

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2006-2010) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

112TH Sitting

Tuesday, 16TH February, 2010

The Assembly convened at 2.02 p.m.

Prayers

[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Absence of the Speaker

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members the Speaker is not well, I think he is on his way to see his doctor, so I will be functioning today and I am asking for your usual co-operation.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

The following Report was laid:

Ministry of Finance: Report of the Directors of the Dependants' Pension Fund for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008. *[Minister of Finance]*

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2010 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2010.

“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 the Revenue and Expenditure of Guyana for the financial year 2010 have been prepared and laid before the Assembly on 2010-02-08;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the National Assembly approves the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2010, of a total sum of one hundred and twenty-five billion, five and sixty-eight million, five hundred and seventy-three thousand dollars (\$125,568,573,000), excluding seventeen billion, two hundred and seven million, and twenty-six thousand dollars (\$17,207,026,000) which is chargeable by law, as detailed therein and summarised in the under mentioned schedule, and agree that it is expedient to amend the law and to make further provision in respect of finance.”[*Minister of Finance*]

Assembly resumed budget debate.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members we will now resume the debate on the Budget for the year 2010. The first speaker today is Dr. George Norton, as I understand. Dr. Norton, you may proceed.

Dr. Norton: May it please you Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this House on the Budget Debate of 2010 presented by the Minister of Finance, Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh.

We shall be hearing ad nauseam of what this large sum of money \$13.3 billion Guyana dollars allocated to the health sector is suppose to accomplish in this coming year. Similar to the past Budget Debates regardless of how much was actually achieved. The issue however, should never be about how much the health budget was increased over the years, but much more so, on what was accomplished.

The big question is if the Guyanese people are getting real value for money with respect to the quality of service and accountability in the health sector. A large number of Guyanese have expressed grave concern of the lapses in patient management in the public healthcare system right across this country. Considering the many questionable deaths especially of women and children under unusual circumstances and/or suspected negligence the answer to that big question; of getting value for money is a capital *NO*.

The Budget spoke of the Government's commitment to provide equitable access to high quality health services. And I guess that is so because the Government is aware that the nation is in dire need of same for it has not been enjoying such, especially in the recent pass.

The public healthcare system is bordering on a crisis situation so much so that in a report of a recent press conference no other person than the President himself, said that his Administration has given the commitment this year of getting value for its money invested in the health sector.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker this given commitment came much too late, after 17 long years of hoping, waiting and praying by the Guyanese nation the situation in the health sector leaves much to be desired. The way things are going in this sector it seems there might be need for a third Minister in order for Guyanese to obtain true value for their money. Two Ministers apparently cannot deliver their goods. They seem not to be getting it right as far as the Guyanese nation is concerned especially in recent months they do not have equitable access to quality health services.

In this year's Budget the sum of \$1.4 billion has been allocated to be spent on construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of health facilities. We can read in the press on a daily basis of the many constructions and renovations of buildings in the health sector and we see handsome portraits of the two Ministers giving the impression that all is bright and beautiful. To the contrary and in spite of these building the health sector continues to suffer and

crumble. Persons feel that the system has failed them, especially when the body of their dead is left to rot and has to be buried without a post mortem and the cause of death undetermined.

Following the many complaints and deaths recently at health institutions across this country, the Ministry of Health is in need of a permanent department of investigation for this has become a full time job now for the Ministry. This is particularly so since these investigations seems to be unending, taking weeks and months to complete. This tardiness in investigation and reporting is the order of the day, regardless of if it is the investigation into the death of the Minister which is still going on after several weeks or to deliver the decision on the sanctions of the doctor who attended to the tortured teen while having a bag placed over his head.

Now the Minister is calling on the Medical Council to review its decision to suspend a doctor for two months who they unanimously found guilty of professional misconduct and he admitted to several professional lapses while examining the teen.

I would just like to remind the Hon. Minister of what his President said and I quote:

“It is a sad thing when there is negligence at health institutions, if there is negligence and no sanctions then there will continue to be negligence.”

We can evaluate the situation as it is in the various health institutions across the different regions of this country, beginning with what is taking place at the very Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation. This is our main referral centre of the whole of Guyana. Even the highly touted National Ophthalmology Centre in Port Mourant which is described in this Budget as the most modern of its kind in the Caribbean in terms of the state of art equipment and staffing and of which the Hon. Dr. Ramsaran spoke so passionately about for most of his Budget presentation, do also refer patients to the Georgetown Public Hospital eye department for management. Concerns are therefore raised when deaths occur the way it is happening at the Georgetown Public Hospital, and considering that more than \$3.5 billion was allocated to this institution this year.

The people of Guyana however expect quality health care services in an efficient, effective, equitable and caring manner as is expressed in the Mission Statement of this hospital. Guyanese especially after hearing of the horror stories of the G.P.H.C. and the patients who seeks medical attention there, are totally disappointed. One such example is, “Mother blames hospital negligence for baby’s death at G.P.H.C.”. Guyanese read of a harrowing tale of

carelessness and indifference on the part of medical officials of this Public Health facility. The mother of a five day old baby, Abina Alfonso is convinced that her first and only child died of negligence on January 8th at the G.P.H.C. This is only one of a series of deaths at this institution that occurred under what can best be described as mysterious circumstances. Other recent cases includes those of Kean Greaves, the 10 years old female patient who died of ruptured appendix at the Georgetown Public Hospital where the doctors failed to diagnose her condition in time to save her life. Also there is Basmattie Balkarran, 28 years of age, a mother of three children of Ruby Backdam, Parika, who was rushed to the G.P.H.C. as an emergency did not receive immediately treatment and died as a consequence. Then on January 17th a mother of five died at G.P.H.C. after doctors delayed diagnosis.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, two of the latest of these unnecessary deaths occurred on Tuesday 26th January last, a mere nine days after the one mentioned above. On the 1st “Another baby dies at G.P.H.C. sparks rumours”, where a one month old baby boy died and the parents are adamant that negligence contributed to their son’s demise. The other, “Baby dies; parents blame negligent doctors at the G.P.H.C.”. This was a six months old female baby with vomiting and diarrhoea who was treated for a respiratory tract infection and sent home. She died shortly after.

These deaths all happen in quick successions and have led to investigations being launched to determine the circumstances of these deaths. For such a death due to vomiting and diarrhoea to happen here at our main referral centre speaks volume of the failure of our health system and of the Guyanese nation not getting value for money.

Into this group of horror stories, these tales from the crypts can be placed that of our own dear colleague, the late Hon. Dr. Desire Fox may her soul rest in peace. I shall only repeat this case to emphasise the point I am making of the strange circumstances of these deaths at G.P.H.C. The death of this Government Minister after being admitted for injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident has caused the Leader of the Opposition, followed by that of the President himself to call for an investigation into the circumstances of her death which occurred at G.P.H.C. our main referral centre. This investigation is still ongoing. The President in referring to this matter said that he cannot understand how she died after sustaining some fractures. He further asked, “how can you move from that to dying? There has to be some explanation”. All Guyanese are interested and waiting for that explanation.

The Guyanese public would be hoping that the \$300 million allocated for the enhancement of child health programmes will be effectively spent with focus on the prevention of infant mortality as is stated in the budget. I am quite certain that the Minister of Finance would agree with me especially when we have been graced with a budget baby.

This situation at the G.P.H.C. is so notorious that even the junior monarch of now Mashramani Calypso Competition in her composition “I do not want to be born” sang about “going to the Georgetown Hospital for a gum boil, and ending up six feet in the soil”. It would be interesting to know if the Hon. Minister of Health could let this House know just how much, such, death in circumstances which called for an inquiry, occurred at the G.P.H.C. for 2009 or for that matter, for the whole of the country. Such deaths happened all over the country, which is a true reflection of the inefficiency of the Health care system.

Last year I expressed the hope that the sharing of beds in the maternity section of the G.H.P.C. by mothers and their new born would have been a thing of the past but lo and behold now we have male patients sharing beds in the male medical wards with photographs in the news papers actually showing one of them partially naked. We do hope that the \$3.5 billion allocated to this institution will be utilized to ensure that the medical and nursing care provided at the G.P.H.C. is in accordance with accepted clinical standards. Besides in the 2007 budget it was clearly stated that the inpatient ward would have been rehabilitated and upgraded, since according to that year’s budget this hospital would have been converted to a genuine tertiary care hospital to reduce the necessity for treatment abroad. In 2008 an allocation of \$2.8 billion had also been provided for operation and maintenance of that hospital. Like so many other plans this remains nothing but a promise.

Now for an examination of the situation in the different regions: Take Region No. 10 for instance, what is in the news? “Woman dies in child birth”, “Billion dollar Linden Hospital theatre not working”. Here we learnt of poor medical response and a non-functioning operating theatre at the spanking new Linden Hospital Complex was blamed for the tragic death of a 35 year old mother of three and her unborn baby. Once again an investigation was launched only to confirm that negligence was part of the cause of this Guyanese to perish with her baby inside her. In December last this Hospital was officially opened at a cost of \$1.8 billion. This was not too long before the tragic death of the mother with her baby inside her. In spite of that large sum of money of \$1.8 B for the completion of the Linden Hospital Complex, we were quick to be informed of “Patients fleeing nauseating stench” at this very

“state of the art” complex. The nauseating stench emanating from overflowing sewage on the ground floor of this new hospital, had both patients and out patients at this complex running out the hospital to escape the noxious fumes. Is this what one of the Hon. Minister of Health called “the efficient and effective use of, and the optimisation of real estate and tax payers’ money”?

As if this case in Region No. 10 was not enough for the Guyanese public to bear, we only have to cross over to Region No. 3 and what do we have there, “Negligence cited as cause for maternal death at West Demerara Regional Hospital.” Another investigation, hence my reason for suggesting that the MoH (Ministry of Health) do need a full-time C.I.D. (Criminal Investigation Department); Reports are that the patient, overwhelmed with pain, attempted to find the nurses to inform them that her baby was ready to be delivered. She collapsed and died. The absence of an Obstetrician Consultant and the lack of a functioning operating theatre at this Regional Hospital, like in the case of the L.H.C. (Linden Hospital Complex), also contributed to this patient’s demise.

Then two weeks after we learnt, “West Demerara Hospital Theatre may be functional again”. This facility had been non-functional for several months having suffered major electrical related problems. This situation was compounded by the fact that a stand by generator was not functioning properly thus several bouts of power outages only served to damage the facility more. The hospital did ask for a new generator in their budget for more than three consecutive years. They only now receive it. It apparently needed a sad situation as the maternal death mentioned above for the Authorities to start getting it right. It was only in the Kaieteur News of yesterday we saw the caption, “West Demerara Hospital theatre to resume surgeries today”. Still there is no specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. We once again look forward to value for money that was allotted this year to the enhancement of antenatal health programmes with specific focus on the prevention of maternal deaths as is again stated in this budget.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we hear investigations being launched of all these deaths under suspicion of negligence at G.P.H.C., Linden Hospital Complex and West Demerara Regional Hospital but it is also of interest to hear the findings, if any was ever launched into the death of the 14 months old baby girl from Shea Village, South Rupununi. The residents of Lethem, in Region No. 9 demanded a thorough investigation that could establish the circumstances surrounding the death of this patient, 18 hours after she was admitted with fits of vomiting to

the Lethem medical facility. The residents are blaming both the Regional and Hospital Administration for what they called glaring negligence in the death of that baby. The absence of a driver for the Lethem ambulance compounded the situation as that baby was referred to the Boa Vista Medical Centre, which has become quite a regular practice. Finding a replacement driver was too late, the 14 months old baby subsequently died. We need the answers to the questions of where was the ambulance driver, what was he doing and with whose authority when he was needed, in spite of being at work? It is important to note that Lethem has two ambulances but only one designated driver who is also used by the R.E.O. (Regional Executive Officer) as a driver. At this regional hospital in Lethem there is no specialist physician.

This Budget, promise to place major emphasis on effectiveness of operation and we await the realisation of same. We remind the Hon. Minister that if people are negligent and they are no sanctions, there will continue to be negligence, words of his President.

As if it will never end we can now move on to Region No. 7. "Girl 18 dies mysteriously at the Bartica Hospital." Here a grieving mother is slamming conditions at the Bartica Regional Hospital after her 18 years old daughter died under unusual circumstances at the institution, allegedly without being treated by a doctor. Is there another investigation to be launched? The mother of this patient was tasked with going to the home of a technician working at this hospital, at 12:00 a.m., in the night to call him out to duty. It must be stated that the operating theatre at this hospital is not functioning as was the case of W.D.R.H. and the L.H.C. The same can be said of the Mabaruma Hospital that this budget refer to as a major highlight of last year but the Mabaruma hospital has an operating theatre that is none functional. No surgery is being done in this theatre. There is no X-ray unit at this hospital, the laboratory is not function and there is a shortage of basic instruments such as, blood pressure apparatus and glucometers to test the blood sugar levels of patients. The roof of this hospital as was stated by the Hon. Mr. Fernandes is leaking so when it rains the beds and other equipment are soaked.

At Matthews Ridge there is no longer a doctor at that hospital. All you have is a lone pharmacist. There is an empty shed that serves as a mortuary with a broken door and residents claim that the dead left there are often mutilated by animals, yes Mdm. Deputy Speaker, dogs are claimed to be eating the corpse. There is a shortage of food at this hospital. The administration would normally take groceries on credit but the shop owners are no longer

giving the hospital credit due to the late payments of debts, so they have to buy from 96 miles away at Mabaruma.

Despite the spanking new building named Arakaka Medical Centre, there is no electricity and the availability of potable water at this centre is a regular challenge. There is a Community Health Worker alone who only works five days a week and up to 4:00 p.m. There are no weekend services for the sick and emergencies must go to Port Kaituma with a transportation cost of \$3,000.

Even though this should never be the case, many a times we are informed of cases in the hinterland locations, where patients have been treated for vomiting and diarrhoea, were sent home and died shortly after. In Region No. 1 there were five such deaths from vomiting and diarrhoea alone during the month of July last. Only in the month of December last in the village of Karasabi, in Region No. 9 two children died from the same reason of vomiting and diarrhoea. As we speak now there is such an outbreak of Vomiting and Diarrhoea in the Matarkai district in Region No. 1, and most of the villages in the Upper Mazaruni, Region No. 7 and also in Region No. 10. We only hope that the Ministry of Health is aware of this and the necessary steps are taken to prevent further deaths.

If one should look at the reports and recommendations of the various investigations that was carried out it will be found that they all point in a particular direction, that is, the correction of non-availability of specialist care in the four basic areas of health care delivery in the regional hospitals. The four basic areas are Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Surgery and Internal Medicine. There is need for a specialist to supervise and manage these areas along with an effective system of 24 hour on call staff; especially at the Accident & Emergency Departments of these hospitals so that patients will not die after waiting for hours without seeing a doctor as was the case at Bartica Hospital.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker \$300 million will be spent on the development of human resources. Like in last year's budget this is deemed to be considered as a priority area. We do hope that this is so done in a way that these problems in human resources can be eliminated. There is a dire need for post graduate training in the different areas in medicine and in sufficient numbers to cover the entire country. I did question in the past years during the consideration of the estimates about post graduate training of physicians but provisions made for such are insufficient. Take the area of Ophthalmology for instance, the area that the Hon. Minister Dr. Ramsaran seems to have a passion for. I would have preferred to hear him speak with such

enthusiasm about Child Care rather than Eye Care, for you do not die from cataracts. So good to hear that 1000 eye surgeries were performed at the Port Mourant “state of the art” facility as at the end of last year. According to the Minister in the Ministry of Health, the Hon. Dr. Bheri Ramsaran, since in 2006 the idea of establishing this centre was originated and at this moment there are 28 Cuban Staffers who are filling the gap until local doctors are able to complete training in eye care abroad. It is interesting to know how many Guyanese are now reading for Ophthalmology as a post graduate specialist course in Cuba.

What are we waiting for? Probably there are, but I have never seen an advertisement for such post graduate training nor heard of it being done by Guyanese in Cuba. I do know that there are two Guyanese being trained in Ophthalmology but in Bangladesh and Paraguay, compliments of Orbis International and the Caribbean Council for the Blind respectively. It is high time that such training be realised. For many years I used to introduce myself as Dr. George Norton O.G.G.O., which means Only Guyanese Government Ophthalmologist. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I have been working as an Ophthalmologist for more than town decades at the G.P.H.C. and have always looked forward to be working along with fellow Guyanese specialist at that hospital. I am now nearing retirement and most likely, based on the track record of this regime, I might now be allowed to continue to work there after retirement. So it appears as though I will not have such honour. The Minister, Hon. Dr. Ramsammy, is very much aware of this situation for he openly declared that in all the scholarship programmes and aid packages, there is either little or nothing about Ophthalmology. Is the Minister not in some way responsible for this? He has been there long enough to have been able to correct this situation. The post graduate training of local Guyanese in these different areas of medicine is long overdue.

It is true that a number of young medical interns, referred to as “young blood” have returned from Cuba as well as doctors graduating from U.G.M.S. (University of Guyana Medical School). Offer them post graduate training opportunities and they will stay in the system, especially the ones from U.G. (University of Guyana) who do not have contractual obligations to the Government. Right now as I speak, there is a hospital in little St. Lucia that is practically staffed entirely by U.G. trained Guyanese doctors. If we can keep all our U.G. trained physicians to work in the field of medicine here in Guyana there will be very little need to train our undergraduate doctors elsewhere.

Our Health Sector faces a variety of human resources problems, primarily an overall lack of personnel in key areas which is worsened by the high number of trained personnel leaving the sector. If the qualified human resources cannot be retained, health care delivery cannot be guaranteed, no matter how many new or refurbished health buildings are commissioned. It is so good to hear of scores of nursing student being selected for training, according to the Minister. Who admitted himself that nurses are leaving the system through migration to greener pastures? What he needs to tell the nation is what is being done to retain the large numbers that are being trained. While there might be some wisdom in training the 400 plus nurses, conditions both for living and for teaching should be in place.

Accommodation for live-in student nurses, especially at Linden is still unsatisfactory. These trainee nurses are crying out for lack of proper teaching in the different nursing schools especially at Georgetown and Linden where courses are not completed in adequate time for final exams to be written as scheduled. Classrooms are overcrowded and the practical rooms are inadequate. The numbers of nurses are too large for the wards during teaching secessions.

Not only the nurses are leaving but qualified persons are leaving from all branches of health care delivery including the doctors, particularly those U.G. graduates and even the doctors that were brought from India on contract are also migrating out of Guyana.

The Budget made mention of the over 60 “young blood” who came back last year from Cuba and will be available to the system through 2010, these persons referred to by the Hon. Dr. Ramsaran as “baby doctors”. They are interns and need to do their supervised rotation here in Guyana.

2.32 p.m.

Only a few if any at all do such training at the G.P.H.C. but most of them did it in other centres, elsewhere and apart from the Georgetown Hospital.

The question is: are they been given adequate exposure to patient care as in these other centres as if it was done at the G.P.H.C.? Are they able to perform on par with those who did the internship at the G.P.H.C.? Experience will prove that this is not to be the case. The budget clearly states that the ability to deliver higher quality health care across our country would be impossible without a well-trained workforce. Taking in to account all these tragic deaths that have been taking place in the different health institutions in this country, it is advisable that the Ministry of health analyse this present arrangement...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Time Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 10 minutes to conclude his presentation. [Interruption]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: I thought there was a general agreement that M.P.s will have an extra 5 minutes when their time has elapsed, are you all no longer sticking to that, if you are not, would you please indicate you are not doing such... I have been advised that I short changed him by 3 minutes of time, which is in accordance with the Clerk who was keeping the time better, so in this case I will give him 8 minutes to conclude in this circumstance. If this is approved by the other parties? Alright Hon. Members, I will keep better time this time.

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. Norton: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Dr. Ramsarran is plying on rooting out these young bloods using his own words and dispatching them across the country. According to the minister this is part of the government's vision to expand quality and equitable healthcare service in Guyana. The Minister must also look into the interest of health workers that are already in the system. Try to imagine the case of a malaria control programme worker from the Rupununi who has not been paid for the entire 2009, a family man, a man with children. The explanation for this: the Minister reminds me of a song made popular American group 'Milli Vanilli' entitled, "Blame it on the rain" only this time it was: "blame it on the fire at the Ministry of Health" which incidentally happen down in the month of July.

