

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012) 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

19TH Sitting

Thursday, 26TH April, 2012

The Assembly convened at 2.04 p.m.

Prayers

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2012 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2012

“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 2012 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2012-03-30;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2012, of a total sum of **one hundred and seventy nine billion, six hundred and ninety six million, five hundred and forty six thousand dollar(\$179,696,546,000), excluding thirteen billion, and eighty four million, seven hundred and thirty five thousand dollars (\$13,084,735,000)** 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]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, Good afternoon again. We will proceed to continue the Estimates for 2012 and go immediately into Committee of Supply.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee of Supply

In Committee of Supply

Agency: 04 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$813,592,000

Deputy Speaker [Mrs. Backer]: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the Hon. Minister inform this House of the forty-nine contracted employees? Last year, Hon. Minister, there were forty-two contracted workers and this year there are forty-nine. Could you please share with this House who are the seven additional contracted employees? It is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: Those will be for one Protocol Officer, three Accounts Clerk 11, two Clerk II General and one Office Assistant.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, are our High Commissioners, in this group, under line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No. They are catered for in Programme 042.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: We see a movement. Five point eight million dollars was budgeted for last year but only just over \$1million was spent. This year, \$19.664 million is budgeted. Hon. Minister, could you share with the House what is the reason for this very high increase?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: As I mentioned in my budget presentation, there will be several persons being posted this year. The Ministry also has to rent a building for the new Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary-General, as the existing building is being rehabilitated.

Mrs. Backer: The rental of the building to the new CARICOM Secretary General, is a cost that is borne solely by Guyana or is Guyana one of the countries which will contribute?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is part of the headquarters' agreement and it is borne only by Guyana.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence: Could the Hon. Minister share with the House what type of travel would be covered under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is used for hiring vehicles for visiting dignitaries. It is also used for internal travel by staff. For instance, sometimes some of our staff would meet their Brazilian counterparts in Lethem. It is also used when there are heads of mission returning to Guyana for a day or two and there may be accommodation costs.

Mrs. Backer: Given, Minister, the stated objective of the Government of enhancing trade and commerce with our neighbours – I am speaking, specifically, now about Brazil and Suriname – do you think...? Because last year the Ministry budgeted for \$27 million and it spent, more or less, just around that figure. This year, the Ministry is only budgeting for \$27 million. Is this money sufficient, given the enhanced trade that you projected in your budget between Guyana and Brazil and Guyana and Suriname – frontier border visits, and so? Will this \$27 million be sufficient?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is usually approval of overseas visits from another line item. It is not from this line item. This is for internal travel only. When we meet to the other programme we will see that, in terms of the oversea missions. The Ministry will also receive moneys through

Cabinet decisions, directly from the Ministry of Finance and that would come from another head. I would say, yes, it is for this year.

Mrs. Backer: A follow-up. Hon. Minister, I was not asking about overseas trips. I was particularly speaking about the trips that will have to be taken – local travel to the border with Brazil, to the border with Suriname and, perhaps, even to Venezuela, given our enhanced economic activities between the two countries, which is one of your stated objectives. I am respectfully asking if that figure is not, perhaps, too low.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I would say that this figure is adequate, especially, since we would use our own vehicles to travel to the border to meet with Suriname, and sometimes we travel by the road to Lethem, as well. I would say that for this year, the money will be adequate.

Mr. Greenidge: If I might pursue this line item a bit further, I think the request is seeking not so much to determine travel and material support, but to determine what measures, efforts and arrangements the Ministry is planning to put in place to strengthen its capacity to negotiate agreements and arrangements, trade wise, that the country would benefit from. It has to do with those skills.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That we would come to, under Programme 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6113 – Other Technical and Craft Skilled: There is a figure in the revised budget for \$909 million, but when we look at the staffing details we see that last year there was no person. Could you please share with the House how this occurred?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Sometime in the year two Assistant Accountants were hired under this line item. One was promoted from the position of Clerk 11 and the other was hired from outside.

Mrs. Backer: Would you not agree with me, Hon. Minister, that it would have been tidier and more accurate if that was reflected in the filled positions because they would have been filled in the 2011?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Perhaps, it would have been a tidier arrangement, but I think that under the year 2012 it is included there.

Mrs. Backer: There is an increase from \$909 million - Hon. Minister you had indicated - for the two persons. Am I correct in assuming that the same two persons are provided for this year?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes, it is, but the increase is because the persons were hired midway of last year.

Mrs. Backer: Just for completeness, I have a follow-up. Could I respectfully ask what the salaries of each of the two employees are?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The salary is \$55,680, but they also have some other benefits that would go with it.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service: We see a figure of \$4.5 million, which is not in itself a big figure, but, Hon. Minister, could you indicate what is the size of your fleet - I mean motor vehicles?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be ten vehicles.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage: Last year, the Ministry, Hon. Minister, budgeted for \$23 million and roughly it spent \$17 million, which was \$6 million less than it was budgeted to spend. This year, it has increased to \$25 million. Could you indicate to us, firstly, what this line item covers and why there was the decrease last year as opposed to what was actually budgeted for?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This line item caters for, when the Ministry is posting officers abroad, to pay for the containers that have to take items. As you know, the Ministry has posted officers to Barbados and Suriname. It intends to post to Caracas, Brazil, Washington, New York, London and Havana.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us where the Ministry had expected to post people during the year 2011, which it did not, which resulted, I presume, in the decrease.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It was to some of those very countries.

Mrs. Backer: Would the Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, be prepared to be a bit more specific?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It will be to Caracas, Brazil and Washington.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6272 – Electricity Charges: Again, Hon. Minister, your Ministry budgeted \$23.7 million and it only spent \$16.8 million. Could you indicate the reason for that reduction?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There was a reconciliation with the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL), and this figure, which is here, seems to be a fairly close estimate for this year.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I think the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganga Persaud, could lead me in the first question, and that would be, Hon. Minister, what security service has been contracted to provide security services for your Ministry?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Through you, Mr. Chairman, it is the Special Constabulary.

Mrs. Backer: Very good. You are leading the way, Minister. Could you explain to the honourable House why the sharp increase is being budgeted for - an increase of just under \$5 million?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Special Constabulary did not increase its rates in the year 2011. It used the same rate for the year 2010. We can surely expect that there will be an increase in the year 2012, because its last increase was in the year 2010.

Mrs. Backer: Minister, has it indicated that to you? Last year, your Ministry budgeted, obviously, I presume, on the assumption that it was going to raise its rates and it did not. What has led you to this belief that the Special Constabulary, whose rates have been constant for years, intends to increase it this year?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is simple, Mr. Chairman. It has so indicated.

Mrs. Backer: Who was responsible for providing security service during the year 2011, Hon. Minister?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It was the Special Constabulary.

Mrs. Backer: Did it indicate in the year 2011 that it was going to raise its rates?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. Later in the year 2011, it indicated that it would have an increase in the year 2012.

Mrs. Backer: Did it indicate in the year 2010, Hon. Minister, that it was going to raise in the year 2011, hence your increase projection?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Hon. Member, as you know, this Government is a caring one and it always caters for increases every year.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6284 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister say what is included under this nebulous line item of “Other”?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is used for bank charges and that increased in the year 2011. The Ministry can expect an increase in the year 2012, from looking at the trend in previous years.

Mrs. Backer: Is this for only bank charges, Hon. Minister - \$22.5 million?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that it is yes.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other: Could the Hon. Minister share with this honourable House what is the main item that would be covered under this miscellaneous line item of “Other”?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry caters here for consultancy fees. For instance, it had retained a consultant to advise the Ministry on its submission to the Commission on the Limits on the Continental Shelf for an extended continental shelf. This line item was also used for transportation, accommodation and meals for visiting delegations that might not be covered under a specific Cabinet decision, to purchase gifts and pay fees to lecturers at the Foreign Service Institute.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, indicate how much money was paid to the expert?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is a retainer arrangement of US\$2,000 per month and when he has to come down to Guyana, for further consultation with the Ministry, there is a daily fee.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6302 - Training (including Scholarships): I see a very small sum of \$1.5 million budgeted. Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us what is covered under that line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is utilised for online training. Right now, training is being done with the Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta. Also, from time to time, there may be local training through the University of Guyana (UG).

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what portion of this \$1.5 million goes to the Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I cannot indicate that now, but I can get those figures and provide them to the Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, given what has pertained in the House for the last couple of days, could I, through you Sir, kindly ask the Hon. Minister what time period she is prepared to give, in terms of a commitment as to how much is paid to the Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We can provide this in the morning, by 10 o' clock, given that all of the staff will be there.

Mrs. Backer: Is training within the Foreign Service Institute provided for under this sum or is it to be found somewhere else?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Some is here and some, as I mentioned, can be found under line item 6294.

Mrs. Backer: How much is here - of the \$1.5 million?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I can provide that information to the Clerk of the National Assembly, together with the other information requested.

Mr. Chairman: Could I suggest that you disaggregate the entire \$1.5 million to see where it is apportioned? It is not much money. Rather than just going through this exercise until it is spent to the last cent, just disaggregate it and supply that.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, are you satisfied that this \$1.5 million, given the lead role that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is expected to play and, indeed, we believe should play, to be sufficient?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry would always need more money, but what I should explain is that this does not represent the total picture of its training. It also receives offers for training in which it might have to stand part of the cost and it makes direct submissions to the Cabinet, and it will have a Cabinet decision for those training activities and those moneys are paid directly from the Ministry of Finance.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, would you be in a position to indicate to us how many of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff are presently studying overseas?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I would not be able to tell you how many are studying overseas right now, but I can provide that information. They are from different areas in the Ministry. But a lot of training is also being done online.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations: When we turn to page 401 we see a figure, a fairly sizeable figure, for CARICOM - \$265,862,000. Hon. Minister, are we, as a country, up to date, with our financial commitments to CARICOM?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. Certainly to the core budget of CARICOM, we are up to date.

Mrs. Backer: For the Commonwealth Foundation, there is a figure of \$4.685 million. There is a reduction of just about half - \$2.419 million. Could you indicate, Hon. Minister, why there is this decrease?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry paid arrears in the year 2011. This figure as brought it up to date.

Mrs. Backer: The same question would be asked for the Commonwealth Secretariat, which is two places below to where I just asked, for which there is a decrease of over hundred per cent.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: That would be correct, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Backer: It is a recommitment, Sir, through you. Line item 6116 – Contracted Employees: Hon. Minister, could you share with the honourable House the seven most senior people who are employed under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are the Presidential Adviser on foreign affairs, the Director-General, Head of the Expenditure, Planning & Monetary Unit (EPMU), Head of the Multilateral and Global Affairs Division, the Chief Administrative Officer, the Systems Development Officer and the Senior Personnel Officer.

Mrs. Backer: Could you be kind enough to share with the House the salary and benefits that are accrued to the Presidential Adviser? Also where is that person housed? I know the two offices are fairly close, but it is that the person is housed within your Ministry or within the Office of the President complex.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The person is housed at the Office of the President. There are no benefits. It is just that salary.

Mrs. Backer: I do not think you provided the salary, Hon. Minister.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is \$721,000.

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$813,592,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$3,000,000

Ms. Selman: Project 2501100 – Office Equipment and Furniture: Could the Hon. Minister tell this National Assembly whether the furniture and equipment are intended for the overseas or local missions, or whether they are related to staff expansion at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and if they are for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whether it is in keeping with the asset inventory register?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Yes, it is in keeping with what is needed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Programme: 041 – Ministry Administration - \$3,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations - \$1,773,479,000

Mrs. Backer: Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Hon. Minister. Line item 6241 – Rental of Buildings: We see a figure of \$450 million. Could the Hon. Minister indicate the main buildings that are rented under this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is mostly for the home-based staff who are based abroad, the heads of missions and, also, the offices abroad.

Mrs. Backer: Would you be kind enough, Hon. Minister, to indicate which, in terms of rental, is the most expensive mission and what is the figure?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I will not be able to provide that, Mr. Chairman, but I will provide that with the other information as well in the morning.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service: I have a similar question, as was asked under the other line item, Hon. Minister. Could you indicate what is the size of the vehicular fleet?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are thirteen vehicles.

Mrs. Backer: In the previous head, there is a fleet of ten vehicles and the cost attached is \$4.5 million. In this case there is a fleet of thirteen, just three more, and we see a budgeted figure of \$22.381 million. Could the Hon. Minister explain what seems to be a fairly large difference?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: In different countries, there are different prices, and so this is what accounts for the difference in costs.

Mrs. Backer: Which mission is the most expensive, Hon. Minister, to the Government and people of Guyana, *vis-à-vis* vehicles spares and service?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, I do not have that information at hand but I can do some aggregation and provide it.

Mrs. Backer: Mr. Chairman, through you, if the Hon. Minister is going to be kind enough to do that, would the Hon. Minister then give us a complete breakdown, in terms of our foreign missions? We do not have that many and it is a significant figure. I do not know that spare parts are any more expensive out of Guyana than they are within Guyana.

Line item 6281 – Security Services: There is a \$5 million increase. Could the Hon. Minister say to where this security is provided? Is it to our foreign missions?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This would be for security to our foreign missions. For the previous question, under line item 6264, I would ask, through you, Mr. Chairman, for the Hon. Member to give us up to Wednesday to provide this aggregated figure for vehicles spares and service because we will have to do a bit more work there.

2.34 p.m.

Mrs. Backer: I think that is the most reasonable request, Sir, coming from a reasonable party. We would have no problem with that.

Line item 6284, the miscellaneous line item of “Other”: Could the Hon. Minister say what are the two or three main items that are contained within this line item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This is only one - bank charges. This is coming from the missions to Guyana and the charges which have to be paid for that.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other, \$45 million: Could the Hon. Minister share with this House the main item or items?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Small stipend is to our Honorary Consuls. There are also operational expenses for some of those Honorary Consulates, contributions to diplomatic groupings and also gifts for departing ambassadors, and so on. This is where the missions will pay.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes, at a sum of \$1.026 million: Hon. Minister, what building(s) are we paying rates and taxes for?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is a plot of land in Brazil where the Ministry is intended to build the embassy and this amount represents the rates and taxes for that.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, on that item, are you aware, Madam, that the Auditor General, in his 2010 Report, referred to that plot and advised that it may be a good thing, and I want to read: “Guyana is yet to avail itself of this opportunity. No work has been done on a donated land, not even the construction of a fence to safeguard the property from squatters and/ vandals.” This is the Auditor General Report. “Trinidad and Tobago... the only other CARICOM member countries...” But this is the part I want to ask you, Madam, if your Government will be willing to look at, that “it is recommended that a cost/benefit analysis of building on the donated land be urgently conducted.” My respectful question is: Has that cost/benefit analysis been carried out? If not, when would your Ministry likely to carry out such a benefit?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: As I said earlier, the Government of Guyana has decided that, for more than the cost/benefit analysis, it needs to utilise this land to build our embassy in Brazil and it is presently engaging an architect in Brazil to look at the design.

Mrs. Backer: That architect who will be looking at it, is the cost contained in anywhere within this page? I do not know if you will be kind enough to share that with us?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry would be utilising from under line item 6294, as well, to do that, but it is working closely with the Brazilian Government on this.

Mrs. Backer: Could the Hon. Minister say what sum has been set aside under line item 6294 for that activity?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry has not yet received the estimated cost from the architect, but if need be, I know that if it has to return to this House the Hon. Member would fully support it with any additional cost.

Mrs. Backer: What figure under this \$45 million has been assigned to this activity?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that the Ministry has set aside just about US\$5,000 in the first instance.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, staffing details, and with your kind leave, I would want to look at them in a holistic way, at least initially. Under what line item, line items 6111 to 6116, would we find our heads of mission?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

Mrs. Backer: Of the eighteen contracted employees, how many heads of mission are catered for there?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be eleven heads of mission are catered for.

Mrs. Backer: Is this the complete complement of our heads of mission – the eleven?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No.

Mrs. Backer: Could you, Hon. Minister, indicate what the total complement is and where we could find the difference between the eleven...?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are twelve and one head of mission is not included in the contracted employees.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, is there a policy as to the length of the contract for those eleven contracted High Commissioners or do their contracts vary?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The contracts are for one year, renewable.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you share with this honourable House if your Government has a policy as to an upward age when the heads of mission will be asked to....? It is as how in the public service it is fifty-five years. Does your Government have an age beyond which a head of mission will not have his or her contract renewed?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, because we are not allowed to discriminate against the elderly.

Mrs. Backer: That is very good. And in not discriminating, could you indicate the age of our oldest head of mission?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I cannot provide that now, but I can provide that information to you...

Mrs. Backer: It is next Wednesday.

Mrs. Rodrigues- Birkett: No. I can give you that tomorrow.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, there is eleven ... [**Ms. Teixeira:** ...agenda...] Ms. Teixeira is not accustomed to being so quiet, Sir. Mr. Chairman, through you, to the Hon. Minister, could you say what is the total number of our staff, meaning Guyanese - not necessarily the local employees - who are employed in our mission in Suriname?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mrs. Backer...

Mrs. Backer: It is not the names.

Mr. Chairman: Do not anticipate. My question is: Are we going to have the strength in every mission? If so, that could be supplied.

Mrs. Backer: No. I particularly want to ask about Suriname.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, go ahead.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: In Nickerie, there is four and in Paramaribo, five.

Mrs. Backer: Could you indicate to the honourable House how many of those nine employees are fluent in Dutch?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I am advised that most of them are, but I can check to know if there is any that is not at all fluent.

Mrs. Backer: But Minister, with the greatest respect, I am asking you about the nine Guyanese, that your Ministry, under your astute guidance, has sent to Suriname and my question is, through you, Mr. Chairman, how many of our nine Guyanese, who are employed at our two missions in Suriname are fluent in Dutch?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Let me explain. Apart from the ambassador, the other employees are Guyanese who live in Suriname. We hired them, locally recruited, so they would be conversant in Dutch. As to fluency, that is what I am ... because there is a meaning to that, and that I would not be able to...

Mr. Chairman: I want to find out. Are you looking at certified, in terms of... or are you looking at the functionally literate in a language? They are two different things.

Mrs. Backer: No. Minister, this is very interested. Eight of our nine employees are Guyanese who live in Suriname. Could you indicate to us what skills...? Have those eight Guyanese passed through, Minister, our foreign service? Have they been trained as the diplomats, any of them, save and exception of the head? I know he or she has been trained. The eight persons, you said that they are fluent in Dutch, have they gone through any period of formal training with our Ministry of Foreign Affairs before their posting to Suriname as representatives of Guyana?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: As I indicated earlier, Foreign Service Officer will be posted from the Ministry to Suriname to join the ambassador to Paramaribo. Those officers are support staff - drivers, secretary, clerks, and so on, a consular assistant. So I just want to differentiate between the Foreign Service Officers and the support staff.

Mrs. Backer: It is not the support staff. How many Foreign Service Officers are there in Suriname who have gone through formal periods of training within your Ministry?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There is the ambassador there and one senior Foreign Service Officer would be joining within a month.

Mrs. Backer: It is one other person. Is that person fluent in Dutch?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The person is not fluent in Dutch, but in Suriname both English and Dutch are languages that are used and we encourage our officers to do this too, enrol to learn Dutch. We have not been able to find a place in Guyana to so do as yet.

