must be invited to have a free night's rest, and, of course, all the other Members.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker and Hon. Members on both sides of this House, the 2013 Budget indeed speaks for itself. In Region 2, we are very happy with the various allocations for Region 2, Pomeroon-Supenaam. Every sector in Region 2 will benefit from this 2013 Budget. I do not want to go into figures but, if any Member is interested, he or she can check his or her 2013 Estimates.

We, in Region 2, would continue with our programmes, where we left off in 2012. There will be more bridges, more roads, more structures, more vehicles for the Regional Administration, new desks, benches and computers for our schools, improvements in our health system, and so on.

In Region 2, our road cannot take off a steady flow of vehicles because of the investment climate in the Region. Development is everywhere and some homes have, sometimes, three vehicles or more.

The rice industry in Region 2 is producing paddy for the PetroCaribe Agreement with Venezuela and, for this crop, farmers are reaping 40 bags per acre. As I speak, the reaping is in progress and the weather is favourable to our farmers.

Region 2 is developing at all leaps and bounds. We have more than 1,000 mineral investments in the Interior and are producing significantly to the Gold Board so that the 2013 target can be met.

It is a known fact that at Charity there is a branch of the Guyana Gold Board and also a branch of the Citizens Bank, bringing the number of banks in Region 2 to six, namely: Citizens Bank, Demerara Bank, Republic Bank, Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry, New Building Society



bank and IPED bank. All of these banks are doing well in the interest of the people. Banks are always built where money is being circulated. Essequibo is testimony to that.

The Demerara Distillers Limited (DDL), the Busta Company and Banks DIH all had good years in Region 2 to the extent that Banks DIH sold more than \$1 billion in beverages and alcohol in that Region.

Last year, I spoke about a number of vehicle dealers in Region 2. As I speak, the vehicle dealers have increased from seven, in 2012, to 13 in 2013. Only a lazy person cries fowl in Region 2 as a labourer. Demands for their skills in Region 2 are everywhere, be it sawmillers, rice millers or even farmers. Region 2 has the most outstanding student which topped the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) Examination in the Caribbean. Hats are off to the pupil that topped the CSEC Examination, and also to the Hon. Minister of Education for having better systems in place at our schools, which are conducive to learning.

The health sector continues to serve the people of Region 2 with distinction. The medical lunch Janet Jagan continues to serve the people of the Pomeroon with distinction...

We have, in Region 2, new supermarkets everywhere. New hotels continue to answer the tourism drive in Guyana - the Holiday Resort, the Chee Parris, the WD, Xenon, Oasis and others. Our nine Amerindian communities have all shown positive growth, be it housing, new schools, health centres and health posts, or even agriculture, logging and extraction of white sand, which is to be part of the building boom in Region 2.

In my last Budget presentation, I made a request to the Hon. Minister, Robeson Benn, to arrange a trip for Members of this House to travel to Region 2 on the M.V. Sabanto. I would like to repeat that call to the Hon. Minister.

I do not want to go on and on and to bore this House. Let me say this: in Pomeroon, we have developed large portions of land through the block planting system where farmers are benefiting immensely and are producing more food for export from Guyana. There usually is a boat going to Pomeroon and collecting processed food in large quantities for Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean.

Let me say that the rice industry continues to produce because of timely intervention by the Minister of Agriculture and the rice research section of the National Agriculture Research Institute (NARI) and Region 2. We were able to have more than seven new paddy varieties in Region 2. All these varieties are doing well. In the Drainage & Irrigation (D&I) system, we were able to complete all our drains and dams so that our farmers could have benefited immensely throughout last year and even up to now.

The Hon. Member made mention of the sea defences and the Mangrove Restoration Programme. Let it be known to this House that the Mangrove Restoration Programme is a grant of EU\$4 million to the Sea Defence Department for the replanting of Mangroves in this country. In Region 2, we have some very sturdy sea defences although the Hon. Member mentioned that slippages and cavities affect large portions of our sea defence in this country.

The Hon. Member spoke about there being a possible issue with Venezuela if President Maduro loses the elections – we might have a border problem. Let me remind the Hon. Member, “We aint giving up nothing.”

All the rice farmers of Region 2 have sent their belated sympathy to the people of Venezuela and wish President Maduro a successful election on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2013.

In closing, I once again congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance and staff for preparing a people’s budget, titled “*Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana*” and not party-supporter areas. God bless the PPP/C for continued peace, progress and prosperity.  
[Applause]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. I am sure you would want me to add after that, ‘and also all the people of Guyana’. You have certainly re-energised the House. We will have a half of an hour break so that we can further re-energise ourselves. We will recommence at 8.00 p.m. I would like to advise the Members of the Business Sub-Committee that we are having part two of the meeting immediately after we rise.

*Sitting suspended at 7.37 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 8.40 p.m.*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Before I invite the next speaker, I would like to apologise, once again, for the late start. There are certain housekeeping matters of some importance that we are trying to sort out.

**Ms. Kissoon:** Thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

I rise to speak on the Budget as it relates to the people of Region 10 whom I am honoured to represent.

First, let it be recorded that I am not in agreement with thinking that the role of the Legislature is to rubberstamp the decisions of the Executive and the non-executive Members of this House have to accept a budget without question or input. This is not the Middle Ages of feudalism where the rigid structure of government consisted of kings, lords, and peasants, and the upper nobility class maintained control over the lower classes – no; this is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The nation is called the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, governed by a Constitution that says that all are equal and should be so treated, and efforts to make such real are in our representative political system. *Ipsa facto*, the elections and allocation of seats in this House, which are based on a universal process, must see us giving voice and representation to the innate desire for equality by those who have sent us to this House. The power we have is not ours; it belongs to the people, and we must use it in the interest of the people.

Since the Legislature is tasked with oversight responsibility of the State's business, it is a responsibility we must carry with due diligence and purpose and go through this Budget, section by section, line by line, and make amendments as necessary. When this process is over, the Budget must be a national budget, representing the developmental desires of every Guyanese, in every region, be they supporters of the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), Alliance For Change (AFC) or non-aligned. This Budget must see an end to feudalism. It must starve the cats of fat – fat is bad for one's health – and restore some sanity to the economic planning of this country.

No region, regardless of which party controls the Regional Democratic Council (RDC), must be made to feel that the ballots cast in November, 2011, meant nothing or that it meant a few will be the beneficiaries at the exclusion of others.

We must deliver a Budget that strives for justice and equity, one that creates the enabling environment to give the poor opportunity out of poverty; one that respects the constitutional rights of all; one that rewards the labour of the honest and hard-working; one that closes the gap between the haves and have-nots. This is our moment and our time, and we, the Members of this honourable House, must seize this opportunity.

A nation comprising diverse interest and identity must be prepared to equally share the responsibilities, benefits and sacrifices of this beautiful land. Only then can we truly make claim to our national motto, *One People, One Nation, One Destiny*.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Said:

“On some positions, cowardice asks the question, is it expedient? And then expedience comes along and asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? Conscience asks the question, is it right?”

The positions we take on this Budget will answer the questions Dr. King posed.

My colleagues have ably dissected the figures and exposed the discriminatory economic policies of this administration and its hodgepodge approach to governance. The task is mine to put perspective to how these feudal policies will affect the vulnerable in our midst – our women, our children, our youth, our elderly and our working poor – for whom a budget can only have meaning when it respects their innate desire for equal opportunities. It is said, the true measure of a government is the way it treats the vulnerable, and while we sat here and heard outpourings of statistics from Members on the opposite side of the House, purporting to address the needs of the vulnerable, such is a farce.

This is a Budget that has no regard for social and economic justice for all Guyanese. This is a Budget that widens the doors for corruption and exclusion and deepens divisions, distrust, dispossession and dislocation among ordinary citizens who are being used as pawns in the game of the self-serving. We must knock out the koker gate that has allowed for two classes of people. There must be no upper nobility class or peasant class. There is a Guyanese class and we must make sure this Budget reflects it.

I am compelled to inform this House, more specifically the Members of the opposite side, that the true measurement of a people's Government would see it addressing the thriving business of workforce gender abuse, which is having direct impact on the family structure and, more importantly, children, and the employment of women as security guards, janitors, drainage and irrigation workers, where they are expected to protect or maintain the property of another and the environs. They work under abominable conditions and earn meagre pay. This is evident of a dual society and an uncaring government. This matter was raised in this honourable House on the 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2013. It would be interesting to hear what efforts, if any, the Minister of Human Services and Social Security has taken or is prepared to take to correct this injustice.

Region 10's economic dislocation is having two major immediate impact on the family structure: one, it has forced the men folk to migrate to other areas in search of work to provide for the family; and, two, the absence of our men folk has placed greater responsibility on our women to take any job to supplement the family's income or keep the family together until the father can find work or send money. The family structure is under great stress and flux as extended members are also forced to leave the community for work and this is placing a strain on the traditionally held value of a village raising a child. A vacuum is being created in the lives of our children who are missing out on the comfort and guidance of a stable family structure.

Within the school system, there are some pressing issues that need immediate attention, including the lack of furniture and crowded classes. The student/teacher ratio of 40:1 is a recipe for compromised quality delivery in education. There is also need for in-house students' welfare counsellors to help children with needed life skills and to foster productive relationships with their teachers, fellow students and wider society.

In the delivery of education, we all have rights, but with those rights come responsibilities, so all must play their part. In order for us to produce well-rounded students and productive citizens, we must be able to meaningfully and structurally invest in them. Proper play grounds are needed for recreation and training, which are necessary components in the learning process and for healthy lives.