The budget however stated a different scenario it state that the health sector demonstrated its resilience by continuing its work interruptedly regardless of the fire. But this is not only such case, the R.H.O. (Regional Health Officer) is a medic transferred from Annai to Lethem to act as R.H.O. since 2004, onto a day like today six years after neither is he confirmed as R.H.O. nor has been paid his acting allowance. While for four years now, we have a retired Hospital Steward who continues to be the R.H.O. in Region No. 7. When we take this into consideration we cannot help but conclude that we seem to have what and the best referred to as in animal farm where all are equal but some are more equal than others. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce [Mr. Prashad]: Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker, Hon. Members of this House, I would like to commend the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, the Minister of Finance for presenting to this National Assembly a Budget which is aimed at

maintaining macro-economic stability, strengthening the capacity of our economy and improve in the quality of the life of all Guyanese. I placed on record, my support of the motion by the Hon. Minister of Finance to produce the Estimates for the 2010 budget. This 2010 Budget, consolidate, transform, sustain capture the commitment of this Government to propel, modernise and develop this great nation for the benefit of all our people. The Hon. Minister of Finance Dr. Ashni Singh, in assessing the performance of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce has granted in specific targeted areas an increase in this year's budgetary allocations for the Ministry to further advance the work it has been doing.

2009 Budget presents many challenges for consumers and I am happy to say that through a proactive approach from the Ministry the rights and interests of consumers were protected. For the year 2009, a number of commodities have been monitored on a weekly basis by the commerce ministries. This was done by way of visits to municipal markets, shops, supermarkets and other outlets in the various regions of Guyana. The Commerce Ministry continues to overlook the prices and quality of goods and services being offered so as to ensure that consumers are not being *ripped off*. We will ascertain that the distribution of goods and services throughout the country are monitored and that quality products are offered within an affordable range to all Guyanese.

Due to good working relations between my Ministry and the Minibus Associations I am pleased to inform this House that in 2009 there were no fare increases in public transportation. I would like to assure you that my Ministry will continue to work with various associations to ensure that the minibus owners get a fair deal and the travelling public is not fleeced.

In 2009, the prices of chicken on the market were relatively stable and there were no instances of shortages on the local market. By the way, Guyana is the only CARICOM, country where beef is cheaper than chicken. The Ministry and the Guyana Poultry Producers Association continue to share information and monitor the industry closely and I am happy also to say that in 2009, Guyana for the first time did not have to import chicken even during the Christmas season. All the markets throughout the country had sufficient chicken and eggs at affordable prices and I have been assured by all the stakeholders including the Guyana Poultry Producers Association that in 2010 we would have a surplus of export for the first time and we are currently observing the Trinidad Market. So we are feeding the nation, so in order to fully equipped consumers with the information necessary to make wise choices as it

has to inform them about their rights and responsibilities the Ministry uses several strategies in 2009 to ensure that information was disseminated throughout the country. These includes informative life, weekly radio and television programmes, daily consumer tips in the local newspapers, distributions of flyers, brochures, booklets and school talks.

To keep consumers informed on all issues, the Ministry cannot work in isolation. To this end we have collaborated with several other organisations that have the responsibility of giving support to consumers advocates. Some of these organisations are Guyana Consumers Associations, I see Mrs. Holder is smiling, Consumer Movement of Guyana, Consumer Advices Bureau, Food and Drugs Department, the Analyst Department, the Public Utilities Commission and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Lethem Industrial Estate which as everyone knows is in close proximity to the newly opened Takutu Bridge and a border between Guyana and Brazil. This estate holds tremendous prospects due to the road linkage between Georgetown and Brazil which will substantially increased trade with Brazil Government states the significance of the Lethem industrial estate to the future development of region nine is of utmost importance with the objective being to create employment for the people of that region to provide an economic base for Lethem and the region as a whole to boost industrial development and economic growth in that area.

I am pleased to inform this House that the sum of \$75 million has been earmarked to improve the facilities and the Lethem industrial estate. The Ministry of industry will be commencing works on roads, drains and culverts at the Lethem industrial estate in next couple of weeks. In 2009, the Ministry of Industry would have also expanded close \$50 million in infrastructural works to develop the commercial zone at Lethem. To date, over 55 applicants have been in processed to conduct businesses in this area and 10 companies that have already started construction.

Next week a 50 member team from Brazil will be visiting Guyana to visit most of our resorts and also meet with the local business community. In 2009 the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce through our small business unit held several bamboo and other craft training seminars/ workshop nationwide. In order to facilitate the development of bamboo craft weaving and furniture industry in Guyana and also to provide capacity building programmes to craft producers. To create networking opportunities within the craft sector, to promote and facilitate training in the area of small business management in the various regions of Guyana.

During the period under review, 15 persons from the Grove community would have completed a 6 months training in bamboo craft weaving at the Grove Craft Centre. Additionally, 51 persons would have completed a 9 weeks training course in bamboo craft weaving at the Bartica Community Centre. During these training sessions several new items were produced while 20 persons from the batch of trained bamboo craft weavers benefited from training in small business management. The Ministry would have assisted over 50 members of the Arts and Craft Producers Association from across the 10 administrative regions of Guyana to participate at GuyExpo 2009 which was a huge success. Members of the Association also receive support from the Ministry to participate at the Linden Town week activity where they were able to display and sell their products.

In fulfilling our mandates to develop the small business sector in Guyana, the Ministry facilitated in 2009 by training over 60 members of the Arts and Craft Producers Association in the area of small business management. Additionally, 100 members of the said Association from the 10 administrative regions of Guyana were hosted by the Ministry at a two days workshop to develop a strategic plan for the Association. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we also hosted 18 young budding entrepreneurs from the Pomeroon to attend a training course on small business management. Additionally, the coconut fibre craft group in Akawini and Kabakaburi continued to produce items for sale. These trained personnel are now equipped to train others.

It is expected that these trainers would impart their knowledge to 21 young persons within their respective communities in the near future. My Ministry would have also met with a group of approximately 15 small Agri. processors during 2009. I am happy to report, that this group came together and Guyana Agri. Processors Association was formally launched in April, 2009 under the guidance of the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce. Mdm. Deputy Speaker, small and medium enterprises have contributed significantly to the economic development of Guyana especially in terms of job creation. S.M.E.'s (small and medium enterprises) are perceived as economic force of nations and as such must be able to provide high products and services to access regional and international markets. Thus the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce paid a lot of attention in the area of training.

Research has shown that small businesses are an effective vehicle for the development of the national economy which contributes to the reduction of poverty. In addition it is estimated that about 80% of the world's businesses are small to medium-size. In Guyana, small

businesses represent about three quarter of business activities and make a substantial contribution to the generation of employment and income. 2009 was a successful and eventful year for tourism in Guyana as the Ministry embarked on a strategy realising. our potential. Tourism supports thousands of jobs and creates employment for many of our indigenous brothers and sisters it also generates revenue and has been attracting both local and foreign investors. Because tourism has been growing and expanding and has seen excellent return on investments I cannot help but say I belief that tourism is the industry of the future for Guyana.

In 2009, Guyana saw a record breaking year for arrivals with a 9% increase over arrivals in 2008. According to the C.T.O. (Caribbean Tourism Organisation) a body which consists of 36 Nations, they conducted an assessment through a London-based economic firm and their findings were only 4 countries in the 36 nation C.T.O. did better in 2009 than in 2008. I am happy to report that Guyana is number one in that respect, it is record breaking, 9% increase over 2008 and the other 3 countries are: Jamaica, Cuba and Saba. In fact, if you look around at what is happening in the Caribbean in Barbados, in the Parliament recently, the government was saying that tourism declined by just 10% and the main opposition leader was saying that it was 20%. So in the Parliament, in the Caribbean area they are quarrelling about how much tourism decline whilst in Guyana we have increased by 9% and of course, Hon. Member that does not include people coming over the Takutu Bridge, coming across from Molsen Creek and also at the known old Ogle International Airport.. [Mrs. Backer: “People are coming for funerals”] [Mr. Carberry: “People are coming for funerals, weddings and thing”.] ...this record breaking visitors arrivals points to visitors confidence in Guyana as well as a success of the marketing initiatives and programmes with the Ministry of tourism and Guyana’s tourism Authority in collaboration with the private sector.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, speaking with the President, January this year, I am pleased to report to this Hon. House, that in January 2010 was the best month we ever had, recording 9,273 against 8,132 last year, an encouraging 14% increase in arrivals over the same period. We also started the year on a high. This is not a fluke, this is not by the way, a strategy has been implemented and a marketing plan is in place. Guyana is now a more popular and known tourists’ destination as a result of excellent and effective marketing. The Ministry of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority would have marketed and promoted Guyana to foreign international forums. I.T.B. (International Tourism Bourse) in Germany, which is the world’s largest travel and trade show. The W.T.M. (World Travel Market) in London, British Bird

Watching Forum in England, The Surinam Tourism Fair and The Adventure in Travel Expo, New York and The Caribbean week in New York those are some of the International Trade Fairs and Travel shows we have participated in.

As a result of Guyana's attendance at these International Travel Trade Shows over 65 International Tour Companies are proactively selling destination Guyana. This sales distribution network is critical to tourism development and growth. Today, some of the largest tour companies in the world are selling Guyana. These include: Saga Holidays, Wild Life, Worldwide, Bird Holidays, Travelling Naturalists, American Bosai Society, Eco-Ventures, Geographic Expeditions, Mass Audubon Tours, Manu Expeditions, Nature Trek just to name a few.

In 2009, Guyana hosted an International Fam. Tour (Familiarisation Tour) comprising of: Tour Operators, Journalist, Researchers and Conservationists. I believe that Familiarisation Tours are critical in creating an increase in market demand for destination Guyana. Fam's also provide excellent travel stories on Guyana and help to raise our destination profile.

Guyana was granted approved destination status by China in September, 2009. This allows Chinese tourists to travel to Guyana. International surveys have shown that China is slated to become the largest outbound tourist market in the world by 2020. This provides an excellent avenue to boost arrivals and investment in Guyana. During 2009, the Ministry of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority would have used several mediums to disseminate information on Guyana's Tourism product. The following are some of the initiatives that were taken: thousands of tourists information packages were distributed to potential visitors in key markets, website marketing, the G.T.A. has one of the most modern websites and provides information on destination Guyana to assist with travel planning and destination awareness. The use of social marketing tools: blogs, facebook and twitter are also now being used to market Destination Guyana to the world. We also advertise in the Caribbean Airline in-flight videos. Destination Guyana receives excellent coverage in the International Travel Press. We estimate that the exposure leverage is valued at about US \$2.5 million for 2009.

Some of the International coverage is as follows: *The Daily Telegraph*, United Kingdom, *Guyana a journey into the Jurassic*, Travel Mail: *Follow for glorious Guyana*, New York Times: *Guyana, model to save the Rain Forest* and only recently, somebody pointed out in the House, New York Times published an article: *Journeys: into the wild in lush Guyana*,

America's magazine: *Climate for Conservation*, *Wanderlusts Magazine*: with a caption: *God's Garden*, *Readers World: Bird watching article*, *Lime Magazines: Going wild in Guyana*, *Outside Magazine: Guyana*, *South America: Trip of the year*, BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation): *Guyana LCD's (Low Carbon Development Strategy)*, *Times Magazines*, *Wild Life magazine, defending Guyana's wild life* and the *Economist*.

Very importantly we have gotten a lot of mileage by his Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo travelling, visiting countries and attending important climate conferences. Guyana is thrown into the spot light and only recently Ban Kimoon appointed him as a member on a panel to look into the finances of the climate change. This is the kind of exposure that we cannot pay for because President Jagdeo's name on the International scene, he has arrived big time. If we had to pay for this it would cost us millions of dollars.

Domestic tourism or as I would like to say 'stay-cation' is critical to the success of any destination. Over the past few years, the Ministry of Tourism has been encouraging Guyanese to travel, explore and discover their own country. So far 2009 was a record year for domestic tourism promotion as thousands of Guyanese travelled to various destinations within Guyana. Some of the areas and events that recorded increase visits locally were: Kaieteur and Orinduik Falls through the Kaieteur specials that we would have had. Orealla, Cow Falls and Wanatubo Resort because we are promoting tourism actively in the Berbice area especially with the opening of the Berbice Bridge and the development at 63 Beach. Mahdia; we had the Mahdia Town Day, and for the first time we had an Expo at Mahdia. Moruka and also we have started Wakanime Expo's. Rock Stone Fish Festival which is getting very popular because we want to encourage people not to be fishy but to take part in these Fish Festivals like you have Oistins in Barbados, and in fact we had people from Barbados advising us. The Pakarima Mountain Safari, I will urge Members of this House when we go to Pakarimas; Hon. Members Lance and my good friend Danny and others to come with us to the Pakarima Safari, come and see the beauty of Guyana. [Interruption] Hon. Member Norton, I am telling you, thought you were an ordinary man I did not know you were someone special. Bartica, Mainstay and Orealla Resorts/Regattas. The Rodeo, Rupununi Expo and many more.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, 2009 was an excellent year in which we achieved greater diversification and tourism expansion in key areas. Some of these areas are, and this is my friend's Favourite; Bird Watching. Guyana is now being compared with Peru and Ecuador and is one of the top bird watching destinations in the world. Of recent, Guyana has gain a lot

of International attention with over 830 species of birds. Today several large International companies are selling Bird Watching Tours to Guyana, with the slogan “*Guyana, A Bird Watchers Paradise*”. With the largest pristine track of tropical rainforest, high species biodiversity, amazing wildlife, pristine rivers, Mountain Ranges, Savannahs, Wet Lands and Indigenous Communities with low carbon life style, Guyana has become a hot spot and a new and sought after destination for eco-tourists.

3.02 p.m.

We have Adventure Tourism, Mountain Climbing, Trekking, Canoeing, Jungle Survival, Safari’s, River Trips, Fishing, Cattle Ranches, Wildlife Watching, Rapids, Water Falls, Flora and Faunas, along with pristine rainforest that makes Guyana a Paradise for the Adventurer seekers. In 2009, the Ministry also rebranded Guyana as ‘Guyana the Amazon Adventure’, because everyone knows where the Amazon is, and we are part of Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (A.C.T.O.). Guyana is known for its rich and viewable wildlife. Tourists are often fascinated by the amazing diversity in Guyana since we are known to be the home for the giants of the Amazon. By this, I am referring to the *Harpy Eagle*, the *Giant Anaconda*, the *Black Caiman*, the *Arapaima*, the *Giant Anteater*, the *Capybara*, the *Jaguar*, and the *Victoria Amazonica*. More communities are turning to tourism as a sustainable means of livelihood and employment. Two Amerindian communities received International tourism awards in 2009, these being Surama for community based tourism and eco-tourism, and Yupukari.

Mrs. Backer: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Hon. Minister just indicated that Guyana was in the top 20 birding destinations. I am respectfully asking if he could give us his source because our source here only has Trinidad and Tobago as the only Caribbean country. I do not doubt him, but I am respectfully asking if he can give us the source. Our source is: <http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/toptwentydestination>, and the date is today.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Minister Prashad, are you in a position to give them the source?

Mrs. Backer: The date is the 12th February, 2010.

Mr. Prashad: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, no wonder the Hon. Member got her facts from HJTV, channel 9. Mdm. Deputy Speaker these records...

Mrs. Backer: All we are asking, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, is if the Minister will be kind enough to share his source? That is all we are asking.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Well if you take your seat, I can perhaps put it to the Minister.

Mr. Prashad: Thank you very much, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: You have a source to offer the Opposition?

Mr. Prashad: I will give a source. Any person in this House, any Guyanese or school child will know that there is no way Trinidad and Tobago can have more birds than Guyana. There is no way! Mdm. Deputy Speaker, these figures can be checked with the Guyana Trade and Investment Support (*GTA-USAID/GTIS*) programme. *[Interruption]*

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members could you please be quiet? The Minister has given his source: “The GTA-USAID/GTIS”.

Mr. Prashad: Two Amerindian communities received International Tourism Awards in 2009, these being: Surama, for community based tourism and eco-tourism and Yupukari for conservation of wildlife. The source of this information is *Stabroek Newspaper*. The Ministry would have also given Local Tourism Awards to Waiaka, Yupukari and Surama for their work in community based tourism. Agriculture in Guyana has a natural fit with tourism and this niche market is being developed by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (I.I.C.A.).

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister your time is up.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker I move that the Hon. Minister be given another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Prashad: Thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Farm based experience: fishing, visit to fruit farms, farm stay, swimming and camping are being promoted at Rock View, Waiaka, Splashmins, Bounty Farm and many other resorts nationwide.

Sports’ fishing has tremendous potential for Guyana. In 2009, filming and promotion was done by Reel Adventures and was shown on national television to over 15 million households in the U.S.A. I am pleased to announce that coming out of the recent filming, Rewa has been

identified as one of the top spots for sports fishing in the world and this is from *Reel*. A Sport fishing plan is currently being developed by the Ministry of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority. Several investors have expressed an interest in investing in this area in consultation and partnership with the local community.

Guyana has been attracting a number of tourists by the hosting of sport events: cricket, motor racing, football, horse racing, hockey, rugby etcetera. Incidentally motor racing brings in about 20,000-25,000 persons at the November event. It has grown even bigger than cricket with the amount of people coming into the country. Last November we had over 600 visitors in Guyana who came for motor racing. These figures can be substantiated by the Guyana Motor Racing Sports Club. In 2009, Guyana welcomed the cruise ship, *Spirit of the Adventure*, which docked at the G.N.S. (Guyana National Shipping) wharf for a day. The Ministry of Tourism is currently working with international tour companies to attract smaller and medium size cruise liners to Guyana. Additionally, yachts continue to arrive in Guyana especially in the Essequibo River and Bartica area. In 2009 the Ministry of Tourism and the Guyana Tourism Authority would have trained in excess of 500 persons in the hospitality industry. Training was done at the airports, customs, immigration, airlines, restaurants, hotels and taxi services. The Ministry also conducted training in the area of tour guiding, events management, event planning, first aid, and customer services for staffers in the hospitality sector. We plan to train over 1000 persons in the hospitality industry in 2010.

Guyana has seen an increase in the number of new investments within the tourist sector within the past year, some of these being new guest facilities constructed at Kaieteur and Tukeit, at Princess Hotel, the Casino which is soon to be opened, Pegasus which has now come under local ownership, new hotels and guest houses, increase in the stock of rooms. Improved air access – Delta Sky Services and Blue Wing. The Ministry remains committed to improving air access and is currently working closely with selected carriers and investors to increase Airlift to Guyana. We are having discussions right now with Jet Blue who have commenced service in Barbados and, three months ago in St. Lucia so we are trying to see if we can get that link into Guyana.

The Berbice Bridge is promoting hassle free travel and trade between Berbice and other parts of Guyana and it facilitates easier travel to and from Suriname. The Ogle Airport is now an international airport with an improved runway being constructed. The current length of the runway is 2000 feet and in another couple of months we will have a modern runway of 4000

feet that can accommodate Dash8 Aircraft so that we will have easy communication between CARICOM and especially the border towns of Brazil, Venezuela and Suriname.

The telecommunications have been improving with more Hinterland areas and remote communities having access to telephones. The improvement in communication is certainly a plus for tourism. Better roads, street lamps, traffic signs and traffic lights, these investments by the Government have certainly enhanced the capacity of the tourism sector in Guyana. With the Takatu Bridge in operation, this will certainly boost tourism and trade between Guyana and Brazil. Due to better roads between Georgetown and Lethem one can drive from Georgetown to Brazil in about ten hours. Incidentally we are planning a trip and maybe some Members from both sides of the House could accompany us on this trip. Right now you could leave Georgetown at 4 o'clock in the morning and have lunch in Boa Vista, Brazil at 2 o'clock, travel to Venezuela at Santa Elena and have dinner and be back in Guyana at Lethem within 24 hours. All this has been made possible through the vision of the P.P.P./C. Government.

I am pleased to inform the House that the Ministry of Tourism and the G.T.A. (Guyana Tourism Authority) would have refurbished at 63 Beach: four benches, three pavilions, changing rooms, and washroom facilities to improve visitors' comfort, convenience, satisfaction, safety, and security during their visits to the beach. We have also established a Beach Committee which is comprised of stakeholders in that region to properly manage the affairs of the Beach and upkeep the facilities that were recently refurbished. Any member of this House can check at 63 Beach for the newly improved facilities. On weekends you have between 3 to 5000 persons using the facilities at the Beach. I am not talking about Holiday weekends like Easter where you have 25000 persons.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in 2009 the Ministry of Tourism took a soft approach to the implementation of a tourism regulation in Guyana to ensure that all stakeholders were properly briefed and sensitised. However, 2010 will see the enforcement of these regulations to ensure the improvement of quality, standards and service, and safety in the hospitality sector. These regulations are as follows: tourism accommodation establishments; lodges and resorts; tour operator and tour guiding.

Guyana has become an attractive meeting and conference destination. The Guyana International Conference Centre has been able to provide similar and in most cases better facilities at a more competitive price than our top competitors in the Caribbean. In this

regard, the Convention Centre hosted a number of national, regional and international meetings and events and some of these being the third A.C.P. (African Caribbean and Pacific) Meeting of the joint Parliamentary Assembly, the 28th Annual West Indies Literature Conference, the 11th Special Ministerial Conference on Sugar, the 27th Annual Institute of Chartered Accountants Conference, the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting, the 34th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference, the Engineers Conference, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (A.C.T.O.) Tourism Workshop and the Heads of Guyana Overseas Mission Conference.