Mrs. Backer: Have you had any talks, Hon. Minister, with your Surinamese counterpart on making available someone who can do classes? We live in a global village. Are any efforts being made to enhance our capacity in our foreign service to speak the Dutch language?

Mr. Lumumba: On a Point of Order. We just had a Dutch football team here, last week, at the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) championships. I went to the Suriname consulate; it said it had no one to help, as interpreter.

Mr. Chairman: In any event a state country will never ask another country to train its officers, just like that.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Mr. Chairman, as you would know, Dutch is not a language that we have a lot of countries speaking in the region, so that is why I said we encourage the officers, in country, when they are posted there, to Suriname, to enrol to do the Dutch language there.

Mrs. Backer: Could I then go to our other neighbour – Brazil? Could you, Hon. Minister, share with this honourable House what is the size of our professional staff in Brasilia?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are three professionals.

Mrs. Backer: How many of them, Hon. Minister, are fluent in Portuguese or are on their way to being fluent in Portuguese?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Two of the three are.

Mrs. Backer: Does this include the head of mission? These are serious questions.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: He is doing language training.

Mr. Neendkumar: It is to ask - who is the head?

Mrs. Backer: No. We know who the head is.

Hon. Member, I am happy, that unlike some of the other Members in your back bench, you understand the importance, Madam, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff, particularly our professional staff, being at least bilingual as the person sitting on your left is. We compliment her for that.

Hon. Minister, could you say, of the one hundred and thirty-one members that are listed there, and that is between line items 6111 and 6117, how many are posted overseas?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be that all the contracted employees are posted and, in a few minutes, I can give you the number for the Foreign Service Officers under the other line items.

Mrs. Backer: Do you have a policy, Hon. Minister? If you do have a policy, is there any timeline to that policy as to when your heads of mission, and if not the actual heads, the senior

diplomatic staff, would be fluent in the language of the country where they are assigned, as happens in most other parts of the world? For all of the foreign embassy here, the senior people are fluent in English.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Of course, it is desirable for all of the officers, wherever they are posted, to be fluent in the language. I am very pleased that there are officers in China who are fluent in Mandarin and there are officers in Venezuela, Brazil, and Ministry is working on officers in Suriname, who are fluent in the language there. This, the Ministry will continue. It has recently posted someone to Havana who is fluent in the Spanish language. So this is a continuous aspect of our work.

If I could answer the previous question, in terms of how many officers are posted, other than the sixteen contracted employees, there are twelve diplomats who are posted, as well, in that listing.

Programme: 042 - Foreign Relations - \$1,773,479,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations – \$47, 000,000

Ms. Selman: Project 2400300 – Land Transport: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a policy in relation to the type of vehicles to be purchased for ambassadors or overseas missions? And, if so, could the Hon. Minister outline this policy?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It will be a vehicle which is suitable to the stature of ambassador and consistent with, also, our economic progress in Guyana.

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister tell this National Assembly how much of the allocated sum would be spent on the purchase of vehicles for each mission, the type of vehicle and the cost of each?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Two vehicles are going to be purchased under this project - one for Barbados and one for China. The Consul General has been accredited yesterday and he would determine the suitable vehicle which he could use in Barbados and in China. It will be a support vehicle. The ambassador already has one.

Ms. Selman: Could the Hon. Minister state whether the purchase will comply with the rules regarding the tendering process?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It is certainly.

Mrs. Backer: Project 1200500 – Buildings: We see a figure of \$25 million for “Rehabilitation of buildings.” The legend states that this rehabilitation will be done at our High Commission office in Ottawa and at our embassy in Washington. Could you please, Hon. Minister, provide us, firstly, with the breakdown and secondly to indicate whether we own both of those buildings?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. There are actually three buildings. The chancery and the residence in Washington, we own both of those, and also the residence in Ottawa.

Mrs. Backer: Could you give us the breakdown please?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: We can provide that information tomorrow, as well.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, it is not here, but you have been very gracious in your answers. Could you indicate, what are the plans, if any, for our High Commission in London which is in a fairly bad shape?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Last year some work was done on the High Commission in London. Some work was done on two of the floors and the Ministry is hoping that it will be able to do some more work, maybe, under maintenance. We will see how that would go, but there is a lot of discussions on this particular building as to whether it is something that should continue to be kept or whether it should be sold and to get somewhere else, but for now it was decided that some work will be done on the building. Some was done last year that is.

Mrs. Backer: Project 2501100 – Equipment and Furniture: The legend states - it is not a big figure, \$10 million – “Purchase of furniture and equipment for overseas missions.” Could you, Hon. Minister, share with the honourable House which mission will be the primary beneficiary or beneficiaries?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It would be for Paramaribo, computer and printers, Bridgetown, Brussels, Brasilia, London, Havana, Ottawa and India. The Ministry would also try to accommodate some filing cabinets and air conditioning units for Washington.

Programme: 042 – Foreign Relations – \$47,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 043 - Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$59,212,000

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6116 - Contracted Employees: We see a figure of eight last year and eight again this year. Could you share with us, Hon. Minister, the designation and salaries of those eight employees?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are for the Deputy Permanent Secretary - \$247,526, the Systems Administration - \$126, 845, the Accountant - \$84,374, Clerk II General - \$53,162, the Driver - \$51,997, the Cleaner - \$40,935, the Stores Clerk - \$39,127 and the Office Assistant - \$35,864.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6112 – Senior Technical: There were seven persons last year and we now see a reduction of one, could you, in a like manner, Hon. Minister, share with the House the designation of the six persons there, along with their salaries?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: It will be three Foreign Trade Officers at a salary of \$158,854 and three Foreign Trade Officers, there are two categories, at \$69,198.

Mrs. Backer: So it is a total of six Foreign Trade Officers. Hon. Minister, are those six persons the only people who are specialised in that area, in that, they are Foreign Trade Officers? Are they the only six persons out of the nineteen who are trained in this particular area?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No. Under line item 6111 - Administrative - there is the Director of Foreign Trade there; there is the Director of International Cooperation, who also have trade experience and the Deputy Permanent Secretary, right here, Mr. Totaram, who is our lead negotiator, together, on the CARICOM-Canada Trade Negotiations.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Member, given the pivotal role that the Hon. Minister of Finance indicated that your Ministry will be paying in trade and investment, are you satisfied with the number of persons or would you, ideally, have preferred to have an enhanced staff?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The Ministry is currently engaged in a restructuring exercise. As you know, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation has been merged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and some of the officers, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Service Officers, are also trained in trade matters, and so if need be that there is need for additional staff, that would be known at the end of this restructuring that Ministry is working on.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you share with the House when it is expected, or projected, that the restructuring exercise would be completed?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: I was going to say that it is after the budget, but it will be in June.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, as you continue to be gracious, there is a four-year strategy plan for the Ministry that ended in 2009. Could you share with the House whether another plan has been completed, or if not completed, if another one is in the making?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: Yes. The Ministry has actually just completed an exercise of going through the strategy, of what it has completed in that strategy, thus far, and it is working on another five-year plan. A few things were carried over from the last one.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Services: Could you share with the honourable House what is the fleet of vehicles under this line item – motor vehicles?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: There are two vehicles under this line item.

Mrs. Backer: Are they both in the pool, Hon. Minister, or are both, or one of them, assigned to a particular officer?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: They are in the pool.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6281 – Security Services: Last year the Minister budgeted for \$1.3 million and none was spent. In fact, in 2010 none was spent either, but the Ministry has, again, budgeted for \$1.301 million. Hon. Minister, could you indicate what it is that you hope will need security services in 2012?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: At the time when the budget was prepared the decision was not yet made to merge the two Ministries, so the possibility existed that there would have been another

Minister, as there would have been before. This amount here represents the amount for the security for the Minister. So chances are that this amount will not be spent this year, as since then things have evolved.

3.04 p.m.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6294 – Other - the miscellaneous head of “Other”: We see a figure of \$1,648,000. In fact it is the identical figure that was both budgeted for and was actually spent on the revised in 2011. Could you, Hon. Minister, indicate to the Hon. House what is the main item or the two main items under line item 6294?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: This sum is used for the International Volunteers’ Week. Every year there are activities for that week and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the focal point for working on this issue. So that is where the amount is spent.

Mrs. Backer: Line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings: Through you, Mr. Chairman, there is a figure of \$1,520,000, could the Hon. Minister share with the honourable House what maintenance will be carried out and on what building or buildings?

Rodrigues-Birkett The Ministry is hoping to use this sum to do the painting of the offices - the internal painting of the offices of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation.

Programme: 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$59,212,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$1,662,000

Programme: 043 – Foreign Trade and International Cooperation - \$1,662,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to thank the Minister and her technical staff for answering the questions. Minister, I noted that on several occasions you willingly offered to supply information, sometimes within minutes, sometimes within a day and sometimes to next week. May I advised

that you make one submission and I would suggest that you do so next week, with everything, rather it coming in a truncated, *ad hoc* manner. Thank you very much for your responses.

Agency: 52 Ministry of Legal Affairs

Current Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$14,026,000

Mr. B. Williams: I do not know, Mr. Chairman, if I could permit the Hon. Attorney General to get some time to compose himself.

Mr. Chairman: Even though the Hon. Attorney General has not asked, I will be exercising strict control and protection over him this afternoon for some personal reasons.

Mr. B. Williams: May I respectfully refer the Hon. Attorney General to line item 6111 – Administrative – and making the observation that there is only one employee for that entire programme and that employee is a contracted employee and the salary is \$8 million plus. Could the Hon. Attorney General disclose the designation of that employee and the salary?

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]: Line item 6111 is zero.

Mr. B. Williams: It is line item 6116 – Contracted Employees.

Mr. Nandlall: You said line item 6111.

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Attorney General is not ready yet.

Mr. Chairman: We know that some six is involved. Hon. Members, I think we get the purpose of the question, it is the contracted employee.

Mr. Nandlall: The contracted employee is the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, it is the Permanent Secretary and that is his emolument.

Mr. Nandlall: It is a salary of \$497,826; it includes a driver. Unfortunately, that is not reflected there.

Mr. B. Williams: The entire sum of \$8,810,000 is the salary for the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Nandlall: It is for a driver and the gratuity. Everything is included there.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6284 – Other: There is a sum of \$1.8 million there. Could the Hon. Minister disclose what that is for?

Mr. Nandlall: That caters for broadband internet, surveys, fees for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit and virement was done to facilitate the installation of a new generator.

Mr. B. Williams: That is all for this programme.

Mr. Chairman: Are you serious?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes. That is all for this head. It is only one employee.

Mr. Bond: Line item 6281 – Security Services: I am enquiring of the Hon. Minister the reason for the dramatic reduction in the payment to security services and which would be the agency providing those services to the Ministry.

Mr. Nandlall: I am told, Sir, that the Permanent Secretary, who is entitled to twenty-four-hour security, has opted to use the MMC Security Force alarm system, which is cheaper.

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$14,026,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$503,700,000

Mr. B. Williams: I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister to project 1501100 – Justice Improvement Programme - and the sum budgeted there is \$500,700,000. Could the Hon. Minister say, with reference to profile number 237, item 1, what is intended by “Enhancing institutional capacity of the Judicial Service Commission”?

Mr. Nandlall: Mr. Chairman, you will be aware that during the Ninth Parliament we promulgated rules for the Judicial Service Commission for the first time. The intention behind those rules, and the accompanying strengthening of the Judicial Service Commission, is to confer upon that Commission a greater degree of autonomy. This budgetary allocation seeks to enhance

that process and to add, for the first time, the establishment of a secretariat, fully staffed, independent of the Guyana Court of Appeal. As you know, Sir, the Guyana Court of Appeal is basically being used as an annexe to buttress the Judicial Service Commission. We are moving away from that to give more autonomy to that very important body in our overall efforts to strengthen the independence of the judiciary.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say how much money from the \$500,700,000 is allocated for that item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, could I suggest, because of what seem to be logistical issue, that we proceed and come back to that question, if you do not mind, Mr. Williams?

Mr. Nandlall: As you may see, Sir, the...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, we cannot be waiting for the answer to be coming from the outside.

Mr. Nandlall: No Sir. She will come.

Mr. Chairman: I am not prepared to allow that. So I would ask the Member to proceed and then we come back to it.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, it is US\$4.4 million which has been allocated as part of the project to be administered and executed by the judiciary itself. There is no breakdown, so to speak, in terms of the amount allocated in relation to the specific question that the Hon. Member has asked, but that is the total sum allocated for judicial reforms and that is being administered by the judiciary itself.

Mr. B. Williams: That is the total sum overall.

Mr. Nandlall: It is the overall.

Mr. B. Williams: So for this item here, for this last phase of the project, you have no idea what that would cost.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not have a figure here. I am sorry.

Mr. B. Williams: And that is to make the Judicial Service Commission independent, as you said.

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct.

Mr. B. Williams: But is it not contemplated in the Constitution that it is supposed to be independent?

Mr. Nandlall: I said “strengthened”. It is to further strengthen the judiciary, Sir. It is the “judiciary and strengthening of the judiciary.”

Mr. Chairman: I did hear you say that, Hon. Attorney General, “further strengthening of...”

Mr. Nandlall: ... and the independence. It is a work in progress. We have to continue ensure that it remains independent.

Mr. B. Williams: It is of the Commission. Might I respectfully continue and ask about item two – “Strengthening linkages among judicial institutions? Could the Hon. Attorney General tell us what is that?”

Mr. Nandlall: This, your honour, involves a wireless link-up between the major organs of the judicial sector. It involves a connectivity between the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the Attorney General (AG), Court of Appeal and the High Court, the Registry in Berbice and the Registries in Essequibo and in Demerara, and also a similar initiative in relation to the Deeds Registry. It is a complete wireless connectivity. Libraries, and so on, are expected to be connected by this mechanism.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up. And what is the cost for that item?

Mr. Nandlall: It is US\$500,000.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister tell us, in relation to item 3 on the profile, what he considers to be components of “Improving access to justice”?

Mr. Nandlall: This concept manifests itself in a variety of initiatives. One aspect of it has to do with the law revision exercise whereby the laws are being revised, for the first time, since 1977, up to December 2010. That aspect of the programme is almost completed. I am to report that

there are approximately nineteen pieces of legislation left, only, along with a few pieces of subsidiary legislation. That is one aspect of it. A second aspect of it has to do with the law reports which are being done in both hard copies and online. There are two hundred sets of those. This one, for example, is from 1985 to 1986. We are bringing them up to date, up to 2010 and then another facet of it is the online version of the reports, dating back to 1930. Those reports, by the 15th of May, everyone here would be able to access them online, from 1930 to 2007. I think Sir, that is a remarkable accomplishment.

Mr. Chairman: You mentioned that during your budget presentation.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir. Another aspect of it also is the creation of a paralegal system, especially the targeted areas which are the Amerindian communities, because we see Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as an important mechanism to release the workload from the judicial system.

Mr. Chairman: Your predecessor left the lay magistracy hanging in the balance to address that very issue. Maybe you should continue.

Me. Nandlall: I can say, Sir, that the Lay Magistrate's Bill, or the Act, because it has been assented to, has to come into force by an order to be issued by the Hon. Chancellor of the Judiciary and therefore the judiciary has to ready itself for that aspect of the programme. The executive, Sir, has very little say, lest it be accused of interfering. We do not want that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I just would have thought that you would have continued with that stream of ADR.

Mr. Williams: Is legal aid contemplated under this item - "access to justice"?

Me. Nandlall: No Sir. Legal aid is not contemplated by this initiative, because there is another arm of the Government which shoulders the responsibility for legal aid.

Mr. Chairman: That was dealt with under the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security.

Me. Nandlall: There is also, Sir, a legal awareness programme where booklets are going to be published and television programmes have already commenced. Audreyanna Thomas, I recall, is one of the contractors and there are going to be a series of television programmes, which have commenced, and would continue to educate the members of the public about their rights, about

their obligations, about the constitutional responsibilities, about our judicial system and about mediation. So it is a comprehensive initiative.

Mr. B. Williams: The timeline of May the 15th, is that contingent on the consultant returning from London to continue this work?

Mr. Nandlall: My friend, it is confusing concepts. May the 15th deadline, which I spoke about, has to do with the law reports, online. It has nothing to do with the laws of Guyana.

Mr. B. Williams: So, Hon. Minister, are you confirming then that the laws of Guyana have their problems, that is dependent on the consultant returning from London?

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot confirm that which I never said. I am saying, Sir, that there are certain aspects of the law revision exercise which are still to be completed and they will be completed very shortly.

Mr. Chairman: Gentlemen, this course took place during the budget presentation, and it was fully ventilated, and I believe brought to an end.

Mr. B. Williams: No Sir. I am trying to get a timeline for the reports coming online. He said...

Mr. Chairman: It is May the 15th.

Mr. B. Williams: That is in relation to the online version. I am talking about when we could get the reports in our hands. I am asking the Hon. Minister now to confirm whether that project has been delayed because the consultant has left and gone to London and has not returned.

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot confirm that. That is inaccurate.

Mr. B. Williams: Is that inaccurate? What he means by that? Could the Hon. Minister give us a timeline when the hardcover reports will be available to the Guyanese people?

Mr. Nandlall: The hard copy law reports, Sir, are with the printery and they are going to be available within the next two months to three months thereby.

Mr. Chairman: I heard you say that in your budget presentation.

Mr. B. Williams: Alright. It is next two months to three months.

Mr. Bond: Project 1201300 – Buildings: Which building is being rehabilitated?

Mr. Nandlall: It is the main office of the Attorney General Chambers. There are some repairs which have to be effected there, including repairs and renovations to the roof, windows and the painting of the building. It is an old building.

Mr. Bond: Project 1501100 – Justice Improvement Programme: Under the Justice Improvement Programme (JIP), Hon. Minister, is it envisaged for the purchase of equipment, in terms of data compilation and storage?

Mr. Nandlall: This has to do with furniture and equipment. This is not part of the Justice Improvement Programme either.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister tell us why this contract was cancelled, that is, the consultant to conduct... [Ms. Teixeira: Which contract?] I am on the same project that is on programme 521. There are only two. It is project 1501100. To the uninitiated, it would appear that you need a new project, but I could understand that. If it pleases you, Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister say why this contract was cancelled? It is for US\$59,400. I will follow up when he answers. [Hon. Members (Government): Which contract?] It is the contract for the consultancy to conduct the Organisation and Management Study for the Registry.

Mr. Nandlall: Which project are you referring to? I do not see any contract here.

Mr. B. Williams: It is under the same project - “Justice Improvement Programme”.

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, but where are you seeing a contract has been cancelled?

Mr. B. Williams: Do not be worried where I am seeing it. I am asking you a question.

Mr. Nandlall: I do not see that a contract is cancelled.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Williams, I think that you would have to lay the foundation. If in fact a contract has been cancelled you would have to say it was a contract entered into and take us through, because the Hon. Attorney General is saying that he is not aware of any contract and of any termination.

Mr. B. Williams: I am guided by you, Mr. Chairman. I understand Sir. I was hoping that the Hon. Attorney General was really well briefed and seized of this materials.

Mr. Chairman: Not as well briefed as you are.