It is my belief that every school should have a state-of-the-art library that would properly channel the inquisitive nature of childhood, even as it offers students the needed grounding in

research, homework and assignments. Library time should also be on the curriculum. We also need a curriculum that addresses local history, from the formation of this land, the struggles and achievements of its peoples, to recent, and this must be done in an honest and forthright manner which brings elucidation to past events and makes known the contributions of all, which is critical to forging a national identity of pride and oneness.

There is need for better pay packages for teachers also.

Region 10 has a branch of the Critchlow Labour College (CLC) and calls on the Executive to restore the subvention in order for Linden to create more ‘Robert Persauds’ – I see the Hon. Minister is not here. When I say more “Robert Persauds”, I mean more persons having the opportunity he had to a Critchlow Labour College education which he used as a base for further educational pursuits and to climb the professional ladder. I appeal to the conscience of this Hon. Minister, even in his absence, to do the right thing and join us in ensuring that this subvention is included in this year’s Budget. Will you join me, Hon. Member? There is no better advocate than a beneficiary.

Workers employed in the Region continue to fight against those who are denying them the security that comes with employment and, I say, the Executive is a leading player in these unjust practices.

As such, it is incumbent upon me to address the statement – in his absence - of the Hon. Minister of Labour, Dr. Nanda Gopaul, which was made yesterday, Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2013, on the industrial dispute between the Guyana Bauxite & General Workers Union (GB&GWU) and the Bauxite Company of Guyana Incorporated (BCGI). This company is situated in Region 10 and I would like to inform the Hon. Member that the comment he made that the Union should have gone to court on the matter of the company refusing to engage them exposes his inability to stand up and do what is right.

May I remind this House that the Bauxite Company of Guyana Incorporated took the matter of arbitration to the High Court, disputing the inconsistency in the Minister’s use of the name Bauxite Company of Guyana Incorporated and RUSAL? It was this Minister, through our State attorneys, who gave the judge the commitment that the inconsistency will be fixed and new letters will be dispatched to start the arbitration process.

The Hon. Member is asked: where is the honour in carrying out his duties under the law for all workers, and not only for the unions who are considered friends of the PPP/C? Where is his demonstration of equality that the Constitution also guarantees the workers in Region 10? Mr. Minister, the Bauxite Company of Guyana Incorporated is owned by RUSAL, a Russian-based company and the people of Guyana. As a citizen of this land, which makes me part-owner of this company, I expect that on this position your conscience would ask the question: is my action right? Surely, the answer will be a resounding no. In like manner, you must act in accordance with the law and your responsibility under the law because it would be the right thing to do. In this moment of question, stand up and be counted as one possessing the strength of character to do what is right.

The Hon. Minister of Housing, who is absent, boasted that 5,869 house lots were allocated in 2012. But the Hon. Minister has withheld critical information such as the exploitation of the people of Linden and Region 10 who are being asked to pay extraordinarily large sums for plots. [Mr. Seeraj: How much is large?] Large is \$500,000, \$300,000, \$150,000. This Minister visits the region in the One Stop Shop outfit, having people practically scrambling at each other and sitting in the hot sun for extended periods before they are attended to. Here is another classic example of feudal thinking and management. These so-called housing schemes do not have light, water, roads or drainage, and, where such exist, there are substandard works.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I pause at this moment to show you a sample of roads, in Region 10, which I have in this bag.

*[Ms. Kissoon displayed the sample.]*

It has two millimetres of thickness. You can walk and kick this. I brought this because roads are being boasted about. The problem, I keep saying, is not the work that is being done. We are not getting value for money and we need substandard works to be stopped in our Region. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, if you need a closer look, I can have this sent to you.

Oftentimes prospective owners are left at their *wits' end* to source financing and the poor has little or no chance of owning a home. [An. Hon. Member: Why did you not bring a picture?] It is better to see the real thing.

It is unfortunate that this has become the new standard of housing development as against a time when prospective homeowners were not only guaranteed financing through cooperatives or national banking institutions to build their homes, but such were done through self-help, creating community environments, and the owner given time off from work to build. When the development was completed, these new homeowners walked or drove down paved roads, with proper drainage and irrigation, turned keys and opened their doors; raised their hands and, by the flick of a switch, turned on their lights; turned on the tap and water flowed; sent their children to play with other children on developed recreational grounds; and held activities in their community buildings.

Our elderly, another vulnerable group, is still to see the deserving dignity that should come with aging and having served this nation in their younger days. An uncaring government plans to increase their pension to \$12,500 which is a measly income when compared to the millions the young so-called Champion of the Earth will receive as monthly pension and benefits.

To the \$2.9 billion budgeted for Linden electricity, it needs to be recorded that this sum forms part of the investment Region 10 made in this country's economy. It came as a result of the sweat, tears and bloodshed by forbearers, us, and those who fell on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2012.

The people of Linden and Region 10 would like to remind this honourable House of their desire for the honouring of the 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2012 agreement with the Government. We want to go ahead with our programmes for economic and social determination, as equally guaranteed to us under the Constitution.

The residents also requested a message be delivered to this House in response to the comments of the Hon. Attorney General, Anil Nandlall, on the recommended compensation by the Linden Commission of Inquiry to the injured and the families of the deceased. This Hon. Member is on record as saying this compensation is a diversion of taxpayers' money.

The people, whom I represent, require that I remind him that they too are taxpayers, so any money being paid to them is theirs and not his. They ask that this House pause and look around this majestic structure, the ornate designs, elegant columns and tasteful craftsmanship and remember that it was built by their ancestors. They ask that as you walk into this compound, take note of the statue and the majestic presence of a man who led the 20<sup>th</sup> century fight for one man,



one vote and internal self-government which made it possible for you to sit within these hallowed halls. They ask that I inform you that when this building was built and Mr. Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow fought for voting rights and self-government, these actions were taken for the benefit of all.

And while they detest the Executive's actions of treating them like second class citizens, they asked that you be told these actions are not the reflection of them, but speak to your character flaw; and the insults you think you are hurling at them, such insults speak to the defilement of those whose mouths they are flowing from.

My constituents asked me to remind you that 300 plus years of slavery, indentureship and colonialism did not kill their spirit, stop their fight or prevented them from pursuing self-development. They have asked me to let you know that you, Members of the opposite side of the House, cannot crush their indomitable spirit. They say that they will not stop until the equality guaranteed them in the Constitution is respected by you, because just as the sun is sure to rise in the east, they know that good is sure to overcome evil.

It would be remiss of me not to address the Hon. Minister of Health, in his absence, who boasted that Linden has one of the best managed hospitals. Today, the nurses went on strike because 76 workers did not receive their gratuity for the month of March. Of this 76, fifty-three are nurses and 23 of them are auxiliary staff. There are about 30 plus single mothers. Among them, the males are the breadwinners of their homes.

I was reliably informed that at the Kwakwani Hospital, there is only \$3,000 in petty cash and at the Linden Hospital Complex (LHC), it is \$30,000. This is grossly inadequate.

The Board of the Linden Hospital Complex needs to be reconfigured. The people of Linden would like the Linden Hospital Complex to be corporatised. Both hospitals must come under the Regional Democratic Council. This process was to be done since in 1997 but the reason it was not corporatised is the Government continues to practice what my Hon. Colleague term as "*control freakism*".

At the Wismar Hospital, there is need for a restroom, two double bunks, a refrigerator to store insulin, and three ambulances. What one finds is that when one ambulance leaves to come to

Georgetown for emergencies, there is no ambulance left in the area and so one could imagine what happens.

The Hospital needs fogging. This should be supplied with urgency if the Hospital is to give the kind of service which is required by the people of Region 10.

I thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ministers, fellow Hon. Members of this honourable House, I had a good experience just now but I thought that I was dreaming because this is the first time I saw a road in a plastic bag. I take cognisance of that.

As I rise to support this 2013 Budget, allow me to congratulate our Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, and his reliable and competent staff for the timely preparation and crystal clear presentation of the 2013 real peoples' budget.

This Budget is consistent with the constitutional provisions as set out in law. This very edifying Budget was presented to this House and the nation with elevated vibrancy of the Hon. Minister of Finance. His robust presentation and his honesty of purpose make the coherence of his plans for the development of this country crystal clear. However, most significant is the fact that the youthful and brilliant Dr. Ashni Singh presented a budget that has its biggest allocation towards education.

Education is not a privilege to the PPP/C; it is a right. This is a Budget that is offering substantial opportunities and benefits to our adolescents, the very young and our youths during their school life. Even when they get married, the Budget offers them that special package which will give them the opportunity to build a house. We can all agree that the greatest gift a young family can receive is that of a home in which that family can be nurtured.

This PPP/C believes in the role of the family. By making sure that the young family has a home, water, electricity and the other basic necessities, our people's family life will be strengthened and there will be less single parents. Our country's greatest asset, our children, will grow up in the loving arms of their mothers and fathers.

The ramblings and the flip-flop, lacklustre presentations of some of the Members of the Opposition are understandable. We, in this honourable House, must appreciate that we are living in better times, thanks to the PPP/C Government.

I am unhappy with the way this House is functioning and, more so, I am in sympathy with the Speaker at the helm of this House. This year, the Guyanese people are celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1973 Corentyne Ballot Box Martyrs. Yes, we were very young and we were motivated to struggle for free and fair elections when we saw how Bholanauth Parmanand and Jagan Ramessar were slaughtered.

Eyewitnesses to that horrific slaughter are still alive; Bijulie Motie, Rishiram Motie and Joe Budhram are still alive. This year, if this nonsense continues, then I feel we should go back to the polls and bring an end to this one-seat majority.

I want to call on the Opposition leaders to let us speak to each other. Let us respect all those who made the supreme sacrifice for the better Guyana that we have today.

*9.10 p.m.*

President Donald Ramotar is a very good listener and I want to assure you that on this side of the House, there are people who are brilliant, reasonable and prepared at any time for any meaningful engagement and consultation.