I now turn to the implementation of Guyana's National Competitive Strategy in 2009 and expectations for 2010. Following the launching of the National Competitive Strategy in 2006, the Government of Guyana had entered into a US\$27 million loan agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank, the support for Competitiveness Programme. Through the US\$9 million investment component of this loan, significant support is being given to a number of institutions whose operations are central to the competitiveness of Guyana's economy. Under the auspices of the National Competitive Council which is chaired by His Excellency, the President, a number of public private dialogue bodies in key thematic areas continue their work. The forum is needed to address important export competitiveness issues such as standards and certification. Efforts are also underway to launch the Expert and Promotion Investment Council in 2010 which was established under the Investment Act of 2004.

Such private public groups and councils are key elements required to drive the ongoing implementation of the National Competitive Strategy. That is why when the Hon. Member Mr. Murray was speaking about consultation... because of the Strategy and other areas the private sector is involved all the way... so the Finance Minister, very early in the year, had a series – over 50 meetings – of meetings with the private sector all over the country. That is why when recently during the Budget Debate, one commentator was running to the media and to private sector bodies to find out if there was consultation, he was told that there was consultation and he was pressing the issue because he wanted to say that there was no consultation. The Private Sector Commission, the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Industry, the Guyana Manufacturers Service Association, the Association of Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry... there was consultation throughout. You will see what we talk about in terms of the competitive strategy.

In addition, the group succeeded in 2009 to obtain \$174.9 million in grand funding from the Caribbean Development Bank's Cart Fund to implement a Single Window Automated Processor System (S.W.A.P.S.) for trade transactions. The system will link licensed bodies, customs and businesses allowing for the electronic and single submission of licence application see 72, Forms and Manifest. At a later stage, the system will allow for other stakeholders such as commercial banks and the Maritime Authority to link into the system. Two other private public groups have been operating successfully where consultation discussions have been ongoing. These groups on infrastructure and energy serve as an adequate forum for constant private sector and public sector dialogue on these key areas of the National Competitiveness Strategy. It is true that guidance and follow up of these groups that much progress has been made in areas such as the development of Lethem's commercial zone; the improvements of the Linden/Lethem road and progress in estimating electricity self generation numbers in Guyana, a key variable in moving the electricity supply towards hydropower. Other issues such as the state of the Demerara Harbour Bridge, the Amalia Falls Hydro Project, the reduction of the commercial losses at G.P.L., and the dredging of the port at Georgetown remain at the forefront of the debate. The private sector is involved at all levels in these very important discussions.

In 2009 the National Competitive Strategy Unit within the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce, also focussed its attention on delivering the ground work required to operationalise the Secretariat of the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission. The Consumer Protection Bill of 2006 was updated in line with International Desk Practice into the Consumer Affairs Bill 2009. The Bill was presented to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Trading and Investment and will soon be debated in Parliament. The enactment of this Bill will compliment the Competition of Fair Trading Act of 2006 in providing Guyana with a sound and secure competition policy. Under the auspices of this legislation the Competition Commission whose commissioners were reappointed for a third year in 2010 obtain funding worth GY\$149.2 million from the Caribbean Development Bank Card Fund to engage key expertise, operate the Secretariat, build a database and information systems, run an awareness campaign, and to engage and train local staff. The Government has provided \$14.8 million in 2010 to support the Secretariat with the aim of it being launched this year.

Another key public private body that falls within the N.C.S. (National Competitiveness Strategy) institutional framework is a small business council which was established through the Small Business Act. Throughout 2009, the Council worked closely with the Ministry and

we have been able to secure funding to launch the Small Business Bureau which has served as the Secretariat to this very important Council. \$15 million have been awarded under the 2010 Budget to operationalise the Bureau. Incidentally the Chairman of this Council is a private sector member because most of these bodies that come under my Ministry are headed by a private sector person. I try to do that and Cabinet, I am happy to say, approves these recommendations. I am very happy to report that the Private Sector Commission, all along the way, are heading these important bodies; not Government, the private sector.

A key agency being supported by the Support for Competitiveness Programme is the Guyana National Bureau of Standards. A key way in equipment has been procured worth GUY\$6 million. In addition, in 2009 a contract was awarded to 'Quire Argentina' which started to provide training and International Organisation for Standards (I.S.O.) 9001. This training will be completed in March. It will also provide training and I.S.O. 22000. In 2010 the Communities Action Plan will be implemented and a standardisation strategy duly developed. The G.N.B.S. (Guyana National Bureau of Standards) is also working on a proposal to train firms in standards with an aim to allow businesses to implement standards on their own. Another key agency is being supported by the National Competitive Support Programme is GO-Invest (Government of Guyana Office for Investment).

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member your time is up.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker I propose that the Hon. Minister be given another ten minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Prashad: Thank you very much, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. In 2009 the institutional strengthening study and action plan at Go-Invest together with a comprehensive implementation plan for all activities in the action plan has been completed. Importantly, supported under the Competitiveness Programme is the Deeds Registry. In 2009 a four year action plan to modernise the registry was completed and approved as well as a comprehensive implementation plan for all the activities in the action plan.

Through 2009 significant efforts were undertaken to complete the digitisation of the business registration and incorporation system at the Georgetown Deeds Registry. In addition, significant progress was made in linking the N.I.S. (national Insurance Scheme) and the G.R.A. (Guyana Revenue Authority) to the Deeds Registry as well as its sub registries. This

exercise is expected to be completed shortly. In 2009 the Matching Grants Initiative was launched. \$148.9 million was acquired with the aim to boost exports of small and medium sized enterprises. Again, another member of the private sector commission, in fact the treasurer, Mr. Yoke Mahadeo from GT&T is heading this Matching Grants Initiative. This is further proof of the involvement of the private sector and that is why this commentator could not get anybody from the private sector to say that there was no consultation; there was adequate consultation all along the way.

In 2009 the National Competitiveness Strategy Unit continued its work to oversee the implementation of the Strategy. Key areas of engagement and support were provided in the N.C.S. (National Communication System). Areas such as sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards, the agricultural diversification programme, aqua-culture, forestry, the credit bureau, taxation, the work services group and telecommunications. The G.N.B.S. continues to provide essential services to the nation in the areas of standardisation, conformity, assessment and metrology. These areas form the pillars on which successful trade is hinged. Consumer protection is another one of its key functions and this is inherent in the services provided and activities conducted.

Members of this Hon. House, in concluding let me once again congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh, for presenting a budget that will address the concerns of the small, weak and vulnerable and improve the quality of life for all Guyanese; in this people's budget, a working class budget where there is something for everyone. Thank you.
[Applause]

Mr. Scott: Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Comrades I join with my colleagues in welcoming to this Hon. House our two new M.P.s, Mrs. Dawn Hastings of the P.N.C./R. and Mr. Lloyd Pereira of the P.P.P.. They both bring a proven record of capable representation on behalf of the third largest sector of our population – the Amerindians – and they follow the footsteps of a fighter who fought for our independence and for his people, Mr. Steven Campbell. I look forward to their contributions to this House. Facilitations to my compatriot, the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Corbin, on his birthday. I wish him good health and vigour. May he go on to greater success while serving the needs of our country. My friend Dr. Ashni Singh and his charming wife, my congratulations and my welcome of your son to our world. May he grow to become a true Guyanese patriot.

The Finance Minister, the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, usually brings to this Hon. House an admirable level of decorum, competent and researched presentations delivered with the conviction of one who truly believes that his prescriptions are for our own good.

This year, however, I worry as I fail to discern any enthusiasm for his task and if I am correct in my observations then I fear a change of environment may be visited on him. His Budget Speech for 2010 reflects an isolationist approach that bodes ill for its broad acceptance by the Guyanese people and I believe he knows it. Was the T.U.C. (Trading Union Congress) consulted? Where is the input of labour: the representatives of industry and commerce? What of their opinions? How involved is the small man who will be called upon to make greater sacrifices with less in his envelope. A budget without the involvement and acceptance of the people will fail as happened in 1962 when in spite of some sound proposals which the Government felt were good for the people; the P.P.P. were forced to revise some of its provisions. History may repeat itself.

This year the pattern of the past three years continues as we are presented with a Budget that proclaims greater billions of dollars to be expended. And as with continuity we can anticipate supplementary additions which will carry the burden of expenditure even higher. People are expected to be impressed and to cheer at these large numbers, \$142.8 billion and even to celebrate when we are told no new taxes would be imposed on us. The mirage continues. We are left to ponder where the money will come from. Will it be from our own increase in the production of goods and services or will it be from more loans and more grants from International funding agencies like the I.M.F. (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank which our children will have to repay long after we have gone. These escalating spending have brought and will bring no tangible relief to the people of this nation. Do we really enjoy no new taxes or is it that we pay with increased mortgage interest, 16% VAT (Value Added Tax) and higher prices for essential commodities as well an additional cost for basic services like water and electricity while our eyes remain riveted to our static 33 1/3% personal income tax?

After three Budgets, \$100 billion in 2007, \$119.3 billion in 2008 and \$128.9 billion in 2009, can we truthfully boast of an improvement in our standard of living that justifies the expenditure of these great sums of money? Yet again the 2010 Budget of \$142.8 billion is expected to dazzle us with the now familiar sweetener of no new taxes. Why not put in a real sweetener then, the return of personal taxes, allowances, or the removal of the tax on

property? Today our wages can buy much less than it bought one year ago. True, if after all the expenditure we the people can afford to pay for the basics: food, shelter, education, and still be able to save a little, support for this Budget would be widespread. But is transportation cheaper or safer? We are still exposed to the elements when we use river transport and we risk possible death on the roadway as many vehicles speed according to their own speed laws.

3.32 p.m.

How much more reliable and safer is the supply of our electricity now than before. Just check the P.U.C. for the large number of claims for damaged appliances and make your assessment.

This Budget, with no change only consolidates, cannot lead us out of our state of poverty. The Budget fails to show us how many new local industries will come on stream or even how many foreign investments will be started in 2010 that will help us to underwrite this level of spending. That would free us from the mendicancy for which we are well known throughout Jamaica and the West Indies. It spends \$146.8 million to improve the business environment at the G.R.A. and Customs yet these departments are notorious for unsolved thefts. Inefficiency and corruption stretches forth its hand to commerce. With a 6% raise of pay, inflation continues to say ahead. No wonder Guyanese continue to flee in ever increasing numbers to perceived greener pastures, while desperate and increasingly isolated rulers seek the return of overseas voting in the vain hope that they could stop the march of history as the masses rally to improve their lot by organising for change to usher in a new and bright Guyana for us all; a country where their wages will allow them to live with dignity.

Each sector reflects large spending and impressive projects that will one day come to fruition, like the Hague Bosch Landfill Project, like the turnaround plan for sugar, but we are not interested in promises of tomorrow but in measurable delivery like roads that quickly fall into pot holes, like in Georgetown and Linden, built to last a number of years but quickly, in six months, are useless. Like the Good Hope Stelling ramp that requires exceptional skill to cross two boards to embark on the ferry and like schools where attendance figures will go up and failures will be fewer. Greater production, an increase in employment for our youths and reliable electricity- unlike the unreliable supply at the Suddie Diagnostic Center.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, we are thought from a very young age to sing and to recite “From the Pakaraima’s peaks of power to Corentyne’s lush land, our children pledge each faithful hour to guard Guyana’s land.” There is no Government or Opposition when our borders are

threatened. We therefore express support to the Foreign Minister, the Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, with her statement rebuffing the Surinamese grand designs. The time is opportune, therefore to scrap the joint service operations within our country and deploy the Guyana Defence Force to its primary role as the first line of defence in the protection of our patrimony. The reconstitution of national service will be most timely at this time.

The quest for affordable housing and safe water is critical to our wellbeing; hence, it is necessary that we work together as Guyanese to develop projects that will satisfy these needs. Thus, when the Minister of Housing regales us with how many house lots he gives out and how many more for the next few years, we marvel at his love for the trees but not for the forest. House lots are not a measure of development, housing units are. While the acquisition of a house lot is not condemned the Government must accept its responsibility and develop a housing programme which will provide affordable houses. There are so many house lots but so few homes. This cannot solve the housing needs of our society.

How many were pawns in the scheme of population re-engineering and received house lots far removed from their children's schools and their place of work, thus incurring additional cost of transportation. Many were victims of repossession even though they had made some payments on the land, unaware of the responsibility of Government to provide houses. The Minister of Housing sought to intimidate struggling house builders when he said in Kaieteur News in October, 2009, and I quote:

“People thought we were joking when we said we would repossess their lands if they did not build.”

He never offered a solution to those small salaried people who made sacrifices to get a lot while awaiting financial assistance from their children. He could have interceded with the Finance Minister to give citizens a living wage which would have enabled them to quickly build their houses. In 2007 \$1.2 billion was allocated to services and for house lots. In 2008 it was \$1.5 billion for house lots and 2,500 titles. In 2009 it was \$1.6 billion for 2,500 house lots and 2,000 titles. I see the consistency of numbers here but then, like mandrake, a hand gesture by the Finance Minister – or was it a pen signature? – followed by the now infamous silence of the Minister of Housing and ‘presto’ \$1.6 billion becomes \$7.5 billion dollars, 2,000 house lots become 4,334 house lots, 2,500 titles become 4,257 titles, \$4 billion dollars is to acquire land from GuySuCo. GuySuCo is resuscitated. With so much land available this Government prefers to buy GuySuCo's land, a co-operation in dire need for additional

acreage to expand directly or through cane farmers to get more cane to feed the new Skeldon factory.

What now will be the cost of a house lot? There was never a plan to spend \$4 billion on housing and even now we remain in the dark. Clearly this was just a smokescreen to transfer money to an ailing industry whose projected production this year is slated to be 280,000 tonnes, a target dependent on this injection, a hope for good weather and, Komal, absolutely no strikes by the workers. Where is the confidence in its survival? Where is the voice of the workers in this scheme? The \$4 billion land would yield 8,000 thousand house lots if we charge \$500,000 per lot, at half that price 17,000 house lots, already way above the cost that would cause a small man who can barely afford \$100,000 per lot. Does the Government really think about the small man? Those lucky to find the purchase price have to contend with inadequate infrastructure and a stipulated timeframe to build or lose their lots. Appeals to an insensitive Minister will not help. Instead he threatens not to put in infrastructure when he says in the *Kaieteur News* of the 27th May, 2009, and I quote: “It makes no sense to put in a well in an area with about 30% occupancy.”

Another illustration of a Government obsessed with house lots rather than a vision of a happy community. We as a people are happy to see the Government has taken on board the start of a revolving fund, as this will help many who are ready to build but cannot access funds as the banks will not lend to those who do not qualify. The One-Stop-Shop has stopped. The speedy acquisition of titles and transport cannot be done at that point. The Central Housing and Planning Authority needs to speed up certification and the distribution process. Many who have managed to acquire a house lot resort to stealing electricity as G.P.L. will not connect power without certification. North Sophia still awaits its regularisation and certification so that G.P.L. can supply power. Housing must be supported by us but without an acceptable plan no amount of billions of dollars will satisfy the needs of the population. I call, therefore, for a return of planned housing schemes with the entire infrastructure like water, drains, fire station, pharmacy, grocery, schools, post office and play grounds in place. The design and construction of condominiums for retirees who wish to return home and for widows and widowers at affordable prices. The construction of rented houses that the cost of sale is set off by the rent paid over the years when the owner is in a position to buy. A call for a moratorium on VAT on all building materials for families ready to build, a call also for the advance of money to build to families who have a corresponding amount of money tied up at CLICO and who will have the same assigned by the Government. A call for the appointment

and the assigning of building inspectors to advise families in the design and construction of septic tanks and homes in adherence to the building codes so as to prevent the lawlessness that has now become the norm in Georgetown. This is just an illustration of how we, on this side of the House have the feelings for the people and we are prepared to help in a collective effort for the development of our land.

The P.N.C./R. is also on record as calling for an investigation into the management and operations of G.W.I. Why, after the inheritance of a new master plan in 1992 and the expenditure of billions of dollars, 17 years later the G.W.I. cannot deliver adequate potable water to our citizens? G.W.I. has not only failed but has regressed in its performance and delivery of this precious resource. Even with the confession of its chairman in 2005 that G.W.I. has failed to meet its targets to the departure and dismissal of competent staff in 2008 and the termination of the contract with Severn Trent. The failure has continued. The Government even fired its chief ‘hatchet-man’ only to discover that the then Minister was all at sea in finding a solution to the problems experienced by water consumers.

Last year in plunged the “new kid on the block”, now he is swimming in mud and there is still no adequate water from our taps. With expenditure of \$2.6 billion in 2007, \$3.7 billion in 2008 and \$3.8 billion in 2009, with the laying of kilometres of pipelines from Corriverton all the way to the hinterlands one would have expected a reliable delivery of safe water from our taps. The chairman in 2005 had admitted that they had fallen below expectations. Today, five years later, in 2010 we the consumers fully concur with him. It would now require a leap of faith to believe that the current allocation of \$2.7 billion will restore lost faith, reverse the hollow promises and deliver the elusive commodity that many of our citizens travel miles to obtain.

Just in September 2009 the residents of Bare Root complained of the inaccessibility to the Minister of Housing for an explanation why after 20 years they still could get no potable water. The laying of pipelines followed and with renewed hope they waited. There was confidence as they expected to benefit from the \$395 million allocated for costal locations in 2008 and a \$2.5 billion in 2009. Now in 2010 they join the other coastal communities which live South of the railway line, Dazzel Housing Scheme, Bachelors Adventure to Ann’s Grove, complain daily of no water. ‘B’ Field in Sophia has been waiting for the past 3 years while the residents of Pouderoyen speak of receiving water only between the hours of 6.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

Billions of dollars spent but where has all the money gone? Have we got value for money spent? The Government proposed to at our woes by spending a further \$2.7 billion on this sector. This is money wasted on an entity incapable of fulfilling its mandate to our country. Instead of service they seek to penalise the customers. They claim that out of 166,000 customers, 123,000 are not paying for the water. 74% of the customers cannot afford to pay nationwide. They further claim that \$6 billion are owed but they deliver bills but not water. They have fail to deliver a service and they have failed to operate successfully as a service entity and instead of rectifying their incompetence they seek to cut off customers and impose additional fees for reconnection. Let them first fix the leaks, up the pressure for water, deliver clean water, root out the corruption and the contractor rip-offs that continue to debilitate their performance before extracting due payments. The quality of water does not meet the World Health Organization's standards contrary to the refutation of the Minister. Linden's outbreak of gastroenteritis and other waterborne disease confirm this. The Government is proud of the hinterland water programme yet last week the residents of Region 1 expressed fear to the P.N.C./R.'s leader, Robert Corbin, of the possible outbreak of illnesses as water for domestic use is now pumped directly from the Kaituma River which is heavily contaminated. Is this the track record the Minister is proud of? Can he assure the people of Arakaka will now get a reliable supply? Will the lower Pomeroun no longer have to worry about the salt in the water? I am sure of two of the several objectives of G.W.I., one of which is and I quote:

“To improve water supply to adequate pressure and volume at all times so that the customer's demand is met and revenue targets can be achieved.”

And the other one, I quote again:

“To efficiently produce, treat and distribute water to customers in order to contain costs and minimise the increase of tariffs to the poor.”

At least the poor are aware that those two objectives have not been met. In spite of the litany of failures of the Government to deliver potable water at all times we commend the Minister on persuading the Government, as part of its \$2.7 billion allocation to commit to the launching of a water conservation education programme. With the prevailing El Nino conditions I hope included in their curriculum will be solutions to the effect of concrete yards on the water table, the use of dams to hold water upstream – Region 2 being a good example – the need for the retention canals and conservancies and the detection of leaks thereby helping to reduce the 60% leakage that has plagued G.W.I. for quite some time now.

Let us look forward to the day when the residents of Sophia and Central Ruimveldt, nay, all of Georgetown will rejoice at receiving potable and fully pressured water at all times. Unfortunately at present they continue to receive smelly brown water through their taps while G.W.I. flounders in finding a solution to prevent iron and other heavy metals from blocking the free flow of water through their water meters, although their bills do not reflect the reduced output. I urge the Minister to re-examine the type of water meters installed and to seek swift remedies for these faults. As is quite evident we are not all about attacking G.W.I. or the Government that is why it pains us to see that 70% of G.W.I.'s income is used to pay for electricity generation. We therefore once again...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Time Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Scott: We therefore urge, once again, that G.W.I. considers self generation as a means of reducing cost of electricity as other private entities have done.