Mr. B. Williams: The contract start date was the 9th of January, 2008 and was to end on the 24th of November, 2008. [Ms. Teixeira: Is it 2008?] Yes. It was to conduct the Organisation Management Study for the Registry. I want to know what the situation is with that termination.

Mr. Nandall: Sir, I am dealing with justice improvement for 2012. I do not see that in my budget.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Williams, is it that this contract was a part of the Justice Improvement Programme or a component thereof?

Mr. B. Williams: It was.

Mr. Chairman: And is it no longer continuing?

Mr. B. Williams: I am surprised that the Hon. Attorney General does not know that.

Mr. Chairman: Given the fact that Attorney General is new to the Chambers, to the extent possible, could he say if he is aware of such a contract? If he is not, well then there is nothing we can do. But if he is aware, what will be the terms and conditions of it? Is it extant? Is it terminated or suspended?

Mr. Nandall: I am told by the coordinator of the programme, as well as one of the executioners of the programme, that there is no termination of any contract; that there was a study being done by Price Waterhouse and it is still ongoing.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, I understand that you have seen this issue in the correct perspective. The Price Waterhouse contract, to which my learned friend alluded, is another contract and that is related to the study implementation/organisation with respect to the High Court registries in Georgetown and New Amsterdam. That is a different one. Perhaps I need to read the list out. It is that I am more informed than the Hon. Attorney General.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we will answer questions on the Estimates before us as they stand today, for 2012.

Mr. B. Williams: This is part of this.

Mr. Chairman: We are taking questions for Estimates of 2012 on the Justice Improvement Programme so that we can move on. Can I put the question?

Mr. B. Williams: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Hon. Minister in relation to the same project 1501100 –“Justice Improvement Programme” - to say what is the status of the consultancy to provide specification for the rehabilitation of court house and court rooms, including the supervision of rehabilitation works, Berbice, lots one and two. Is it still in progress?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: When do you estimate that would be completed?

Mr. Nandlall: Well Sir, it is the 15th of May, I am told.

Mr. B. Williams: The same project: Could the Hon. Minister tell us the timeline for the completion of the extension to the Georgetown Magistrates' Court?

Mr. Nandlall: It is the same date - the 15th of May.

Mr. Chairman: It is the 15th of May, you are saying.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Minister say when the timeline is not met what redress the people of Guyana have, in relation to these matters?

Mr. Nandlall: My learned friend, Sir, ought to know that every contract has within it facility for penalties when there is a breach and then the ordinary law of the land provides also for penalties.

Mr. B. Williams: The record would show that the Hon. Attorney General is committing himself to the *Hansard*. So when the 15th of May comes we will be able to deal with that on that day, God willing, of course.

3.34 p.m.

Could the Hon. Minister say what the situation is with the rehabilitation works to courtrooms and court houses in relation to Lot 1? And this contract was also terminated. Does the Minister wish to explain?

Mr. Nandlall: Lot 1 where?

Mr. B. Williams: Berbice

Mr. Chairman: Mr. B. Williams, I think you will have to help the House with some specifics.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, it is clear that my learned friend was not given the whole gamut of the contract. I will ease him up. I would put questions to him as we go along.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I am asking, where is Lot 1, Berbice?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know. I can tell you where Lot 17 is.

Mr. Nandlall: The Speaker does not know Lot 1, Berbice, and that is a question you are asking me.

Mr. B. Williams: Lot 1 is the description in the contract document. What I am saying is that it is clear that I would not be able to garner the type of answers I wish for the Guyanese people today. As I said, the Attorney General is new to the Office and he has been very busy with cricket and all of those things. I will ask him questions during the course of the year.

Programme: 521 – Main Office - \$503,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$45,843,000

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, might I respectfully ask the Hon. Attorney General to divert his attention to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. There are ten of them in the Ministry's administration of legal affairs. Could the Hon. Minister tell us the description and the salary packages for those employees?

Mr. Nandlall: The descriptions are: two Accounts Clerks II - \$45,338; three Office Assistants - \$35,864; three Vehicle Drivers - \$39,127 and Typist - \$45,354.

Mr. B. Williams: Might I respectfully refer the Hon. Minister to line item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings. The sum is \$1.8 million. Which building is being referred to under this line item?

Mr. Nandlall: This is the Main Office of the Attorney General's Chambers and the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6281 – Security Services – could the Hon. Minister tell this House which buildings or persons these services are provided for?

Mr. Nandlall: The building is at the Main Office at 95 Carmichael Street, Georgetown and the Police Commissioner, through the City Constabulary, is providing the service.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$45,843,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$2,800,000

Mr. Bond: Under Project Code 2501700 – Furniture and Equipment – could the Hon. Minister tell us what the nature of the furniture and equipment to be purchased is?

Mr. Nandlall: Two executive desks, four fire extinguishers, three air conditioning units, two photocopiers, six desks, five filing cabinets, two book shelves, one heavy duty printer, one shredder, one UPS, two water dispensers and four sitting chairs will be purchased.

Programme: 522 – Ministry Administration - \$2,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 523 – Attorney General's Chambers - \$98,538,000

Mr. B. Williams: Might I respectfully refer the Hon. Attorney General to line item 6116 – Contracted Employees. There are four employees listed there. Could I enquire whether they are State Counsel? If not, could he say what the designations and salaries are?

Mr. Nandlall: They are not State Counsel. The designations are Chief Parliamentary Counsel - \$1,135,105; Deputy Chief Parliamentary Counsel - \$548,382; Personal Assistant to the Attorney General - \$445,228; Driver - \$45,354.

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6133 – Benefits and Allowances – could the Hon. Minister say what categories of workers are enjoying those allowances?

Mr. Nandlall: Employees who are enjoying these benefits are at the clerical and secretarial staff.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6272 – Electricity Charges – could the Hon. Minister say whether these electricity charges are for the sole building at Carmichael Street?

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct. It is for the main building.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister tell us what the line item considered as “Other Goods and Services” is?

Mr. Nandlall: Which line item are you referring to?

Mr. Bond: I am referring to line item 6284 – Other.

Mr. Nandlall: This line item is used to finance the provision of internet services, the payment of bank charges and installation of six air conditioning (AC) units – general maintenance for the building.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister explain why we have arrived at \$1.3 million when, in 2011, though a similar sum was budgeted for, we only used \$414,000?

Mr. Nandlall: I understand that we are now paying \$50,000 per month for the internet services. And the Supreme Court, whenever the Attorney General requests a file, he now has to pay for it. So we now have to make provisions in our budget to accommodate that very novel expenditure.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, do the Attorney General's Chambers presently have a Deputy Solicitor General?

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct. I have a Deputy Solicitor General.

Mrs. Backer: Do you, Hon. Minister, have a Law Revision Officer?

Mr. Nandlall: Which head are you on?

Mrs. Backer: I am on Line Item 6111 – Administrative.

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct. We have one.

Mrs. Backer: Could you indicate the salary that person is paid?

Mr. Nandlall: The gross salary is \$210,000.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, the 14 persons who are there in the staff, are these employees sufficient to properly carry out the functions of the Attorney General's Chambers or are you constrained to seek to hire outside services from lawyers?

Mr. Nandlall: I can tell you without even consulting with the Permanent Secretary that the Attorney General's Chambers is understaffed.

Mrs. Backer: Would I be correct in assuming that as a result of that understaffing that you have been constrained to outsource?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, it has been a time-honoured tradition that the Attorney General's Chambers outsource.

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct. One outsources when he or she does not have the requisite skills within his or her armoury. Whether I am 100% fully staffed would not necessarily mean that the Attorney General will not outsource. They are mutually exclusive concepts.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to me what plans are in train to seek to enhance your in-house capacity?

Mr. Nandlall: The cuts which have been made earlier to the Budget would incapacitate tremendously. Sir, the Attorney General will continue to endeavour and find new initiatives to ensure that he attracts more qualified people to the Chambers despite the limitations which he labours under because of the fact that the legal profession is lucrative out there and it is difficult for me to attract lawyers to work at the rate of remuneration which the Government can afford to pay at this point in time.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, could you indicate to us how many vacancies you have that, ideally, you would like to fill if you can find lawyers who will come and work for the salaries? How many are you currently looking for?

Mr. Nandlall: I have not done the complete examination to say, with any degree of accuracy, a number.

Mrs. Backer: How many vacancies do you have? There are a lot of lawyers coming out this year and who have been here for two years. We might be able to attract them.

Mr. Nandlall: There are vacancies in the authorised establishment.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: could the Hon. Attorney General say whether the salaries that are being paid now in the Attorney General's Chambers are an inhibiting factor to attracting staff?

Mr. Nandlall: I just said so.

Mrs. Lawrence: Line Item 6283 – Cleaning and Extermination Services – could the Hon. Minister kindly inform the House why there is such a large increase in this line item for the year 2012?

Mr. Nandlall: This is a line item that deals with cleaning and extermination. I do not know why. The cleaners are cleaning more, I suppose, this time around.

Programme: 523 – Attorney General's Chambers - \$98,538,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$18,107,000

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6111 – Administrative – could the Hon. Minister indicate the designation and emoluments of the administrative staff?

Mr. Nandlall: There are four Legal Clerks at a salary of \$45,338.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees – could the Hon. Minister tell us the designations and emoluments of the contracted employees?

Mr. Nandlall: They are all Legal Clerks and the salary is the same.

Programme: 524 – State Solicitor - \$18,107,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$4,540,000

Mr. Bond: Project Code 2501700 – Furniture and Equipment – could the Hon. Minister indicate the source of the equipment and furniture?

Mr. Nandlall: Do you want me to list the stores that I will be buying them from?

Mr. Bond: Yes please.

Mr. Nandlall: I would not be able to say which store the items will be bought from. It is a budget for what is to be purchased. We do not know which store we will source it from.

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us the method of procurement please?

Mr. Nandlall: It is the procurement procedure as is outlined in the legislation which will be utilised.

Programme: 524 – Office of the State Solicitor - \$4,540,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry - \$78,978,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees – they have increased from 13 to 16. Could the Hon. Attorney General indicate the designations and salaries of these 16 employees?

Mr. Nandlall: They are: Accounts Clerk II; two Legal Clerk II - \$45,338; Office Assistant - \$35,864; Cleaner - \$40,935; Accounts Clerk II - \$45,338; Typist Clerk - \$45,354; Legal Clerk II - \$53,160, Legal Clerk II - \$45, 338; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Accounts Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$45,338; Cleaner - \$40,935; Office Assistant - \$35,864; Legal Clerk II - \$45, 338; Legal Clerk II - \$45, 338; Legal Clerk II - \$45, 338; and Typist Clerk - \$45,354.

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6114 – Clerical and Office Support – could the Hon. Attorney General tell us the designations and categories for this category of workers?

Mr. Nandlall: They are: Senior Registry Officer - \$60,516; Registry Officer - \$55,652; Confidential Secretary - \$49,827; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Confidential Secretary - \$49,827; Registry Officer - \$55,652; Office Assistant - \$40,935; Typist Clerk - \$45,354; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; Legal Clerk II - \$55,275; Legal Clerk II - \$50,863; Legal Clerk II - \$53,161; and it continues. I can go on, Sir, but...

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Minister has confirmed that the two distinct categories employ the same type of designations, Legal Clerk and the like.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6223 – Office Materials and Supplies – could the Hon. Minister explain the leap in expenditure?

4.04 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: Under the Deeds Registry Reform Programme, the system by which the Deeds Registry is being operated has been transformed from a manually driven system to a computer driven system. That by itself carries with it an increase in cost. The Transports et cetera are now being done electronically; the trademarks are processed that way. If you look at the business registrations now you will see it has improved; it is a highly decorated document with a different

seal purchased and imprinted on it and so on. That accounts for the increase in the new costs that you see here.

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – the sum allocated is \$1.8 million. Could the Hon. Attorney General say which building that money is going to be spent on to maintain?

Mr. Nandlall: It is for refurbishment and renovation to the Deed Registry of Georgetown as well as Essequibo and Berbice.

Mr. Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state under line item 6281 – Security Services – where there is the sum of \$8.5 million, what security services will be provided?

Mr. Nandlall: It will be the Deeds Registry Building in Georgetown, escorts to the bank daily to make deposits, the Deeds Registry Essequibo and the Deeds Registry in Berbice. It also includes monitoring around the clock by MMC in all three locations.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6264 – Vehicles Spares and Service – could the Hon. Minister state what is the fleet of vehicles available to the Deeds Registry?

Mr. Nandlall: It is a Toyota Pickup, PHH 6244.

Mr. Bond: What is the life of the vehicle? How old is that vehicle?

Mr. Chairman: PHH would be about nine to ten years old.

Mr. Nandlall: It is about nine to ten years old. Let me fill the Member in that the repairs that are budgeted for are the changing of tires, filter, brakes pad, wipers et cetera.

Mr. Bond: Hon. Minister, could you state under line item 6261 – Local Travelling and Subsistence – who are the persons that benefit from this line item?

Mr. Nandlall: The person who is performing the Registrar of Deeds function is required to travel to Berbice and Essequibo to perform the functions, to cancel Transports, to pass mortgages and to pass Transports. This line item largely provides for the transportation of that person and her staff, Ms. Ferdinand.

Mr. Bond: In relation to the same line item but more in the line of a policy question, would it be more beneficial to have the services obtained in these counties as opposed to someone coming from Georgetown?

Mr. Nandlall: My learned friend would have heard that in my Budget presentation I outlined that in the unfolding reforms, which are taking place at the Deeds Registry, involves largely the conferment of authority to the Sub-Registries precisely to ensure that there is not such a dependency on the centre for the performance of certain services and that we can have personnel who are localised in the other counties performing these functions, thereby obviating the need for persons to travel from Georgetown at the frequency they now travel.

Mr. Bond: I am just affording the Hon. Minister an opportunity to reinforce his points. I am sure he will be grateful. Could the Minister tell us when that would be coming on stream please?

Mr. Nandlall: A consultancy agreement has been signed only yesterday. As of the first working day in May, that consultant will begin that aspect of the project.

Mr. Bond: One final question Mr. Minister: could you afford the House with the cost of the consultancy, the payment for the consultant?

Mr. Nandlall: The consultancy is one that is financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The beginning phase is about six months; it is not intended to be a protracted exercise. The cost as I recall is GYD \$390,000 per month.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Minister state in relation to line item 6111 to 6116 whether the Registrar of Deeds is in a conformed position? Is she confirmed as the Registrar of Deeds?

Mr. Nandlall: There is no Registrar of Deeds.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state the designation of the person who is sitting next to him advising him?

Mr. Nandlall: She is the Acting Deputy Registrar, performing the functions of the Registrar.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Can I ask the Hon. Minister when that position will be filled, the substantive Registrar of Deeds.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, my learned friend ought to know that the Constitution resides that responsibility exclusively with the Judicial Service Commission. The Hon. Attorney General, a humble servant of this Assembly, is most anxious to have that position filled, but I have to await the Judicial Service Commission.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Could the Hon. Minister state whether he has made any recommendations to the Judicial Service Commission for that position to be filled?

Mr. Nandlall: I have made representations to the Chairman of the Judicial Service Commission and I have not yet received a response that permits me to say with certainty when that appointment will be made.

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry – \$78,978,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry – \$3,300,000

Mr. Bond: Project Code 1201500 – Buildings - could the Hon. Minister indicate who the contractor is that will facilitate these works at the Deeds Registry, washroom facilities?

Mr. Nandlall: It is rehabilitation of the washroom facilities. The total budgeted sum is \$800,000 and we are now seeking the Parliament's approval. So, how can I say who is the contractor?

Programme: 525 – Deeds Registry – \$3,300,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, we still have the High Court.

Mr. Chairman: I know. We are going on to the Supreme Court. This is for the Ministry. So, I wish to thank you and your technical officers for the advice that they have given and the support given this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nandlall: You are most welcomed, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister please avoid the crosstalk and indicate when you are ready. It is that crosstalk that got us into trouble the last time.

Agency: 55 Supreme Court

Current Expenditure

Programme: 551 –Supreme Court of Judicature – \$606,663,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6011 – Statutory Wages and Salaries – there is \$177,748,000. Could the Hon. Minister confirm that that head relates to salaries of Judges of the Supreme Court?

Mr. Nandlall: I so conform, Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow up please. Could the Hon. Minister say whether the salaries of the Judges of the Supreme Court are tax-free?

Mr. Nandlall: As far as I am aware Sir, only the Hon. Chancellor and the Hon. Chief Justice.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you. A follow up question: Could the Hon. Attorney General say whether any moves are afoot to make the salaries of all the judges tax-free?

Mr. Nandlall: I cannot so say, Sir.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Attorney General say whether he is of the view that all Judges' salaries should be tax-free, being the Hon. Attorney General who has to direct this Government and who...

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Mr. B. Williams, let us stick to the line item. I do not think that that is fair question to put to the Minister for him to answer publicly. It is not a line item; it is a policy issue which you can raise at the appropriate committee.

Mr. B. Williams: I am sorry Mr. Chairman...

Mr. Chairman: It is not a Point of Order, I am just saying.

Mr. B. Williams: As it pleases you Sir. Under the same line item... [*Interruption*] The judges, we have to take care of our judges. The Puny Judge Hon. Attorney General, does he/she get the same allowance as the Justice of Appeal and the Chief Justice and Chancellor?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told that the benefits which are enjoyed by Puny Judges are the same as enjoyed by Justices of Appeal.

Mr. B. Williams: I am not sure the Hon. Attorney General would agree with me that there are at least four categories where the Puny Judge does not get the same allowance as for example the Chancellor of the Judiciary.

Mr. Chairman: He said Justices of Appeal.

Mr. Nandlall: You see Sir, I speak very specifically; I said Justices of Appeal. I never said anything about Chancellor.

Mr. Chairman: The Chancellor and Chief Justice are separated under a special dispensation. That is my understanding. Mr. Williams, go ahead.

Mr. B. Williams: For example, does the Puny Judge get a chauffeur allowance?

Mr. Nandlall: They are paid an allowance for a Chauffeur.

Mr. B. Williams: So they have a chauffeur allowance, in other words?

Mr. Nandlall: I just said that.

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, but you could have said yes or no.

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, my friend cannot dictate how I phrase my answer.

Mr. Chairman: Alright, we are not before a Jury.

Mr. B. Williams: I do not know why the Attorney General is so edgy.

Mr. Chairman: The Member can answer the way he chooses. The Minister is not under cross-examination as a witness. He is assisting this House. Let us look at it in that vein please.

Mr. B. Williams: Hon. Attorney General, are there any moves by you or the State or the Government to increase the complement of Judges for the High Court or the Supreme Court?

Mr. Nandlall: Is my friend situating this on a line item, Sir? I just need guidance.

Mr. B. Williams: It is the same line item 6011 – Statutory Wages and Salaries – if I moved from that line item I would have of course let you know.

Mr. Nandlall: I also said in my Budget presentation that this year we will bring to the Parliament the requisite legislation to augment the constitutional provision that allows for the appointment of temporary judges. I also indicated that the High Court Act that limits the complement of Judges will be amended to expand it.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, I would like the Hon. Attorney General to say what number of judges he proposes to increase the complement to?