I call on you to lobby support for your needs and wants, and I am sure that with trust and compromise we will all be able to work together. And, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, remember we had a seminar on trust and confidence.

The theme of this Budget is indeed appropriate: *“Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana.”* This record presentation of a \$208.8 billion Budget is indeed a manifestation of the result of seven consecutive years of growth in our economy. Hence, while this Budget is heavily biased in favour of our young people, I am thrilled to see that the older generation will benefit from a 25percent increase in their old age pension and there is further help with their light bills and water bills. This PPP/C Government earns the right to be described as the most caring, loving and responsible Government in this hemisphere.

Guyana is one of the countries that was seriously short-changed by the colonial masters and when they gave power to the People's National Congress (PNC) that Government also did not provide our people with any proper international sports facilities.

Today, the PPP/C Government can boast that we built a state-of-the-art national stadium at Providence. It is indeed God's gift that our National Cricket Team won two matches there earlier this week.

The Olympic-sized swimming pool is a reality, and last year Guyana hosted the Caribbean Goodwill Swimming Competition. Our visitors were high in their praise for the quality of the pool, and, let me say that I am indeed proud to know that all and sundry are praising us for the quality maintenance provided. Significantly, the main Maintenance Officer is a graduate from Kurukuru College right here in Guyana. This Indigenous son, Gregory La Rose, a graduate from the Electrical Department is proud of the kudos that eminent visitors such as Lord Tiffany from Canada showered on him.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, allow me to also make mention of the fact that at the last Regional Democratic Council (RDC) meeting in Region No.4 the Chairman, Mr. Corlette praised the young plumber attached to the RDC for the efficient and excellent work that he did at his home. Mr. Corlette said that he could not believe that Mr. Guy Thom, a graduate from Kurukuru College, could do such quality plumbing in such a short time.

We have some young vibrant Ministers in this Government. A substantial amount of investment that is put into the New Opportunity Corp (NOC), Kurukuru and other venues come from the initiatives of Minister Dr. Frank Anthony who was able to access fund from NGOs. I invite all Members of this House to visit Kurukuru College and the NOC and you will not believe the quality of equipment and the facilities you see there to continue to provide further training for our youths. The Government believes that we must cajole and nurture our very young people because it is our responsibility to be a Government for all the people.

This 2013 Budget allocated \$1,199,299,000 to ensure that all Guyanese are provided with opportunities to participate in sport activities and programmes thereby channeling their energies, abilities and talents, to contribute meaningfully to national development in all communities in all parts of Guyana.

I want to thank the PPP/C Government, particularly Minister Ashni Singh, for making such a generous allocation to the further development of sport.

Let me further inform this Honourable House that of the aforementioned amount \$560 million has been budgeted for advancing work on the construction of a state-of-the-art synthetic athletic track which will also have the best football-field in the Caribbean. At this venue we will be able to host international athletic events and international football.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, \$52 million has been allocated for us to build a warm-up pool at the National Aquatic Centre so that we will be able to host regional and international swim meets. A further \$300 million will be for development and upgrading of sport facilities and infra-structure countrywide. I am quite sure that all of us in this Honourable House are fully aware of the fact that our youths throughout this country are beseeching us to provide them with better sports facilities.

I would like to call on all Honourable Members of this House to make sure that when we allocate money for the construction and development of facilities that the money is well spent, not for a single group, but for all Guyanese. I hope we will sort out the problem that Mr. Ramayya spoke about; it needs to be sorted out.

I listened to the Hon. Member Mr. Renis Morian's presentation and I listened also to the Hon. Member Vanessa Kissoon. Mr. Morian questioned the Government's position in respect to the appointment of women in Region No. 10. I would like to report the following: Women in management positions in the Regional Democratic Council, Region No. 10 and other agencies Regional Executive Officer Yolanda Hillman, promoted in January, 2012; Deputy Regional Executive Officer Maylene Stephen, promoted in February, 2012; Assistant Regional Executive Officer Leola Narine appointed in August, 2012; Regional Education Officer Jennifer Bourne, promoted in 2012; Regional Health Officer Pansy Armstrong and Administrative Assistant Janicia Anderson promoted in January 2012; District Education Officer Sonia Fraser, Principal Assistant Secretary (Finance) Dolette Powers, Senior Personnel Officer Simone Johnson, District Education Officer (Nursery), and I could go on. But I want to also tell you that for the first time we have a town clerk, Jonell Bowen Appointed in 2012. Even at the Linden Hospital Complex we have the Senior Personnel Officer (LHC) Michelle Bollers, and the Chief Accountant Mrs.

McKinnon. Do you see the balance from what Mr. Morian said? He said he and I are friends; we could still be friends.

The Bauxite Industry. Everyone who worked at the bauxite industry knows that the industry has been unprofitable since 1982. By 1992 the then President Desmond Hoyte threatened to close the industry since it was costing the Government more than US\$5 million to keep it going. The PPP/C Government under Cheddi Jagan had the Alumina Plant functioning and in 1982 the PNC closed the Alumina Plant sending home approximately 1,200 workers. The PPP/C in full respect to the people in the Linden Community kept faith in the Company. BOSAI came in and over the last three years they are showing a profit. In 2012 the Company made a net profit of US\$14.8 million. The Company employed 640 persons directly with 18 foreigners only while more than one thousand persons are employed on contract and otherwise. After all the years of the bauxite industry only last year we saw the provision of a dust collector at Kiln No. 14. And I want to assure this House that all systems are put in place to have a dust collector at Kiln No.13 shortly – by June. Thank you Minister.

Linden Economic Advancement Programme (LEAP)-as a result of the failure of Minproc to make the Bauxite Company profitable and the heavy loss of employment, the PPP/C Administration embarked on a study to look at methods of diversification from being dependent on bauxite only. Hence the birth of the LEAP project which was the brain child of his Former President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo. That project was financed under a grant from the European Union; the project commenced in 2002.

Because of what my friend over there said I will just mention a few of the projects that came out of LEAP:

Rehabilitation and extension of West Watooka farm to market Road

- Installation of Culverts at West Watooka
- Rehabilitation of Moblissa road.
- Rehabilitation to 3 sluices/Kokers and Burnham Drive. And when we talk about road when we came in Government in 1992 Burnham Drive and Arvida Avenue were dust; this Government put asphalt so residents could drive freely with no more dust.

- Construction of Spreightland Bridge
- Rehabilitation of the Mackenzie Car Park
- Construction of sub-office at Ituni RDC.
- Rehabilitation of Mackenzie Wharf and Building of stalls
- Rehabilitation of Himara Road
- Construction of water System at Moblissa
- Construction of Egbert Benjamin Exhibition Center—at Mackenzie

#### Investments in Linden:

- Bai-Shanlin-Wood-Timber Processing. And only yesterday the Hon. Minister told you about the advertisement in your favourite paper Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Stabroek News.
- Toucan connection invested US\$510,000
- Triple L's bakery invested US\$10,000.
- GNIC Container Yard invested US\$855,000 preparing for Linden / Brazil operation.
- JB metals workshop and operations invested G\$80 million at the old rail road area,
- L&L Modern Restaurant invested over G\$45 million
- A & R Collision Workshop invested over G\$35 million.
- We now have two new commercial banks – Citizens and NBIC.

Courts establish a business in Linden. And there are many hardware stores now to match the growing housing drive. Now there is Churches Fast Food in Linden. There are many other businesses in operation that I have not mentioned.

12.5 Million Euro was put into LEAP; 701 loans were approved and 752 were disbursed. The history of that will come out shortly.

Housing - The first well-planned housing scheme that was built in Linden was the Wismar Housing Scheme under the then Minister of Housing the late President Janet Jagan. Since the PPP/C took office in 1992 more than 4,000 persons received house lots at Block 22, Amelia's Ward and in other areas. Thank you very much Minister Irfaan Ali. Very shortly another 1,000 house lots will be distributed. The Government is spending approximately \$500 million to develop phase three of the Amelia's Ward project and development works are underway. Thank you Minister Irfaan Ali.

Agriculture was absent from Region No.10. There was the Siripana Farm, who liquidated it? There was the Goat Farm, who liquidated it? Answer -over \$150 million was spent in developing the West Watooka farming area with access road and drainage. Over \$30 million was spent to rehabilitate the road at Moblissa.

I listened to the Education report and I want to tell you that when I first came into this Parliament about 10 years ago I was fortunate to be in London at a Commonwealth parliamentary programme and one night while in my hotel room I was amazed to see the BBC News reporting about Minister Henry Jeffrey who was the Minister of Education. The report since then said that Region No.10 has the most graduates and most trained teachers per capita in this country. And it still is, like last year when young Allen was the top common entrance student in this country. It was the first time in the history that a student from Linden topped this country.

Education:

- All the existing Schools in Region No.10 were rehabilitated since 1992.
- Linden Foundation School (new) at Amelia's Ward cost over \$250 million. And this is the best secondary school, construction wise, in the Caribbean. In fact there is a contest in Region No.10. The Mackenzie High School is seen as Former President Burnham High School, the High School over at Wismar, where all the dust used to go, is seen as President Hoyte's High School, but the Linden Foundation, the best constructed, is seen as Bharrat Jagdeo High School. This is the sentiment of the people in Linden.



- New Wisburg Secondary School at Wisroc Cost over \$350 million.
- New St. Aidians Primary School at Blue Berry Hill cost over \$ 200 million.
- New Watooka Primary School at Watooka, cost over \$120 million.
- New Primary School was built at Kwakwani.
- New Primary School was built at Ituni.
- New Primary School was built at Malali.
- New Primary School was built at Muritaro.
- New Primary School was built at Great Falls.
- New Primary School was built at 47 Miles.
- New Primary School Built at 58 Miles.