In October 2009, we lamented the loss due to fire of lives, buildings and jobs over the years owing to the lack of water flowing through the hydrants. The hydrants do not work, some have no covers and old galvanised pipes to carry the water are useless. Thousands of gallons of treated water are wasted when we use some of these hydrants. The very use of treated water to our fires is a waste of precious chemicals needed to purify water for domestic consumption. We need a new system to quickly and effectively deliver untreated water to our fires to any part of the city. Think of two or three tenders quickly at the scene of the fire and they have unlimited supply of water to fight the fires. Many homes, businesses and lives would be saved.

I propose to the Minister that an urgent study be undertaken to have a completely new system of accessing water for the fire hydrants and that we lay new underground pipes, install new hydrants and access water directly from the Demerara River by the use of a series of booster pumps. This way water would be available all year round in abundant supply, and in the long run, at very little cost after initial expenses incurred, potable water would now be reserved for customers totally for domestic and commercial use. Money saved in treated water would be of great benefit to G.W.I. I urge the P.P.P./C. Government to seriously consider this and other

proposals from this side of the house in the long-term interest of our society. A national water council will be the ideal place to start the studies.

The \$1.1 billion for sanitation we applaud. Hague Bosch would become a reality, good health will be enjoyed, Robert Frost can see the beauty in a snowy woods, and J. W. Chinapen was enraptured when crossing the Berbice River. Shakespeare saw a thing of beauty being a joy forever but we are forced to avert our eyes in shame as we pass the Mandela Avenue east of the Botanical Gardens. Durban Park in close proximity to what should have been an example of beauty is now the latest dumping sight to besmirch the good name of our Garden City. What allocations did the Minister give to improve the aesthetics of these areas? The families who reside in Lodge, La Penitence and Ruimveldt have seen a misnamed Mandel Dumpsite at La Penitence grow from a level dump to a mountain of garbage and methane gas, frequently combusting and seriously affecting the health and wellbeing of the residents. Asthma, bronchitis and malaria are widespread in these areas.

In 2008 they wished for closure. They got \$323 million extension of that site and a promise to rehabilitate the Tucville facility and other holding centers. The Government stated their commitment to raise the standards of sanitation in the capital city and communities in all regions while the sewage system was on the verge of collapse. The Minister of Health has never visited these areas to offer, not tablets, but at least sympathy to the suffering residents. No money for compensation has ever been offered for damage to homes and household effects. Karran Singh, the then C.E.O. of G.W.I. had promised to order 28 pumps to replace the obsolete pumps laid down in 1929 and slated to work up to 1989. By 2009 only 6 pumps were working and Georgetown was a city of overflowing effluence everywhere you turned. All the pumps were to be installed by 2009. We commend the Government for completing the Tucville facility and the acquisition of new pumps as we watch the Mandela Dumpsite like Soufriere's volcano, continue to spew forth its sulphur of suffering. [Applause]

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]: Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members, I rise this afternoon to support Budget 2010 under the theme "Consolidate, Transform, Sustain". These words were deliberately chosen to capture the essence of what the P.P.P./Civic Government is all about. We need to consolidate the gains and achievements that we have made in restructuring the fundamentals of the economy. It is because of these changes that our economy was so resilient despite the global economic crisis. That is what consolidation is all about.

4.02 p.m.

We recognise that despite our steady progress, we need to usher in a new generation of changes so that we can be competitive in the 21st Century. That is why this budget has made provisions for those far reaching transformatory changes by building the transport networks, the information backbone and by pursuing a low carbon development path. This certainly will give us the competitive edge.

In addition, the substantial investments in education, health and other social services are to ensure that we have a highly educated and a healthy population to drive development, narrowing the gaps that exist between us and other countries. These investments in our people stems from a strong conviction, a 'Jaganite' tradition, that our people are the wellspring of our economic strength.

What we become in the future depends on the foundation that we lay now. That is why this budget was specially designed to invest in the now, for the transformation of our future. And unlike those that have governed before us, we in the P.P.P./C. will always ensure that this nation enjoys sustainable development. This budget will ensure that Guyanese are not just getting by, but that they are moving ahead with developments and realising new heights of prosperity. That is what the P.P.P./Civic is all about. Making the right investment for long term growth, creating opportunities for all Guyanese to join and share in the progress and prosperity of our nation. It is against this backdrop that I would like to extend my congratulations to the Minister of Finance, the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, and his staff, for once again presenting an inclusive budget that meets the aspirations and expectations of all Guyanese.

The young people of our country are the primary beneficiaries of this budget. This is reflected in the allocations flowing through various Ministries. We in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports are working in every region of our country. Our programmes can be grouped in five broad areas. These are Youth Health, Youth Education, Youth and Citizenship, Parenthood, and Juvenile Justice.

In Youth Health, we know that from a survey which the Ministry of Health did in 2004, that young people are engaged in unsafe and undesirable behavioural practices which place them at a higher risk not only for HIV/AIDS, but other STIs and the long term life impacting complications from these. Of those surveyed, 58.7% are reported to be sexually active, and of

those, 63.5% were not using a condom. Apart from sexual behaviour, the survey showed that more than 50% were reported to have consumed alcohol. These findings have prompted a closer collaboration between various ministries to get our young people to understand the consequences of their actions. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports through the President's Youth Award Programme of Guyana (P.Y.A.R.G.) programme has had a massive edutainment programme called the 'Caravan of Hope'. Through this, they have interacted with more than 19,000 young people directly, and an estimated 20,000, indirectly.

In Youth Education, our focus has been to give young people a second chance at education. The residential programme at Kuru Kuru now has an intake of 220 students, up by 50 from last year. Our projection for 2010 is to increase that to 270 students. Upgrades to the campus have been constant. We have a new well, dormitory and library. A computer centre is currently under construction. For the first time last year, this facility which was established under the P.N.C., now can boast of electricity from the national grid. This is the kind of progress that is associated with the P.P.P./Civic Government.

In addition to our residential programme, we have our non-residential programmes at Sophia and Vryman's Erven in New Amsterdam. These continue to train and place young people into jobs.

In the area of Youth and Citizenship, the Ministry has embarked upon a programme to educate young Guyanese about their civic responsibilities and obligations. As of this year, a handbook developed by the Ministry will be utilised at our youth camps that cater for more than 7,000 young people. This programme will be complemented by the existing P.Y.A.R.G. programmes that have been instilling a sense of pride in our young people.

In the area of Parenting, the Ministry has been providing training to young people about the responsibilities of parenting. We recognise that single parenthood has evolved as a phenomenon in our society. We believe that if we are going to reverse this trend, we have to educate our young people about the integrity and virtues of parenthood in the context of marriage and wholesome family life. Thus, we will expand our programmes in this area, targeting young men especially.

In the area of Juvenile Justice, the Ministry has the responsibility for the management of the New Opportunity Corp. The campus of this facility has been steadily improved. All the dormitory facilities have been rehabilitated; and this year we would undertake the

improvement of our classroom spaces. Our reintegration programme is also been helping young people adjust to life outside of this institution. This year the Government will also introduce the New Juvenile Justice Bill which will create a new framework for the administration of juvenile justice and Guyana.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, having described the core areas of the Ministry's youth programme, I hope that it would clear any fogginess that Members may have harboured. I heard advocacy from Hon. Member, Ms. Africo Selman, for the National Youth Policy. Indeed, there exists a National Youth Policy, but it is outdated. I have said in the past that the Government is committed to upgrading the policy. This year with the assistance of United Nations Development Program (UNDP), we will upgrade the National Youth Policy.

Culture in all societies is important. It becomes even more important to small countries as it anchors our sense of self, a sense of who we are and what we are. It is that essential glue, that common denominator that holds us together as a proud people. The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports understands how important our culture is to the nation, especially in a globalised world. We have therefore designed our policies and programmes to ensure that the Guyanese culture is properly researched, documented and promoted, allowing our peoples innate creativity to flourish. This overarching framework is captured in the draft Guyana Culture Policy 2009 to 2014, which was put together by a wide cross-section of stakeholders, from cultural experts to consumers of culture. It is within this context that the Ministry has been fashioning its programmes.

At international level, Guyana acceded to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the protection and promotion of cultural diversity. A substantial section of the UNESCO Convention on underwater cultural heritage has been incorporated into the new Maritime Bill that is currently before the Parliamentary Select Committee. We have worked with other South American nations on the RIO plan of action for cultural cooperation between South America and Arab countries.

At the bilateral level, Guyana and Brazil have signed a very comprehensive cultural agreement, and starting from this year, many of the provisions contained therein will be actualised. During 2010, we would actively pursue the expansion of bilateral cultural relations and indeed we have seen this earlier this year when Guyana established cultural relations with Kuwait. This is what the Ministry, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, would be pursuing.

The institutions within the Ministry have also concluded several agreements with parenting institutions such as the Austrian museum of ethnology and the Walter Roth Museum. Through this partnership, a technical team visited Guyana in October 2009 and conducted training for the museum staff. During 2010, these collaborations would be strengthened by knowledge transfer projects, joint exhibitions and research.

Museums have played an important role in our society. Since the first exhibition on the 13th of February 1868 interests and investments in our museums have varied. The Ministry has been making a concerted effort to get more people to visit. Last year, visitors to the National Museum increased by 46%, the Museum of African Heritage have seen visitors increased by 30%, and at the Walter Roth Museum, the increase was by 20%. This would account for an overall increase of 35% of visitors to all our museums.

This year, we intend to further boost visitor's attendance to the National Museum. We will put on display the fossils of two megaterium, that is; the Giant Ground Sloth, which has been carbon dated to more than 10,000 years ago. In addition to the actual fossils, we have also procured an exact replica of what the Ground Sloth looked like. We have created a special hall in the museum to house this unique exhibit. All of this was possible through collaboration with our German partners. They are from the Museum of Animal Science, or as they say in German, Museum fur Tierkunde and Museum Senckenberg Natural History Collection of Dresden. We also got help from a German N.G.O., Eerepami. These were the organisations that helped to fund the construction of the replica of the ground sloth. These efforts were coordinated by Mr. Ben ter Welle. Locally, we have the support of Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (G.B.T.I.) who has agreed to fund the creation of the special hall to house the exhibit at the National Museum. This project shows the power of public/private partnerships.

Building on the success of this model, a similar strategy is being pursued to create a permanent cartographic exhibition, which is scheduled to open in November 2010; and an exhibition depicting the Amerindian civilisations of the Amazonia is scheduled to open in 2011.

The African Heritage Museum continues to play an important role. Our displays were further enriched last year with several donations. One interesting donation was the Bishimba Power Sculpture of the Songye People of the Democratic Republic of Congo. And for those of you who would like to learn more about this piece, just visit the museum and get acquainted. The

museum continues to offer valuable community service by serving as the principal venue where prominent scholars would speak on various themes in African history.

The Walter Roth Museum continues to do pioneering work in anthropology and archaeology. The Dennis Williams Summer School has been offering archaeology and cultural anthropology. Our efforts have been complimented by professors from Boise State University and the University of Virginia. This year students from the University of the West Indies will be joining our programme. Last year we were able to conduct excavations at Waiwa Creek in the Barama River. The artefacts at this site were carbon dated to more than 8,400 years ago, making this the oldest shell mound found in Guyana to date. This type of research is opening up new frontiers of knowledge about the history of our country. And during 2010 we will consider to fund expeditions and conduct scientific research in this and other areas of our country.

The Walter Rodney National Archive is the memory of our nation, but that memory will only be as good as the record that it contains. We in the Ministry have embarked upon an aggressive programme of collecting historic records from various organisations and agencies. Last year we were able to acquire archival holdings from the Deeds Registry in Berbice, and from the High Court in Georgetown. Additionally, the archives of The Netherlands presented to us maps of the Dutch period in Guyana.

In 2010, the National Archives will be collaborating with various stakeholders to establish an audiovisual archive. We will also partner with the history department of the University of Guyana to have an historian in residence at the National Archives. We will continue to work on the national appraisal policy for Government records.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the National Culture Centre continues to be the premier destination for the performing arts. However, to maintain this 34-year-old facility requires constant upgrades. The timely provisions in this year's budget will allow us to start remedial works on the roof of the National Culture Centre.

This year also for theatre arts, the Ministry will coordinate a National Drama Festival which will allow playwrights, actors, and actresses, to bring new work to stage. Discussions have already started within the Ministry to establish a National Theatre School based at the National Culture Centre.

The National Trust continues to play an important role in the protection of the nation's patrimony. Last year significant work was done at a number of sites including Fort Nassau, Fort Zeelandia, and other historic sites. This has resulted in a direct increase of visitors by more than 20% to all of these sites. This year we will continue to enhance our heritage sites and start the restoration of other important sites, such as the Dutch Windmill located at Hogg Island, and of course, we will be re-doing the roof of the Umana Yana.

Guyana has a strong musical tradition. Testimony of this can be found in the Guyana Music Festival. This festival, which had its genesis since 1948, has had its ups and downs. Only last year, after a prolonged absence, the Presbyterian Church, the Guyana Music Teachers Association, and the Ministry, came together to restart this festival. The results have been quite positive and heartrending. However, we noted that there were limited opportunities for persons to learn theoretical and practical music. The Ministry has decided that we will address this problem with the establishment of a music school. A specialised team has been developing a curriculum, the instruments have been procured, and shortly, we will be recruiting the teachers to start the programme.

In addition to this, our steel band development programme has been growing. We have more community and school bands. Last weekend we had a highly competitive steel band competition at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall. The level of competitiveness was due to the developmental work that the Ministry in collaboration with what Republic Bank has been doing over the last two years.

Calypso and Chutney art forms have also come under scrutiny, and the Ministry will continue to work with these stakeholders to make them an important part of the entertainment industry.

Our literary traditions date back to 1595 with the publication of Sir Walter Raleigh's book, "Discovery of Guyana". From then to now many books have been published on Guyana, or about Guyana, but have been unavailable to many ordinary Guyanese. Dr. David Dabydeen and Dr. Ian MacDonald came up with the idea of publishing thirty-six books in a series called, 'The Guyana Classics.' During Carifesta X in a meeting between the writers and his Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo, it was decided that the Ministry will establish the Caribbean Press to publish The Guyana Classics and other books from Caribbean writers. I am pleased to say that in 2009, the Caribbean Press reprinted the following books with scholarly introductions:

- Guyanese Poetry 1831 to 1931 by Norman Eustace Cameroon
- Asylum Journal volumes 1 & 2 by Robert Grieve
- Canoe and Camp Life by Charles Barrington Brown
- The Coolie: His Rights and Wrongs by John Edwards Jenkins
- Selected Poems of Martin Carter
- Selected Poems of Egbert Martin
- Discovery of Guyana by Sir Walter Raleigh
- The Chinese in British Guiana by Sir Cecil Clementi
- The First Crossing by Theophilus Richmond
- The Shadow Bride by Roy Heath

These books have already been printed and will be launched during this month as part of our 40th Republic Anniversary Celebrations.

In 2010, we will reprint another twelve books and three anthologies for children. These anthologies will include twenty-five Caribbean Poems for Children, Volume 1, and an Anthology of Caribbean Short Stories, Volume 1.

In addition, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports will be sponsoring an essay competition in schools. The thirty best essayists will be invited to attend a creative writing workshop in August to be conducted by Professor Dabydeen. During the workshop, the children will develop creative pieces, which will be performed in December 2010 at the Festival of Words in honour of our national poet Martin Carter. These pieces will then be published in a third anthology. We see that this investment by the Government will not only help to preserve our rich literary legacy, but also help to develop a new generation of writers and poets.

We have started a conscious effort within the Ministry to get Guyanese to understand more about the intellectual traditions of this country. Last year we hosted a series of lectures on the life and works of Dr. Ivan Van Sertima and Dr. Richard Allsopp. We have also restarted the Mittelholzer Lecture Series with a lecture on Dennis Williams: ‘Art, Blood and Heritage’ by Evelyn Williams. These lectures were well received by the public and so similar ones will continue this year.

The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports continues to organise many of the celebrations for national holidays. This year our 40th anniversary as a republic would be celebrated in every

region of Guyana. The crowning spectacle would be the annual float parade on the 23rd of February. This is expected to be one of the largest parades. I hope that some of my colleagues will take time out to join us on the road. The P.P.P./C. will be out on the road with a strong contingent. So if you cannot muster your own band, I have an open invitation to you to come and join us as we *mash* for the 40th anniversary.

The Ministry's work in sports has been gaining momentum, especially in the development of sports infrastructure. In 2007, we completed the Guyana National Stadium at Providence which is the best sports and entertainment venue in Guyana.

In 2008, the Ministry started construction on the Olympic size swimming pool, but construction was delayed during 2009 because the local firm did not have the technical expertise required for such a facility. The contract was put on hold and discussions were held with a FINA recommended contractor, Myrtha Pools. The local and international firms are now collaborating and the pool will be fully operational by mid of the year.

In 2009, the Ministry started construction of a racquet centre at Woolford Avenue. The centre involves the construction of lawn tennis courts, two squash courts and lawn tennis training areas. It also envisages badminton courts and a resource centre. Currently, the hard surface lawn tennis courts with bleachers for 400 persons, the two training areas and the two squash courts are under construction. These are expected to be completed within the next three months. In addition, it is expected that with the assistance of a donor agency, we will be able to complete a sports resource centre that will house a library and a conference facility.

In 2010, our flagship infrastructure project will be the development of the synthetic athletics track. Already construction has started with the Ministry and The Amateur Athletic Association. A design firm has been hired, a feasibility study for four sites has been conducted, and a recommendation has been made of the best site. The athletic community is fully supportive of this venture and once completed, would see another P.P.P./Civic manifesto promise being accomplished. However, more importantly, it is our own young people, the sportsmen and sportswomen who are going to be the real and true beneficiaries.

This year, you will see a proliferation of school and community programmes. This would also be complimented by the introduction of three new awards in the national sports awards. This would include; the best community in sports, the best primary school in sports, and the best secondary school in sports.

We are also engaged in mapping the grounds of our country. Soon we will have electronic database of these grounds. Not only that, but we have allocated more than \$20 million to help with the development of some of our grounds.

The National Sports Policy, of which we have a draft, which was worked on by a number of sports associations, does not meet the required standards we are looking for. And right now we are engaged in the process of hiring an international consultant who will be coming to help us to finalise the National Sports Policy. So later in the year, you will see the National Sports Policy coming to fruition.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: You time is up, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Hon. Minister be granted another 15 minutes to continue his presentation.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister you will have your 15 minutes when you return. Hon. Members, I think this is a convenient time to break. Will you be finished in 5 minutes? Well with the concurrence of the House, I think you can go ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. Anthony: Thank you very much, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Last year, one of the highlights of the local sporting calendar was a visit of King Pele to Guyana. His presence has certainly helped to strengthen ties between our two countries. This and other such events have given Guyana a strong reputation for hosting international events. That is why several major international sporting events will be coming to Guyana. These include the Caribbean Power Lifting Championships, which will be held in March.

4.32 p.m.

This will be followed by I. C. C. Twenty/20 cricket at the Guyana National Stadium in the first week of May, followed by the Central American and Caribbean Rugby Championships in July, and then the Pan Am Karate Championships in August. These sporting events will certainly help to profile Guyana as a sporting destination and bring thousands of visitors to our shores.

I have had the good fortune to have met many Guyanese from various villages and communities. Though they come from various places and varied backgrounds, they all have

a shared legacy that binds us together. A legacy that manifests itself in the celebration of our diverse cultural heritage, a legacy that manifests itself on the ball fields when we champion the cause of our sports teams, a legacy that makes us Guyanese. Let us harness this innate power of our people to build our common prosperity. Let us consolidate and transform our economy to meet the challenges of the 21st century. I am confident that with this budget, our nation will not just sustain, but will prevail. A happy 40th Republic Anniversary to all of you.
[Applause]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members we will now take the break.

Assembly suspended accordingly at 4.34 p.m.

Assembly resumed accordingly at 5.32 p.m.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members the House is resumed.

Ms. Ally: Thank you, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members of this House, permit me to congratulate the Hon. Minister of Finance for his fourth presentation to this Ninth Parliament under the theme: ‘Consolidate Transform Sustain’.

Government boasts of the largest budget, a budget of \$142.8 billion. It is for us to now assess how this will take us out of the poverty, which the Guyanese population is living under and what will be done to put the economy on a sound footing. We must be able to assess what qualitative results it will yield, and how the deliverables will contribute to the improving of the standard of living.

During the 2009 Budget debate, the Hon. Minister of Education expressed profound happiness for the large \$20.4 billion allocated to the education sector. This year, 2010, there is an even greater inflow of funds for this sector, some \$21.4 billion. In monetary terms, there has been an increase. The question is; has the nation been getting its money’s worth? Are the benefits measurable and consistent with the funds allocated? I submit that this has not been so.

The Budget presentation at page 31, bullet 4.62 in referring to the National Strategic Plan alludes to the provision of quality education, teacher education and developing managerial capacity within this sector. Hence, I wish to examine each of them in detail.