Mr. Nandlall: This Attorney General will not act in a non-consultative mode. I intend to engage my learned friend and other Members of the Assembly and will arrive at a number that we think will be competent to administer the affairs of the Judiciary.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Williams do you have a number that you wish to propose?

Mr. B. Williams: By all means, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Propose it.

Mr. B. Williams: I am shocked that the Attorney General does not have his number. Could the Hon. Attorney General see if he can follow this line of reasoning? Do you consider Hon. Attorney General that the Family Court should have a Judge?

Mr. Nandlall: My view is that it should have two Judges.

Mr. B. Williams: Two Judges, good, we are getting somewhere. Do you consider Hon. Attorney General that the Commercial Court should get an additional Judge?

Mr. Nandlall: That is correct, but my friend as he proceeds must bear into account the physical space available in the High Court in its present construct.

Mr. B. Williams: Am I to understand the Hon. Attorney General to be limiting justice to space, Sir? I would hope not.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go into the Estimates.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, we are getting somewhere with the complement. We are doing fine. We are getting along fine. I am asking the Hon. Attorney General whether he considers that the Assizes should have two additional Judges.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General is it your function to appoint Judges to the Assizes?

Mr. Nandlall: I was just going to tell you, Sir, that the matter of distribution of the business of the High Court and the Court of Appeal are exclusively within the domain of the Chancellor and the Chief Justice respectively. I cannot trespass in those provinces.

Mr. Chairman: I would not allow.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, we understand that, but we are not talking about the assigning of judges who exists, we are talking about adding to the complement of Judges.

Mr. Nandlall: I just said that already.

Mr. Chairman: He said that he intends to bring legislation to do so.

Mr. B. Williams: The Hon. Attorney General and the Minister of Justice is saying that he cannot say whether he needs other Judges in certain aspects of our Judiciary. Is that what the Hon. Member is saying? I last asked him whether he believes that the Criminal Assizes of this country required two additional Judges. Right now you have two judges dealing with 234 cases in the High Court.

Mr. Nandlall: I believe that we should have as many judges as possible.

Mr. Chairman: Let us move along, Mr. Williams, to another line of questioning. You have done what you established, that the complement is lacking and it needs to be supplemented.

Mr. Nandlall: I said that before.

Mr. B. Williams: If it pleases you Mr. Chairman, could the Hon. Attorney General, as soon as the Hon. Ali has concluded his disturbance, I see that there is an extremely large figure for contract employees under line item 6116 – Administrative – for the Supreme Court, 83 in number. Could the Hon. Attorney General tell us the designation of the ten most senior that category, and their emoluments?

Mr. Nandlall: In order of seniority, they are the Judicial Officer whose salary is at \$448,967, the Head of Information System at \$267,696, Accounts Clerk II at \$53,161 and the rest up to ten are Accounts Clerk II at \$53,161.

Mr. B. Williams: So, you have largely Accounts Clerk. What other large categories do you have under the 83?

Mr. Nandlall: We have Accounts Clerk, Legal Clerks, Typists Clerk, Office Assistants, Drivers and Cleaners.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, a follow up question please: could the Hon. Minister say, under the said line item 6116, what is responsible for this increase in the number of contracted employees from 2011 to 2012?

Mr. Nandlall: I am informed that there was a very anomalous situation in the system where you had a number of employees that were employed on a temporary basis. During the year 2011 efforts were made to regularise that anomalous state of affairs and persons were given the option to either move from the nebulous position of a temporary employee to the more stable position on the establishment or by contract. Some choose by contract and some choose by way of going on the permanent establishment.

Mr. Bond: Line Item 6242 – Maintenance of Buildings – could the Hon. Minister indicate which buildings are being maintained?

Mr. Nandlall: The buildings which are expected to receive maintenance work during this period are the High Court in Georgetown, the Court of Appeal, Maintenance work to the Jury Room at the Berbice High Court and the Essequibo Registry, as well as the Judges Quarters in Berbice. Some work will also be done at the Berbice Registry.

Mr. Bond: Similarly, Line Item 6255 – Maintenance of Other Infrastructure – could the Hon. Minister indicate to the House what other infrastructure the line item refers to?

Mr. Nandlall: This is for infrastructure outside of the building like the fence. I see here the Court of Appeal fence and repairs to the High Court’s fence. If you recall Mr. Bond, a part of the High Court fence adjacent to High Street is missing. The ironmongery parts of the fence are expected to be replaced.

Mr. Bond: My last question Mr. Minister; Line Item 6281 – Security Services – could the Minister indicate who provides the security services?

Mr. Nandlall: Strategic Action Security.

Mr. Bond: A follow up question please Mr. Chairman: is this the same company that provided the services in 2011?

Mr. Nandlall: In fact, the contract was awarded in 2011.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister then explain the reason for the increase in 2012?

Mr. Nandlall: Many of the buildings for which security services are required were also secured by the Commissioner of Police under the constabulary branch. They have indicated their inability to continue to offer those services, hence the use of private security now.

Programme: 551 –Supreme Court of Judicature – \$606,663,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 551 –Supreme Court of Judicature – \$75,600,000

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, would you permit one question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. B. Williams: Project Code 2501400 – Furniture and Equipment – the purchase of furniture and equipment to the tune of \$40,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Do you need to know what that is?

Mr. B. Williams: Yes, Sir. What amount of this amount is being spent on the Family Court?

Mr. Nandlall: We have an estimated sum to be spent on the Family Court of \$32,571,000. The balance of \$7,429,000 is expected to be spent on furniture for the Supreme Court.

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon: Mr. Chairman, can the Hon. Minister state under Project Code 1201400 – Buildings – for the completion of the Magistrates Court, what is the projected date that the Magistrate Court at Linden will be completed.

Programme: 551 – Supreme Court of Judicature – \$75,600,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the estimates

Current Expenditure

Programme: 552 – Magistracy – \$358,744,000

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, Line Item 6116 – Contracted Employees – in which 55 are listed, could the Hon. Minister say whether Magistrates are employed under this Head?

Mr. Nandlall: Yes, Magistrates are employed under this head, some of them.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow up question, Sir: could the Hon. Minister indicate how many Magistrates are under this head and their emoluments?

4.34 p.m.

Mr. Nandlall: Four magistrates are under this head and their salary is \$514,710 each.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up, Sir. Is the salary of a Magistrate on par with that of a State Counsel?

Mr. Nandlall: Which line item?

Mr. Williams: The same line item- Contracted Employees.

Mr. Nandlall: No, it is not the same.

Mr. B. Williams: Which one is more favourable, the state counsel package...?

Mr. Nandlall: The magistrate's.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow up question: could the Hon. Attorney General say what the compliment of magistrates in the magistracy of Guyana is?

Mr. Nandlall: We currently have nineteen magistrates presiding in Guyana.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question, please, Mr. Chairman: could the Hon Minister say whether those 19 magistrates are all assigned to a magistrate court and, if not, how many magistrates' courts are there in Guyana?

Mr. Nandlall: As far as I am aware all the Magistrates have been assigned to magistrate courts.

Mr. B. Williams: Could the Hon. Attorney General say how many magistrates' courts there are in Guyana.

Mr. Nandlall: There are several magisterial districts; as I am presently positioned I am unable to say the total number of courts in the country.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: would the Hon Attorney General agree that we have a shortage of magistrates?

Mr. Nandlall: I am told, yes, we have a paucity of magistrates.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Attorney General you indicated that we have 19 magistrates, and four are on contract. There are fifteen who are not on contract. What is the salary of a regular magistrate who is not on contract?

Mr. Nandlall: The contracted magistrates to whom I made reference...

Mrs. Backer: Not the contracted; you said four of the 19 are contracted magistrates. The other fifteen I assume are on the pensionable establishment. I am asking what will a magistrate, not a senior or principal, earn on the pensionable post.

Mr. Nandlall: It is the same salary, \$514,710.

Programme: 552 – Magistracy – \$358,744,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 552 – Magistrates’ Department – \$151,746,000

Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon: The Hon. Minister has had some opportunity to research the answer. Could the Hon. Minister state when the Magistrate’s court at Linden is expected to be completed?

Mr. Nandlall: The date I have here is the 16th July, 2012 for the completion of the Linden Magistrate’s Court. I should take this opportunity to say that we are creating for the first time a magisterial district in Linden because, historically, Linden is part of the West Demerara Magisterial District, and that situation causes undue hardship to people who have to travel all the way to Vreed-en-Hoop Magistrate’s Court to uplift their maintenance etcetera. We will now open an office in Linden and Linden will be a separate magisterial district.

Mrs. Backer: Thank you very much. Hon. Minister would you care to share with this Hon. House the projected completion date for the Magistrate’s Court at Lethem.

Mr. Nandlall: 10th June, 2012

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister would you indicate to the Hon. House how frequent are sittings in the Lethem Magistrate’s Court?

Mr. Nandlall: Currently it is once a month; it used to be once per quarter. I understand that there is every intention to make the sittings even more regular.

Mrs. Backer: Would you agree Hon. Minister that with the increased trade, and the fact that Lethem is shortly projected to be a town in the not too distant future, that it may be prudent to look at a magistrate’s court that sits at least twice or thrice a week and that there is a resident magistrate in Region 9, if not in Lethem only.

Mr. Nandlall: It is the vision of the Attorney General Chambers to ensure that as far as possible we get magistrates to sit everyday in magisterial districts. It is in pursuit that vision that the new

magistrate's court being constructed in Lethem and, which will finish in June, has built in resident quarters for the magistrate. So we are making plans for that.

Mrs. Backer: Was this vision enunciated in your budget address Hon. Minister? I was not able to hear everything because of Ms. Teixeira's constant heckling.

Mr. Nandlall: I understand from Government Information News Agency (GINA) before they were cut off, that my speech is online.

Mr. Bond: Would these buildings be sound proof, air-conditioned buildings? Project Code-1201400.

Mr. Nandlall: As I am advised, no, Sir.

Programme: 552 Magistrates Department – \$151,746,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimate.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to thank the staff of the Supreme Court for their assistance to the House.

Agency: 56 – Public Prosecutions

Current Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$96,716,000

Mr. B. Williams: Line Item 6011 - is the sum of \$13,812,000 the remunerative package of several members of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Chambers or the DPP himself or herself?

Mr. Nandlall: That is the statutory remunerative package of the DPP.

Mr. B. Williams: A follow-up question: Line Item 6116 - Contracted Employees - nine. Are the state prosecutors included under this line item, their salaries and remunerative packages?

Mr. Nandlall: Four state counsels are on contract.

Mr. B. Williams: Could you indicate the designations and the emoluments of the four?

Mr. Nandlall: The designation is state counsel; the remuneration is \$197,356.

Mr. B. Williams: Are all state counsels?

Mr. Nandlall: That is right.

Mr. B. Williams: Sir, could I enquire of the Attorney General what is the complement of state counsels currently at the DPP Chambers?

Mr. Nandlall: Eight, I understand.

Mr. B. Williams: Could I enquire of the Hon. Attorney General, Mr. Chairman, if that is the complement or whether there is a shortage of state prosecutors in the DPP Chambers.

Mr. Nandlall: The Complement is 10 so there is a shortage.

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$96,716,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimate.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$6,800,000

Mr. Bond: Mr. Chairman, Project Code 2500700 - could the Hon. Minister indicate what type of vehicle is being purchased and the cost?

Mr. Nandlall: It has not been decided what the type of vehicle will be.

Mr. Bond: Could the Hon. Minister indicate the purpose for which it will be purchased?

Mr. Nandlall: This vehicle is for the use by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Bond: With your leave Mr. Chairman, could the Minister state what amount of the \$6.8 million is proportioned to the vehicle, the furniture and the equipment? How much?

Mr. Nandlall: Sir, I cannot say with certainty what portion of this money will go towards the purchase of the vehicle. I suppose a larger portion will go there.

Mr. Bond: Could the Minister offer an intellectual guess for the equipment and furniture then?

Mr. Nandlall: If I can assist my friend I will list the furniture expected to be purchased: two fans, three air condition units, chairs, one shredder and one scanner. When those sums are subtracted the balance will go towards the vehicle.

Programme: 561 – Public Prosecutions – \$6,800,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I wish to thank the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and his staff. Also, I wish to say on behalf of the entire Assembly that we extend our condolences to him. He has endured, and his family is enduring, a tragic loss, and so we thank him for his time spent this afternoon in those circumstances.

Assembly resumed

Sitting suspended at 4.49 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 6.04 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members when the suspension was taken we were just about to consider the estimates from the Ministry of Finance. Since then some good news has come into the Assembly. The Hon. Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport has asked for my leave for him to say a few words.

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]: Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon history was created when Mr. Shivnarine Chanderpaul attained 10,000 runs. He is the first Guyanese to do so, the second West Indian, and the 10th person in the world. *[Applause]*

Mr. Speaker: Outstanding.

Dr. Anthony: I can safely say on behalf of the entire National Assembly we wish to extend our sincerest congratulations to Mr. Shivnarine Chanderpaul for achieving this milestone. I think all Guyana is extremely proud of this achievement. *[Applause]*

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Members just to say that I hope in the not too distant future this House would be able to consider and approve a motion to honour our cricketing great Mr.

Chanderpaul and hopefully he will be able to come here himself and say a few words to the Assembly. That will be arranged on a bi-partisan basis, and we will choose a date and time when he is free from cricketing duties. We will ensure the full support of the House, without any cuts or interruptions guaranteed for him.

Hon. Members, we can now go straight into the consideration of the Estimates.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Agency: 03 – Ministry of Finance

Programme: 031 - Ministry Administration – \$15,212,586,000

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions in connection with the current programme, more specifically on page 44. I am looking at line item 6111, Administrative, and wonder whether the Minister could give us an idea as to what brought this number down.

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member will note that the staffing details table, consistent with the expenditure estimates, reflects a reduction in the number of persons and the budgetary allocation. This is principally of the retirement and demission of office of certain persons. In fact three persons are no longer under this category. They are a Senior Personnel Officer, Personnel Officer and Administrative Assistant. So there is only one person left under that category.

Mr. Greenidge: I must thank the Minister and take him immediately to line item 6116 - Contracted Employees - to seek an explanation as to the reason for this steep increase, and ask what categories of employees have been recruited under that head.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, through you, we have been adding a number of positions to the complement of staff. I will mention the designations which contributed to the increase; I think the increase is by 19, if I am not mistaken. They comprise one Deputy Finance Secretary, seven Economic and Financial Analyst, one Vehicle Driver, two Administrative Assistants, two Typist/Clerks, one Clerk II General, one Office Assistant, one Senior Personnel Officer, one Assistant Accountant, one Cleaner and one Finance Manager.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, can I ask whether these have been recruited under the framework of the Ministry itself or Office of the President or under the job definitions of the framework of the Public Service Ministry (PSM)?

Dr. Singh: The recruitment was all done through the PSM process.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, through you again, the item Revision of Wages and Salaries makes provision for an amount that moves from \$3.4 to 3.7 billion. Can the Minister tell us whether this has an implication for the public service as a whole in terms of the increases to be negotiated this year?

Dr. Singh: Indeed Mr. Chairman, I can confirm that this is the allocation out of which the salary increase, eventually to be paid in 2012, will be met amongst other obligations.

Mr. Greenidge: Am I right in thinking this is a figure over 10%, and if so what other than wage increase will be paid from it.

Dr. Singh: The revision of wages and salaries allocation cannot be mapped to the total wage bill in a simple division and an implied salary increase be deduced there from. The simple reason is that throughout the Central Government we do not budget for vacant positions. As would have been noted throughout the consideration of these Estimates, the employment cost allocation budgeted in each instance under every Agency would have been in relation to positions that are currently filled.

The revision of wages and salaries allocation, as I have explained in this House on previous occasions, is intended to meet the salary increase that would eventually be concluded for public servants and other public employees, including teachers who are currently party to a multi-year agreement, and the salary increase to be awarded the disciplinary forces. But the allocation also meets employment costs shortfalls that might arise in other budget agencies, occasioned by such developments as promotions, reclassifications of employees, new recruitment, et cetera. In the event that a budget agency requires additional allocations for employment under the general rubric of Employment Costs that shortfall will be met from here.

Mr. Greendige: I thank you very much Mr. Minister. I assume that these other claims on this item normally would not be of a magnitude of 10% or more in the course of a year – these other claims, unfilled positions and the other categories you have identified. Is that a fair assumption?

Dr. Singh: I would not necessarily say so because in a typical year we do recruit a fair number of teachers. There are certain categories, like teachers and policemen, that we would recruit a fairly significant cohort in any one year.

Mr. Greenidge: But in terms of new recruitment it would not be normal for new recruitment to be of a magnitude, or would new recruits to be of a magnitude to impact significantly on this number?

Dr. Singh: In fact it would, Mr. Chairman. Because, like I said, particularly in recent years we have been making a concerted effort to increase the number of teachers we bring in to the system. And in the public health system in particular there are a number of doctors we have been recruiting. Doctors have been coming back particularly from Cuba - government trainees coming back to be employed in the public healthcare system. They can account for fairly significant numbers, so it is difficult for me to say whether they would account for a particular magnitude or a particular quantum of resources or not. I would say in my experience it could certainly be significant.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you. But I see in essence you are working with a figure in relation to revision in excess of 10%.

The other item is not a massive item but the increase seems to be relatively significant. It pertains to line item 6264 - Vehicles Spares and Service - which suggests an increase from \$11.4 billion to 14.5. This seems to be very large.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I note the Member's reference to the increase. I will say that our vehicle fleet is aging and I would be happy to share with the Hon. Member the details. But the fleet is aging and we are hoping to be able to bring some vehicles in marginal surface back to full service.

Mr. Greenidge: Is a significant proportion of the vehicles out of service at the moment?

Dr. Singh: No, they are not unserviceable; all of the vehicles are serviceable, they are working, but some of them do require significant maintenance to bring them to the condition we would like to have them in.

Mr. Greendige: I am asking that particular question because I notice that in the report of the Auditor General of 2010 he did make reference to the fact that the Ministry had a number of vehicles, a significant proportion which seem to be not in use – that was the term he used. Now you seem to be proposing to acquire some additional ones so I was...

Dr. Singh: In fact, we do have vehicles that we have been endeavouring to dispose of that is vehicles that are past the stage where it would be economical to recover. Essentially these vehicles will become unserviceable. But we still do have in use vehicles whose dates of manufacture go back to years like 1994, 1995, and they still seem to have some amount of life in them. We would like to eke out of them as much life as we possibly could.

6.19 p.m.

Mr. Greenidge: I notice, and I am raising this because it suggests rather steep increases, which need some explanation. Line item 6281 - Security Services, seems to have gone from \$19.2 million to roughly \$29 million... *[Interruption]*

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, through you again, I am glad that the Hon. Member asked this question because there are some peculiarities associated with this number that had me and I understand why it leapt out. We did in fact have an issue with reconciling. We have tightened up on the monitoring of the delivery of security services to ensure that we get the hours delivered that we are paying for. We did undertake an exercise in the last quarter of last year to reconcile hours that we had been billed for and that we needed to confirm had been delivered, in terms of standing guards present on the location. As I am sure you realise we have some locations where we have a number of guards. Sometimes you are paying for five guards, but three might turn up on a particular shift. I had asked for this matter to be looked into having made the observation on one or two occasions that we did not have the full complements present.