We also built two hostels, one in Mackenzie and another in Kwakwani and they are functioning. Thank you very much Minister Priya Manickchand.

When we talk about Health we must be fair and honest. There is a new state of the art hospital built at Mackenzie at a cost of \$1.8 billion. We must be fair in our comments.

In Linden surroundings, I want to tell you that health centres were built that did not exist under the previous government. A new health centre was built at One Mile replacing the old one. A new health centre was built at West Watooka, Amelia's Ward, Siberian/Old England, Coomacka and Three Friends. Other Health Centre/Post in Region No.10 that did not exist under the PNC, One was built at Ituni, at Malali, Demerara River, at Muritaro, Demerara River, at 47 Miles, at Rockstone, at 58 Miles, Anarika and Great Falls. And in the Berbice River at De Veldt, Calcuni, Ebini, St. Lust, Maria Henrietta, Hururu, and Wiruni thanks to the PPP/C Government.

We come to social and sports facilities. I want to tell my good Friends Trevor Williams and Christopher Jones that...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Honourable.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Yes, Honourable; they are Honourable. Mdm. Deputy Speaker you did not listen when the speaker before me did not talk about Honourable. I hope we have the verbatim notes to see that. But I agree with you that I must say honourable. Minister Anthony now has the sports policy and plan for the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. We will be making this available to the nation shortly. So I want to assure my Comrades that we will be getting it.

Social and sport facilities - it is this Government which built the Community Centre at Christianburg. This PPP/C government built a community centre at Bayroc, a community centre at Silvertown, and a community centre at Coomacka, community centre at Maria Elizabeth, community centre at Wiruni, bleachers at West Watooka Ground, bleachers at Ituni Ground. And yes, Brother Odinga, I agree with you, you gave the money and you helped to rehabilitate the Basketball Court at Mackenzie and at Amelia's Ward too. Thank you Brother Odinga.

In respect to the Berbice Bauxite operations, the Company produced \$1.6 million tonnes of Bauxite in 2012 while in 2013 the Company is projecting to produce \$1.8 million tonnes. We must appreciate that Rusal has more equipment in the Company than any other Company in the history of Guyana.

Allow me to inform this House about RUSAL's Contribution to the Community; Rusal's contributions to Guyana's rural economy – for workers transportation, last year they spent \$133.8 million; sports for mini Olympics \$2 million.

For example, when the sister said the team went to Antigua, but the Government did not support the National Sports Commission under the advice of the Hon. Minister gave to that team financial support and assisted them to go to Antigua. I want to assure you of that.

Hururu Amerindian Day \$0.5 million; road repairs at Kwakwani for 2012 \$1.5 million; Linden/Kwakwani Road \$2 million; the Company put \$2.5 million to pay Aroaima Teachers last year; bus fuel for Hururu, \$4.4 million and for Kwakwani \$164,000; Maple Town cost the Company \$256.3 million to maintain; free house for workers \$136 million; monthly bonus for the year 2012, 30 percent; safety bonus for the year 2012, \$51.2 million; heavy equipment training \$14.2 million; because when the people are trained they are going for more lucrative and better salaries in the interior.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member your time is up, you will need an extension.

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

*Question put and carried*

**Mr. Neendkumar:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in 2013 local contractors will be employed with 40 trucks.

The Company will construct: a complete new dryer, a complete new crusher, and a complete new plant. There will also be a new port and new office buildings. While the Company has 506 persons on their payroll, there are approximately 900 persons working with contracts and sub-contracts.

I am proud to report to this Honourable House that our young athletic team that competed at the just concluded Junior Carifta Games in Bahamas and arrived home this morning won six medals for their homeland. Jevina Straker, a student of Tutorial High School, won Gold – her second gold Medal at the Games; fourteen-year old Cassey George of the Mining Town Linden who attends Christianburg/Wismar Secondary School was our top performer with a Gold in the girls Under-17 1,500 metres, and a Silver in the 800 metres while Tirana Mitchell, Jason Yaw and Kadicia Baird won Bronze medals. It is pleasing to also announce that young Andrea Foster won a Gold medal last week at the FALCON Championships in Trinidad. Guyana is on the rise. Let us give our unflinching support to the 2013 Budget as prepared by the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you Hon. Member. I now invite the Hon. Member Mr. Jaipaul Sharma to make his contribution.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, please allow me to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for the excellent Budget presentation - as he is known for articulating and compiling such a Budget - and also the staff of the Ministry of Finance, and staff of the Ministries, Departments and Regions in compiling their budgets submissions for the Regions. Nevertheless,

the views that will be expressed by me will be the views of the plenty poor people of Guyana. I am obligated to represent the people of Guyana by being the voice of the people in keeping with Article 9 of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana which states:

“Sovereignty belongs to the people who exercise it through their representatives and the democratic organs established by and under this Constitution.”

Let me confess that the majority of the people of Guyana say Budget 2013 at a glance is undoubtedly a good budget for all Guyana. Reinforcing this is the theme of Budget 2013 *“Overcoming Challenges Together, Accelerating Gains for Guyana”* This is where the problem exists. The Budget 2013 was not crafted for the people of Guyana but rather for Guyana. It was crafted for the rich and middle income earners, the large and medium scale enterprises and finally for the destitute of Guyana that will be locked away but nothing for the working poor, the small man, the real man, earning the minimum wage.

After the more than three-hour presentation by the Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March, the length of the presentation and the assertion that the \$208.8 billion Budget is the largest ever being there was \$88.3 percent increase over the 2012 \$budget gives the erroneous impression that these facts alone make the Budget an excellent one. The Hon. Minister of Finance mentioned the sterling performance of the economy and all these things are commendable achievements for this administration. However, our poor and ordinary citizens are asking the question about what all this sectoral growth means since there is little or no improvement in the standard of living.

Several times the people of Guyana have heard the Hon. Minister say the largest budget ever. What does this mean for the plenty poor people of Guyana? Does the Government use the largeness to pay the public sector employees a decent living wage or a public assistance increase that is truly meaningful or alternatively to ensure that old age pensions are adequate? The answer is no.

No meaningful engagement was embarked on with the respective union representing public sector employees to determine the decent living wages, not even an interim salary increase was mentioned in the Budget although Volume 1 of the Estimates of the public sector page 44 Agency 3 - Ministry of Finance, Programme 031-Policy Administration under Line Item 6141,

Revision of Wages and Salaries, contains \$4.4 billion. This amounts to \$17.7 percent over what was allocated in Budget 2012. What else must the Guyanese people expect from a Government that is bold enough to glorify commitment and renege on its implementation? As the Hon. Minister of Finance indicated at paragraph 3.20 of the 2013 Budget speech that in keeping with the stated preference of the multiyear agreement as the basis for setting emoluments in a predictable manner Government concluded with the Guyana Teachers Union in the first half of 2011 a second 5-year agreement from 2011 to 2015 which provided for predictable salary increase along with addressing a number of non-salary benefits of the teaching profession in the public sector. However, the Minister of Finance saw it fit not yet to pay the 5% increase and not to include this increase in the Estimates for the year 2013 to reflect the agreed upon increase in salary with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2013, and not to implement the other non-salary benefits. In addition also, there was no mention of increase in public assistance to the vulnerable Guyanese including those living with disability. Therefore, those receiving public assistance will have to be content with the miserly amount of \$5,900 per month for 2013- shame, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

*9.40 p.m.*

This represents a deviation from the norms, whereby in previous budgets, both public assistance and old aged pensions would receive an increase. As in 2012, when the Hon. Minister of Finance announced an increase, both the public assistance and the old aged pension was increased by 7% and 8% respectively, but a public assistance of \$5,900 per month with effect from May, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 being announced.

In addition, did this largest Budget deal with our most important problem of unemployment and underemployment, in particular, the youth population? The Government love to exaggerate that over 4000 students will be writing Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) this year or alternatively boast of the large number of graduates coming out of the University of Guyana. The University of Guyana graduated 1480 students at the 46<sup>th</sup> Vocational Ceremony. In addition, Cyril Potter College of education graduate 862 educators at its 78<sup>th</sup> Vocational Ceremony. The Government did not address the employment opportunities that persons will be having. This is what is lacking in this budget. Every year, a similar amount of person will be graduating and the employment opportunity is diminishing.

Did this largest budget address the situation of the flight of skills and most of all, the tax burden, in particular Value Added Tax (VAT)? In relations to VAT, Guyana had undertaken a major reform of its taxation system. Guyana adapted a VAT Act and also enacted Excise Act legislation in 2005. The VAT which took effect on January, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007 at a general rate of 16% replaced Consumption Tax, Service Tax, Hotel Accommodation Tax, Entertainment Tax, Purchase Tax and Telephone Tax. Although there was the debate on the VAT Bill in 2005, in the Hon. House, the Government Ministers emphasised that the overall collection of VAT, plus Excise Tax would be revenue neutral; whatever that means. Since the implementation of VAT, the prices of commodities increased. This seems to suggest the prior existence of a very strong underground economy involved in smuggling and under invoicing, which ironically appears now to have benefited the poor working class. Even more ironic now, with the implementation of VAT plus Excise Tax, the Government is collecting a significant windfall at the disadvantage of the poor working class. Page 12, paragraph 3.22, of the 2013 Budget Speech, indicates that the Value Added Tax (VAT) and Excise Tax collection increased by 7.2% to \$56.8 billion.