Provision of Quality Education: Quality education must be a pillar to ensure that the system of education contributes to the raising of our standard of living in Guyana. Boasting about the construction of twenty-four schools, six practical instruction centres and rolling out a lot of talk certainly cannot produce quality education. For in those very schools there has to be adequate furniture, relevant equipment, adequate and qualified staff delivering an organised plan.

Too many schools are without adequate furniture and relevant furnishings. Too many schools are either understaffed or overstaffed. Georgetown for example, has been doing rationalisation for the past three years and until now, they cannot get it right. So it is in all the other Regions. If these variables are not taken into consideration, there can be no quality education.

It is grossly unfortunate that there is no vision and no focus for this Ministry. In the 2008 budget, the Hon. Minister of Education drew attention to reform and innovation in the education sector. Words and more words!

By the 1st May 2009, the P.P.P./C. Government decided that they will not bother with any reform and innovation.

Let me quote what Minister Baksh said in his 2008 budget presentation in responding to my concerns, and I quote:

“So, I want tell you that the Inspectorate Division has been incorporated into a larger unit known as the Monitoring Evaluating Reporting and Development unit (M.E.R.D.). That is a unit which the Ministry has set up to ensure more effective management and supervision and outputs of the education system”.

On the 1st May 2009, the Minister lost his battle. This beautiful unit, this innovation, was taken away from Minister Baksh and handed over to the Office of the President. Minister my sympathy to you because your own boys say that they cannot trust you to manage your own Ministry. This M.E.R.D. unit has now gone back to the original body called the Inspectorate.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, not because the United Kingdom has a system where the inspectorate works well for them means that we must adopt that system. This is Guyana. Be that as it may, why then was the inspectorate scrapped, the reform and innovation M.E.R.D. came in and one year after you reverted to the Inspectorate? The Government must stop

administering the affairs of this country in an ad hoc fashion. Stop playing with the future of our children.

National Strategic Plans: The goal and purpose of this plan is to ensure that the system of education contributes to the raising of the standard of living in Guyana. Its purpose is to improve the overall effectiveness of education so outlined in the National Strategic Plan. While the intention is admirable, let us do an assessment from 2008 to January 2010 in order to see the extent to which there is improvement in the overall effectiveness of education. I wish to highlight a very important one; the revision of curriculum guides.

In the education system, curriculum guides steer the programme for the delivery of the education policies and programmes, etc. It contains the content and the expected outcomes among other things. I am sure that the Minister will confess, and if he does not I will ask his colleague next to him to organise for a lie detector test. He will confess that existing in the Ministry of Education, is a serious problem with the production and distribution, and, the use of the curriculum guides. What then do you expect? Which schools will you always blame? Is this how the standard of living will be raised? I submit that this is a retrograde step to fulfil the purpose of overall effectiveness in education.

Sometimes people listen, but they do not hear, nor is it in their interest to act. In 2008 and 2009, I raised the question of curriculum guides, and today even that is not part of the Ministry's programme. We have been presented in money terms with the largest budget ever. But largest must yield qualitative results. We cannot boast of building schools and it is not reflected in performance. We cannot speak up of large chunks of money going to the education sector, and there is no value for money. Look at what is happening to our Grades 2, 4 and 6 Assessments. Look at what is happening at English A, English B and Mathematics at the Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (C.S.E.C.) examinations. Are we comfortable with these results? I submit that it may not be the policies, it may not be the large monetary inflow which is ploughed into the sector, but your administrative mechanism is in deep crisis. Examine it. It is your duty to fix it.

Very often we hear of studies being conducted to identify the real problems. When recommendations are made, they are not followed. As recent as October 2008, EGRA, the United Kingdom-based firm, the early grade reading assessment was done. A survey was conducted, and this survey which was conducted in 6 of the 10 Administrative Regions showed that the early grade students lack decoding skills, comprehension and fluency. What

did the Ministry positively do to correct that situation? Nothing, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, nothing! Where did they highlight it and what remediation programme did they engage in? Not only the early grades, our secondary level education is also in serious trouble. The performance in English and Mathematics is woefully poor. We must work towards seeing positive performance.

This Government must understand that not everything that is done or is to be done must be done by politicising them. Education cannot work that way. Policies will be developed, but the success is borne on its implementation, and it is people who have to do the implementation. More often, those persons are appointed through political patronage.

If we are to take a look at the Critchlow Labour College, for example, it is clear that the P.P.P./C. Government is disinterested in training people, more so young people or late achievers. It is a clearer case that this P.P.P./C. Government took away the subvention from the Critchlow Labour College to fulfil their political gains without placing any importance on training people. The Critchlow Labour College is an institution with great institutional memory, an institution which has provided service to our people over the years, and an institution where many of you sitting over there probably attended. Yet training did not take precedence, political patronage and politicking did. So I wish to renew this call to the Government to set aside your political mischievousness and release the subvention for the Critchlow Labour College.

Teacher Education: On page 32 of the budget speech, the Minister alluded to some 491 teachers who have completed training and some 1,967 that are now enrolled for training. At paragraph 4.64 also, the Hon. Minister of Finance referred to the increase in the intake in the present first year batch at the Cyril Potter College of Education (C.P.C.E.). I wonder if the Hon. Minister of Education is aware that this batch boasts of quantity, but certainly not of quality.

The Hon. Minister of Education issued an ultimatum to all untrained teachers within the system that if they were not trained within a certain period, they will be off the job. This ultimatum affected persons who were in the system for as long as twenty years. These teachers could not have been trained because they had not met the entry requirements for C.P.C.E. As a result, someone advised the Minister of Education, and I hope it was not the Prime Minister, that a three-month crash programme in English and Mathematics would be

enough for an upgrade for those teachers after which, they will be ready for C.P.C.E. Well, they have been accepted and because of the poor quality, most of them are not coping.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Minister seems to be highly perked up with large numbers. I am happy with the large numbers of persons in training. I wish to site the following:

1. The criteria and eligibility for entry must be re-examined. This Government yields to the lowering of standards by leaps and bounds so that they can boast of large amounts of people. doing teacher training. When these compromises are made, the end products are affected.
2. The quality of training being offered at training institutions.
3. The delivery of this programme being executed at training institutions.

At paragraph 4.70 on page 32, it says:

“Over \$880 million is allocated for teacher training and development and will result in the continued upgrade of teachers.”

I submit that if that large amount of money is allocated for teacher development, why is it that the modules for teacher training are not available for use by teachers? Why is it that for example, these modules are packed away in a room at C.P.C.E. and are not made available to teachers? Why is it occurring in Berbice?

Teacher trainees have to photocopy the modules because they are not available in the requisite quantities. I am sure the Minister cannot deny this. More importantly, have these modules been upgraded to meet the current trends? What about the face-to-face interaction between lecturers and students? Is this being discarded now? So it is not only about spending \$880 million on teachers training, we must get value for money. We must provide quality training so that the policies can be successfully implemented and the nation's children can benefit.

Although the Minister of Finance in paragraph 4.64 of his budget speech indicated that:

“In excess of \$375 million was expended on Cyril Potter College of Education including further rehabilitation of the science laboratory, purchase of laboratory and other equipment and furniture and to meet operating costs.”

The rehabilitated science laboratory is still not completed hence, it is not operable.

Technical Vocational Education: In his 2009 budget speech, the Minister of Finance at paragraph 4.41 noted that:

“In order to ensure greater accessibility for all young people to alternative pathways, a stronger emphasis on technical and vocation education will be seen in 2009”

This resulted in an allocation of \$400 million for the construction of two new technical and vocational training centres in Regions 3 and 5. Only the sites of these institutions, have been identified, nothing else was done. However, a similar amount has been spent according to the Minister of Finance. I quote from paragraph 4.63 of this year's budget speech:

“More than \$400 million was expended on the technical and vocational institutions which included the construction of a workshop at the Linden Technical Institute, procurement of tools and equipment for all technical institutes as well as the expansion of the Secondary Competency Certificates Programme (S.C.C.P.) to include eighteen additional secondary schools from September 2009, resulting in a total of twenty-four schools and six Practical Instruction Centres (P.I.C.s), now delivering this programme.”

Not a word about the two new buildings. In 2008, \$60 million was allocated for the expansion of technical education in the school system. At November 2008, only \$2 million was spent on the B.C.C. programme.

Although the Minister of Education told this Hon. House that the remaining \$58 million was spent, we have information that this sum was returned to the Ministry of Finance. Last year \$50 million was allocated to that programme. Is there any continuity in this programme? Are there not any funds available this time around?

How well is the ‘Skills for Life’ programme offered through the S.C.C.P. going? When will the Kingston P.I.C. be rehabilitated and upgraded? When will the equipment in place at the Tutorial High School and Bladen Hall Secondary school be fully utilised? Has the promise to upgrade Carnegie School of Home Economics been done?

This time last year, the Hon. Minister of Education hurriedly appointed, in his own words, a vibrant Technical Vocational Education Council, which was headed by former dean of the Faculty of Technology at the University of Guyana. What the Minister did not say, was that the chairman of T.V.E.C. works in Trinidad. This chairman only presided over three meetings

of the Council. He was more out of Guyana than in. Is the Minister really serious about raising the standards of technical and vocational education to meet our counterparts in the Caribbean? Where is the money for that council to function properly? One year later, two very important positions still remain unfilled: the Curriculum and Standard Officer, and the Testing and Certification Officer.

Are you really serious Mr. Minister? Work at the council has been in limbo since the life of the council expired in December 2009. Although you know of this inactivity, you hurriedly last week extended its life to the end of March 2010.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, through you, I ask that the Hon. Minister of Education stop providing improvement to technical education in a piecemeal fashion.

I would like the Hon. Minister of Education to understand that quality is more important than quantity. Therefore the quality of the training of the technical teachers provided at the technical institute is also very important. If these teachers are to be awarded the same certificate as the one provided to a trained teacher from C.P.C.E., then this aspect must be revisited.

The Hon. Minister should also be advised that the part-time lecturers at C.P.C.E. have the same monetary issues as those of the Government Technical Institute. As a result, the promise of an increase to G.T.I. staffers must apply to the staff at C.P.C.E.

Literacy and Numeracy: There has been the question of literacy and numeracy looming large in the education sector. It is acceptable that poor literacy achievement at the primary level impacts on secondary achievement. A number of initiatives were introduced to grapple with this problem, but in a very tardy manner.

6.00 p.m.

As an educator myself, my interest and that of the P.N.C./R., is to see education grow in Guyana. Hence, I make the following proposals:

1. The provision and maintenance of equipment must be carefully examined and addressed for effectiveness of Interactive Radio Instructions (I.R.I.) and Literacy Programme.
2. There is need for more cluster advisors so that in the initial stage, a small catchment area can be monitored.

3. Remediation must not be a word only, but an action word.
4. The Ministry of Education must have a focus and share this amongst schools.
5. Heads of units and coordinators must be well equipped to execute such a programme. One cannot disseminate what he or she does not know. There are many who are employed as Heads and do not know anything about education.
6. Finally, the Minister and his various managers must eliminate *ad hocism* and work a plan.

This National Strategic Plan speaks to the establishment of clearly stated benchmarks of what children are expected to know and be able to do at each grade, and that these standards serve as reference to the curricula. But what updates have been done apart from Mathematics at level four? And if they have been done, surely they are not in the school system. If these issues are not addressed, the literacy and numeracy problem will continue to be with us.

Managerial Capacity: The development of managerial capacity did not escape the Minister's budget presentation. Surely he must have recognised that the lack of managerial capacity is one of the factors responsible for the non effectiveness and non growth in this sector. For the education sector to boom with its growth and successes, there must be knowledge, experience and loyalty to the system. In addition, there must be continuous and relevant training and a willingness to implement. You see, education is not static...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: You time is up, Hon. Member.

Mrs. Backer: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move that the Hon. Member be given 5 minutes to conclude her presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Ms. Ally: ... there are new dimensions and educators must learn and be able to adapt. We cannot expect to have senior appointments, for example, made through political partisanship. While this will pump up the ego of those beneficiaries, it will deflate the enthusiasm of others.

In order for this sector to grow, professionalism is key, but the Minister and his Government has no respect for professionalism. It started with the Minister not wanting the appointment of a qualified individual in the position of the Chief Education Officer (C.E.O.). Do not

worry with the talk that it is a public service appointment, the Minister himself told the Acting C.E.O. that he did not want her.

While the Minister speaks of developing managerial capacity and boasting about the huge sums of money being ploughed into the education sector, he himself is contributing to the stymieing of development. The Minister however, is ensuring through key contract appointments of retirees in key head positions.

In conclusion, budget 2010 is a promise with lots of words. We believe that in keeping with the theme of the budget “Consolidate, Transform, Sustain” – the Government can, at minimum on this occasion, transform its words into action. We trust that this P.P.P./C. Government will be able to develop their managerial skills so that the affairs of the Ministry of Education will not focus on *ad hocism*.

The time has come for the Minister of Education to organise his Ministry in such a way that Heads of units implement in such a manner, that the billions invested, bear fruits. It is necessary, for emphasis to be placed on relevant and requisite administrative mechanisms so that when the Government speaks of rolling out, it is not rolling out talk, but rolling out action.

Finally, the P.N.C./R. hopes that this largest budget ever will produce qualitative results and that the people of Guyana will get value for money. I thank you. [Applause]

Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Ms. Webster]: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to join all those who have preceded me in this Hon. House, to give my support to the 2010 budget under the theme ‘Consolidate, Transform and Sustain.’

Let me once again extend congratulations to my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh, for a budget presentation which has revealed the dynamic progress made within Guyana’s economy. I wish to publicly recognise the contributions of the technical staff of the Ministry of Finance who have worked assiduously on the technical and analytical aspects of this year’s budget.

The 2010 budget has been formulated with the aim of maintaining macro-economic stability, utilising policies critical to the consolidation of prudent fiscal management of Guyana’s economy. This Government remains steadfast in ensuring that growth is sustained in a

manner that would be realistic and measurable in the context of the global economic challenges.

In the global context, economic prospects remained uncertain. The past year has been very challenging. We have all seen the impact which this has had on global demand. For instance, there has been a decline in production and trade levels, depressed commodity and asset prices, escalated bankruptcies, a rise in unemployment levels among others. It is quite evident that the world's economy still remains vulnerable to exogenous shocks, notwithstanding, some tentative signs of improvement being shown.

It is indeed a testimony to the growing strength of Guyana's economy and the Government's sound economic management that we managed to post positive growth in 2009 while many other small, vulnerable economies did not. However, as a small open economy, Guyana remains vulnerable to external shocks, erosion of trade preferences and socio-economic impacts from natural disasters. We are also at risk due to the limited diversification of the economy.

The path to recovery and strengthening of the economy will be a long journey. It is against this background that we have strategically planned, here in Guyana, to continue to Consolidate, Transform and Sustain Guyana's economy using policy measures to realise this objective.

Government has consistently formulated policies that support and provide for all Guyanese, with particular emphasis on the poor and other vulnerable groups in our society. We must continue this noble effort since poverty alleviation remains our Government's primary focus, and we do have a duty and responsibility to all citizens of this country to improve their welfare and quality of life. In order to ensure that we do not fail in our responsibilities, we must also work to build an environment that fosters economic growth, creates more jobs, strengthens our industries and diversifies the economic base.

Given our exposure and susceptibility to the adverse effects of climate change, government has also taken the bold step, led by His Excellency, President Bharrat Jagdeo, of developing a Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) which seeks to protect and preserve our local, and to some extent, the global environment through avoided deforestation and ensuring a low carbon path to development.

In keeping with our primary objective to preserve macroeconomic stability, government will continue to make critical investments to bolster the resilience of our economy and foster medium and long-term growth.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in the Budget presentation, the Hon. Minister of Finance informed this National Assembly of the rebasing of the G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product) which was undertaken by the Bureau of Statistics. We are all aware that the role of the Bureau of Statistics is to collect, compile, analyse and disseminate socio-economic statistics. The Bureau of Statistics over time has benefited from resources, via technical assistance provided by two of our development partners – the Inter-American Development Bank (I.D.B.) and the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (C.R.T.A.C.).

The Bureau has now been able to build capacity to better monitor and measure economic activity and as a direct result of the technical assistance provided, has rebased and re-benchmarked its national accounts series. The Bureau of Statistics is now compiling production based estimates of Gross Domestic Product, based upon a 2006 framework, instead of the now outdated 1988 framework. This exercise, which began in mid-2007, saw continuous and intense effort until its recent completion.

The rebasing exercise not only revalued G.D.P. at current and constant prices, but also provided an opportunity for methodological and conceptual reviews and improvements, as well as incorporation of new data sources. Taking these wide ranging effects into account, the Bureau's national accounts compilation system has taken considerable steps forward to bring Guyana in line with sister CARICOM countries and countries further afield. This is particularly important given that the region is in line for the formation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (C.S.M.E.). In fact, among CARICOM member states, Guyana became the fourth member of CARICOM, joining Trinidad and Tobago, Belize and Jamaica, to rebase their G.D.P. series in the year 2000 or later.

Rebasing is necessary simply because economies change over time. With the liberalisation of Guyana's economy, our industrial and economic structure and relative prices have all changed. We are all aware that industries such as transportation and communications have been growing and there have been technological innovations and developments throughout the economy. These trends underscore the need for rebasing.

Major results of the rebasing exercise are as follows:

- Guyana's rebasing now allows the national accounts series to capture the real and up-to-date picture of the economy.
- Coverage has increased due to the revamping and increasing of data sources. Over the years, informal activities have been brought into the formal economy and are now better measured.
- Methodology and best practices are now more in line with international standards.

It must however be emphasised that the continued quality of our data depends in large part, on cooperation by businesses. All business enterprises are required, by Sub-section 1 of Section 9 of the Statistics Ordinance of 1965, and the related Bureau of Statistics Act of 1992, to provide data requested by the Bureau. However, over the years, the Bureau has had to endure significant non-responsiveness, delayed responses, excuses and in some cases, outright refusal and even open hostility from businesses. While there were considerable improvement seen in the economic surveys conducted in the 2008 and 2009, non-cooperation by data providers is unacceptable. We look forward to continuous improvement by businesses in adherence to their legal obligations in this regard.

The Consumer Price Index (C.P.I.) basket which has also been updated, which ran from January 1994 to December 2009, has now been replaced by a new series which commenced January 2010. The old basket of goods and services was compiled from the nationwide Household Index and Expenditure Survey of 1992-1993 with the former C.P.I. series calculated relative to a base period of January 1994. Prior to this, I am advised by the Bureau, that the previous C.P.I. Series was based upon the Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 1969-1970 and that C.P.I. series ran from 1970 to July 1989 when it was suspended on instructions from the then administration for 1 year in July 1990. Of course, at that time, shortage of goods on the shelves was the norm as the black market prevailed. The monitoring of prices for C.P.I. must have been a horrendous task for the Bureau's staff of that era. Obviously, based on pressure from the International and Multi-lateral lending institutions and the realisation from the administration of that time, you could not attempt any macro-economic management in the absence of any sense of the inflationary trends within the economy. As a result, a proxy basket was put in place. This was later replaced by the immediate past series and basket which ran, as I indicated, from January 1994 and which subsequently, was replaced by the immediate past series and basket which ran from January 1994 to December 2009.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, growth in levels of income and quality of life are catalyst for gradual or sometimes rapid change in consumption patterns. In fact, to ensure that continuously changing patterns are duly captured, and the most current consumption patterns of households accurately measured, the international recommendations are that there should be an updated Household Budget Survey every five 5 years. Nationwide Surveys in Guyana are very costly and the cost to mount one such survey every 5 years would need to be reviewed in these terms. However, once a ten-year period has elapsed, questions could be genuinely asked of the relevance of the consumption basket or pattern being used.

Thus, as in Guyana's case, the 10-year period since the last Household Budget Survey of 2002 has elapsed and a decision was made to mount a new nationwide Household Budget Survey. Subsequently, Cabinet approved the execution of this survey over a period of one (1) year, from October 2005 to September 2006, in order to capture the seasonality of patterns of consumption and expenditure over a 12 month period. It was from that survey data that the new basket introduced from 1st January 2010 has been compiled based on both the frequencies and aggregate levels of consumption expenditure recorded at item level for the widest possible range of goods and services, as reported by the sample households. A total of 7,200 households nationwide were interviewed in that sample survey.

Expectantly, with advances in technology and technologically based products in the 13 years that have elapsed between the two surveys, the compilation of the new basket has seen the introduction of new products; such as electronic, communication and other service type products, which were either not available on the market when the current basket was introduced in January 1994, or too expensive at the time to feature in regular expenditure patterns. Some of the prominent new items that now appear include: products of the IT explosion and technological innovation, and of course, the cell phone and its support services, internet services, banking automated services and DVD players to name a few, since some of the services of 1994 which were then considered state-of-the-art are now considered obsolete, 15 years later. Also, rising income levels which signalled greater affordability at the individual level are the precursors of a higher level of expenditure on certain specific types of personal goods.