That reconciliation exercise, going through the records to ensure that we had proper attendance records and that we were being billed only for security services supplied, took some time as a

result of which there is an amount that is due in relations to the last quarter of last year that was not paid and that will be paid in 2012 upon passage of this budget.

So that contributes to an appearance of a lower amount in 2011, an allocation that is somewhat higher in 2012.

Mr. Greenidge: Okay, that makes sense because I see that in the previous year and also the budget of 2011, the figure was more like \$27 million than \$19 million.

The other way that seems a little odd is, line item 6282 - Equipment Maintenance and I am wondering if whether that has declined as significantly as it appears or whether it is a classification problem.

Dr. Singh: Did I hear the Hon. Member refer to a decline or an increase. I am reading an increase there.

Mr. Greenidge: Sorry, it is an increase.

Dr. Singh: The increase there is particularly in relations to electronic equipment which now entered their post warranty period that would require us to meet the maintenance.

Mr. Greenidge: Could the Minister assist us in relations to the head that actually does have a decline and I am apologising for that and that is line item 6284 - Other, which is down from \$62 million to \$45 million?

Dr. Singh: Under line item 6284 allocation we meet the cost of a variety of services, including the payment of, in a centralised manner, legal fees when the Government contracts legal representation and that is probably one of the most significant items within this category. It is anticipated, expected, hoped projected, I suppose, that the call on this allocation will be somewhat less in 2012 than it was in 2011.

Mr. Greenidge: May I ask the Minister in relations to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, for an explanation as to the Ministry's action in relations to the recommendations of the Auditor General which would have been captured in 2009 and 2010 as regards the movement of CANU and the State Planning Commission from this category as is shown here? I do not know if whether I need to site you.

Dr. Singh: I am familiar with it.

Mr. Greenidge: Okay, thank you.

Dr. Singh: In fact Mr. Chairman, through you, colleagues Members of the House would recall that in the last treasury memorandum tabled before this National Assembly, it was indicated that the recommendations made by the Auditor General were in receiving the benefit of active consideration and I am happy to say that that consideration has advanced considerably and in fact action has commenced already.

In fact, in relations to CANU, Members of this Hon. House would note that the amount allocated under the Ministry of Finance is significantly less than was spent last year. That is not because CANU's activities will be declining, but in fact we have already started the migration of CANU over to the Ministry of Home Affairs. It will be noted that we have in fact only provided for the period of 2012 up to the time of the passage of this budget for CANU to be funded under the Ministry of Finance. For the remainder of the year it will be funded more appropriately under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

That migration has happened and in fact this Hon. House has already approved an allocation for the Ministry of Home Affairs that includes an allocation for CANU.

In relations to the State Planning Secretariat, likewise, we recognise the recommendation made by the Auditor General's Office. We have in fact already commenced taking actions to migrate the staff currently employed or up to recently employed under the State Planning Secretariat or the State Planning Commission. We have in fact already initiated actions to migrate those staff members over to the staffing complement of the Ministry proper.

Mr. Greenidge: May I ask about the allocation under this same head to the Ethnic Relations Commission. I believe that there has been provision under another head, Office of the President I believe and why is the allocation split in this way?

Dr. Singh: I am not aware that there is an allocation under the Office of the President for the Ethnic Relations Commission.

Mr. Greenidge: That is all I have on this page for the moment thank you.

Mr. Ramjattan: Line item 6311 – Rates and Taxes, \$162 million is that intended for the Municipality Council of Georgetown?

Dr. Singh: That allocation is in fact for all of the municipalities – the Georgetown Mayor and City Councils and the Town Councils of our other towns.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Member, through you Mr. Chairman, what is the figure that will be given to the Georgetown City Council?

Dr. Singh: The total rates and taxes bill issued by the City Council in relations to the Government properties in the city of Georgetown amounts to \$157 million and that \$162 million includes that \$157 million.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, could you indicate whether the Government's rates and taxes owed to the council is current?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I am happy to report that we are completely up to date.

Mr. Scott: Same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations. If you were to turn to page 396, subsidies, we would find that last year the (Ethnic Relations Commission) ERC received \$91 million plus. I do not know if whether I can say it is a non-functional organisation at this point, but I see that the money has gone to \$99 million. Could you say what justified the raise from \$91 million to \$99 million?

Dr. Singh: Well this increase essentially, I should say, the overall amount provided, is to meet the operating cost of the Commission and the increase is contributed to by a number of factors, these include change in employment cost to salary increase paid to the members of the staff, but also increase activities, monitoring and public awareness activities. It really is a combination of things. On the one hand some movement in employment cost, but on the other hand or in addition, movement in other operating expenses in relations to the activities of the Commission.

Mr. Scott: Under the same line item, you have two very important organisations to the country, which are the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Guyana Securities Council. I recognise the importance of these organisations, but I noticed that of the \$6 billion, they only get \$55 million

each. Do you think that that is enough allocation to enable these two organisations to effectively function in carrying out their duties?

Dr. Singh: We do in fact believe and I am happy to confirm, that the allocations provided will be adequate to fund the operations of these entities.

Mr. Scott: Do you consider either organisation to be adequately staffed?

Dr. Singh: In fact Mr. Chairman, we do anticipate some scaling up of the staffing of the Financial Intelligence Unit and so Hon. Member, I am sure, will observe that there is a significant increase in the allocation provided to that unit.

Mr. Scott: Will you lay a financial paper to this House, however guarded of those two organisations?

Dr. Singh: Well in fact Mr. Chairman, I am sure the Hon. Member knows that we have been tabling reports produced by the Guyana's Security Council and we have been doing so diligently. The Financial Intelligence Unit which is a somewhat newer entity, will be complying with its obligations under the Anti- Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act, which was passed unanimously by this Hon. House a year or two ago.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relations to the same agency I noticed that for the Statistical Bureau, last year we had \$171 million and today we have \$952 million. What is the cause for that increase? I might have missed it some time.

Dr. Singh: I do not recall Mr. Chairman if I might have mentioned it before, but in keeping with the 10 year cycle of execution of National Censuses, 2012 will be the year for the next National Census, the last census having been conducted in 2002. We anticipate that the Bureau of Statistics will very shortly announce a census date, which will be a date sometime in 2012, probably in the latter part of the second quarter or the early part of the third quarter. The increase reflects the cost of executing that census.

Mrs. Lawrence: The same line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Hon. Minister I am looking at page 396, at the allocation to the Statistical Bureau, could the

Minister kindly inform this House whether included in this allocation are moneys to establish the pension scheme as asked for by the staff there?

Dr. Singh: In fact, we have recognised for some time the circumstances of the Bureau of Statistics; I suppose relatively unusual, somewhat peculiar circumstances of the Bureau of Statistics. This by way of information is an entity that moved from a traditional civil service department to a semi-autonomous entity, I believe in 1980. At that time notwithstanding that its Act stipulated that a pension scheme might be established for its employees, that was not done at the time and is yet to be done. The matter has been raised by the employees; I believe this is publicly known. In fact, I am happy to say that a proposal is currently before Cabinet which will see a speedy resolution including the establishment of a provision for pension for the employees. That cost will be met, it is anticipated that that cost can be met under the allocations provided in Budget 2012.

Mrs. Backer: On the same head, the Rights Commission of Guyana, we see a sum of \$65 million has been budgeted for this year, which Rights Commission will benefit from this \$65 million Hon. Minister?

Dr. Singh: This will be the Constitutional Rights Commissions, the Rights Commissions established under the Constitution specifically those that have been appointed and are now commencing their operations, specifically the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Indigenous Peoples Commission, the Rights of the Child Commission and a central amount for administration, because the administration will be shared by these commissions.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister could you indicate, are those four commissions being given an equal amount of funding? Let us exclude the Human Rights Commission; I am speaking about the Women and Gender Equality, the Indigenous Peoples and the Rights of the Child Commission.

Dr. Singh: The amounts allocated from what I have before me do not indicate that an exactly identical amount has been provided to each of the commissions. Those details may very well depend on the work programme that the individual commissions have submitted and the stage of plays as it relates to the respective activities.

So I suppose the short answer is that the summaries that I have before me does not suggest that an equal and identical amount will be provided to each commission.

Mrs. Backer: Could you share with the House, Hon. Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, the break down for the three that I have identified?

Dr. Singh: Sure. The break down that I have before me indicates an allocation of \$22.3 million for the Women and Gender Equality Commission; \$15.7 million for the Indigenous Peoples Commission and \$17.3 million for the Rights of the Child Commission. Those amounts will not add up to \$65 million, because as I indicated there is also an amount for central administration.

Mrs. Backer: Hon. Minister, are you aware through you Mr. Chairman, that that figure has been allocated for the Women and Gender Equity Commission is substantially below what that commission submitted as to their needs to effectively carry out their work. It is less than half.

Dr. Singh: I will say I am aware they did not get all the resources they requested.

Mrs. Backer: Would you agree with me that they got less than 50% of what they requested Minister?

Dr. Singh: I wonder, Mr. Chairman, whether the intent of the Hon. Member is to engage in a contest in arithmetic. I am sure the Hon. Member is perfectly capable of doing the arithmetic herself.

Mr. Chairman: But Hon. Member, the Minister cannot be forced to give an answer that...

Mrs. Backer: No, he is not being forced.

Mr. Chairman: You have an opinion that it is less than 50%...

Mrs. Backer: I am asking, I do not have the figure, I do not know what they have asked for, so I am asking...I am not a member... [*Interruption*] ...I am asking if the Hon. Minister said that they did not get... I am asking if it was less than half that is what I am asking.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I will say this that what I have before me is an indication of the approved amount and notwithstanding that I do pride myself on my powers of recollection. I

would not pretend that I can recall exactly how much was requested. I was relying on the Hon. Member's indication of her own recollection of what the request was.

Mrs. Backer: I am not a member, I do not work with the Ministry of Finance, how will I know?

Dr. Singh: But like I said I do not have before me and I am sure the Hon. Member will bear with me for the amount that was requested. I have before me the amount which was provided.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister I think it was established that they did not get all. I think you said so and Mdm. Deputy Speaker also said so.

Dr. Singh: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. B. Williams: Line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, page 396, Statistical Bureau; The Hon. Minister is aware that the employees are complaining about this condition of bunching due to the non-payment over the years, of increments. Could the Hon. Minister say, if whether this figure of \$952 million budgeted for this year makes provision for the payment of increments to the employees of the Statistical Bureau?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the Hon. Member who I gather has been speaking on matters in relations to the Public Service for some time would be well aware that the issue of bunching is one that pervades the public sector and certainly the public service and quasi public service entities.

Indeed I believe he would be better aware of this issue than I would. I will say that as I am sure the Hon. Member is aware the resolution of this matter is a fairly involved one and we do not at this stage have included in the provision for the Statistics Bureau, a financial provision that will necessarily resolve that matter during the course of 2012.

Mr. B. Williams: Thank you Hon. Minister. Could the Hon. Minister confirm whether there is a Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Statistics Bureau and the Guyana Public Service Union?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I would not be able to say. I am currently not in possession of that information.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I think that the time is right for us to put the question, but I believe there is a certain amendment which I receive notice for. Mr. Greenidge, would you like to speak to that please?

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, there is some information here which I think will be useful to us. I would just like to ask the Minister one more question before I put the motion, if I may?

Mr. Chairman: Very well Sir.

Mr. Greenidge: It relates to the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). I think it is widely recognised that, it is the same line item that we are on, line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, page 396, the Guyana Revenue Authority, provision of \$55 million. What I would like to know is whether this provision is meant to cover both VAT refunds and refunds for overpayments associated with personal income tax. Do you know?

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman I am sure than the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge's eye sight exceeds my own, but my eyes tell me that the allocation to the GRA is not \$55 million, but in fact it is \$3.195 billion.

Mr. Greenidge: Minister you are of course quite right and I apologise, but the issue was whether you have provided for these two items in this figure.

Dr. Singh: Can you please repeat the two items for me?

Mr. Greenidge: VAT refunds and personal income tax refunds for overpayments.

Dr. Singh: The allocation for the GRA, the appropriated allocation for the GRA, will include refund of income taxes, which was the second item the Hon. Member enquired about it but will not include VAT refunds because when the VAT Act was passed, there was a special inclusion in that Act to provide for VAT refunds to be met out of VAT revenue before VAT revenue is paid over to the Ministry of Finance.

So in fact what is received by the Ministry of Finance is VAT net of VAT refunds and that was done by design in the Value Added Tax Act. So that is treated differently, but the provision would include refunds of all other taxes.

Amendment to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations - \$6,724,352,000

Mr. Greenidge: I would like to thank the Minister and Mr. Chairman I wish to refer you to the amendment standing in my name.

Mr. Chairman: We have received notice on the 23rd April of an amendment to line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, Mr. Greenidge in your name.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. The intention of the motion is to call for a reduction in the allocations specifically related to three items/entities. CANU, that is the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit, which is \$20 million, we are suggesting the amount be cut from \$20 million to \$1; the Ethnic Relations Commission from \$99.419 million to \$1 and the State Planning Secretariat from \$105 million to \$1.

Mr. Chairman: What is the third one please?

Mr. Greenidge: State Planning Secretariat from \$105 million to \$1 Mr. Chairman. The total reduction being proposed, therefore, is \$224.419 million. The intention here is to encourage the Ministry, except in the case of the Ethnic Relations Commission, to adhere to the recommendations of the Auditor General, whose recommendations are over two years old...

[Interruption] Well if he is doing it then there is no problem.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, is there a seconder for this motion?

Mrs. Backer: I rise to second.

Mr. Chairman: Very well. Hon. Members the motion has been proposed...

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, do we get an opportunity to...

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course I will just like to formally... Hon. Members the motion has been proposed, of which we received notice on the 23rd of April. That is that line item 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, be amended in terms of being reduced, in the case of CANU, from \$20 million to \$1; in the case of the Ethnic Relations Commission, from \$99.419 million to \$1; and in the instance of the State Planning Secretariat, from \$105 million to

\$1, giving a total of \$224.419 million. The motion has been seconded by the Hon. Member Mrs. Backer, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. I will not entertain discussions and debate on it.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman if I may, the moving of this motion by the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, does of course or should of course not come as a surprise, notice having been served a day or two ago. But I will say that it was my genuine expectation that the opportunity to post questions and receive answers would have been utilised for the purposes of a final determination by the mover on the merits of the motion he was proposing.

6.49 p.m.

We have before us, essentially, three allocations and if I might speak to them in turn: We have CANU (Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit) whose work can only be described as indispensable to the security of our state, the integrity of our borders and the deterrence of the particular kind which is covered by this entity's mandate. In fact we have a situation where this House has, in its wisdom, already voted an appropriation for CANU under the Ministry of Home Affairs which proposed appropriation was included in the National Budget for the specific and precise objective of addressing the matter raised by the Auditor General. Were we to turn to page 399 of the National Estimates we will see that whereas the Ministry of Home Affairs previously had \$0 allocated to it for CANU, CANU now receives an allocation of \$71 million under the Ministry of Home Affairs, for the first time, as the first step of our migration of this entity to the Ministry of Home Affairs. If I were to explain this and provide this answer I would have thought that the Hon. Member would have seen it fit to acknowledge that efforts were being made. One could not move all because there are four months of activity prior to the passage of the Appropriation Act, which had to be funded by interim releases. Since the entity was not under the Ministry of Home Affairs, in the first instance, those releases could not have been granted under the Ministry of Home Affairs. That is why it had to be split in this manner; otherwise the whole allocation would have been put under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which is what our intention was.

I would have thought that given a demonstrated – not even an undertaking or a promise – action to address the matter raised by the Auditor General... As I said, it is not an undertaking, the estimates reflect it. Page 399 shows that CANU, for the first time, has money under the Ministry of Home Affairs – Agency 51. This is not an undertaking or a promise. It is demonstrated action

to address this matter and it disappoints me, to put it mildly, that in the face of demonstrated action by the administration and, furthermore, given the peculiar and extremely important mandate of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit – an entity's with which the importance of whose functions cannot be over emphasised – this effort to deny the entity resources for no good reason, given that action has already been taken by the Government, is most regrettable. I would like to hope that, notwithstanding that the Hon. Member has moved the motion, given that the vote is still to be taken, as I believe, there is still time. I call on the Hon. Member to reconsider his position on this matter.

In fact, the same could be said about the State Planning Secretariat. If one looks at the allocations for the State Planning Secretariat they have been steadily reduced. In the space of one year the State Planning Secretariat's budget allocation, notwithstanding that they have received wages and salaries increases just like the rest of the Public Sector, has moved from \$130 million in 2011 – we did not spend all of that, we only spent \$123 million – by declining in 2012 further by \$25 million from last year's allocation to \$105 million. As a specific and direct result of action taken by this administration to migrate the staff working in the State Planning Secretariat into the structure of the various Ministries – particularly the Ministry of Finance, but there are one or two persons assigned performing functions in other entities. Here, again, you have demonstrated that. These people did not disappear into thin air, their salaries were not cut, and they are being migrated. Their names are available, their designations, where they are working - they are being migrated into the structure. So here again you have a concerted effort to address this matter. I would have thought, and I will again appeal that good reason be shown and exercised so that this matter does not reach the stage of a debilitation of these agencies' ability to function.

The same could be said about the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) except that this is not an entity that falls within the same category as the other two because, as I understand it, the concern is not the Auditor General's Report. I do not know what the concern is, to be frank with you. Here you have an Ethnic Relations Commission, an entity whose constitutional mandate is so important, and when we in this House speak with a single unified voice about the need for the entity to be adequately resourced to discharge its function, we have a motion being moved by the Hon. Member to eliminate the budgetary allocation to the ERC.

There are no words that I can find that would be appropriate and that would be sufficiently forceful for me to use in condemning this action. As I said it was my sincere expectation that, having availed themselves of the opportunity to ask questions in this Honourable House and having, I believe, received answers that they were by and large satisfied with I would have thought that the Hon. Member would have exercised the option available to him - not to proceed with the amendment he had tabled.

As I said, there is still time and I would hope that that time be used by the Hon. Member to withdraw this amendment. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I spoke in my maiden speech in this Assembly at the Budget Debate I did say that I hope that the Hon. Members of this House would not be blinded by bitterness or by fear or by failures of the past.