In addition, VAT on the domestic supply of goods amounted to \$14.8 billion or 13% above 2011. This amount is what the poor people are paying. It was \$14.8 billion the Government collected in 2012. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, you may be interested to know that the Hon. Minister projected in the Estimates of the Public Sector, Current and Capital Revenue Expenditures for the year 2013, Volume 1, revenue collected for VAT on the domestic supply of goods in the sum of \$16.5 billion or 11.5% over 2012. Page 13, paragraph 3.23, of the 2012 Budget Speech which indicates that Value Added Tax (VAT) and Excise Tax collection increased by 9.7% to \$53 billion. In addition, VAT on the domestic supply of goods amounted to \$13.1 billion or 7.7% above 2010. What this is indicating here is a progressive increase of VAT that the poor is paying. For 2013, the Minister is projecting a \$16.5 billion or an 11.5% increase. Maybe the Hon. Minister may see it fit to ultimately reduce the VAT from 16% to 14% in the first instance during the 2013 Debates.

The people want to know whether this budget offers them a better quality of life and guarantees a better quality of service, security and consumer protection. Whilst most Guyanese use these and other relevant indicators to determine the excellence of the budget, it is the view of the many Guyanese that the Budget is a disappointment. It is not going to significantly transform the

people's lives because of the absence of programmes to address the working poor and vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. Further, it is the view of the people of Guyana that the Government's responsibility is to put in place policies that will give the poor and vulnerable people hope and skills to build their capacity. Therefore, priority must be given to projects that raise the level of income and creation of permanent jobs.

In keeping with Article 1 of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana which states:

“Guyana is an indivisible, secular, democratic sovereign state in the course of transition from capitalism to socialism and shall be known as the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.”

However, it is seen that the PPP/C Government is in the course of transition from socialism to capitalism, which is a direct violation of Article 1 of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. Socialism speaks about the people; capitalism speaks about business people. This budget is about business people and not the people. It is a violation of the Constitution.

A preliminary assessment of Budget 2013 will reveal that whilst there are a few goodies, such as, reduction in the Personal Income Tax rate, increase in pension for senior citizens, increase in the tax free threshold for Property Tax, introduction of a mortgage interest relief and an old aged pension electricity assistance programme, they are all illusions. No real attempt has been made to give any substantial increase in the minimum wages to enable the purse of the poor public servants and teachers at the lower end of the salary scale to cope with the rising cost of living. The abovementioned goodies is of no relevance to the thousands of workers categorised as clerks, office assistants, handymen, drivers, cleaners, labourers and many other workers in the Public Service. In addition, security guards, sales girls and factory workers in the Private Sector, proprietors of small businesses, carpenters, masons and other self employed individuals, all whose gross pay is less than \$40,000 per month, do not even presently benefit from the \$50,000 threshold announced in Budget 2012. Needless to say that they would obviously not benefit from the reduction in the Personal Income Tax Rate announced in Budget 2013.

Let me examine the reduction in the Personal Income Tax Rate from 33 1/3% to 30%. The Public Sector employee earning \$51,000, that is \$1,000 over the tax threshold of \$50,000, would receive on \$33 more on his net salary. However, the Public Sector Employee who is earning \$51,000 per month, to maximum of \$150,628 per month - being the maximum ceiling for National Insurance Scheme (NIS), will now have to pay 1% increase on its employees' contribution, which works out to be, at a minimum \$510 and a maximum of \$1506. So the employee that is getting \$1000 and benefitting from the reduction in the Payee is \$33 savings, but he will be paying \$510 to the NIS; so he is worst off at the end of it. His take home pay salary would be less coupled with that of transportation and food bills, which will go up because of the unscrupulous business community that embrace this budget. They will increase the prices because they believe the people are taking home more money, which is not true. However, the poor will have to pay because there is no price control mechanism. It does not matter what amount of salary they receive, even with a Constitution that says, "Guyana is in the course of transition from capitalism to socialism". Shame!

All what the poor working class is asking for is when they would actually begin to see a change in their pocket. Needless to say, the working poor Guyanese do not take loans to build their homes. They live in what many would call "slum like conditions". They cannot even qualify for a small loan, much less to borrow up to \$30 million to meaningfully benefit from the mortgage interest relief. In addition, needless to say, their mansions do not value \$40 million in order for them to benefit from the increase in the Property Tax threshold. Budget 2013 appears to be more of a political management tool in preparation for elections and to test the joint Opposition resolve.

It is the camouflage of figures intended to dazzle and bemuse. It is one designed to bail out Government's cooperation, plagued with inefficiencies and mismanagement. As can be seen with the \$1 billion to be transferred by Government to GuySuCo; the \$11.2 billion to be provided to Guyana Power and Light Company (GPL); the additional \$590 million representing electricity subsidies to old age pensioner; and the \$215 million to be paid to the NIS, representing the 1% increase in contribution payable with respect to the employed persons whose income is not more than \$50,000 per month.



It is the view of the people of Guyana that the abovementioned entities need institutional restructuring and depoliticisation to address the current situation of the mismanagement and efficiency before any funding is considered. The continual bailouts are preventing much needed financial resources from being utilised to pay better wages and salaries, old aged pensions, public assistance, reduction in VAT and the reduction in the Berbice Bridge toll.

Further, Budget 2013, this \$208.8 billion budget and the largest ever contains \$85.7 billion and appears to provide for handing an identified group of contractors, both locally and internationally, large contracts for the procurement of goods and the execution of works without a fair equitable transparent process and without safeguards on corruption. No meaningful attempt is being made by this PPP/C Government to have the members of the Public Procurement Commission appointed in accordance with Article 212 X, paragraph 2 of the Constitution.

Needless to say, the PPP/C have not yet submitted the nominees for the Public Procurement Commission to be nominated by the Public Accounts Committee and approved by the National Assembly before being appointed by the President. Shame Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Any responsible thinking political party that demands transparency, accountability and an end to pervasive corruption that is so wide spread in Guyana would want to put the necessary systems in place to curb the situation. Even more reasons to do so, after knowing that the budget would be the largest ever, at \$208.8 billion, with a \$69.6 billion budgeted for total audit charges and \$85.7 billion budgeted for Capital Expenditure.

To reinforce my argument, in this year alone at least 74% of \$155.3 billion of Public Expenditure relates to the procurements of goods and services as well as the execution of work. However, there was nothing mentioned in the 2013 Budget Speech about the long awaited, as I mentioned, Public Procurement Commission to oversee all the Government procurements and the functioning of the various tender boards and to ensure that the contracts to the value of billions of taxpayers' dollars are awarded transparently and not skived in after the handpicked contractors through a flawed tendering process that is currently opened to manipulation.

It is not secret that there is huge public dissatisfaction in the way contracts are awarded and the quality of works executed, such as, the yearly procurement of drugs and medical supplies for the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation and the Ministry of Health with the prices, which are a

far cry from being realistic and competitive. The many PPP/C flag ship projects, like the bongle's US\$15.4 million contract which was handed to Synergy Holdings. The company had an address which was sari and puja Shop, in Florida and was given the money to build the Amaila Falls and the overpriced Marriot at US\$60 million. It was reported sometime that a similar project of this nature in Jamaica would cost about quarter of this amount.

In addition to this, there is the Specialty Hospital the Government is building for US\$18 million. In addition to that is the \$150 million expansion of the Cheddi Jagan International Airport (CJIA). It was also reported that at St. Martin, the Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) was being built at \$117 million, also overpriced; in addition to this is the barber shop company, who in 2011 received \$1.46 billion in contracts; the \$804 million Amaila Falls Project and; in the \$20 million Skeldon Factory...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member your time is up, but before Ms. Ally moves the motion to give you your final time, I will ask the Hon. Prime Minister to move the necessary motion so that we can go beyond 10 p.m.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I propose that we suspend Standing Order No.10 so that we may proceed and complete the speakers listed for this evening.

*Motion put and carried.*

*Standing Order No.10 suspended.*

**Ms. Ally:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I moved that the Hon. Member be given five minutes to complete his presentation.

*Question put and carried*

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. Member please proceed.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Sectorial developments and the agenda for 2013; Goal - the people of Guyana believe that more could have been done if the Government would have addressed the haemorrhaging of the gold, diamond and timber industry where the loss of revenue is of the greatest.

Rice – the Hon. Minister of Finance indicated that rice production was reaching unprecedented levels of greater than 450,000 tonnes annually. However, there was no mention of the hard work that the rice farmers put in producing the rice and all the challenges they face. Now they are facing attacks by wild cows and so forth. Only today, I received complaints from the rice farmers about long lines at the mills. Some millers are taking the paddy, but the price is not giving to the rice farmers. For the last crop, the rice farmers mentioned that they received \$4100 per bag of paddy and now the price is being talked about of \$3500 - \$6500 per bag. The rice farmers are saying this is inadequate and they cannot live on such meagrely sums. It is hoped that this matter can be addressed as soon as possible, since rice is in the field presently waiting to be cut, but apparently there is no market. Thank you. [Applause]

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much. I now invite the Hon. Member, Ms. Eula Marcello to make her presentation to the 2013 Budget.

**Ms. Marcello:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. I once again rise to lend my support to the Alliance for Change (AFC) Members who have spoken before me on the 2013 Budget, themed by the Government, “*Overcoming challenges together, accelerating gains for Guyana.*” I am left to wonder how serious this Government is about its theme. Is there real commitment to a unified approach to the challenges we face? I have doubts because prior to the release of the Estimates, the Alliance for Change made repeated calls urging that together the Government and the Opposition work to develop a National Budget that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of the people of Guyana. All of this fell on deaf ears as there were some, half hearted to engage the AFC. So, the Government did its duty and prepared Budget 2013. Now, the AFC must do its duty and its duty is to the people of Guyana to ensure that their dreams are realised, that the needs of the people are met and our children’s future is secured. The Government of this country needs to accept constructive criticisms coming forward from the Opposition’s benches and build policies upon these criticisms and create an efficient Government towards the good of the Nation.