Expectantly, the change in consumption patterns has been accompanied by changes in relative significance or weights of the different consumption categories. The most noticeable is the change in the weight of the food basket, which from its current weight of 44.1% will

now have a reduced weight of 33.8% in the new basket. This should be no surprise to us all. The shift in proportionate expenditure over the past 15 years, has merely confirmed that when our income is increased, we spend less on food, but more on durable goods and when our income is decreased, we spend more to fulfil our primary needs, particularly food and shelter. This House has been apprised over time of the several initiatives taken to raise the ‘take home pay’, the standard of living of the average wage earner, and this is no better borne out by the increase in the monthly public service minimum wage from \$5,500 in 1994 when the current basket of goods and services was introduced to \$26,070 in 2006 when the Household Budget Survey was concluded, representing an increase of 474% over the period. Indeed, since 2006 the minimum wage has been further increased to \$31,626 at the beginning of 2009.

The majority of this expenditure shift has gone into the categories of housing, transportation and communication, respectively. These major shifts in the comparative expenditure patterns of households further emphasise the point that as income levels grow overtime, a reduced proportion is spent on food and more on essential services, durable and semi-durable. A total of 217 items will be monitored in the new basket as compared to 238 items previously monitored. Some of the items no longer on the list are

- Radios,
- VCR players,
- and cinema charges to mention a few.

The items that will no longer be monitored now carry such an insignificant weight that it would taken an exponential surge in the price of those items to have even the slightest effect on the overall index.

The conduct of the Household Budget Survey also allowed data to be collected on the predominant points of purchase by households nationwide. As in the competitive economy of Guyana today, several new distribution outlets have emerged, some have gone out of business, and there have been shifts in consumption patterns not just at item level but at outlet level, as competition has forced distribution outlets to offer the best prices and packages available. It is known that households also react to reliability and availability of supplies. The weekly monitoring of prices is now based on the monitoring of those new and traditional outlets which have emerged as households’ current purchase points of preference.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, let me offer congratulations publicly to the Bureau of Statistics for the successful execution of the Household Budget Survey, an endeavour that commenced some 4 years ago and which has culminated with the introduction of a new Consumer Price Index series effective January, 2010.

Strengthening Public Administration: In paragraph 41.43 of the 2010 Budget Speech, the Hon. Minister of Finance highlighted the importance of strengthening Public Administration through the maximising of programme effectiveness and I quote:

“Government will pursue an agenda for further strengthening public financial management which, when implemented will see improved internal controls, expanded use of I.C.T. in the delivery of information and services.”

Let me assure all members of this Hon. House that Government will continue to place emphasis on programme effectiveness by guaranteeing that our projects and programmes are implemented in a timely manner, thus ensuring that commitments made to the citizens of Guyana are realised.

At the policy level, greater emphasis will be placed on holding public officers accountable for the efficient and effective delivery of all public goods and services. This year, the Ministry of Finance will lead this process, which will result in improvement in the area of ‘internal controls’ throughout Government. When supplemented by additional initiatives, this reform process is expected to result in enhanced accountability and controls within the Government system and institutions.

Review of the Guyana Revenue Authority (G.R.A.): In keeping with the Government’s earlier commitment to modernise the operations of the Guyana Revenue Authority, to ensure efficient revenue collection in 2009, the development and implementation of an Integrated Tax Administration System continued with the integration of the VAT and internal revenue administration functions, along with the alignment of various business processes and procedures, utilising the TRIPS (Total Revenue Integrated Processing System) capabilities. In support of this, staff were also recruited to fill the key and critical vacant positions, while capacity building in the form of training of staff at all levels was conducted. In addition, computers, a container scanner and several patrol boats were procured in order to properly equip staff to maximise their productivity.

6.30 p.m.

In addition, major infrastructure works were undertaken at various locations thereby enabling the establishment of more integrated Regional offices. Additionally, new offices were established at Kurupukari and Charity in 2009, while offices at Crab Island and Parika are expected to become operational in 2010. Collectively, these activities are intended to enhance efficiency of the Guyana Revenue Authority's operations, improve voluntary compliance of taxpayers as well as facilitate taxpayers' satisfaction.

Government remains committed to increasing efficiency gains in the operations of the Guyana Revenue Authority through streamlined operational procedures and processing, and underlying changes in the economic prices and volumes of major exports.

The G.R.A. is committed to sustain strong revenue collection over 2010, as reform gains momentum and efficiency gains mature in the organisation.

Debt Management: Since assuming office in 1992, this P.P.P./Civic Administration has made tremendous progress in reducing Guyana's external debt burden, whilst maintaining prudent debt management that has allowed our country to achieve and maintain the national debt at sustainable levels.

In comparison with the stifling external debt of approximately US\$2 billion in 1992, today the stock of external debt has been reduced to approximately US\$933 million.

The removal of this huge debt burden has allowed Guyana's economy to grow to the benefit of our citizens. Today we can all see the benefits in the form of better infrastructure, improved roads, the installation of street lighting along the main highways, new schools, hospitals, together with improved social services.

This massive drop in the external debt stock is due to the untiring and dynamic efforts of Government in securing substantial debt relief for Guyana. Over the past year, the total external debt service declined by about 14.5% from US\$20.5 million in 2008 to US\$17.5 million by the end of 2009. This is significantly lower than the total sum of US\$103 million which was actually spent on servicing the debt in 1992. In fact, of that sum US\$17.5 million, principle repayments accounted for about US\$7.8 million, while interest payments were about US\$9.7 million in 2009.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Your time is up Hon. Minister.

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I stand to request that the Hon. Member be given 15 minutes to continue.

Question put and agreed to.

Ms. Webster: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the recent gains in improving Guyana's external debt position are as a result of the measures of this P.P.P./Civic Government, where we have taken to further strengthen public debt management, which includes updating regularly the debt and new financing strategy, and investments in capacity building.

By the end of 2008, Guyana's main external debt sustainability ratio fell to 118% from 205% in 2007, which is well below the international debt sustainability benchmark of 250%. However, despite these gains, Guyana remains at a moderate risk of death distress arising from our exposure to exogenous shock, such as high food and energy prices. This is compounded by declining concessional resources from our traditional development partners.

This Parliament continues to be the key forum for deliberations to address matters of national importance, thereby promoting good governance. This Government has already made significant strides in ensuring greater transparency and accountability in the procurement process throughout Government.

In fact, a diagnostic assessment of the Public Procurement System was undertaken under the Guyana Threshold Country Plan Implementation Project (GPTCP/IP). That assessment identified capacity building as a key element for improving the efficiency and transparency of the procurement process. In April, 2009 high-level consultations were held at the National level with contractors, consultants and public officers including Heads of Departments. At that forum, emerging from concerns raised, it was highlighted that by simplifying procedures and equipping procurement personnel to apply the laws and regulations correctly, the transparency of the procurement process would be enhanced.

A number of initiatives were undertaken as a result of these consultations including the:

- (i) Revision of Standard Bidding Documents.
- (ii) The preparation of a Procurement Handbook and Tender Manuals.

It is proposed that these Standard Bidding Documents be revised to incorporate categories for works, goods and related services, consultancy services and non-consultative services. Government intends to have this new standard bidding documents introduced in 2010.

Further, it is intended that these bidding documents would adequately address the concerns raised, and would include instruments aimed at ensuring that bidders are committed to their respective contracts, that contractors are penalised for defective and shoddy work, and for delays in the execution of their respective contracts. Some of these instruments include:

- Bid Security/Bid Security Declaration
- Performance Bond
- Liquidated Damages

In the year 2010, the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board's website will be upgraded in an effort to further increase transparency, and facilitate the development and implementation of E-Tendering, so as to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Capacity to collect and process procurement data.
- (ii) Provide current, accurate and timely information.
- (iii) Provide a secure web-based service to facilitate E-Tendering

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Member, Mr. Winston Murray, in his budget presentation alluded that:

“Government had failed miserably to appoint the Public Procurement Commission”.

In the absence of the Public Procurement Commission, the procurement process under this administration has been made transparent and open, when whereas in the past, there were no systems nor procedures for competitive bidding in place. Today, any member of the public can attend the public opening of any tender at the office of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board. The award of contracts is publicly announced. This Government has nothing to hide!

I would therefore like to urge my colleagues of the Opposition to let us work together, in the interest of improving the Public Procurement Process, in an effort to bring into effect the Public Procurement Commission as mandated by law.

In my presentation today, I have highlighted a number of reform initiatives aimed at improving and strengthening public sector institutions, and improving the environment in which the private sector operators. These objectives will certainly enable us to ‘consolidate, transformed and sustain’ our economy as we confront and emerge from this challenging global economic situation.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in closing, I urge all Members of this House to support budget 2010. It is by working together that we all will ensure the maximisation of the potential of our country, thereby improving the standards of living of our people. At the minimum, we owe this to the people of Guyana!

May the peace and direction of God be pivotal in our determination to consolidate, transform and sustain this beautiful land of ours! I thank you. May God bless you all. [Applause]

Mrs. Punalall: Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. The 2010 budget, as presented by Dr. Ashni Singh, the Hon. Minister of Finance, is before this National Assembly for the deliberation and passage. Year after year we go through this process every time dealing with a budget exceeding the previous one by millions. This has been the routine. It is not sufficient for this administration to just routinely run our country. They must build it as well. They must actively determine and shape the way forward for Guyana. It is the will of the people that Guyana moves forward.

This is a \$142.8 billion budget and represents a 10.8% increase over the 2009 budget. Inasmuch as we approve bigger budgets year after year, most of our people live pathetic lives, have blighted hopes, and are unrelieved of the economic woes. We all know that by the time 2010 ends, our economic standard will not be increased by 10.8%.

The few who live a life of cultivated pleasure and comfort here are:

1. Those who have earned in foreign lands and are now back home on a decent retirement.
2. Those who are fortunate to have remittances coming their way from parents and/or relatives who reside abroad.
3. Those who fall within the parallel economy of Guyana
4. The P.P.P./C. and the Government

There is nothing in this budget to assure the Guyanese workers and average citizens that 2010 will be a better economic year for them. On the contrary, the daily grind will be much harder.

The budget comes to us under the theme 'Consolidate, Transform, and Sustain.' This is an excellent vision to have. However, a vision would be hollow and meaningless if there are no concrete goals, targets, and indicators for attaining that vision. By the end of 2010, which is

just a matter of ten months away, we will all realise that Guyana is no better off than where it was at the commencement of this year. Just as how the 2009 budget had to be supplemented by huge budgetary additions, most likely, this is what will happen again at the end of this year.

In 1995, at the Caribbean Conference of Regional Programme in Monetary Studies, Dr Clive Thomas, who is a well-known Caribbean scholar and economist, presented a paper on social capital. He outlined 10 economic principles which we must follow if we want to advance social development. We can build our future by following these principles:

1. It is humane - it elevates social concerns over individual gains/losses.
2. It is sustainable - its true horizon is oriented to future horizons.
3. It is empowering - it is not based on exploitation.
4. It is synergistic - it affects and is affected by all areas of social life.
5. It is catalytic - it is an agent of change.
6. It is mobilising - it helps to develop energies of society.
7. It is accountable and responsible - it emphasises sharing and trust.
8. It is concerned with both development and the distribution of the benefits of development.
9. Its accumulation is driven from below because of its social ladder.
10. It is non- resistance - voluntary action rather than external rewards or punishments drive it.

Many of these critical principles are absent from the economic administration of our country and were not considered in the crafting of this budget. We all know that we live in a country which conspicuously lacks the prudent and lawful management of State funds.

My first direct reference to figures in this budget is US\$30 million which is an expected income from Norway as part of a 5 year forest saving deal. In his presentation the Hon. Finance Minister stated that:

“This money will be spent on infrastructural development, low carbon small business initiatives, and the cost of land demarcation and land titling for indigenous communities”.

The A.F.C. wishes to make it abundantly clear that it is not against Guyana receiving genuine financial assistance from the developed world, neither are we against the harnessing of our

natural resources in an environmentally friendly manner. We believe that this country will definitely flourish when our natural resources are managed for the benefit of all Guyanese.

However, it seems as though the implementation of this LCDS deal will impact negatively on citizen's accustomed practices of livelihood, in particular our already poor Amerindian brothers and sisters in Guyana's hinterland. In order for these brothers to farm, harvest logs or mine, vegetation will have to be cleared. If this is curtailed, the suffering and level of poverty among our first people would definitely increase. Of the many races which inhabit our land, it is our first people who are the only ones to have an entire Government Ministry designated for their welfare - the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Ironically, they still remain among the poorest of the poor in Guyana.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I visited the hinterlands settlements and have seen the struggles of these citizens. Many live primitive lives and are virtually cut off from the civilised world. However, I support what I just said from the following statement by Mr. Jorg Vereecke, Associate Expert on Indigenous People who prepared a 'National Report on Indigenous Communities in Guyana' for UNDP (December 1994). He stated:

“Many Amerindian communities are dependent on the remittances from migrant labour whereby men leave their families for work in mining or logging for long periods of time. A major reason for this is the weak nature of subsistence food production in many parts of the interior and the low purchasing power of the majority of the Amerindian families. A serious outcome of this situation is the existence of a rise in the number of female headed households and the implications for stability of the family unit, the neglect of children and excessive burdens of women. The lack of human resources and the experience in community development, result in the creation of a culture of poverty and dependency”.

When I think of the extreme poverty facing our first people, the words of Mother Theresa came to my heart. She said:

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start to remedy this kind of poverty.”

This is the kind of compound poverty that faces our first people. Rather than being dependent on aid and remittances, focus should have been placed on the generation of internal economic growth by harnessing the under-utilised resources of our land.

The sum of \$21.4 billion is allocated to the Education Ministry in the 2010 budget. It was once said that in Guyana, education is free from nursery to university. Unfortunately, this has been slowly changing over the years as private and subsidised tuition is gradually integrated in our society. More and more students have to rely on extra lessons in order to receive a complete education.

There was a time when only Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE) students underwent this tedious task, but now you will find that even six year olds are required to take extra lessons even on Sundays. This comes at a steep cost and depression to parents. In the case of secondary school students, it is as high as \$4000 per subject per month. Later in this month, a batch of fifth formers will travel all the way to Linden to do their School Based Assessment (SBA). The cost per student is in excess of \$25,000. There is a direct relationship between education delivery and poverty in our country.

Sideone Gabrielle in an article titled ‘Timeless Thoughts on Poverty’ said:

“Real poverty is the lack of knowledge. With knowledge comes power. Education is a way out of poverty.”

This being an accepted truth, one would have therefore thought that this budget would have better reflected policies and programmes that would be helpful to children living in poverty. Also, that more money would have been allocated to improve learning environments, strengthen poor neighbourhoods, and even grant more relief to low income families and paying teachers a better salary.

Education and training is not an end in itself. We need to develop the kind of economy in Guyana which will have the potential to integrate those educated and trained so that they can be gainfully employed. I know of many who have skills in this country, but who are without proper employment. In the village where I live there is a young lady who was taught knitting. She has knitted material that is beautifully crafted. Unfortunately, she cannot find a market for her product and she still wallows in frustration, poverty and an abusive situation. There are many others like those across our country.

If people find it hard to find food for their bellies, they will not spend money in other areas, and those who are trained cosmetologists, cake decorators, craftsmen, etc will struggle to have their products or services sold. Therefore, we must begin to address the issue of economic development by improving the purchasing power of our citizens. With persistent low wages offered in this country the very purpose of education and training is defeated and our trained personnel leave for other lands where they can earn a decent living. Simply stated, we have been spending our resources in education to the benefit of other nations while we remain poor.

Prudence requires that we be guided by experts on this matter. On this note, I quote some relevant words from a UNICEF report (2000) which touched on the value of our children. This report says:

“Poverty causes children to go hungry, missing out on school, or being forced into child labour. Poverty causes lifelong damage to children’s minds and bodies, perpetuating the cycle of poverty across generations. This is why poverty reduction must begin with the protection and realisation of the human rights of children. Investments in children are the best guarantee for achieving equitable and sustainable human development. Breaking the cycle of poverty depends on investments by Governments, civil society and families”.

Notice that in this list of three stakeholders, the Government is listed first - a point which the present administration needs to carefully note. In more schools across our country the attendance is about 75%, the rest of the children just struggle along in poverty missing the most important preparation for life.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the minimum wage remains in the vicinity of \$30,000 per month. To add to this misery, many of workers earn less than this. The sweeper/cleaner and security guards in Region 4, most of who are women, fall in this unfortunate category. Some are single parents while others work to supplement their husband’s meagre income. I am reminded of these simple, but yet profound words of Finley Peter Dunne who said:

“One of the strange things about life is that the poor who need money the most, are the very ones that never have it.”

No consideration was given to reduce the 16% VAT which had been very burdensome to our people. The income tax threshold also remains at \$35,000 per month. If the A.F.C. had to

bring a National Budget to this National Assembly it certainly would have reflected more care and concern for the working-class people of our country.

In November 2007, USAID presented an assessment of ‘Guyana’s Economic Performance’ which was done by Nathan Associates Inc. This report said:

“Labour Productivity has been stagnant in Guyana, between 2001 and 2005. Guyana’s level of labour productivity barely budged with an average annual increase of a mere 0.1%. Such poor performance maybe attributed to a lack of investment and high emigrating rates among trained Guyanese. It is notable that 89% of Guyanese graduates live in O.E.C.D. countries.”

7.00 p.m.

Three years after these words were written the situation in terms of investment and emigration continues to decline.

The Alliance For Change recognises and notes that this Budget does not meet the needs of our people. While many may think that they will continue to ride on the backs of the toiling citizens of our country, let us be warned by the divine words recorded in the *Holy Bible* in Job 34:21, and I quote: “For the eyes of God are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his doings.”

Let us be warned that Almighty God observes and inspects those who rule the human race. May Almighty God hear the cries of the poor and bless them indeed. Thank you Mdm. Deputy Speaker. [Applause]

Ms. Shadick: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, before I begin, I hope that you will take into account, that if I am disturbed, and I have to stop, that that time will not count in the time that I have to use.

As I begin my contribution to this Debate on the estimates for the year 2010, I wish to add my voice to that of all of those who spoke before me in congratulating the Hon. Minister of Finance and the team of persons from the Ministry of Finance for a realistic Budget which is aimed at consolidating the gains we have secured, staying the course and advancing the transformation agenda, and sustaining our economic gains against the continual background of a prevailing global financial crisis and uncertain external adversarial conditions. In the face of world's economy collapsing, not excluding the regional and local effect of the

Colonial Life Insurance Company (C.L.I.C.O.) and Stanford debacles, our Government has been able to keep the inflation rate at 3.6%, its lowest in 8 years; realises positive economic growth for the fourth consecutive year, after the floods of 2005; while expressing optimism that Guyana can and will emerge stronger and more resilient in 2010.

Since 1992 this Government set itself an agenda to improve the lives and living conditions of the citizenry of Guyana, and we have been relentlessly pursuing this agenda since that time. All Guyanese knew in 1992 that a transformation was needed, and the Guyanese electorate, by continuing to ensure that the P.P.P./C. continues as the Government of this country, has evidenced its conviction that it trusts us to carry out this transformation and to do it in such a manner that there is minimal disruption to lives and livelihoods. The physical transformation is now very visible, and I will make bold to say that the Members of the opposite side of the House accept this, even though, they, in the belief that it is their duty always to oppose and never to voice appreciation, scathingly denigrate Government while they point out defects and deficiencies. Some of which, by the way, we acknowledge, and it is in this context that I invite all Guyanese, including the supporters of the Opposition, to pay more attention to works which are being done in their communities, and to report infractions in a manner which can bring about positive change which will benefit all of us in the long run.

There is evidence of positive change all around us and it is there for all of those who wish to see, and since change is a continuous process, the transformation can never be fully complete, because just like any progressive homeowner, who is continually making improvements because he is never satisfied that his living accommodation is up to date, the people will always ask for more in order to keep up with a fast-changing world environment.

Tonight, I am expected to make my contribution in the context of my responsibilities as one of the three Regional Geographic Members of this Assembly, with responsibility for Region 3, which stretches from Arobaio Creek on the Demerara River to Makouria on the Essequibo River, and includes all of those areas in between, including the West Bank and West Coast of Demerara, as well as all the Essequibo Islands and the riverine areas.

Year after year, Members on this side of the House stand and list all the projects and programmes which have been planned, and for which the Budget makes provision for the current year. But tonight, I urge all Members of this House to study the figures for themselves, and to communicate this information to their supporters and constituents, thus eliminating the need for me to go through the long list which is contained in the voluminous

Budget estimates. I do not need to speak of the thirty watering ponds which are currently being dug on the island of Leguan to allow the livestock farmers to access water for their animals, or the many bridges, roads, health centres and other infrastructural development in Region 3. The people living in that Region know of these things, and visitors to the Region can see these things when they visit.