I want to speak specifically to the motion to cut the budgetary allocations to the Ethnic Relations Commission and I would like to say to this Honourable House that this action, as political as it might be, is not affecting any of the Commissioners or any of the persons who serve as Commissioners of the Ethnic Relations Commission. This is an action that is affecting people that work there and the programmes, the Constitution mandates that the Ethnic Relations Commission should carry out - the 27 functions of the Ethnic Relations Commission. Mr. Chairman, may I remind you that while it is a fact that there is an issue with the complement of Commissioners it is the job of this Hon. House to approve a motion by two-thirds majority for the entities to be consulted to elect the Commissioners. This Hon. House does not name the Commissioners; they have nothing to do with the personalities and if because they have problems with personalities they will be grandstanding in this House, as it relates to the allocations for the Ethnic Relations Commission. I believe that the Members proposing and planning to vote to this motion would have failed the people of Guyana, especially bearing in mind that the Constitution of Guyana was amended to include the Ethnic Relations Commission because of our historical past. This was part of a process that came out of the Herdmanston Accord and this was an agreement that was made in this House. What I am hearing is, if Hon. Members of this House cannot dictate who the personalities are that emerge out of a process, what this is attempting to do is collapse the Ethnic Relations Commission. While the House has a

responsibility to put in place the mechanisms and measures to ensure that there is a functioning commission. The House must not collapse the secretariat with all of the institutional mechanisms that are in place because what we will be doing, sometime in the future, is the starting over of another Ethnic Relations Commission... [*Interruption*] ...I am already not there. It is a known fact that the Ethnic Relations Commission comprises of seven Commissioners and they come from seven constituencies - the three major religions, the private sector, the labour movement, women and youths. it is one of the commissions in this country where we would have had to rise above fragmentation to get agreement among diverse bodies where entities that did not speak to each other, in times past, had to come to a table to agree on a single candidate to be named in that constituency. When there was a formation of an Ethnic Relations Commission Guyana had come to a place of maturity where we were overcoming fragmentation in several of our sectors. We had built this institution and while I would agree that we have individuals who have problems with individuals who would have served on that commission, while we would have heard comments and while we are aware that in the run-up to the last election no lesser a person than the previous Leader of the Opposition filed a motion in the court to prevent the functioning of the Ethnic Relations Commission. We know that it is being landed in the area of politics but I dare say to this Honourable House that the Ethnic Relations Commission has established a reputation and a standard; check the records, annual and special reports are here. More than 17 reports have been tabled in this House and to not finance an institution that has been working and reporting to the public its activities... One would have seen that every community across the length and breadth of this country would have expressed confidence in the work of the Ethnic Relations Commission by participating in its activities, making recommendations...

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Minister to complete...

Bishop Edghill: ...and working. While I cannot determine how the Hon. Members vote, I would like to conclude by saying that this action must be considered and seen clearly for what it is. I said yesterday, when I was dealing with some other matters, we cannot use a majority of one for spite, settling personal scores and for being vindictive. Every time it would appear that we have a personal score to settle it, again, would appear that there would have been a grand diabolical plot to collapse and interfere and destroy institutions that are serving the good of this country. I would like to make it very clear here tonight that this move, I find, is not nationalistic; it is not

one that is in the best interest of the people of Guyana and I would ask that the Members reconsider it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have had two presenters from the Government side and I was going to invite someone... I see that Mr. Rohee, the Hon. Member, wishes to speak but I would like to hear from the Opposition side.

Mrs. Lawrence: I am not on my feet to speak. I rise to invoke Standing Order 38 (b) and ask that the motion be put forthwith without any further debate.

Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]: Sir, you said yesterday that you have discretion and that Your Honour is going to exercise that discretion in a fair manner that allows the entire issue to be ventilated. A sector under Minister Rohee's purview is about to be chopped out of this Government and I think that I would like to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mdm. Hon. Members, the motion to amend covers three critical areas, which not necessarily interconnected – one deals with CANU, another dealing with the Ethnic Relations Commission and the other dealing with the State Planning Commission. We have heard arguments vis-à-vis State Planning Commission and Ethnic Relations Commission, I think it is only fair that we hear from the Ministry that is to be affected and the Subject Minister, Mr. Rohee. Again, I still feel that if there is any Member on the Opposition Side that wishes to speak on any of the matters please so indicate.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your understanding. I think that this move by the Opposition, with respect to CANU, is coming at the wrong time, a very wrong time. It is coming at a time when the fight against narcotics has assumed greater and greater proportions. It is coming at a time when CANU has reached a point that it is increasingly interdicting more and more persons who are involved in drug trafficking.

I think that this move will send the wrong signal to the international community; meaning that for the first time after many years the law enforcement agencies, such as CANU, that are engaged in an aggressive fight against drugs are developing very important and active relations with the law enforcement agencies around the world. What is the signal that we are sending to the law enforcement agencies around the world with respect to one of their partners that is engaged

in a fight in a country that is seen as a transit point for drugs into the United States and Europe? It is a very wrong signal.

Since we have had a new head of CANU appointed, since we have had new ranks appointed to work in CANU, we have seized over 1,200 kilograms of cocaine – amounting to US\$1.2 million. With respect to cocaine, we have seized 305 kilograms of cocaine amounting to US\$7 million. This is indeed progress in the fight against drugs. In fighting against drugs you are now taking a step to cut off one of CANU's feet and you are telling them to run. It is unacceptable.

This cut is coming at a time when CANU is intensifying its bilateral relations with Brazil, with Suriname and Venezuela. What signal is this sending to our bilateral partners? We hear constantly, that we need to do more in the fight against drugs, yet we are speaking on one side of our mouths and on the other hand we are defeating the very interest after which we seek.

I believe that the explanation given by the Minister of Finance – looking at the body language of some of the Members on that side of the House – I suspect, they may not have been aware of the facts which the Minister explained. I do not think that they were aware of that. What is even more disappointing is the fact that under the Ministry of Home Affairs there is a portion of money assigned to CANU that has been approved, which is the one foot that they are now giving CANU to stand on, but on the other hand they are cutting off the other foot of CANU and asking CANU to run. This is unconscionable.

CANU has sought to build capacity. It is sending more and more ranks abroad for training. Only two weeks ago two ranks went to Jamaica at the Red Track Training Institute for training. Next week we are sending two law enforcement representatives abroad to Singapore to participate in a very important meeting with respect to the fight against drugs. What message are they going to take to those meetings?

Even if the decision is taken, notwithstanding the arguments that have been made with respect to the fight against drugs, we will continue. We have the interest of the country at heart. CANU has a national responsibility and we will demonstrate, notwithstanding the cut that is being made, that we will continue this fight and do so effectively.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Hon. Members.

Mr. Ramjattan: I wish to speak. I want to indicate that, indeed, all that we have heard in relation to this CANU business is not very convincing or is it compelling. The Auditor General was making a statement that this must definitely go to the Ministry of Home Affairs for the past six years and it was not being done. The fact that it is being done now will mean – from the Alliance For Change’s position on this – that once you make it happen you can come back for a supplementary provision and we are going to pass it to you. We are making benchmarks now for the good governance of this country and when the Auditor General gives an instruction... The \$71 million from the Home Affairs Ministry can take care of the four months or whatever; that has been approved. If you come here in three months and say that the budgetary allocations for CANU have gone over fully we will give you the \$20 million. Do not ever feel that we are not concerned about narcotics trading and all of that.

I want to say in relation to the Ethnic Relations Commission. [Mr. R. Persaud: Good spinning there.] What spinning? We are creating our benchmarks here and now. I was getting very, what one might call, swayed by the argument until Mr. Edghill spoke. Here it is a Former Chairman of the Ethnic Relations Commission who was there, getting monies almost five or six times more than all the rest of the other commissions. This is what is going on: Every year the other four commissions are getting in the vicinity of – whatever the years where – one-fifth of what the Ethnic Relations Commission was getting and the Ethnic Relations Commission was supposed to be what is called non-partisan in its personnel. We then saw the now Minister, then Ethnic Relations Chairman, taking the political platform and saying that Jesus Christ will walk with the PPP.

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Standing Orders are clear with relation to the content of speeches.

Mr. Chairman: I believe that there is a Point of Order.

Ms. Teixeira: There is a Point of Order. The Standing Orders are clear when dealing with imputing motives and comments of Members of this House. This is not what the subject of debate is about right now.

Mr. Chairman: I know, but is Mr. Ramjattan imputing any negative...

Mr. Ramjattan: We do not have demonic motives here. I am using the argument that it was supposed to have been as a judge, who is supposed to be nonpartisan. Later on you came and became an activist for the PPP and then you became a Minister.

Ms. Manickchand: If we were to do that...

Mr. Ramjattan: What transpired then...

Ms. Manickchand: Mr. Chairman, I rise to... Sir, I believe it is up to you to bring... If we were to go down this line... Mr. Ramjattan is clearly saying that Bishop Edghill, the Hon. Member, was not impartial while he was on the commission and he arrives at that judgment based on the fact that he subsequently joined a political party. If we go down that line we encourage all of Guyana to believe that for all of the time Mr. Winston Felix was Commissioner of Police he was not impartial, and I do not believe... We can go further and I do not want to do that, but we have a retired brigadier in this Honourable House leading a political party.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, allow me to preside over this Assembly, Mr. Trotman and others. Would you allow me please, Hon. Members, to preside over this Assembly? Ms. Manickchand has made a point; it is a Point of Order, which I agree with that many of us could have some point in time could be tarred with the brush of being partisan when in fact we held offices which should have been considered non-partisan. As to the statements made by Mr. Ramjattan, vis-à-vis the Minister, those are, as we say in law, notorious facts. He did make a statement. Whether or not he made it while still as Chairman I do not know – you can clarify that, Minister. Did you resign prior to making the statement about Jesus Christ on the platform or not? The point is the statements were made, I do not think that is denied, but in any event I would like Mr. Ramjattan to move on from that and let us not get into personal comments.

Mr. Ramjattan: ...to finally state that in view of what transpired just now has hardened the sentiment and I just want to say that we are going to support this cut now.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I would like to put the question...

Ms. Teixeira: Mr. Chairman, the Ethnic Relations Commission is provided for by the Constitution.

Mr. Chairman: That is true.

Ms. Teixeira: The Constitution provides for the Commission and Commissioners that have a responsibility and duty in relation to human rights and the issues of ethnic discrimination and ethnic insecurities.

7.19 p.m.

Even if this House has failed...and it is this House which failed. The Ninth Parliament, despite efforts of the Committee on Appointments, failed to appoint a new Ethnic Relations Commission. The Commission, however, continues to be the only complaints mechanism under the Constitution to do with reports and complaints of ethnic discrimination and ethnic insecurities. It would be unbelievable that this House, which is supposed to uphold the Constitution, would want to remove a Commission with staff who have the door open every day, Monday to Friday, who go out into the communities to hear complaints, who go out into communities to talk to people, to explain the laws. It is that this House would shut that body down. This has to be a gross violation of the Constitution of Guyana. This attempt to bring the debate down to a past former head of a Commission is a most ridiculous argument in this House.

After the constitutional reform, it took several years before the Public, Police and Judicial Service Commissions could have been set up. In fact, the Public Service Commission staff secretariat functioned in that period until the Commission, which was appointed in this House, had the requisite support of this House to appoint those people. Then, there was the subsequent negotiation between the President and the Leader of the Opposition. I am appealing to the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance For Change (AFC). They may want to prove a point. They have got one seat more. The point is that they are making a dangerous move today by voting to close down the Ethnic Relations Commission of Guyana. This will haunt them.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have no doubt that there are highly persuasive arguments on, both sides, but at the end of the evening, as Chairman, I have to recognise that there is a motion on the floor. The mover of that motion has not indicated his intention to withdraw it and, therefore, I am duty-bound to put the question.

Question put

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: Division.

Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 31, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Mr. Trotman

Mr. G. Persaud

Ms. Selman

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. Allicock

Mr. Benn

Ms. Wade

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Felix

Mr. Ali

Ms. Hastings

Dr. Ramsaran

Mr. Scott

Dr. Westford

Lt Col (Ret'd) Harmon

Mr. R. Persaud

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Backer

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Dr. Norton

Mr. Nandlall

Mrs. Lawrence

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. B. Williams

Mr. Rohee

Ms. Ally

Mr. Hinds

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Amendment carried.

Line item 6321, Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations, amended to \$6,499,933,000.

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration - \$14,988,167,000, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration - \$23,063,550,000

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to project 3401000 – Low Carbon Development Programmes - I look at Volume 3, which has reference to profile reference number 26, and refer to the description of the project, and wonder whether the Minister might be so kind as to give us the amounts associated with different projects listed here.

Dr. Singh: With pleasure, Mr. Chairman. The projects concerned and the respective amounts allocated are as follow: Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, specifically Government's equity contribution to this project - \$16.4 billion, Amerindian land titling project - \$252.15 million, Amerindian Development Fund for village economy development - \$205 million, Small and micro-enterprise development - \$512.5 million, Adaptation projects, specifically the Cunha Canal - \$410 million and Institutional strengthening - \$615 million, bringing us to a total of \$18.39465 million.

Mr. Greenidge: Could I ask why this particular mix of projects is here? Why, for example, the two pertaining to Amerindian land titling and the Amerindian Development Fund for village economy were not placed under the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs?

Dr. Singh: The Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) was a strategy that benefited from extensive national consultation. It would be recalled that hundreds of communities were visited and detailed consultations had. It would further be recalled that a number of targeted stakeholder groups with special interests in matters related to the LCDS were also engaged in centralised consultations which saw a process that was unprecedented in its scale and coverage as it relates to consultation. The projects that were identified emerged from this process and would have benefited, also, from the institutional arrangements that are in place to govern the implementation of the LCDS, including the Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee (MSSC) which exercises oversight of the LCDS and which has widespread stakeholder's representation. That committee, it would be recalled, includes Government representation, sector representation, from the regulatory side - Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) and Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), private sector representation – Forest Producers Association and the Private Sector Commission (PSC), Amerindian organisations, a number of them, women's representation, the labour movement – the Guyana Trades Union Congress (GTUC) and the

Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Guyana (FITUG) and a number of international Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), including Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). I gave that background really to make the point that the projects emerged from a process that is documented in the LCDS and I would be happy to share with the Hon. Member the detailed process that was gone through in order to identify the projects.

In relation to the Member's question about why the projects were situated under this particular allocation, I will say that this is, of course, a single vehicle – The Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF). That single vehicle, which has been established under the LCDS arrangement, is being used for the approval process, resource mobilisation, resource approval and ultimately disbursement of fund and execution of the project. It is purely for that reason that all of the projects to be funded under the GRIF are placed under the Ministry of Finance so that there would be in a single place, the Low Carbon Development Strategy projects, funded under this single and innovative financing mechanism.

But the Hon. Member correctly identifies that some of these projects relate to Amerindian communities, some of these projects relate to small business development, some of these projects relate to institutional strengthening, whether it is GFC, Office of the Climate Change, or the GGMC. It is purely for what I would describe as, perhaps, “administrative efficiency”, that the projects are placed together, particularly, given that we are going through the very early stages of identification, design and securing project approval, and so on. It is really solely for the purposes of administrative efficiency that the projects are aggregated and located in the Ministry of Finance's budget. I might add, too, that the role to be played by the Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Government of Guyana, in relation to the administrative arrangements governing the fund, was actually identified in the strategies that were consulted on. That, I suppose, Mr. Chairman, is my not so short answer to the question asked by the Hon. Member.

Mr. Greenidge: I agree with the Minister that it appears to be a matter of administrative choice that these other items, apart from the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project, are here and I bear that in mind. I believe that my colleagues have some other questions.

The other point I want to emphasise is that, notwithstanding the Minister's mention of GRIF, profile reference number 26 makes no reference to external financing. Am I right?

Dr. Singh: There is a very specific reason for that. That is because we have, as a Government and, indeed, as a country, been at pains to emphasise that payment for climate services does not constitute development aid, development support – a grant as such. In fact, this is a philosophical position that has been adopted by Guyana and, indeed, other forest-endowed countries. The argument, essentially, is that this is not an unrequited transfer or a unilateral benevolent transfer from a wealthy country to a poor country. It is, in fact, a payment for climate services rendered. The fact that our trees are standing and providing environmental services to the world, helping to cleanse the atmosphere, essentially serving as the lungs of the earth - which is how they were described more traditionally - and, more recently, essentially serving as a most efficient carbon zinc, constitute the provision of a service. We have argued that payment for climate services provided by standing forests must be treated as a payment for services, rather than as a grant or development aid. For that reason, the inflow associated with the GRIF project is treated as a financial inflow into Guyana and expenditure budgeted and provided for accordingly.

Mr. Greenidge: Notwithstanding the very kind and eloquent explanation by the Minister, am I right in assuming that if in configuring the expenditure and revenue and then striking a balance, which is shown and which the Minister is proud to boast of – an overall balance in terms of financial operations - the money itself is received that balance changes? In other words, as the accounts are shown now, they are shown without reference to the inflow. What does that mean for the surplus?

Dr. Singh: That, in fact, Mr. Chairman, is not the case. If the Hon. Member were to turn to page 11 of Volume 1 of the Estimates, and I am happy to allow the Hon. Member time turn to that page, Table 6, Central Government Details of Revenue Estimates, about a third down the page, under “Miscellaneous Receipts”, the Hon. Member will see a line that is numbered 5622, “Guyana R.E.D.D. Investment Fund” and the amount indicated there is exactly the same amount as is budgeted for disbursement on the projects. There is in the Estimates an inflow reflecting the payment for these climate services and an exact corresponding outflow representing expenditure on the projects.

Mrs. Lawrence: Project 1904000, page 412, and I am looking at the allocation of \$910 million local input in this fund. When I turn to the project profile, I have some questions for the Minister. Minister, the project profile states that there will be some construction, rehabilitation and

extension work done in several areas. If we take item 1, it speaks to the education facilities, and I am particularly interested in Ithaca - whether it is the primary school and whether the whole building will be redone or whether it will just be part work on that building?

Dr. Singh: This is in fact the Ithaca Nursery School.

Mrs. Lawrence: What will be done, Mr. Minister?

Dr. Singh: Essentially, a building will be constructed for Ithaca Nursery School.

Mrs. Lawrence: Could we kindly look at Diamond. Which school in Diamond are you talking about, Hon. Minister?

Dr. Singh: This is for the construction of a nursery school in Diamond.

Mrs. Lawrence: We go to (b), roads. Hon. Minister, you speak to roads in Leguan. Mr. Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, could you kindly tell me how many roads will be done and what is the actual allocation for Leguan?

Dr. Singh: Two roads will be done in Leguan - Zuil Street in Theirens Village and Enterprise community road, upgrading of those two, and the total amount allocated is \$3.8 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, item 1 (d), Potaro, we are looking at the health facilities. Could you kindly tell me whether pipes will now be run to this health facility, so that there can be access to water?

Dr. Singh: I can say that the health centre is being constructed. I can only imagine that utilities will be provided. I am not sure if there is a specific problem in relation to water. I will be happy to find out. In fact, I am advised that provision is made for water to the facility.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Hon. Minister. I note that there is a day care to be constructed at Hururu. I am very happy about that and I am quite certain that the people in the community will be happy too. Could the Minister tell us, after the building of this facility, whether it will be handed over to the community?

Dr. Singh: That is the normal model which is followed by Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF) projects. So, as every other BNTF project, I anticipate that the centre will be handed over to the community.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Minister, through the Chairman, could you kindly explain what is meant at item 5? What is going to be done with the implementation of maintenance programme? Where is it going to take place? How much money is allocated?

Dr. Singh: This is an allocation intended to address the issue of sustainability of the various BNTF projects implemented. This sum is provided to fund maintenance of BNTF projects nationwide in their post implementation period or their post construction period, simply to ensure that those facilities remain in good order and continue to be serviceable and capable of delivering their intended objectives to the communities. The amount allocated is \$107.8 million.