Let me focus on education. Education prepares young people for the outside world. At this point, I need to commend this Government for trained teachers, infrastructural developments, even for the availability of outdated text books. We are happy with the universal education, but what about the further training. As I mentioned in my 2012 speech, there is no motivation for students

who would have had excelled in the CSEC examinations, no scholarships for tertiary education as in the case of two top students of Paramakatoi Secondary School in 2010 and one in 2011. Therefore, I suggest that this Government puts strong emphasis on manpower planning as a number one priority on its national agenda, since equality is what we are looking for not only on the Coast, but throughout Guyana.

Overcrowding in schools continue to plague the hinterland communities since the population increases rapidly in these hinterland areas. The Government needs to cater for the next five years ahead when establishing schools in these areas. Paramakatoi Primary School is still not completed since its commencement in early 2012. Students continue to be housed at Paramakatoi Church of Christ and multi-purpose halls. I am concerned about a church being used to house children. We are not in the 1960's where education was delivered in mission homes. This Government with so much pride cannot speed up the process of the construction of this school. Such projects need proper monitoring to ensure timely construction.

Hard lying and station allowances for teachers have not been given to teachers in Region 8, since an agreement was signed between the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Teachers' Union in 2011.

In-availability of learning resources - Meals for dorms - meat being spoiled while waiting to be transported, reaches its location in a very bad state for human consumption. Accommodation for teachers from the coast continues to pose a problem in interior locations, as in the case of Ms. Vanessa, who is a trained teacher and also a graduate from the University of Guyana (UG). She had gone to Mahadia Secondary School to extend her services, but was put out of the room she was occupying by the Regional Administration at the Regional Guest House, while she was at work. The head teacher had to spend approximately two weeks sleeping on a chair and went to work from same. Travelling allowances for teachers from the coast have not been provided.

Health: In spite of millions allocated for the Health Sector every year to provide adequate pharmaceuticals and timely services to the people of Guyana, we continue to suffer inadequacies in medical supplies. The hospital bond is yet to be fixed; there is no electricity, no proper storage for pharmaceuticals nor ventilation.

By the way, yesterday afternoon around 3 o'clock, I got a message from a colleague saying that after the speeches given by the Hon. Members, Dr. Norton and the Hon. Member Bulkan, when the message reached to Mahdia, the Regional Executive Officer (REO) of Region No. 8 had to pick up a team and they went running to the bond. That same afternoon the installation of bulbs in the bond began.

Crives are sent to the Materials Management Unit quarterly for drugs supply. It takes one month to be processed; in the meantime we suffer shortages. On various occasions we are supplied with expired drugs which gives us no other option, but to use them at our risk. Dr. Ramsammy knows about this. He visited and the condition in which he saw the bond remains the same, as when he was a Minister.

Is this improvement and timely services? The malaria drugs are supplied in small quantities to endemic areas, this is an insult to the Regions affected. Transportation is still an issue in Region No. 8. In spite of moneys allocated to purchase a truck and a 4x4 ATV for the hospital, this remains a dream and has not become a reality. Now I can see in 2013, moneys being allocated to purchase an ambulance. Paramakatoi Health Centre does not have any means of transportation. Critical patients from Red Creek, Bamboo Creek, Taruka, Kairisparu, et cetera are transported to P.K. Health Centre via the traditional way of hammock tied to stakes to make the stretchers. I would like to know where the moneys for 2012 have gone, those that were allocated for health.

*10.10 p.m.*

Security: I am concerned about the nurses and doctors who work at night on night shifts without 24-hour security in spite of moneys allocated yearly to cater for this purpose. As in the case, recently, at Mahdia District Hospital, nurses were attacked around 11.00 p.m. which made nurses jump through the window with a patient, a child, at that time to escape. As usual, police were called and they arrived after a while, at which time the person had gone. I need to see 24-hour security at these institutions since these hardworking nurses and doctors need complete protection.

Mining: I wish to commend the miners at this time for producing gold under serious circumstances, such as malaria, which has contributed to our country's economy. As mining continues to breathe economy, we need a bank in Region No. 8 so that savings could be done by

miners to improve their living standards because we cannot continue to put our savings under our mattresses or in our pillows. Mining is one of the major economic activities in Region No. 8. As a result of this prostitution is on the rise – not all of them – crime is on the rise, drug abuse is on the rise, school dropouts are on the rise, unemployment is on the rise, illegal mining is on the rise. Therefore with the implementation of roads joining our borders one can find people from neighbouring areas using that as back track to come into Region No. 8 to extract and carry away gold. They do not sell the gold that they extract from there to the Gold Board. This is what I am talking about. This is not something untrue. This is a true something. ...such as Brazil. Brazilians come in, in numbers every single day. Therefore security is needed in these areas but the police in these hinterland locations lack resources to effectively carry out their duties; as in the case of Mahdia, police only have one functional ATV. Since the hinterland is a safe haven for criminals the police need to be properly equipped to do their work. For instance if there is a criminal activity in Black Water police are handicapped from responding swiftly so by the time they reach by some means the law breakers will all be gone. What is the Government doing about this? Therefore these criminals walk free in the hinterlands while the families affected lack justice.

As the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan often said, “this country is too rich to be so poor”. The hinterland is too rich for its people to be so poor.

Electricity: I saw moneys in this budget to keep MPL running, we welcome that. By the way, I am concerned about the frequent blackouts which residents say destroy their appliances. When the Hon. Prime Minister visited the area earlier this year the issue was brought to his attention. He promised that an additional generator will be purchased to back up the existing ones and this Government is committed to doing so. In the 2013 Budget I have not seen any allocation for same. Is the Hon. Prime Minister still dreaming?

Electricity in Campbelltown: Residents of Campbelltown continue to ask question as to when electricity poles will be erected in their area. During the visit by our Hon. Minister of Amerindian Affairs this question was raised. To their disappointment the Minister said that she does not have an answer to this and that instead they should seek answers from the people they voted for. Is this togetherness?

Water: The water situation in many communities in Region No. 8 has improved to some extent. We have water on and off. At Paramakatoi an additional well has been dug and residents will enjoy potable water very soon, anyway; not all of the things are bad, thanks to the Government. I cannot say that they are doing nothing. However, the development in these areas is very poor and limited.

Roads: Roads have been fixed to some extent after a protest action spearheaded by the AFC which saw the whole of Mahdia shut down. The Regional Executive Officer of Region No. 8 is a very hard person to convince when it comes to work. He takes his time to respond but I would like to see speedy response to serious issues affecting the people this year.

Tolls have been removed. Drivers traversing Mango Landing do not have to pay tolls anymore thanks to the Regional Chairman who had to pursue this issue diligently while having consultations with Ministers concerned. The Regional Executive Officer needs to work closely with RDC this year and put the recommendations of these representatives and aim at moving Region No. 8 forward since most communities are still 1,000 years behind national progress.

Toshaos stipend need to be raised from \$20,000 to \$40,000 since this is inadequate for them as they are mandated to carryout day to day affairs of their villages. They are hardworking people.

There is much to be done to make the Guyanese populace comfortable. The Government does not do good things for people because they are close to its heart but rather because of his obligation as the President and we cannot be fooled by the strong words of Ministers on the other side that Government is helping people because they are close to its heart. This budget does not address, fully, the needs of the working class and the poor

Pensioners: The increase in pensions: The hinterland pensioners will not enjoy the additional provisions for GPL and water because they are not the customers to these entities. They, therefore, should be given their \$15,000 pension.

Amerindian Title Lands: Titling of Amerindian Lands: The moneys allocated to do Amerindian land titling we welcome, just as usual, as Amerindians, but when I read an article written in the Guyana Times, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, where Amerindians were referred to as second defenders to the land I am doubtful that these lands, when titled, would see complete jurisdiction of the

Village Councils over these lands since the judicial system, the officials and the Constitution have often failed us in respect to protection of our rights and privileges.

We have been promised a better Guyana during campaigns but right now it has turned out to be a bitter Guyana. It is a sad day for Amerindians under the PPP/C's 20-year government. Our right to healthy environment, safe drinking water, as in the case of Kako is shattered. Article 181, Article 22 which says that property cannot be taken away from people without compensation have not been respected, as in the case of Issenaru. The judicial system has shown no regard to human dignity and worth by disregarding the Amerindian Act 2006 as invalid and denying us our right to occupy our ancestral lands without discrimination.

In closing, after saying all this, I would like to urge this Government to join with us to include all Guyanese across Guyana to be part of the development process and stop dreaming upon the critical issues affecting Guyanese. It is time to wake up, Mr. Government, and realise the reality of our mistakes and work towards change and stop trying to cover up your weaknesses with the Opposition. It is time to look forward rather than consistently looking back to the 1990's. It is time we heal Guyana of its nightmares. People of Guyana, let us work together for change. The Alliance For Change is in the forefront of this effort and we stand ready to work with all who truly love this country to make it better, thank you. [*Applause*]

**Mr. Nadir:** Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker

Firstly, I would like to join in the condolences expressed yesterday on the passing of the late Rev. Dr. Dale Bisnauth, a colleague with whom I shared five years in Cabinet and also had the opportunity to work five years with as Chairman of the Board of Industrial Training.

Secondly, I joint with my colleagues in extending heartiest congratulations to the Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, on the presentation of this budget and I highly commend the work of he, Minister Edghill and the team at the Ministry of Finance.

This is another budget in a history of PPP/C budgets that has overseen the largest expansion in Guyana's history. It is the biggest budget that I have seen; big, balanced and befitting its presentation and passage.