I would like to focus instead on some of the public comments made by various personalities including political commentators, those who hold themselves out to be expert on economic issues, media representatives, not forgetting the newspaper letter writers, and, if I am to give credence to the comments made last night by the Hon. Winston Murray, my countryman, “there is nothing in the Budget which is exciting.” I have heard and read many comments that the Budget has nothing for the small man and that there are no provisions to lift Guyanese out of poverty. I submit that all the spending which is outlined in the Hon. Minister of Finance’s presentation last Monday, particularly under the captions, *Investments in our People* and *Enhancing Security and Justice*, investments which will have a direct impact on people’s lives and amounting to more than \$50 billion, are designed to do just what the critics say is not in the Budget.

How does spending on improved infrastructure and access to free education not help lift people out of poverty? How does financial provision for improved free health care and improved access to that health care, not reach down to the benefit of the poor? What are the allocations for housing, water and sanitation meant to do, if not improve the living standards and conditions of those who need such improvement? I have read a comment in one newspaper which is attributed to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the Finance Minister has made allocations of resources, allegedly, for specialised training of youths outside of the long established training institutions, and that it is ironic that while the Minister has announced such huge allocation for technical training outside of the established institution, nothing has been allocated to improve the quality of training at the Government Technical Institutes.

In 2009, more than \$400 million was expended at technical vocational institutions, inclusive of the construction of a workshop at the Linden Technical Institute; procurement of tools and equipment for all technical institutes, as well as the expansion of the Secondary Competency Certificate Programme to add eighteen additional secondary schools, to the six secondary schools and the six Practical Instruction Centres which were already delivering the

programme. In 2010, a further \$940 million is being allocated in the Budget to continue the expansion of the technical vocational training, catering for another twelve secondary schools to be added to the twenty-four already conducting this programme, as well as for the maintenance of facilities and the procurement of more and up to date tools and equipment for the Technical Institutes. With the completion of the Technical Institutes in Regions 5 and 3, there will now be Technical Institutes in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10.

The comment attributed to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition also allegedly referred to the industrial action which is being taken by the lecturers at the Technical Institute. Well, first of all, I absolutely agree that remuneration for lecturers, whether full-time or part-time, should be at least, comparable with that of other professionals. While I think about professionalism, I find it apposite to note at this point that a close relative of mine graduated from the Georgetown Technical Institute in 2008 with a certificate in air conditioning without ever having had a single practical lesson in the discipline. He since had to pay to be an apprentice, to a skilled practitioner, before he can engage in this skill for which he was certified. I am certain that had Mr. Corbin, who I know is an honourable man, listened to the Finance Minister or read the document which was distributed, those comments could not have been made by him, and then I would have to conclude that in its usual style the newspaper was manufacturing the news.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that the comments which are attributed to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the allocation of money to be used for the training of out-of-schools youths...

Mrs. Backer: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, on a Point of Order. If the Hon. Member is quoting from a newspaper, I think the normal thing is that we get the newspaper and the date so we can check the veracity if we need, because she is making statements attributed to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, and has not even told us which paper he was supposed to have made these comments and the date, so that we can check. I am asking her for that.

Ms. Shadick: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I did not quote anything, and I have used the words - "alleged" and "attributed to". I never quoted them!

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Ms. Shadick, at least you could say which is the paper. If it is a newspaper, you could say. If you have it there, just say which is the paper.

Ms. Shadick: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I have a photocopy of it. It is the *Kaieteur News*. Unfortunately, I do not have a date on this paper, but it was sometime during the week.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: *Kaieteur* of this week.

Ms. Shadick: I am sure that the comments attributed to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the allocation of money to be used for the training of out-of-school youths, school dropouts and for single parents, in order to equip them with income earning skills which they can utilise to start up small income generating activities, using tools and the equipment which would be purchased from a grant of \$65,000 each would get after graduating from the said training. Madam, how can one not acknowledge that such expenditure will result in the reduction of poverty?

The establishment of a Child Protection Agency and accommodations for at-risk children in protective custody, expansion of the Pilot Foster Care Programme carried out in 2009; the provision of one school uniform for each child attending school, the building of a home to accommodate at least three hundred homeless persons, the refurbishment and the maintenance of the Palms Geriatric Facility for the indigent; the provision for \$645 million for public assistance and \$3.5 billion for old age pensions coupled with payment to Guyana Water Inc. (G.W.I.) for water rates for all old-age pensioners, are all provisions being made for the immediate and short-term benefit for the most vulnerable in our society. This is why Madam, I am still to understand why persons, who should be more responsible are trying to convey a different message to our citizens. True, the Finance Minister did not announce an increase in the income tax threshold, but he did announce that in spite of the global, regional and local financial upheaval, the Guyana economy grew, the inflation rate was lowered, and as we all know, since Members of this House also benefited, a public sector salary increase, greater than inflation rate, was given for 2009. I am certain that when the global, regional and local economies stabilise and grow, the income tax threshold can and will be increased.

When we look at the allocation for the justice and security sector, we see a similar pattern, the enhancement of infrastructure and services which can only improve the quality of life of our citizens. Madam, who can deny that the establishment of the new Family Court which is under construction, even as we carry on this debate, will result in better administration of justice to the victims of domestic violence, as well as to expedite issues concerning the care, custody and maintenance of children who are the most vulnerable of our citizens, and whose welfare are of paramount importance. Matters relating to divorce and the division of property

can and will be dealt it in a more timely manner, resulting in parents and children being able to carry on with their lives, instead of being involved in long drawn out legal battles which sometimes can go on for years.

The \$1.7 billion which is allocated to improve the quality, efficiency and the effectiveness of service delivery in the justice sector, catering for the physical improvement to courthouses, as well as piloting a digital speech recording system in the High Court and the Court of Appeal will be money well spent to decrease the frustration of members of the Magistracy and the Judiciary, legal practitioners and litigants alike.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, why is there so much opposition and suspicion about the real reason behind setting up a centralised agency to gather intelligence on crime and criminal activities, at a time when Guyanese, while still not satisfied with the level of criminal activity, have cause to be pleased at the announcement by the Police Commissioner that the rate of crime reduced in 2009 comparing to 2008, attributing this reduction in most part to improve intelligence gathering? Are the members of the public to infer that those who protest this move have something to hide which can be uncovered by such an agency? The Budget made the provision of \$473 million for the construction of a new forensic laboratory which can only significantly enhance the forensic and investigative capacities of the law enforcement agencies. Is this not an exciting development in a country which up to now has had to depend on external assistance in its crime solving capabilities? Added to all of this there is provision for increasing the vehicular fleet of the Police Force and the establishment of a mobile Police station together with increased training in the area of investigation and detection of crime, information and strategic management, as well as for purchases and maintenance of specialised I.C.T. equipment to standardise information gathering surveillance and operationalise an integrative crime violence information system.

Finally, budgeted expenditures on agriculture, energy, powers generation and supply, infrastructural development and improving the business environment can only serve to enhance the already improved visual appearance of our country and the living standard of our people. This Government, when it first came to office in 1992, had a vision for our country, and with all that has been achieved so far, and what is provided for in this Budget, that vision is within our reach and we invite each and every Guyanese, regardless of his or her political affiliation, to walk with us down this exciting road to peace and prosperity which was but an

elusive dream prior to 1992. At this time, Madam, I would like to commend this Budget to this National Assembly. Thank you. [Applause]

Dr. Austin: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I would like to start my contribution to this year's Budget Debate by quoting from a World Bank document entitled, *A Poverty Map for Guyana*, and this document was prepared by Emmanuel Skoufias. In this document, the index called the "Enumeration District Marginality Index" is used to rank the ten Regions in Guyana according to poverty levels, and Region 6 is ranked among, let me say the three more wealthy Regions in Guyana. In other words there are seven Regions which are less wealthy or which are poorer than Region 6. As a result of this ranking, when we think about the amount of poverty that is present in Region 6, because we in Region 6 know that poverty pervades in Region 6, we shudder to consider what would be the situation in terms of poverty levels in other parts of Guyana; especially when we consider the seven Regions which are supposed to be poorer than Region 6. We were hoping that this 2010 Budget would have raised the income tax threshold and reduce the Value Added Tax level from the exploitative 16% to a level that would have been more conducive to the alleviation of poverty in our society.

How meaningful is it when we are told that the economy of Guyana grew by 2.3% in 2009, and when we see so much poverty in our society? In fact, the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.) published a document entitled *The Guyana Country Strategy 2009 to 2013*, and in this U.S.A.I.D.'s document it is stated that Guyana is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yes, in 2009 we were informed that the economy grew by 2.3%. But many streetlights in New Amsterdam were disconnected in 2009. There are many areas of Region 6 that when we turn on the taps we will get either no water or orange-red coloured water, including New Amsterdam.

There were many patients in 2009 who had to take home their body parts after they have had a surgery at the New Amsterdam hospital. Either they or their relatives took them, to dispose of them. I have tried to get a resolution to this disgusting situation by calling officials at the hospital to clarify the matter and to find out why this was so. Some of the hospital staff explained to me that there was an agreement whereby a certain funeral parlour was supposed to take these parts and dispose of them, but they do not know what has happened to that agreement. The typical thing of some of these officials... one of the senior officials told me that such a thing did not happen and does not happen. But I am convinced that it did happen

and it was happening, and as far as I know it is not happening now. I am convinced that it did happen and it was happening during 2009. The official was just trying to be dishonest.

There are large portions of Rose Hall Town which would flood when there is a slight amount, well I should say relatively small amount of rainfall, and this should not be happening. I talked about this in my Budget speech last year, and it is still happening. There are many streets in New Amsterdam, including major roads, which are so deplorably that traffic flow is impeded. The defective koker at Hogstye is resulting in salt water flooding residential and agricultural areas, I do not know if that has been corrected, but it is a significant enough problem. That is why I am talking about it here. I have found it is a pattern that we would talk to the people on the ground, we would talk in the National Assembly, and then next year we will still have to come and complain and talk about the same thing.

In many schools in Region 6, parents have to provide furniture for their children.

In Region 6, blackouts are relatively frequent and these blackouts affect equipment - electronic and electrical in offices, schools, hospitals and homes. For example, television, DVD players, computers, refrigerators. These equipment, because of the frequent blackouts, are either restricted in their use or they are damaged as a result of voltage fluctuations.

In government institutions, especially schools and hospitals, it is a common occurrence to find significant staff shortages. These staff shortages usually occur because the working conditions are so unsatisfactory that the professionals preferred to resign and go for greener pastures rather than to stay and be subjected to discrimination and poor working conditions. That is why we can be training teachers and training nurses but we still have shortages, because we do not do the right thing. We do not make the working conditions and environments as suitable as they should be so as to keep the staff when they start working.

There are many of us who can go for more money elsewhere, but we prefer to serve Guyana. But when we are faced with all of these hindrances and problems some of us would just pack up and go. There are many qualified persons in Region 6 and other parts of Guyana who are compelled to act in certain positions, although, they are qualified to be appointed to those positions. This malpractice of the Government - well I blame the Government because the Government can change it - affects the persons in many ways.

7.30 p.m.

But the main ones are that they do not receive the salaries that they are supposed to be receiving for the work that they are doing; and when they retire, they do not get the benefits to which they are entitled because they were never appointed to those positions, they were just acting. I guess if the Ministers of the Government were subjected to the same kinds of conditions of serving as Ministers, these problems of so many acting persons would have been corrected by now.

There are many persons in Region 6 who consider the Skeldon Sugar Factory to be a white elephant. We are still waiting for the large scale electricity production which would boost the G.P.L. grade so that we would stop having the blackouts. We were promised that when the sugar estate starts to produce current on a large scale we would not be having the kind of blackouts that we are having now, but we are still waiting to have that promise fulfilled. Also, what we are waiting for in terms of the functioning of that sugar estate is the large scale production of sugar, this is going to help alleviate the unsteady or unsafe situation we have in terms of sugar supply. You would remember, those of you who would admit or who care to rethink it, that in 2009 we had to be importing sugar.

The former New Amsterdam Hospital building is an eye sore. We were promised that this building will be gainfully utilised in some way. However, to date, this has not happened; windows have been broken; the roofing is missing; various parts of the hospital building have been stolen and the compound is in an unkempt condition.

The Berbice Bridge tolls are exploitative. We are thankful for having a Bridge, yes, but the tolls are so high that they have taken the cost of living in Region 6 up. The students are the most affected by these tolls. It sounds ridiculous, but it is true. The student who has to travel the Berbice River Bridge to and from school per week, has to pay one week extra than what it would have costed him or her if he or she had used the ferry for one school term. The other disadvantage that the Bridge is causing, as a result of the high cost for crossing, is that the students are forced to use the ferry because they cannot afford to use the Bridge. They cannot afford to pay the tolls to cross the Bridge on a regular basis, so they are forced to use the ferry. The ferry does not run on schedule anymore because most persons travel on the Bridge, whereas, if the Bridge were not there they would have had to use the ferry. The ferry would have had to be punctual. However, because the ferry is no longer punctual, the students who are forced to use the ferry very frequently arrived late to school. It is a common sight to see the students of Region 5 who attend schools in New Amsterdam waiting outside of the

schools because they have been locked out. Many times they would miss classes, and they would have all of the disadvantages due to being late as a result of the ferry not being punctual. We have been trying to deny that, but it is a fact.

There are many roads in Region 6, Mdm. Deputy Speaker, which have become mud tracks with scattered shallow ponds when it rains. Some of these roads have been rehabilitated but they are victims of shabby workmanship. For example, burnt earth would be thrown on the road; it may not be spread; or the burnt earth may be spread, but it is of poor quality, and after a while what appears to be burnt earth becomes mud again. Sometimes bauxite dust is thrown on the road - bricks might be mixed - for a while, especially in dry weather; it will seem as if the road was repaired, but then it rains and the road becomes a mud track. Examples of such areas, you will find, are Ulverston, Liverpool, Corriverton, Manchester, New Amsterdam, and Rose Hall Town.

The Ministry of Agriculture encourages the growing of more food. [Mr. Neendkumar: That is good.] Yes, it is commendable. But there are certain communities which are not given the equal opportunity that other communities are given in terms of growing more food. The drainage channels, the inflow and outlet, are not serviced as is done in other communities. The access roads to the farmlands are not serviced as is done in other communities. What we find happening is that farmers who do cash crop or rice farming in certain communities are not able to do the farming as well as they should. There are some of those roads in those disadvantaged communities which are just roads by name. When one tries to walk on those roads it is difficult and sometimes challenging, much less when one will try to ride or drive on such roads. Examples I would give of such communities are: Nurney, Limlair, and Kildonan.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, it is a common policy for the P.P.P./C. Parliamentarians to use the years of the P.N.C. in Government to excuse their inadequacies and failures. But I would like to highlight that the P.P.P./C. is now in its eighteenth year in Government. And eighteen years, I would think is a long enough period for the Government to stop living in denial; deliver on repeated promises and in other ways get its act together. Thank you. [Applause]

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you very much, Mdm. Deputy Speaker. This is the fourth Budget Debate that I have been fortunate to be a part of and may I hasten to say from the very outset that as I have listened over the past two evenings to the ten speakers on the Opposition side, I was not sure that I was listening to a tape recording of the proceedings of the previous three

years. And the reason is that each Budget, the Opposition can never give – and this is disturbing – recognition to improvements to achievements. But then, the Opposition Members do not offer any proposals, any contributions of substance. They do not. Hon. Minister of Finance, having listened to these ten speakers, I think I owe it to you and the committee that worked with you, to congratulate you on the tremendous effort, the tremendous work you did in producing a Budget like the one before us.

The P.P.P. has stood by its commitment to the Guyanese people and this is reflected in the Budget before us. Commitments which were set out in our Election Manifestos of 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2006; commitments which were premised on the Poverty Reduction Strategy, on which we have consulted extensively with the Guyanese people; commitments which were reemphasised by His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo when he had addressed the 9th Parliament on September 28th, 2006; and commitments which have become integral to our development agenda as they have created conditions propitious to improving the standard of living of the people of Guyana. So Madam, it is these achievements, these developments that I wish to highlight so that the Guyanese viewers, readers and listeners can be made aware that while those on the Opposition side, politicise, distort and misrepresent the truth; we, of the P.P.P./C., are determined that the wheels of progress continue to turn. As they turn, as many as would join us and make meaningful contributions to the socio-economic revolutions taking place in this country, we welcome you to join.

Our Government, through the Regional Democratic Council of Region 1, the Barima-Waini Region, continued during 2009 to implement programmes and projects aimed at providing more goods and services of a better quality to the mostly Amerindian residents of the Region. This, in spite of the remoteness and difficult terrain of the communities, and despite the resultant high cost of delivering such services to them, we continue to improve equity in the education sector by giving special attention to previously unreachable students in the Region. \$20.4 billion of the 2009 National Budget, of \$128.9 billion, or 15.7% of the 2009 National Budget was allocated for education delivery in our country. But in the Barima-Waini Region, \$564 million out of a Regional Budget of \$1.079 billion – my friends that translates to 52.8% of our Regional Budget – was allocated to education delivery.

Do you know what that means? The size of the allocation testifies to Government's determination to promote equity and reduce the gap between the rate and state of development of Hinterland and urban communities. \$28.2 million was spent from current

estimates on rehabilitating school buildings and teachers' quarters. \$50.9 million was spent on the construction of new schools. I want to mention some of the places. Among those are Sebai and the extension of the Mathews Ridge Primary School. I mention those two, because those works took place in a part of the Region that the Hon. Member Desmond Fernandes indicated, last evening, was neglected by Government. I mention these things also because you need to understand and to appreciate that by constructing and extending schools you are providing a favourable environment in which teaching and learning can take place.

In Region 1, my friends, there are fifty-five schools with a population of 9,483 students. There are 415 teachers and of this number 163 or 39.3% are trained. I mention this for two reasons. From 1999 to 2000, the number of trained teachers was 31.5%; 2006 to 2007, it was 37.6%; and now 2008 to 2009, it is 39.3%. It is increasing. I am confident that our Millennium Development Goal, our target of reaching that 50% of trained teacher by 2015 is very much reachable. My friends, what this means also is that the student to trained teacher ratio has improved. Let me give you the figures, because somebody talked about value for money, about results. What we are saying is that as a result of the investment, we have begun to see returns. The student to trained teacher ratio: 1999 to 2000 it was 80:6; 2006 to 2007 it was 71:7; and 2008 to 2009 it has reduced to 58:2. That is what you call improvement. That is what you call value for money.

Teacher training, my friends, has resulted in innovations in the classroom. It has resulted in adoption of new practices and methodologies, and it has resulted in better performance of the students. The National Grade Six Assessment that a speaker from the opposing side spoke about showed a pass rate of 47.07% for 2009, as compared to 39.4% for 2008. In addition, the CXC results, Grades 1 to 3 - 51.9%. My friends, I mention these things because I have learnt, and I am sure that some of you have learnt, that the quality and accessibility of education are an important factor, are an important variable in all the variables which are used to measure improved living standards.

My friends, we have learnt in this House from the Hon. Member, Mr. Desmond Fernandes, that there is a serious shortage of teachers in the Matthews Ridge area and the Arakaka area. In short, we have been led to believe that those areas were singled out and we did not deal with them the way we ought to. Well, the information that I have indicated to the contrary, at the Matthews Ridge Primary School the entitlement – and this is coming from the Head of the programme in the Region – is seven teachers, and presently it has six. The entitlement of

the Pakera Nursery School is three and one Head, and presently it has three. The entitlement at the Arakaka Nursery School is four, and it has three. The entitlement at the Port Kaituma Primary School is twenty-eight, and it has twenty-six, two of whom are at the University of Guyana. My friends, the point I am making is that contrary to the information that was presented, which gave the impression to this National Assembly that there is a serious shortage of teachers within the Matarkai subregion, is not so. That is definitely not so. My friends, these are indications that the standards of education in the Region have certainly been improving.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, there is a correlation between improved systems of education delivery, access to quality education and improved standards of living. In Region 1 there has been noticeable improvement in the governance of the villages and the way resources are managed. Many Region 1 residents now hold key positions previously held by persons from the urban areas. Positions: Deputy Regional Executive Officer, District Education Officer, and Head Teachers of Schools. Amerindian leaders and others are now able to participate in the delivery of services in their communities and in practising entrepreneurship. This is primarily due to the fact that they have been able to access education and education of a better quality.

During 2010, a technical vocational training centre will be constructed at Mabaruma so that vocational training for young, especially out of school youths, will be available. There will be the extension of the Baramita Primary School which falls within the Matarkai subregion of Region 1. There will be the completion of the distant education models for Cyril Potter College of Education (C.P.C.E.) Secondary School Academic Certificate Programme. Of course, our Education For All Fast-Track Initiative (E.F.A./F.T.I.) programme which is focused on institutional strengthening for schools will continue. These are all developments in the area of education.