Mrs. Lawrence: Project 4400700 – Poverty Programme: The allocation of \$720 million, profile reference number 28. Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether moneys from this particular allocation will be used to complete the works on the Le Repentir Cemetery, so that it can be in a position or a form where persons can go there and bury their loved ones without being afraid of a tiger running them, or falling into a tomb?

Dr. Singh: I cannot necessarily say, at this stage, whether the Le Repentir Cemetery will be addressed in this programme. But, obviously, if there is a need and there is a request, then it is something that could be considered.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Chairman, it is a follow-up to the Minister. I thank the Minister for his honesty. He probably does not drive through that part of Georgetown. Mr. Minister, it is of interest to me and many other persons and I am asking: How do persons go about to have the Ministry allocate funds for works to be done at the Le Repentir Cemetery?

Dr. Singh: This programme, as I have said before, is demand driven. It is responsive to essentially small-scale community interventions based on requests from community organisations. It does not typically fund large infrastructural projects. This is the reason why I said that if there is a modest intervention that can be funded that would help to address the

problem, then, perhaps, it could be considered. It is a programme that is really driven by requests.

Ms. Kissoon: Project 4501100 – Youth Initiative Programme: Could the Hon. Minister say which regions are earmarked to benefit from the \$60 million?

Dr. Singh: They are Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister kindly say to this National Assembly the amounts allocated to each region?

Dr. Singh: It will for Region 2 - \$6 million, Region 3 - \$3.5 million, Region 4 - \$17 million, Region 5 - \$11.5 million, Region 6 - \$10.5 million and Region 10 - \$11.5 million.

Ms. Kissoon: Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us what types of programmes would be done so that jobs...because I think it says...?

Dr. Singh: We anticipate constructing, essentially, sports and entertainment facilities. Basically, it is not large-scale. This is a relatively modest programme – small-scale interventions in community facilities and, in particular, community facilities that young people use. For example, there will be the construction of a fence in Kwakwani; upgrading of a playfield in Rockstone; construction of fence and rehabilitation of the bleachers at a basketball court in Christianburg and construction of a sanitary block in Ituni. It is projects of that nature.

Mr. Morian: Mr. Chairman, it is a follow-up on that same project. Could the Hon. Minister furnish us with a hard copy of the facts pertaining to that youth initiative?

Dr. Singh: I would be happy to do so.

7.49 p.m.

Ms. Kissoon: A follow-up to that. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to us, in each Region, which agency will be responsible for executing or carrying out that, whether it is the Regional Democratic Council (RDC)?

Dr. Singh: The funds are usually disbursed to the regional administration.

Mr. Morian: Project 1900400 – Basic Needs Trust Fund - 5/6: When the project detail is look at there are a number of items there. I would like if the Hon. Minister could furnish us with a hard copy as it relates to the works for Region 10. It speaks to a number of items at Wiruni, Kimbia and Hururu - skills training. So if we could we get a hard copy I would be happy.

Dr. Singh: I would be happy to supply that detail.

Mr. Greenidge: I would like to return to project 3401000 – Low Carbon Development Programmes. I refer to the Minister’s explanation as to why the profile does not include the expected, or anticipated, foreign inflow. If I understand him correctly he is contending that the Government is proposing not to treat it as a grant in keeping with the normal way, that it treats all inflows from bilateral or multilateral agencies. I am a bit concerned with that and also the question of the consultation that the Minister had mentioned that had taken place with all Amerindian communities in connection with projects under this head. I do recall that when we were speaking to one of the agencies involved in this exercise that it seemed not to have been satisfied with the extent of that consultation. Could the Minister inform us, as to precisely, with which bodies were party to those consultations to which he made reference and when?

Dr. Singh: There is an extremely lengthy list of villagers which were visited and organisations that were met. I would be happy to furnish the Hon. Member with that list. I am sure that, at that time, it was fairly and widely publicised. In fact, an international organisation, given the very significant international prominence that the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) had received, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) was engaged to monitor the consultations and the public dissemination work that was done and that organisation, the IIED, actually produced a report confirming the comprehensiveness of the national consultation. That report is actually available on the LCDS website. www.lcds.gov.gy and provides an extensive account of the consultations done and also that international institutes assessment of the consultations confirming, essentially, the extensive national coverage and the high quality of the consultations. As I said, I would be happy to provide that detail to the Hon. Member, but it is also publicly available.

Mr. Ramjattan: In relation to the \$18 billion we are talking about here, under the same line item, is it not true that, at this stage, there is no actual receipt into our treasury, of this money?

Dr. Singh: The resources are not received into the treasury as such. The resources are disbursed. There is an administrative arrangement that is described in the LCDS, under which the Kingdom of Norway disburses the resources into the trust fund - the Guyana REDD Investment Fund, which is an internationally held trust fund with a trustee that is a replicable international organisation, the World Bank. It is a fact that that fund has already received into it disbursements totalling US\$70 million. So that fund has already received those disbursements. Those funds are disbursed into the trust fund on condition that certain benchmarks are achieved. So each tranche has certain triggers that have to be achieved before the Kingdom of Norway decides to disburse the funds, and upon the achievement of those triggers the disbursement is made. Two disbursements have already been made into the trust fund. The mechanism then provides for a partner entity, typically an international development partner to work with Government, or for Government to work with the partner entity, to design projects that would conform to certain safeguards and that those projects would then be executed in conjunction with, or in collaboration with, the partner entities. It is not anticipated, at this stage, that the funds are disbursed as such into the treasury, but the funds will be disbursed through that mechanism and in collaboration with the partner entity in order for the execution of the project. As I said, that mechanism is described in great detail and is captured in the LCDS and other documentation, including in the original agreements that were entered into. I believe the Hon. Member is probably familiar with that documentation. The documentation is available on the website.

Mr. Ramjattan: That is correct. This then is conditional upon the requirements of certain things being met before they can be disbursed. Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Hon. Minister if, indeed, then, the requirements for disbursements, as yet, have not been met, in relation to this \$18 billion.

Dr. Singh: That is not necessarily the case. Each project is at a different stage of approval. There are some projects that are very advanced in their stage of approval. For example, there is the Institutional Strengthening project which will see the strengthening of the Office of Climate Change, the Guyana Forestry Commission and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission. That project, in fact, is already approved by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Board, so that project is ready for execution. The Cunha Canal project is already at a very advanced stage of approval. Other projects are currently in an advanced stage of preparation to

be taken to the board of the respective entities and, indeed, they will have to go through an approval process. The projection that we have made here is based on our anticipation of what approvals... In fact, everything in the budget is based on our anticipation; everything is a projection based on what we assume will be accomplished and based on the best information that is available to us, working in close collaboration with the partners entities, we anticipate that all projects will be taken through the approval stage and that the amounts identified under the respective projects will be disbursed during the course of this year.

Mr. Ramjattan: Would not it be safer, especially in the context of what I have read in section 21 about conditional appropriation, that we await and when indeed those requirements are met then we do the disbursement because, assuming for one reason, it can be a possibility that we do not get the moneys, then what happens?

Dr. Singh: This budget, in fact, anticipates significant provisions of loans and grants. The budget includes \$13.8 billion of external grants and \$24.2 billion of external loans. Throughout the course of the last six and half days we have been considering estimates for projects that are funded by development partners, many of which, in fact all of which, have one condition or another associated with their respective disbursements. What we have to do is to make a realistic assessment of what we anticipate can be achieved and be incorporated into the national budget, that realistic assessment. We have already approved in this honourable House allocations for road projects, funded by development partners, such as the IDB or the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), but the utilisation of those resources, or the realisation of those resources, is dependent on certain things materialising. We cannot assume that nothing will happen. If we were to assume that nothing will happen and include in the budget no allocation on the presumption that nothing will happen, then, in fact, we will have... I am struggling to understand this concept. For all of the projects that have...

Mr. Chairman: You are putting up a valiant effort, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Singh: I am trying my best, as I can.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, it is 8 p.m. We are scheduled to take a suspension now, however, I am minded to proceed, but it seems that Members want to go into very much detail. If that is the case I would have to take the suspension, but we will go until 11 o'clock, tonight.

Mr. Ramjattan: Just one more question and I will be finished. In view of the track record in Budget 2011, estimated that \$14 billion would have been got and there was none. The revised budget has zero here. What makes the Minister so certain that in 2012 \$18 billion will be got?

Dr. Singh: The fact is that some of these projects are already approved.

Amendment to project 3401000 – Local Carbon Development - \$18,394,650,000

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I rise to crave your indulgence to ask that the motion, under my name, be laid.

Mr. Chairman: I believe that the time is right for me to put the question. But before I do so I acknowledge that there is a motion in the House, on the table, for amendments and those we received notice for on the 23rd of April in the name of Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge. Has there been a seconder? Mrs. Backer, have you seconded it?

Mrs. Backer: I am now about to rise to do so, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Very well thank you.

Mrs. Backer: I formally second the motion.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, there is formally, before the House, a motion for the reduction of Estimates, by way of amendment, in the sum \$18, 394, 650, 000.

Mr. Greenidge, what is the correct figure please?

Mr. Greenidge: The confusion probably arises from rounding the...

Mr. Chairman: What should it be?

Mr. Greenidge: The recommendation is that \$1 be allocated to the project.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the motion has been seconded and I will now invite a few persons to speak to it. I saw Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Hinds: I do think that as the Minister responsible for energy and, in particular, the development of our hydroelectric potential resources in Guyana, and due to the fact that a

significant item in this allocation pertains to the Government putting up a certain amount of money, equity, for the realisation of the Amalia Falls Hydropower Project, Sir, I need to be given the opportunity to speak to Members of this honourable House and, indeed, the people of this nation about this very regrettable step that is being proposed by Members on the other side.

The development of the hydroelectric potential in Guyana has been a dream of our parents and our grandparents before us. We can all recall that even in the 1960s, in those periods of time of the early Government of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), before independence, there was the desire to develop, I think, it was Tiger Hill, or maybe Tiboku. In the mid 1970s, Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham pursued the development of the Upper Mazaruni project and Guyana did expend huge amounts of money that came directly from its treasury in that pursuit which, unfortunately, was not realised. I have felt much rewarded in the last years that I could have made efforts to salvage some of our expenditures at that time, and I speak in terms of rehabilitating and making available, again, the road to the Upper Mazaruni, from Itaballi through opposite the Kurupung, at Papychao Landing. In our own times we have continued to pursue the development of our hydropower project that would meet, firstly, the needs of our country. Again, studies done by our country with support from the Canadians and United Nations (UN), even way back in 1970s and 1980s, identified the number of sites and Amaila Falls was one of the six that was identified that was most interesting to provide electricity here for us.

It was since 1996 or 1997 that work was focused and pursued in the developing of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. Large projects such as these, Sir, go through many years and a number of stages, in a similar way, as we are looking forward to the development in a gold mine at Aurora, currently. That too was an area which was identified in the 1960s and there were some people working there and the particular group had been pursuing it again in the early 1990s. So there is a lot, Sir, as a country, as a people, we have put a lot into development of Amaila Falls Hydropower Project.

Let me just give some of the numbers that are being looked at particularly in these days of high oil prices and particularly in these days when it looks as fossil fuels, as oil, maybe in ten or twenty years, would have to carry the cost of refixing the carbon dioxide (Co2) that is liberated. When that happens one may see an even more doubling up, again, of fossil fuel prices. In that kind of context I would think that each of us would do the maximum that we could to make this a

success. We would seek to remove everything that may be in the way, but instead of that, Sir, I am extremely disappointed, that my honourable friends, on the other side, seek to put a big stumbling block in the way. We would not give up. We would try our best, but it makes life so much more difficult when Guyana has so much to do.

I wonder too what is their thinking, what is their vision and what do they plan for us. Hydro has captured the imagination of our people ever since, and, for us, the realisation of Amalia Falls Hydropower Project is something to capture the imagination of our young people. Maybe, it would worth as much to us as the savings in the cost of generating electricity. It will capture the imagination of our young people. It would direct our gaze towards the Hinterland and the development of it. I could not imagine them persisting in this motion, that they had laid some days ago, to make this amendment to our proposal. Also, we think of hydro not only for our own use, but we think of our hydro potential as a natural resource that can be developed and provide us with jobs and income flow. What do I speak of when I say this, Sir? It has been known even in the 1970s that there is a potential in Guyana of some seven thousand mega watts of hydro. Much of it lies in the two main river basins - the Potaro and the Mazaruni. I think some of them had asked, and other people have been asking, what is being done to capture the interest of our neighbouring country Brazil, that it has been speaking about getting hydropower out of Guyana. They asked me - I tried to remember if any Member, on the other side, had not asked me that - what we are doing about it to capture the imagination, to capture the interest of the Brazilians in getting power. It often happens that one needs the first example.

When Amaila Falls Hydropower Project happens it would open the door for other hydropower. It would remove the risk and it would answer a lot of questions. So if our hydropower is to be developed at a larger level, to say two thousand or three thousand mega watts, for sale into Brazil or to attract a smelter, someone who wants to put up a smelter, and if we want to reduce the risk of someone doing such, then Amaila Falls Hydropower Project would also be the way. It will show that it is doable. For those sorts of reasons I am extremely disappointed and I would like for all of our country to know, I would like in particular for our young people to know, that this opportunity, that more hurdles are being put in the way of this development, is done by persons who are misguided. I think that the arguments that we are hearing here about "why are you putting it in?"... As you know, Sir, if the Government were to spend this money without putting

it in the budget we would have heard some other sets of accusations and allegations that the Government has spent money that has come to the country as if it was its own, that the \$80 million was put up as equity in the financing of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project as if it was its own money. Sir, it is because the Government is conscious of that, it is because the Government does not want to infringe regulations, that it is here, so that it is there, and it gives the assurance to all of our partners who are involved in putting together this sum of money. When it is looked and seen that Guyana is committed and everything is in place for it to make good on providing \$80 million as an equity contribution then everything else flows easily. If the other person has his money ready to put it makes it much easier for you to put your money.

I think I need to say one other thing as to why the \$80 million is being put as equity. In addition to setting the example that we are putting our money where our mouth is so as to attract and encourage all the people to put up their money, the Government putting \$80 million as equity has the choice to vary its returns so that the cost of electricity could be minimised. As you know, Sir, equity in putting together financing, as this, the equity portions, which are often twenty to thirty per cent, carry the higher return because they carry the higher risk and that money is put in there to receive, if we choose, a return now in the order of twenty per cent. We have noted before that in the Government's negotiations with Sithe Global, we have worked on it, with it, and to make this project go easier it has reduced its rate of return. We can get the same rate or choose to forego the rate on our equity so that the cost of the generation of electricity to GPL is lowered.

I have taken some time to speak to this topic because I cannot realise, I cannot think, of any justifiable reason why the Hon. Members on that side would not proceed with this project. Our young people want challenge.

8.19 p.m.

We have talked about Customs Anti Narcotics Unit (CANU) and the attraction of drugs and going to that kind of life that Curtis James Jackson, known as *50 Cent*, speaks about "Getting rich quick or die trying."

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Members, I think that we have to give our people something to live for - some challenge to live for. For me, Sir, maybe more than anything else, the Amaila Falls

Hydropower Project gives our people an opportunity for satisfaction of an achievement. For that reason, Sir, I would like to plead with my Hon. Members, on the other side, to think again and let this expenditure go through.

I thank you very much. [*Applause*]

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment [Mr. R. Persaud]: I rise, on speaking on the amendment, just to offer a few insights. I want to talk about the immediate and long-term implications of this amendment if it is carried on, and I do urge my colleagues on the opposite side to seriously reconsider the amendment as proposed.

We in Guyana, all of us... This is not a pride that the PPP/Civic Government wears alone, but it is in fact a pride of honour that all Guyanese wear, in what we have been able to articulate, what we have been able to champion and what we have been able to secure from the international community. That is, bringing a value to our rainforest and being able to persuade partners, and persuade international institutions, that the time has come for them to pay and to compensate countries, such as ours, for the tremendous eco-services and that was not an easy case to have been made and also was not an easy battle to have won. In Guyana, we have done that; the people of Guyana, we have done that.

This did not start with the PPP/Civic. This started, first of all, from our indigenous people and the way in which they have been able to manage and utilise our rainforest, and that has carried through also from the post-independence period. More recently, former President, the late Desmond Hoyte, himself, when he allocated and dedicated the Iwokrama programme to the Commonwealth was, in fact, a significant step in this regard. Then, further, the work which has been done through successive governments, in preserving and managing our environment, certainly allow us to make that convincing case. So the Government's achievement, so far, has been the achievement of the people of Guyana and what we are telling the people of Guyana, that the sacrifices, that the commitment they have made, in terms of the management and preservation of our forest... and here it is today, we have arrived at the point where countries and institutions are compensating us, and because of a political act all of that is been thrown away. All of that is absolutely been thrown away because of a simple political act. I think if this amendment goes through, it will be a very sad day in the history of this country. We will be

telling the people of this country and future generations that we are irresponsible and that we are reckless in taking this course of action.

When I came this afternoon I took the liberty of sharing two important outputs that were released today, not to the Government of Guyana, but those were models that were generated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It has close to four hundred and sixty experts, through the global environmental facility arrangement, and it has a senior team here that are looking at ways in which it can work with our institutions and develop a comprehensive framework, because the UNDP, the United Nations, in fact, is using Guyana as a model in terms of promoting low carbon growth and low carbon strategy. There were two pieces of information I shared, which I will submit to the Clerk so that all Members can benefit, but I will take the liberty in sharing them with Mr. Greenidge and also with Mr. Ramjattan.

The first one was what was referred to as a sea level rise and storm surge modelling and, because it is small and some Members may not be able to see this, there is here, in the blue, the worst case scenario, in terms of dealing with the climate change. On my right is the..., but in fact this is the best case scenario and this here is the worst case scenario, and where ever we see blue it means that it is inundation - the threat that is there. This is not generated by the PPP/Civic; this is what the models are predicting. The resources which were being garnered, in addition to the projects that were identified, were in fact to be used to allow us to mitigate and also to involve in some levels of adaptation, for instance the Cunha Canal. So what we are doing here tonight is that we are telling this generation and future generation that we do not care about this; we do not care if this entire coast goes under water; we do not care what impact climate change will have and it is having on the country. That is the reality that we are ignoring. This is what we are doing: We are squandering the future well-being; we are squandering the existence - the mere existence of the people of Guyana if we look at this model that has been generated.

The second bit of information also generated by the UNDP is what is referred to as Guyana bi-capacity. It is proven by the UNDP that our bio-capacity is thirty times the global average. I will explain it briefly. Where we see the green here is in terms of our eco-services and where we see the red here it refers to our emission and there is a huge gap, and this huge gap has been able to be quantified and to be developed as part of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism so that we can be compensated for the eco-services.

Many of the countries in the world, the red line would be close to the green, so they do not have any opportunity, as it were, in terms of selling, and that is why they looked to Guyana as to offset their own emission levels. The UNDP has made the case and as a result of this proud record where there is thirty times the global average, in terms of our bio-capacity, Guyana has been able to market, and has already received compensation. What message are we sending from this august Assembly? That this here, which is a service that this country is offering, where the international community has already paid one country \$70 million and Guyana is on the verge of attracting another US\$30 million, which, in fact, will become another commodity, what signal are we sending to them? That is the implications of this amendment and certainly it is a very sad day. If this amendment is to go through... [**Dr. Norton:** It will.] The Comrade who is just shouting that "it will" sits on the MSCC and was a part of steering that process that articulated the road map that allowed us to be. So we can see that this action is not about logic. There is no legal, there is no moral, there is no financial, and there is no ... As you know, it defies commonsense as to why it is that we have this amendments here certainly and only to score political points and also, perhaps, to have political revenge.