The PPP/C Government has inherited a lot of destruction from the Former People's National Congress and listening to the Members of the Opposition, in particular Members from the People's National Congress under the umbrella of APNU, one would feel that we have taken Guyana down a road of destruction, of poverty. They have removed from questioning the economic performance in previous budgets here - the Opposition used to question the numbers and the compilation of the growth statistics. Significant in 2013, they have now laid these unfounded allegations, as the Hon. James Bond mentioned, of Guyanese living today in squalor and poverty.

While we know vestiges of poverty that still exist in our country, it is far different than we had in 1992 and far different under the People's National Congress. I have said over and over in this Parliament that I do not like to argue over the facts. I like to argue with the facts. Let us establish what those facts are under the People's National Congress and the failed policies of the Hon. Carl Greenidge during that time, and I repeat, failed policies. He has the temerity today to stand up and criticise this Government? Failed policies! In 1987 when they introduced the fixed exchange rate of \$10 to \$1, with one fell swoop of the pen... The exchange rate, officially was \$4.8 to \$1 and with one fell swoop of the pen the then failed Finance Minister moved it to \$10. The parallel rate was \$11 and when that fixed exchange rate... [*Interruption*] This is history and they are trying to rewrite history - some people want to rewrite history today. The parallel rate dropped to \$45 to \$1. Do you know who got impoverished, Mdm. Deputy Speaker? People like me and you who had some fixed deposits in the bank, who worked hard...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I never had fixed deposits then and I still do not have.

**Mr. Nadir:** All the Guyanese who put their hard earned savings into banks immediately got impoverished. Their wealth got diminished by three-quarters over night. That is what the Hon. Clive Thomas said, that that is the social debt. Dr. Roopnarine, the Hon. Member, heard his colleague speak time and time about the social debt that the People's National Congress owe to this country.

When we talk about the failed policies of the People's National Congress, industrial production in the last three years of the regime was 3%, 8%, 10% – the last three years – and they have the temerity to lecture us about growth and about poverty.

Let us talk a little bit about poverty. The Hon. Volda Lawrence used the weight of children born. Let me talk about poverty because I was integral in trying to elevate first, second and third degree malnutrition that our children suffered during the failed policies of the former Finance Minister and his colleagues. 73% of our children under five suffered from first, second and third degree malnutrition. Generally when one traveled one saw the vestiges of it – the bronze hair, the moon face and the big belly – and there are medical terms for it and I am not versed in those medical terms. I am versed in seeing the physical signs that were imposed on the poor children. Today we hear about a Government that has expanded this economy, moved it from under US\$300 per capita to now US\$3,000 in two short decades.

Counting the children who went into school – the Hon. Priya Manickchand mentioned this – the dropout rate was 5,000 annually; counting those who did enroll to school, I am not counting the 20% who never went to school. I am counting the ones who did enroll. 5,000 dropped out. Of the 200,000 children we have in the school system today we still have 2,500 too many who drop out. We still have those. What did they (PNC) invest our money in?

I am not prone to looking back but they took us back there. The Hon. Former Finance Minister, Mr. Carl Greenidge, took us back. He recommended that we put in programmes like the Guyana National Service. [**Mr. Greenidge:** I did?] Yes, he did.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we have arrived at a point of great comedy.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hold on. I assume that Mr. Greenidge is rising on a Point of Order.

**Mr. Greenidge:** We have arrived at a point of great comedy, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Greenidge, just get to your Point of Order. Mr. Greenidge, I am addressing you.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I had nothing to do with the establishment of the National Service.

**Mr. Nadir:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker...

**Mr. Greenidge:** I was not even in the country when it was established.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I do not think that the Hon. Member said that. My recollection is that he mentioned that you mentioned it.

**Mr. Nadir:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am impressed with your memory. Very impressed.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, it is very late. What I just need is for you to indicate, if you could remember, is whatever it is that you said. Let us clear it up.

**Mr. Nadir:** Your memory coincides with mine. I never said that he formed it. I said that he recommended policies in his speech like the Guyana National Service and it is there in the verbatim record. He introduced it. I started that by saying that I am not prone to looking back. I learn from the lessons from the past - so as to avoid the mistakes of the past and to build on the successes. That is what I do.

I want to give you an example of the National Service. The National Service, during the People's National Congress regime, in my view and the majority of Guyanese, I can say at that time, was a drain on this nation. It was not supported by the majority of Guyanese. It was not. Let me give you the facts. By 1992 the Guyana National Service employed 2,500 people and trained under 200. 2,500 people were members of staff and it trained under 200.

If I point to Minister Anthony who spoke earlier today...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, I recognise another Point of Order.

**Mr. Granger:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, could the Hon. Member cite the source of his information that 2,500 persons were employed by the National Service in 1992?

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I am sure you heard. Mr. Nadir is trying to explain what he said so please let us allow him to so do.

**Mr. Nadir:** No. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am not trying to explain what I just said. I am trying to now answer as to exactly where I found the information; in the Ministry that was responsible for the Guyana National Service and we have a Former Minister right here too. By the time she took over they still had 1,900 people and they trained 111 that year.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I think what he is asking for is the source.

**Mr. Nadir:** The records of the Government of Guyana. That is what I am quoting. [**Mr. Greenidge:** That is not good enough.] That is not good enough? Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I was going on... on two programmes alone. As the Hon. Member, Dr. Frank Anthony, spoke earlier at the Kurukururu Training Centre today and at NOC we have 119 staff members and last year he trained 300.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Which one of the organisations?

**Mr. Nadir:** Both of them, together – NOC and Kurukururu. This is how the People's Progressive Party deals with the money of the people of this nation. This is how we deal with it.

Why am I supporting this budget? One of the first reasons, the Hon. Member Dr. Gopaul, the Minister of Labour, said that in the last five years his organisation alone, the Board of Industrial Training (BIT), trained over 8,000 people with under 500 trainers and in today's budget his allocation for the Board of Industrial Trainers has moved from \$120 million to \$220 million. Mr. Finance Minister, thank you very much for that allocation. He said it, the Finance Minister, from 1900 we are going to move at BIT alone to 2,500 in 2013. Those are the kinds of allocations that we have in this 2013 budget.

These are opportunities - second and third opportunities - for our children who, for whatever reason, did not get a chance to complete high school but here under BIT, under youth, under health – training a lot of the environmental health officers – 4,000 persons are going to be trained and many of them do have CXC's now. Not only for school dropouts, the programme has expanded to give life empowering skills to an overwhelming number of Guyanese youth.

In this budget... building on the successes of past but not only that... I was so surprised and please, heartened to hear, that \$200 million were being set aside for similar programmes for hinterland communities in this budget. One does not necessarily need technical institutions to get technical knowledge. The British, who introduced the BIT in 1908, spoke of apprenticeship and placing people in workplaces from the time they were about 13 years old. The Hon. Member Irfaan Alli says that he remembers. One does not necessarily need technical institutes but what is desirable is that we still have to use the opportunity in places where they exist to give our people technical, craft and other life empowering skills.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, if you use that facility in front of you and you go onto the Yahoo page right now, among the top ten hiring in the United States – and we have to deal with this – is heavy duty equipment operators so this, I must add, caring, well managing PPP/C Government is dealing with our children that way; providing for them and their families. One cannot weaken the strong to strengthen the weak. One has to put programmes in place so that the strong could expand and sprout more wings while at the same time help the needy, helping the vulnerable, hone skills, so that they can help themselves. That is what these programmes do. We do recognise that there is a big issue of labour market mismatch and people do not necessarily want to train for the jobs that are there. They want to train for jobs that they like and they want a job not necessarily across the river but at their doorstep. It is not going to happen so we have to ensure that while we counsel people to train for jobs that are going to exist and that exist, at the same time we have to ensure that there is a good labour market recruitment system and I have spoken about this time and time again.

The Hon. Finance Minister has taken a small step, a small precipitate step, one that we took a few years ago to set up a web exchange. It was small. It was only about \$2 million or \$3 million but when I saw the budget and I heard the budget speech that set aside \$52 million for a modern labour exchange.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, do you know what it has? We hear talk about all of this ‘Guyanisation’ and so forth. It has now... Let me tell you that I was at BIT, the Minister responsible, when the persons building the Marriot first came and put a long list of the skills needed. The records exist. This would be their demand.

*10.40 p.m.*

It was not only them but for the Amalia Falls Hydroelectricity project. This labour exchange could even bring greater coordination between; the 1,200 work permits that are issued annually by the Ministry of Home Affairs; what the economy demands and; what skills are available. This is what this budget speaks about.

I was at pains listening to three Members, at least. Again I say the former Minister of Finance, whose policies failed us as a nation, Madam Volda Lawrence, the Hon. Member, and the speaker before the last, that is, Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, speaking about the Value Added Tax. Let me

command the Hon. Member Jaipaul Sharma because he did say honestly that at a first glance it is a budget for all. The first glance is the correct glance. He then soured his presentation by saying that he did not see the development among the people. I say just let him look at his own family over the last 20 years that had a little box above a cook shop, not a barber shop, or a butcher shop, but a cook shop, and it is now the biggest television station in the country, today. Let us not denigrate the efforts of hard-working visionary people, because we want more Sharma's in the country and the economy, growth and prosperity, and making use of the opportunities which the \$80 billion of Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) will bring.

We have a new frontbencher, a new Member of Parliament, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon. He spoke about the vision of the chairman of the Ogle International Airport Inc. and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Trans Guyana and he said that Guyana has to have a long term infrastructure vision. We have it under the PPP/C! The Hon. Member Mr. Harmon [Ms. Ally: It is without integrity.] We are not like some Members on the Opposition. We must give *Jack his jacket*. We must give people the accolades for the achievements which they have acquired.