Another important variable, when one talks about development, is the health care system. I want to deal a little on that. There is a saying that: “the wealth of a nation resides in the health of a nation.” Undoubtedly, a healthy nation is one of the prerequisites for the development of our country. Our country has, through the Ministry of Health and the Regional Democratic Council of the Barima-Waini Region, been working towards a stronger regional health care system, fully cognisant that the upgrading of the health services, especially when one recalls its run down state in 1992, when the Guyanese people mandated us through the electoral

process to bring about positive changes to their lives, will take time and require much funding. During 2009 we spent \$178.9 million on the current programme and \$32.5 million under the capital programme, a total of \$211.5 million or 19.6% of our Regional Budget in upgrading the health services. We have built health huts, we have rehabilitated health huts and we went as far as way up in the Barama River.

I mention this to let you be aware of the spread when we deal with development in the Region, and the cost and the extent to which we will go to bring services to our people - provision of outboard engine and boat to do outreaches into the villages of the Barama River, N.C.H. (Northwest Community Hospital) vaccines, cold storage at Kwabanna and Kariako. We have intensified medical training in order to improve human resource capabilities of health personnel; public health education, even at the level of the school, under the Ministry of Health Integration Management of Childhood Diseases. This required workers to visit schools to perform certain screening activities. In the process, efforts were also focused on encouraging people to make lifestyle changes. A lot of work was also done in the H.I.V./A.I.D.S fight, taking it to the community and the school. In the area of malaria, outreaches, use of impregnated bed nets, partnership arrangements with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the miners, the loggers and the farmers... As a result of all these efforts, malaria has been under some control over the past six years, hindered only by low water levels in some far areas.

Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology Programme (M.C.H. EPI.) has achieved 97% of its target, a great increase from the 72% of 2008. There was some mention of the Mabaruma Hospital. Well, it has been completed. Yes, the hospital boasts four expanded wards, thirty-six beds for inpatients, an x-ray department that is operational, and other supporting departments. Yes, some minor surgeries were successfully done during 2009. During 2010, we will double our efforts, our allocation has increased, we will continue to construct and rehabilitate health facilities going out into the far reaches like Baramita and Kwabanna. Indeed, \$15 million will be used to construct a nurses' hostel at Port Kaituma which is an area that we have been accused of neglecting.

I need to deal a little on the physical infrastructure – roads and bridges – especially the roads. Our Government has been spending quite a lot of money to repair roads and bridges. In fact, we have spent over \$40 million in the Moruka subregion: shaping, grading, repairing roads; \$30 million in the presidential grant, in the Mabaruma area and, may I say also Madam, in the

Matarkai subregion. Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (G.G.M.C.) has also made a significant allocation as we do extensive work on the roads of that subregion.

8.00 p.m.

Therefore, I was disappointed to hear the Hon. Member speak of neglect of road maintenance in the area. In fact, quite apart from the \$30-odd million that we have spent, the National Democratic Council (N.D.C.) in the Matarkai subregion has been allowed to collect tolls which could be used to assist with the maintenance of those roads and it has not been doing so. May I say to this House that the Chairman of that N.D.C. is a former Regional Democratic Council (R.D.C.) Councillor, P.N.C./R. R.D.C. Councillor, the Vice Chairman of the said Council, is a member of the P.N.C./R., so I find it hard to understand that whilst our Government has made significant resources available for the rehabilitation of roads in the Matarkai subregion, that N.D.C. did not consider it important enough to vote sums from its allocation for rehabilitation of roads in that subregion.

In terms of the Jialing Company, one would have thought that the Vice Chairman of the N.D.C., who accompanied the Hon. Leader of the Opposition on their roll-in, roll-out trip to the Matarkai subregion, a few weeks ago, would have drawn attention to the fact that there is arrangement between the R.D.C. and the N.D.C., and Jialing Company, whereby the company does not pay a toll, but it is responsible for maintaining 30 kilometres of that roadway. We need to correct that. We need to understand that there is an arrangement between the R.D.C. and the Jialing Company, under which the company does not pay a fee, but does maintenance of the road.

Electricity and water: May I deal briefly with those? During 2009, the Region and Guyana Water Incorporated (G.W.I.) did rehabilitation of the water supply plant at Port Kaituma and Mabaruma. There was construction of water storage facilities in a number of villages, including Whitewater and Santa Rosa. There was installation in Yarikita Village of 105/125 watt systems. In the Wauna area, there was the installation of a 3,300 watt system for the purpose of roasting peanuts. During 2010 the intention is to provide more solar unit systems for a number of villages in the Region, including villages like Sebai, Red Hill, Hobodia, Four Miles, and from that you will note that some of those villages also fall within the Matarkai subregion.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, our Government has recognised and, so too, have our Hinterland people, that integral to Government's efforts to enhance the quality of life in the Hinterland communities is the development of projects that focus on supporting and pursuing the diversification, and development of additional produce and products in order to reduce dependency on a few primary commodities. It is part of our drive to promote food security and self-reliance, and eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture have been working together in a National Secure Livelihood Programme, launched during 2009 in fifteen villages in the Region. Among the projects which are presently being implemented are the cultivation of forty acres of passion and citrus fruits in the Mabaruma subregion, and towards this end, thirty-one farmers are involved in seven villages.

There is also a fish and crab farming project in a number of riverine communities. Sixteen farmers have been involved in clearing of land, in construction of crab pens, and in fact, may I say that already some work has been done in testing the market for these crabs, because 120 crates were sold as a test in Georgetown with a profit of \$61,000. It has been determined that the market potential is 1000 crates per week.

There is also the honey project that targets four villages, forty-seven participants, and so far four bee hives have been built, and during 2010 it is planned that a further 650 will be built. Quite apart from that, we have targeted projects in areas such as ginger, cassava and pineapple. The idea is to assist our people, our farmers, to develop already existing activities and to take them to a next level.

The Presidential Grant: This project has allowed our Amerindian villages to be able to take decisions, to make choices as to what they would like to do with resources made available to them, of course with guidance, with advice, at the level of the Ministry. May I say that, to date, a number of Amerindian villages – in fact thirty-eight villages – in Region 1 have been able to benefit from these projects. The projects vary from agriculture projects like poultry rearing to acquisition of transportation facilities so that they can take their produce to the market. Here, I refer to the acquisition of tractors, outboard engines. The projects also include the construction of village shops, especially in the far-flung areas so that they can have goods and services available as and when they need them.

My friends, I have examined, briefly, a number of areas in which there have been tremendous investments, in which there have been quite a lot of significant activities all geared towards

providing more goods and services to our people in the Hinterland area, with the primary objective of improving their standard of living. In the process of course there were challenges. In the process of course there were some difficulties, but we were able to work together to overcome these difficulties.

Some people assess, the P.P.P./C. on the basis of its performance as a Government, and not as the Opposition does, on the basis of raucous, reckless, unsubstantiated attacks. Our development model is based on a New Global Human Order which places people first. The 2010 National Budget provides opportunity for accelerated development. We in Hinterland Regions, like the Barima-Waini Region, are happy to be part of this development. Together we can and must consolidate, transform and sustain this development. We will not be distracted or diverted as our Hon. Minister of Finance pointed out from the task of working together to build our country. I, unreservedly, offer my support for this 2010 Budget, confident that the P.P.P./C. will continue to navigate us along the route of peace, progress, prosperity and commitment and I advise that this Budget...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Time Hon. Member. Are you winding up?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the Hon. Member be given another 5 minutes to conclude his presentation.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Whittaker: Thank you very much, because I want in these five minutes to deal with some other issues which were raised by the Hon. Member Mr. Fernandes. I would wish to use that time to deal with the issues raised by the Hon. Member.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, the issue of fuel and the GUYOIL station: The Hon. Member would appreciate that there were discussions between the Regional Democratic Council and the Private Sector in the Region with a view to having them investigate the feasibility of getting into the fuel business at Morawhanna. A number of bids were submitted and I wish to inform the House that these bids are presently being looked at.

Roads in need of repair: The R.D.C. has spent over \$100 million during 2009 to rehabilitate roads in all three subregions. We wish to... and I have spoken with the Regional Chairman with the intent that he discusses with the Matarkai N.D.C. so that it can use significant sums from the funds generated by way of toll to assist in the maintenance of those roads just like

the Mabaruma N.D.C. has been doing. It has used its \$3 million subvention to do road works in the Mabaruma subregion and there is no reason why the Matarkai N.D.C. should not do that. Efforts are being made to have that N.D.C. account for road tolls that it would have received.

In addition, in terms of Livestock Officer: there are five Extension Agents, one Veterinary Surgeon and one Livestock Officer currently operating in the Region. We also have a Fisheries Officer in place at Mabaruma. A Marketing Officer has been sent to the area and arrangements have been put in place for the livestock staff to visit Moruka, Arakaka, Matthews Ridge, Port Kaituma and the other villages around. The Veterinary Surgeon is also doing follow-up visits in other nearby villages. In short my friends, the Officers have been reaching out to all parts of the Region as and when they are needed, and as resources are available.

I also wish to point out to the Hon. Member Mr. Fernandes, contrary to the information that he presented to the House, there is no problem of significant understaffing in the schools in the Matarkai subregion and that matter is being addressed. Probably, there is a problem of communication in that area.

In conclusion, I would wish to suggest that it may be a good thing when having these visits proper arrangements are made so that the Hon. Opposition Leader could meet with the right people in the right places, and get the right answers that he is looking for. In concluding, I wish to advise this House that the 2010 National Budget, as presented in this National Assembly, does offer much in terms of resources, and in terms of opportunities for development for the people, not only in the urban areas of Guyana, but also in the Hinterland areas. It is part of a concerted effort to close the gap...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Time.

Mr. Whittaker: ...and I invite you to support it. [Applause]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, we have one final speaker for this evening, and with the concurrence of the two Whips I think we will go straight through and then take a break, rather than break now. So I call on the Rev. Kwame Gilbert.

Rev. Gilbert: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a delight for me to join my colleagues this evening, in first congratulating the Hon. Dr. Ashni Singh, the Minister of Finance, on his

preparation and presentation of a very ambitious, yet practical Budget, and also to make my contribution to this Debate.

I have often times wondered as to the real purpose for these Debates regarding the National Budget. I had assumed that the intention, at least from this side of the House, was to convince the Opposition of Government's commitment to the people and the development of our country. But I have realised that convincing the Opposition is not necessary because the Members are already convinced, and listening to some of the earlier presentations made, I am further convinced that they are going through the motion of the Debate, because, of course, that is what is expected of them from their constituents. At least from this side of the House, we approach this Debate not with the intention of convincing anyone, rather, because our vision is much broader, and that is because we recognise that we have a commitment to be as transparent as possible to the nation that we serve.

This Budget that is presented under the theme, *Consolidate, Transform and Sustain*, and there is, in these words, a recognition of past accomplishments, present responsibilities and future aspirations. In order to fully appreciate the past accomplishments of this Government, one must, of necessity, consider the wider global realities and their consequential impacts upon smaller developing nations such as ours. I will not seek to educate our learned friends of these considerations because I am sure they are well aware. But to suggest that, as a nation, we have made no progress, seen no development and made no accomplishments is absurd. We are not where we want to be and we on this side of the House will be the first to admit that, but neither are we where we used to be, and the Opposition should be the first to admit that, as well. The achievements of this Government are the achievements of the people of Guyana, and in light of our unique and very difficult historical realities, there is much that we can, and should be thankful for. In heeding the caution of Dr. Singh, we must see the occasion not to celebrate, but rather to consolidate, strengthen and sustain our achievements as a nation.

The various subject Ministers throughout this Debate will seek to enlighten this National Assembly on the numerous developmental undertakings that they have successfully completed throughout the country. Therefore, I will not assume to take responsibility for anything, sectorally or geographically, which has not been allocated to me. But permit me to bring to the attention of this House what I consider to be significant major allocations which have been made in this Budget.

The Government of Guyana has allocated, and this has been brought out in many of the earlier presentations, some \$21.4 billion dollars for continued development of the education sector as compared to \$20.4 billion in 2009. This is a significant allocation. It is rather interesting that prior to my coming into this National Assembly, I would not say that I was disillusioned, I held the view, and I still hold the view, that the business of the National Assembly was treated with a degree of sobriety, because we understood the nature of what we do here; and that the people of this country expect us to treat their welfare with a level of sobriety and commitment, and seriousness. While I understand the culture that obtains here, which is one where we heckle and so on, I rather suspect that very often many of our people are disappointed in the way those of us who have been chosen by them, to represent them, the way we represent the seriousness of their matter. What we do here, and what we are going here over these next few days, in these Debates, will determine in a large way the quality of life that our people will enjoy.

Let me go back to what I was saying. The vital focus on education by virtue of the significant allocation that has been made and the increase in allocation over this past year must be seen in the light of where we stand globally, if not regionally, where education is concerned. With 8.3% of our G.D.P. spent on education, Guyana sits with Cuba, Iceland, Denmark and Botswana as being among the few countries with top spending on education. Guyana is one of the highest ranked developing countries in the Education Index of the United Nations Human Development Report with a score of 0.943 on the human index. Our overall is thirty-seven; third in the Caribbean after Cuba and Barbados, and second in South America after Argentina. This is significant considering that our neighbours Trinidad comes in at ninety-one, and Suriname at ninety-five, and that represents how serious the Government of Guyana takes the education of its people.

The returns on Government's Fiscal Policy with regards to education have been very encouraging, and we continue to see increased enrolment rates, both at the primary and secondary levels. There has been a consistent increase in the National Grade Six Assessment completion rates, and this is of great personal importance and encouragement as well to me, by virtue of the fact, that I have been becoming increasingly concerned with the fact that there seems to be a trend of a disengagement of mostly our boys at the secondary level. This represents, I believe, a crisis and we are confident that with the development of the education policy in our country, we are going to see an improvement in that regard. The Education Ministry has done successfully, and this has been elaborated on in greater details by some of

the speakers before me and therefore it is not necessary for me to go into that, but just for the purpose of establishing the value that we place on education, completion of the construction, rehabilitation and extension of several primary, nursery and secondary schools and the training of over 5000 teachers from 2002 to the present.

Again I repeat, it would be, and by virtue of the fact that I am a man of faith and I hold my religion and my faith very dear to my heart, very hypocritical for me to stand here in this House, because God is my Judge and my conscience will judge me, and say that we have the best of situations in this country. It would be wrong and hypocritical for me to say that we have a perfect environment existing in this country. It is not so.

It is interesting, however, that we are very quick to point out the failures without recognising that we have a concomitant responsibility to recognise when improvements are made, even if they are not as significant as we perceive them to be; because every one of us will have to give an account, and I remember President Obama saying in his inaugural address in response to the Islamist Extremist world that: “Our children will judge us. They will judge us not just for the things we have built but, also for what we have destroyed.” We have also seen the establishment of close to a dozen learning-research centres in the Hinterland Regions and the training of Hinterland teachers through onsite and distance education, and a provision of incentives to attract and retain teachers in Hinterland schools. Also of great value to the longevity of quality education is the indication made by the Minister in his presentation, the fact that Government intends to train more than 2000 teachers in the area of I.C.T., which is a critical consideration if education in Guyana will meet the challenges on a 21st century labour market.

I want to consider Mdm. Deputy Speaker, albeit not in any great detail, Government’s continuous efforts in tackling many of the social problems, but specifically as it relates to gender based violence. Domestic violence continues to be a nightmare for all of us, considering that recent trends tend to suggest an increased level of fatalities. Every study that has been done, specific to Guyana, recognises that the solution lies in the multifaceted, multi-sectoral approach. To this end Government has consistently engaged N.G.O.s, Faith-Based Organisations (F.B.O.s) and many such social partners in pursuing a comprehensive solution to this problem. The Ministry of Human Services through the Domestic Violence Policy Unit continues to pursue various engagements and initiative in seeking to address this issue. The magnitude and impact of domestic violence upon a small population such as ours provoke a

certain kind of impatience and even intolerance at any delay in immediate results. This is understandable. We all want to see this behavioural blight eradicated from our society, but may I remind this House, that not so far in our distant past, this very August body passed the Domestic Violence Act, representing another of Government's initiative towards a solution.

The Domestic Violence Act is generally acclaimed as progressive and comprehensive, and adequately provides for all areas relevant to such a sensitive issue, including the rights of all parties directly or indirectly involved or affected. The Domestic Violence Act is designed to be consumer-friendly and there is provision for the procedure to be swift and definite. Victims of domestic violence, male or female, have the right to seek protection, occupation or tenancy orders.

9.30 p.m.

It must be noted that Guyana has created history in designating a National Men's Week; an initiative aimed at sensitising men of their responsibilities to their families and nation; and one which is unprecedented in the Caribbean - all in an attempt to address the issue of domestic violence.

There has been on many occasions public outcry on the modus operandi of the Guyana Police Force in the handling of domestic violence matters. While I cannot safely conclude that we have arrived at a place of public comfort, an improvement in the way the Police have been dealing with domestic violence cases is evident at some stations, particularly with regard to collaboration with N.G.O.s and other agencies. A recent informal survey of twenty police stations by Help and Shelter found twelve with at least one Police Officer who is trained in domestic violence issues, seven with places where persons reporting domestic violence could be interviewed privately, and that others understood the need for privacy and are making efforts to accommodate this. Again I stress, these are all steps in the right direction. Indeed, many activists pointed to the work being done to improve the Police response to domestic violence as an area in which progress is evident.

The Social Work Department of the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation also provides counselling for patients seeking treatment for physical manifestations of domestic violence. These include bruises, broken bones, lacerations, and manifestations of neglect such as dehydration and attempted suicide. Just to stick a quick point here, the Public Hospital has been coming in for a lot of flak and for a lot of criticism, and I believe that we have a

responsibility, when the Government has been investing as much as it has in health care, to demand the best kind of service. One of the things we seem to forget is that, on a comparative basis, what is expended in our country on health care, as compared to many other countries in the world, and some of the health delivery services, and with regard to the expediency of some of these, I am not quite sure if many of our people understand that while we are not where we want to be... I have had the opportunity of attempting to seek medical attention, not for myself, but a relative of mine, out of Guyana, and spent in excess of 10 hours... I am not suggesting that it is acceptable by any standard, but I believe that on any given day, and as the records are there to show the public information campaign may not have been as effective as it should have been. But I believe we must give recognition to the efforts that are being made to provide health care services at the public hospital in Georgetown. Are we where we want to be? Again I say we are not, but these are steps in the right direction.

So at the inter-sectoral level there is a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of domestic violence. The Hon. Manzoor Nadir last evening, made reference to the fact that a significant increase of 14% to the Human Services Ministry will allow for the continuation and expansion of many of the social programmes, including the day care voucher subsidising the cost of childcare, the provision of child-friendly job training for single parents, amongst others.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, in my capacity as a religious community worker, I am very much aware of the rather difficult circumstances facing many single-parent headed families. The needs are great. I want to submit that even the \$50 million that has been allocated in this year's Budget for addressing that may very well be inadequate. Again, it is a step in the right direction. From my understanding of the division of the Ministry of Human Services, the intent is that these women would be empowered sufficiently, that they can be better positioned to benefit from greater economic opportunities. I will not seek to venture into adumbrations in other sectoral issues with which I do not hold the great familiarity except to say that when one locates the progress of Guyana with an understanding of our socio-economic history we should not celebrate, even though we can, but we should be extremely proud.

One in every five people in the world, more than one billion people, still live on less than one dollar a day. More than 40% of our world's population constitutes in effect a global

underclass which is faced daily with the reality or threat of extreme poverty. Even as I speak of poverty, it must be borne in mind that it does not by any means suggest to you the absence of economic and financial resources. Poverty must also be understood as a dearth of fruitful, rich thoughts and ideas. As citizens of our beautiful country, in the midst of our very challenging economic times, we are still encouraged to cultivate fruitful, rich thoughts and ideas - ideas which must be nurtured and cultivated in the spirit of nationhood and patriotism.

I believe that we have a responsibility to provide the basic, and beyond the basic necessities, for our citizens that which as a Government we been mandated to provide. But in the midst of all of this, we have a responsibility also to keep hope alive in the hearts of our people. The more we continue to decry genuine efforts; the more we continue to suggest that the sky is falling down, and tomorrow is going to be a black day, we continue to create a spirit of hopelessness in the hearts of our people. Therefore, we encourage them to dream, to hope, to aspire.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker, permit me before I conclude, to leave with this August body the words of Moses, who said that:

“If we as a nation would remember to honour God, He has promised to set our nation high above the other nations of the earth; and that all blessing shall come upon us; and that he shall bless the fruit of the ground and the fruit of our cattle; and he shall bless the basket in our storehouse.”

This represents our national treasury.

“Blessed shall we be when we come in and when we go out.”

Therefore, I suggest in these final words, that Guyana is blessed, and the success of our Government represents the success of our nation. Therefore, with these words, I do commend this Budget to this Hon. House. Thank you. [Applause]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, this concludes our business for today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Deputy Speaker, I move that the House be adjourned until tomorrow at 2.00 p.m.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: The Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

Adjourned accordingly at 9.39 p.m.