If we allow this amendment to go through we are in fact snubbing at a commodity, but, more importantly, we are squandering and endangering the population and the development of this country. That I do hope Hon. Members will take into consideration as we prepare to vote on this amendment. Thank you. [*Applause*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I sensed that... Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett...

Minister of Amerindian Affairs [Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai]: Mr. Chairman, I was standing first.

Mr. Chairman: I did not see you. Go ahead. Were you deferred? I am not too sure.

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: Mr. Chairman, are you not too sure you are going to give me a chance to speak?

Mr. Chairman: You are not going to test me like that. I am not in that game out there.

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: I think it is extremely important that I speak about this amendment. Statistics have shown that if there is any group that we need to pay attention to, in this country, is the Amerindian people. Statistics would also show that Guyana is

a star in this hemisphere when it comes to Amerindian development. It would be presumptuous of me if I did not recognise too that some of the land titling efforts started during the days of the PNC, and we have been able, within the last eight years or so, to increase land owned by Amerindian people from 6.5 per cent to fourteen per cent. But many of our communities, including one, Cul Riversview, where my dear friend and colleague, Dr. George Norton hails from, have been asking about their land title. This process is ongoing.

Here we have before this House, this night, a proposal by this Government for us to continue this process and to give the people of this country, the first people of this country, the land that they have been living on for the longest while and there are, some of us, on the other side of this House, are saying “No. It is not now.” I think that history would judge us badly - that side of the House - when it comes to this. Those communities have been waiting for this day; have been waiting for this moment. They have been working on this Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), probably more than even all of us who live on the coast. They have been working on it and they have had expectations and we are just a vote away from making those expectations real and we are saying “no”.

The world is looking at us; it is looking at all of us. I think politics is about the possible and I think we must make this possible. I do not think all of us have political ambitions, I am sure, but this is one thing we must not play politics with. We have played politics with this thing for a very long time, but we have been able to make progress and I today, as all of us in this House, am proud of this progress, but we cannot, tonight, make a decision...because I do not know what reason to say that we must not do it. How could you say “no” to an Amerindian Development Fund for a village economy? How could you? This is included in here and I think that sometimes the truth hurts, but this is the truth, and this is what is in this document.

Secondly, I recall just recently in an article in the newspaper, the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge chastising us about not taking up, what he called, an offer from the Brazilian Government when it come to hydroelectricity and the Hon. Member, the Prime Minister, responded to that - those comments. We are working, right now, with the Brazilian on hydroelectricity. [Mr. Greenidge: What is the connection?] What is the connection? The connection is that they have seen that we have started to do something with Amaila Falls and they like what we are doing and what we plan to do. This is why they are coming on board; they are working with us

right now. But what are we saying here? We are saying, “No. We do not want that.” Image means a lot. The image of Guyana is at stake here. I hope that in the months ahead, and maybe in the years ahead, when people are going to go out there, and they are going to go to those places, they are going to tell them that “I was the one who voted against you having your land.”

Mr. Chairman, I rest my case. [*Applause*]

Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai: I just would wish to add my bit as the Minister of Amerindian Affairs with respect to the proposed cuts submitted to this House tonight. While my colleague has demonstrated very eloquently the damage and the impact which this proposal, before the House, is expected to make, I would want to give a few details to add to what she has said. She spoke about the land titling and the demarcation. I would like the nation to know that the PPP/Civic Government intends to complete the titling of all Amerindian lands to our people. I would like the nation to know that tonight’s proposal to cut under this head will affect communities as follow: Eclipse Falls, Kariako, Batavia, Kambaru, Tassawini, Kangaruma, Parabar, Ruruwau and Riverview. Those applications for titles to the Amerindian lands for those communities have already been submitted awaiting the funds to proceed the processing.

I would like also the nation to know that nineteen titled communities, which have applied for over three years, are languishing on a list to be demarcated. This is the chance that Guyana has been waiting for; this is the chance for Guyana, not to be only a role model to the world with respect to dealing with indigenous rights issues, but particularly as it relates to resources and land. This is a sad day for Guyana if the Members, on the other side, do not rethink their positions.

When we speak about the LCDS, it is the Amerindian communities that have worked the hardest to ensure that this nation, not only was recognised for its stewardship in its protection of the forest, but our nation felt that it was very appropriate to even launch the consultation firstly in the Amerindian areas. On the other side sitting across the floor, many of them denied themselves the opportunity to participate in the consultation or even the process running up to such a fine development strategy and model in which a small country as Guyana has been able to shine as a star internationally. I will also want to say that on the other side I have a colleague, who sits in the second row, whose community is already working on the pilot Monitoring Reporting &

Verification (MRV) and benefiting already from funds under Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and Norway. They have been the pilot community in pushing for the LCDS so that this country will be recognised for its worth.

I also want to speak to the community development plans, because I have sat in this House during the debate of the presentation of the budget and I have heard on the other side a comment which said that Amerindians are living in modern-day slavery.

“As fire drives out fire, its pity pity”, William Shakespeare, from *Julius Caesar*, and what he actually meant is that we are heading along the path of destruction, not destruction of our entire nation, but destruction of the progress and the development which has taken hold of our Amerindian population of this country.

I beg this House that the Hon. Members, on the other side, see the wisdom in ensuring that they do not cut the votes and the allocations under the LCDS. Our nation will be so ashamed that we can go to the lengths to ensure the destruction of the first people of this nation. The programme under the Amerindian Development Fund (ADF) is intended to begin the transformative economic activities for the village economy.

We have spent years providing and developing the foundation for our first people to ensure that they become intimately involved in national development, including participation of dealing with their own village development. We have gone through the process of ensuring that they had foundation of the Presidential Grant Fund to give them that capacity, to build the capacity and empower them, so that when the time comes for additional and larger sums of resources, financial resources, they are ready. We can speak of last year when the leaders, one hundred and seventy-six leaders, sat at Liliendaal to go through their priority projects, to deliberate among themselves, to provide exchanges to each other and shared experiences and what their focus would have been. In this House, today, the Opposition, and it appears as though it is the combined Opposition, is against the funds allocated here to really transform the village economy, and we speak about employment for Amerindians, opportunities for our young people.

I rest my case. I implore that on this side of the House we will stand firm to support Amerindian development. [*Applause*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Dr. Ramsammy is going to be the last person I am allowing to speak and I will put the question for the amendment.

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: I would not keep the House very long because the Cunha Canal, and sluice, is one of the projects that is caught up in this political grandstanding and I know that I would not change anybody's mind, but I do want to put it on record of what we are voting for or against. The Cunha Canal is one of the five release sites from the East Demerara Water Conservancy. We all know the importance, so I am not going to go into that. But the original construction of the East Demerara Water Conservancy was such that the two releases, at Lama and Maduni, were always of a greater capacity than the three for the Demerara River. Therefore in emergency the three at the Demerara side were never enough, forcing us to release water from Lama and Maduni. This situation got worst in 1990 with the Barama deal. Some will remember and recall the Barama deal because where Barama is located the channel ran straight into the Demerara River, and that channel was taken up by the arrangements made as part of the Barama deal, and so the alignment for the discharge had to be changed into a circuitous and smaller discharge and then in fact it did not work and was abandoned and therefore the release into the river was now limited to four channels, four sluices, two on the Demerara side.

In 1994, a report was done that identified the Cunha Canal project as one of the priority projects we did not, in fact, find the funding for that. In the Conservancy Adaptation Programme two projects were identified, one was a Northern Relief Channel for the East Coast of Demerara and one was the Cunha Canal. In the approved Conservancy Adaptation Programme for the Cunha Canal, the cost was too much and was excluded. We included it, in fact, in the Guyana REDD+ Investment Fund (GRIF) Project. This is one for Mr. Ramjattan's interest, if he is interested, that is, in fact, an approved project which has gone through all the stages, but it is not only that will improve the releases into the Demerara River and into the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, for the Cunha Canal, something else happened in 1990 when that discharge was restricted and then abandoned, because all the areas around, Laluni, Badarima, and all those areas, are surface discharge into the Cunha Canal and therefore all of that land was restricted in its drainage and irrigation. This project is not only important in reducing the risk that the people in the Mahaica/Mahaicony faced, but it is also going to improve the drainage in the Laluni, Badarima, and all those areas, improving livelihood of people. That is what we have been asked tonight to vote on.

We are being asked: Are we going to stand with those people or are we going to vote against them? This is not something we are talking about that we hope to do in the future; we want to do it now. The designs have been done and the money has been approved for this project. Stand up with the people of this country! Stand for decency! Do not be reckless! Tonight, let us tell the people who we stand with. Let us not go and mamaguy on television and fool the people. This is the people of Guyana; this is what you are voting against. So I ask you... [Mr. Ramjattan: We have vote against it because we have not got the money.] Mr. Ramjattan, allow me to speak now. I have listened to you for days, and when you go to the people you will face... [Mr. Ramjattan: I have gone to the people.] You are for the people... [Interruption]...in the last few days we have had a chance to walk with the people, we have refused to walk with the people. We on this side, as like the late Dr. Cheddi Jagan, will walk with the people of Guyana. [Applause]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member Mr. Nagamootoo, do you wish to speak, Sir?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Yes Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Well go ahead.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I would like you to protect me, however. Sir, what is playing out here is theatrical and drama. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, allow Mr. Nagamootoo to speak please.

8.49 p.m.

Mr. Nagamootoo: What we are being fed with here is a pie in the sky. Having been designated in the elections, they have to have a hype for the Guyanese people. If it is not going to be oil, it is going to be hydro. We do not disagree with the expectations that our country would realise a hydro project as large and ambitious as the Amaila Falls project nor do we disagree that our country should not benefit from our natural resources, that is our petroleum resources, gas resources. No one is saying here, from this side – I have not heard anyone say so far – that support from Amaila Falls project or any other project for national development will be withheld. What we are having here is this drama of a fiscal fiction being created in this House of coming to the National Assembly with a revenue of \$18 billion stated. Nothing has been paid to

us, not a cent from the \$18 billion. If it is that this is an account then there is the law by which we are bound that the Government has to come by a conditional appropriation. This Government does not have this money in hand and is treating it as revenue. We can talk about predictability with regards to revenue from income tax or from the Value Added Tax (VAT). We know this is being paid. As I speak here, revenues are being collected so the Government can budget for that. Budgeting has to do with certainty. It is not a guesstimate, a guess work or a work of fiction.

There is a picture being painted that if we did not agree with the Government's allocation from a fictional source – because my learned friend has pointed out last year that it budgeted for \$14 billion and did not get anything... *Country people got a thing 'they didn't got it'* – not even that. But I would not say what it is. And they come back here to fool this nation that they could deliver on promises without giving this National Assembly an assurance that the money is being approved. So I say: one, to have certainty in this House... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Allow Mr. Nagamootoo to speak please.

Mr. Nagamootoo: My humble suggestion is that the Government is not sure where this National Assembly stands on many things. It would come to this House with a motion on the Amaila Falls project and we guarantee unconditional support for a motion for Amaila Falls to be a project for Guyana. We also will suggest that there is money in the mean time that the Government could use rather than having National Industrial & Commercial Investments Limited (NICIL) pouring \$21 million into the Marriott hotel...that they use that money as the equity... It is genuine people's money. Alternatively, the Government makes representation with whatever power is at its disposal to have NICIL put the billions of dollars it has into the Consolidated Fund so that it can be accessed for legitimate projects to benefit the people of Guyana. There is a red herring being pulled across the floor of the National Assembly that this money is needed and that without the vote here on non-existent, fictional *Head* that there will be no land titling.

We voted, in this National Assembly, a few days ago when we considered a vote for the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, \$160 million for the Amerindian Development Fund. So that no one is thinking about Amerindians and this breast beating and those great concern for Amerindians... We voted \$282 million for project development and assistance for local community council which could be made and accessible for demarcation and land titling... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, order please.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mr. Chairman, we voted \$720 million for basic needs. No one is saying [inaudible] including Amerindian areas. No one in this House, I have heard so far, spoke against the need or necessity of Amerindians so I submit that it is a red herring. I say this: we are in favour of equity for Amerindians, but come with a conditional appropriation and we will support it. But we will not support an illegality in this Parliament to vote for sums that we have no guarantee will ever be released to us. If this money does not come in to the Budget and we vote for it as an expenditure, we will be forced to raise taxes on the already oppressed Guyanese people to raise money for these projects that they are identifying that needs to have money. We say that there is less concern... Look at the breast beating here and the concerns. But when we raised that the Value Added Tax (VAT) which is really a *Revenue Added Tax (RAT)* should be reduced by 1%, they did not agree to reduce VAT to ease the people of this country. And they come here beating their breasts as great patriots and nationalists when they could not, even in the Budget... The Budget has a 10% money allocated to wage increases to public servants. They could not confirm that there will be 10% wage increase for the public servants of this country. So they are very selective in their concern for the people and I say this: in all good conscience, I cannot subscribe to an illegal act in this Parliament; I cannot subscribe to any act that will not bring us closer to accountability, good governance and responsible fiscal measure. I vote against this allocation as a matter of fiction and as a matter of principle.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think that if we continue at this rate, we will get nowhere. So it is either we put the question... I noticed Mr. Allicock wanting to speak. Are you still insisting Sir?

Mr. Allicock: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. I am really happy to be here to listen to all the justifications being said. I must say that we are for development. We are for the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS). We actually supported that initiative when the former President made the announcement and we have been living the life. We were really happy that this came into being.

The story here is that as it regards land demarcation, there is a problem. Within the North Rupununi – I thought we were all like that in the entire country – we were doing it the way we

thought was right. But there are complaints from the other regions. One coming to mind immediately is *Middle Maz* and what is worrying is that it is said that lands are being handed over to the Indigenous peoples, but yet there are phrases or lines that do not help. Our land is from the highest mountain of Guyana to the middle of the earth. But here it is it is like all of this land belongs to us, save and except. And those are the words that are disturbing. I am speaking here having listened to my brothers out there who have spoken to me. We are not against the development. But again there is confusion because at one moment we are hearing that the money is here and at another moment the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is controlling it. We need to get that clear. I have just learnt that the IDB is concerned. The needs of the Indigenous peoples must be met before the IDB could move forward and I think we need to address that. So Mr. Chairman, if we could address those things, I think we can move forward in the future.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Chairman, I urge that the question be put.

Mrs. Backer: I second that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we have had a long and exhaustive...

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, if I may... [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, this is becoming torturous. Hon. Minister of Finance, you spoke at length on this matter and five other Members of the Government side spoke. Two Members of the Opposition side have spoken. I would like to put the question. It is 9.00 p.m.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that I spoke on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Yes you did.

Dr. Singh: No I did not. I answered a question but once the motion was put, I have not spoken on it.

Mr. Greenidge: Mr. Speaker, may I remind you of last evening's exercise when I was wanting to speak, having being the mover of the motion? You ruled that because Mdm. Gail Teixeira asked that the matter be put...you exercised the guillotine. Subsequently, you accommodated the other side. May I urge, Mr. Chairman...? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, the question was put. And, indeed, given the precedence, particularly my recent ruling as of last night, I am going to put the amendment.

Question put.

Mr. Hinds: Division.

Committee divided: Ayes 33, Noes 31, as follows:

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Noes

Mr. Jaffarally

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Chand

Ms. Shadick

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mr. Bond	Mrs. Campbell-Sukhai
Ms. Kissoon	Ms. Webster
Mr. Trotman	Mr. G. Persaud
Ms. Selman	Ms. Manickchand
Mr. Allicock	Mr. Benn
Ms. Wade	Dr. Anthony
Mr. Felix	Mr. Ali
Ms. Hastings	Dr. Ramsaran
Mr. Scott	Dr. Westford
Lt Col (ret.) Mr. Harmon	Mr. R. Persaud
Mr. Greenidge	Dr. Singh
Mrs. Backer	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Dr. Norton	Mr. Nandlall
Mrs. Lawrence	Dr. Ramsammy
Mr. B. Williams	Mr. Rohee
Ms. Ally	Mr. Hinds
Dr. Roopnarine	
Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger	

Amendment carried.

Project 3401000 – Low Carbon Development - amended to \$1.

Programme: 031 – Ministry Administration - \$4,668,900,001, as amended, agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Current Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$3,345,591

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$3,345,591 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Capital Expenditure

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$10,500,000

Programme: 032 – Government Accounting Administration - \$10,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, at 9.09 p.m. on the 26th April, 2012, I declare that this completes the consideration, by the Committee of Supply, of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 2012.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply considered the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2012 and approved of them as amended.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if we can have the actual figure now. We are still in the process of computing them.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Appropriation Bill 2012 – Bill No. 3 of 2012 to be introduced at this stage.

Question put, and agreed to.

Motion carried

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bill was introduced and read a first time:

APPROPRIATION BILL 2012 - BILL NO. 3/2012

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31st December, 2012, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Dr. Singh: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I should, in fact, also have signified that Cabinet has indicated its consent that the Assembly proceeds with consideration of this Bill and, as I indicated, I present the Bill to the Assembly and move that it be read the first time with the amended schedule, of course.

Bill, as amended, read a first time and taken through its remaining stages.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

INCOME TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2012 – BILL NO. 4/2012

A Bill intituled:

“An act to amend the Income Tax Act.” *[Minister of Finance]*

Dr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to make a lengthy presentation on the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2012 – Bill No. 4/2012. This Bill is, in fact, an extremely simple Bill. It has four clauses and, in fact, has one intent and that is to give effect to the measure announced in Budget 2012 in relation to the personal income tax and, in particular, to the threshold that is applicable to that tax.

It would be recalled that Budget 2012 announced an increase in the income tax threshold from \$40,000 per month to \$50,000 per month or \$480,000 annually to \$600,000 annually. This

adjustment featured considerably during the course of the debate and, I believe, by and large, it was welcomed by Members on all sides of the House. And this Bill now seeks to give legislative effect to this measure. I do not anticipate that it would generate much debate and so I will stop and merely say that the Bill, as indicated in the Budget speech...the measure announced, the measure that will be given effect by this Bill, has the result of increasing disposable income, removing 21,000 persons from the income tax net and, ultimately, will contribute to the well being of the taxpaying public. And so, with those very brief remarks, I now move that the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill 2012 – Bill No. 4/2012 be read a second time.

Question put and carried.

Bill read a second time.

Assembly in Committee.

Bill considered and approved.

Assembly resumed.

Bill reported without amendments, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this completes our business for today and I dare say for the continuous and long consideration of the Estimates as well as the Budget Debate. Before the Hon. Prime Minister rises to move the motion, I invite any Member who wishes to speak or has anything to say at the end of this long exercise. If there is no one who wishes to speak, Hon. Prime Minister...

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned to Thursday, 10th May, 2012.

Adjourned Accordingly at 9.18 p.m.