The Ogle International Airport Inc., which the Member was so proud about, and the infrastructure vision, is an example of public-private sector partnership that is working. The Member did not know that that agreement was signed on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2001. I was in Cabinet at that time; it was not yesterday. The Hon. Member did not know that the expansion of Ogle Aerodrome, that European Union (EU) money did not go to a private sector consortium it came to the people of Guyana of which this Government signed on to. The Ogle International Airport Inc. is not putting in all of the equipment for the control towers. We are, this Government, and we are paying the workers there too. It is the Government of Guyana.

When we had entered into the Berbice River Bridge as a private consortium, again, Opposition tried to crush that.

I want to talk a bit about an industry that is very close to me. In 2001, June, His Excellency President Jagdeo said to me, "Manzoor, I want you to ensure that we have a sector leading investment in Tourism." Tourism today employs \$260 million people worldwide. Tourism defied and outperformed global economic growth last year and continues to do so. Tourism and ICT are the two sectors which we have to invest heavily in, in order to diversify this economy, which this

budget does. So let me talk a bit about the Marriott Hotel and tourism and I do not want to use the Hon. Minister of Tourism, acting, numbers. If one goes to the World Travel and Tourism Council website, it states that tourism today – it is not in the future - contributes \$28 billion dollars to the Guyanese economy [Mr. Ali: Big time.] Big time. That tourism and travel directly provide for 10,528 jobs in the Guyanese economy now and by year 2023, in the next 10 years, almost \$58 billion will be contributed to the economy because of tourism. We are not going to exploit these opportunities by waiting to make decisions tomorrow. We are going to do that by making decisions today. The prosperity and entitlement of our children depends on the sound decisions today. To deny them these decisions today will deny them tomorrow's prosperity.

Marriott did not come here because of the Chinese. Marriott came here because of seven long hard years of work and negotiations. A gold mine does not come overnight. After Omai, have we seen another gold mine? It takes time. Marriott, one of the single biggest names, in 2005 the vice president, responsible for Latin America came here and then we got the approval going. That investment, the World Travel and Tourism Council stated:

“...along with our investment in the Stadium and the roads, in the highways, in the pool will propel tourism growth and diversify the economy of Guyana.”

We have to commend the work of the Guyana Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism Industry and Commerce, especially when it comes to nurturing this fledgling industry. The efforts have been paying off. In 2012, when Channing Tatum and Adam Rodriguez from *CSI Miami* came to Guyana they went on the David Letterman's Show and talked about the wonderful experience that they have had. They want to come back in 2013. It is not with ten persons but with even more people. Those are the kind of endorsements that our tourism product is getting today. That is the kind of tourism that we are going to benefit from, in terms of putting us on a map for soft and adventured tourism. This is not a dream. The 20 yachts, which will sail down later this year from Trinidad, Chaguaramas, to Bartica, are not a dream. Someone talked about “old men dreaming dreams and young person's having visions”, these are divine words, so this young PPP/C Government continues to provide visions that will propel even greater growth in our country.

We only heard about negativism, about squalor, about poverty and about overtaxation with VAT. [Mr. B. Williams: Time, Mr. Nadir.] Do not worry with time. There are three Hon. Members on the other side who spoke of the VAT as so burdensome. I had to heckle the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge when he was talking about the high burden of tax because consumption tax at a rate of 30%, imposed at the factory floor, cascaded through the economy to 39% by the time the consumers pay for their goods. He wants to compare his 39% consumption tax with the 16% VAT. That is not the true story. The true story is this: They did not say that bread is zero-rated; that brown rice is zero-rated; that brown sugar is zero-rated; that cooking oil, be it vegetable, coconut, palm, corn, soya bean, peanut, olive, is all zero-rated. They did not say that cow's milk and evaporated milk are zero-rated; baby formula is zero-rated, fresh fruits, except apple, grapes, are zero-rated. The list goes down to 108 items, all zero-rated. It continues in services - education services, health services, all zero-rated.

There is a difference with a VAT exempt and zero-rated. Do you know why it is zero-rated, Mdm. Deputy Speaker? It is zero-rated because any VAT that is accumulated on a zero-rated item one can claim it all back. When we talk about the VAT bringing in more money, it is true. VAT has been a more efficient tax. Wherever it is introduced it does widen the tax net, but this is not a story about VAT. This is a story about the PPP/C Government restructuring taxation. While we remove the 8 taxes, which the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma mentioned, we have worked to ensure that those people who are suffering double jeopardy, especially the PAYE persons, continue to get relief. The Ministry of Finance, in the past, has cited a lot of the tax breaks to companies, correctly so, so that they can reinvest so that they can retool and create more jobs. This gives a big break to everybody.

We have been looking at other countries that have a PAYE rate of 25%, today we are 30%. What is going to happen to the homeowner who has a first time mortgage? That homeowner will have the opportunity, not to have to make a decision between the mortgage and the furnishing of their house, but they can do both because of the tax breaks. We will look at VAT as part of a complete restructuring. It is something which the People's National Congress (PNC), APNU and the AFC cannot conceive, but there is cheap politics in saying that we will give the Toshao \$40,000. There is cheap politics in saying that we will give every public servant 10%. That is unsustainable, and we heard the cries from over there about sustainability.



When we have to start looking at this future infrastructure development plan... when we look at investment in hydroelectricity – future infrastructure development plan – the Opposition wants to block it.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, before you continue, you would need an extension.

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given his standard five minutes to conclude his presentation.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

**Mr. Nadir:** We heard the Hon. Member Mr. Harmon spoke about the vision of Michael Correia, the businessman, about the future infrastructure development plan. Everything that has its eye on future infrastructure development plans the APNU and the AFC want to block in this budget.

Hon. Member Robeson Benn, the Cheddi Jagan International Airport expansion project, they want to cut that.

**Hon. Members (Government):** What?

**Mr. Nadir:** Amalia Falls Hydroelectric project, they want to cut that.

**Hon. Members (Government):** What?

**Mr. Nadir:** Expansion of the four-lane highway, they want to cut that.

**Hon. Members (Government):** What?

**Mr. Nadir:** The Hope Canal, I was there for Easter, they want to cut that. They cut Cunha Canal last year...

We have been all over this country and people are watching, and they are watching all of us. Derek Godette, from Lot 67 King Edward Street - Godette is a very famous name in the People's National Congress (PNC) - said, "We are watching and you guys in the Government are trying. Tell them in Parliament let us put together a plan to clean up Albouystown and to rid it of crime."

Mr. Smith, the forklift operator, at John Fernandes Limited, said, “I voted for APNU and you tell them, when you stand up and speak in this budget debate, that I am disappointed.”

This morning, actor Derrick Gomes, Mr. Sharma’s grandson was crying for some..., and myself...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Nadir, please do not call name. You have called two names, which I am not even sure that you should, but you did not say anything bad about them. Now you are talking about somebody’s grandchild. Just let us try to...

**Mr. Shadick:** It is his grandson.

**Mr. Nadir:** I am one to bow to the rulings of the Speaker.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I did not know if it was your grandchild. If it is that you want to talk about your grandchild...

**Mr. Nadir:** I cannot deny the lineage.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, if it is your grandchild, it is not your child. Your grandchild is not your child.

**Mr. Nadir:** What is the point?

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** The point is that I do not know if the parents of the child would want you...I think you could make your point.

**Mr. Nadir:** I am not accusing him of wanting to haul...

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** I am saying that you do not have to use a name to make a point.

**Mr. Nadir:** This morning, the grandson who I share with CN Sharma, I took him out for a walk around the corner. I ran into Mr. Derrick Gomes, the actor, and he is a very fair and balanced person. The relevance is this: He said, “When are you speaking?” I said, “Tonight.” He said, “I want you to say to the Finance Minister, former, Carl Greenidge, that...”

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, where are we going...?

**Mr. Nadir:** These are actual conversations.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Is he going to come to say that?

**Mr. Nadir:** Yes. He will.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Listen. I am not attempting to fight with you. I am saying to you that it serves no purpose to be...

**Mr. Nadir:** It serves.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Mr. Nadir, I am not finished speaking. As I said before, I will sit here until two o'clock in the morning, if you want. I have no problem.

**Mr. Nadir:** Neither me.

**Md. Deputy Speaker:** I am not going to adjourn the sitting but I am saying to you that I see no purpose in you calling the name and saying what he told you to tell Mr.... If you say that you saw someone who said something, but do not call names of someone who cannot defend himself or herself. If now the person disputes that, what forum does that person have to say that what Mr. Nadir said was inaccurate?

Please proceed. I am sure you are an experienced enough parliamentarian to make your point without calling names.

**Mr. Nadir:** The actor said that "the Opposition Member spoke of the sugar workers problem as your problem over here and he must say that the problems of this country, whether it is the sugar workers, the bauxite workers, are all of you all problems in the National Assembly, not one side."

We heard many times from the Opposition benches that it is "our constituents", but they are only speaking for one person. My politics of Guyana states that, when we had a National Assembly by proportional representation (PR), everybody represents everybody. This is not my side and your side, this is the side of the people. This is not my race and your race, this is the human race. That is what this is.

The people out there are looking. I do not know if they are going to give any one side what they want at any other election, but I will tell you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, this: they have seen who has been responsible; they know under whose administration growth is.

Yes, we have to work hard. Priya Manickchand, the Hon. Member, Irfaan Ali, all of the speakers on this side have been extending that hand to ensure that we can continue to provide a budget that can give us the economic growth to break that bigger economic pie, so that each one of us can have a good mouthful to crunch on.

I, again, commend another wonderful budget of the PPP/C Government. [*Applause*]

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you very much Hon. Member and thank you those Members who stayed until the end.

**Mr. Hinds:** I propose that the House be adjourned until Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April at 1.00 p.m.

**Mdm. Deputy Speaker:** The Assembly is adjourned on Monday the 8<sup>th</sup>, at 1.00 p.m.

*Assembly adjourned accordingly at 11.05 p.m.*

