

Official Report

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

3RD Sitting

Thursday, 16TH February, 2012

Assembly convened at 2.09 p.m.

PRAYERS

[Mdm. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

REPORT ON SUBMISSION OF AUDITOR'S GENERAL REPORT

Mr. Greenidge: I rise to offer personal explanation arising from a report carried in today's *Guyana Chronicle* newspaper concerning the question of the submission of the Auditor General's Report. I would just like to draw the attention of the Members of the House to the fact that the report suggested that somehow I had been party to an attempt, or an exercise, which breached the Constitution. I will just like to draw the House's attention to the Constitution, article 223 (3) which deals with the office and functions of the Auditor General, and it is brief. If you do not mind, I will just read to you the sentence. It states that "The Auditor General shall submit his reports to the Speaker of the National Assembly, who shall cause them to be laid before the National Assembly."

I believe that the terminology here was satisfied in its entirety in the exercise we undertook the other day. Thank you. I thank you for the floor, Mdm. Deputy Speaker.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much Mr. Greenidge.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTIONS

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 7/2011

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 7/2011 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the (Current and Capital) Estimates totalling \$2,240,901,071 - Advances made from the Contingencies Fund for the period 2011-10-25 to 2011-12-31.”

[Minister of Finance]

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Let the Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 7 of 2011.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]: Mdm. Chairperson, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the National Assembly the motion for the approval of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 7/2011 – Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$2,240,901,071 and I now move the motion.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Members we will proceed item by item. We are looking at Financial Paper No. 7/2011. For the benefit of the new Members - there are many new Members here - we will go through, as I said, Financial Paper No. 7; we will start with Current Estimates, item by item. I will first of all propose the question and, at that stage, if there are any questions that is when Members must stand and ask their questions, and please remember, as we all know, both sides of the House, or all sides of the House, are so entitled.

CURRENT ESTIMATES

**Item 1 01-012 Office of the President - Presidential Advisory (Cabinet and Other Services)
- \$25,500,000**

Mr. Scott: Office of the President, I notice that eight million dollars was voted and actually spent for awards. The previous year sixteen million dollars was actually used. Last year there was a request for twenty-five million dollars. This is 193.5 per cent increase. I do not know if the awards are now three times as many as they were the previous year. But can you say what are the justifications for this large increase in the awards cost? Does this not reflect a lack of effective planning as well?

Mdm. Chairperson: It would be helpful if we ask one question at a time.

Mr. Scott: The original one stands.

Mdm. Chairperson: No. I am just saying that many people are new here. This is not an exam; we are going to be as flexible and as fair as possible. The question is on the floor. Who from the Government side will answer?

Minister in the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]: National Awards were not given out for the past five years. As a result, they were not budgeted for in the 2011 budget and, because of the hiatus for five years, that year there were a one hundred and thirty-one national awards being offered, which was quite a larger number.

Ms. Ally: Agency code 01- 012, I would like to ask: Could the Hon. Minister provide some explanations and details as to the expenses associated with the national awards and could he further state why those were not planned for in the 2011 budget?

Bishop Edghill: The expenditure associated with the preparation and actual hosting of the investiture ceremony was just over ten million dollars.

Mdm. Chairperson: I recognise Mr. Ramjattan. Ms. Ally, I will come back to you because I did call Mr. Ramjattan name and he is already on his feet.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Minister kindly indicate at what point in time last year the urgency of having the conferment of national award took place? As you see, Mdm. Chairperson, I just want to make it clear, section 41 of the...**[Mr. Lumumba:** That is a stupid question.] It is not a

stupid question, please. Mdm. Chairperson, the Minister must, before he would have done any Contingencies Fund proposal like this, satisfy that it was an urgent, unavoidable and unforeseen need for this expenditure. I am asking the Minister, since January last year they did not cater for conferment that is why there was no provision, when of last year this urgency arose?

Bishop Edghill: The process for the consultation for the award of national awards started since 2010. It was concluded in 2011. Those announcements were made and the awards were then offered.

Mdm. Chairperson: Is it a supplementary question?

Mr. Ramjattan: That is right. To whom were the amounts paid, this twenty-five million dollars?

Bishop Edghill: The Hon. Member is assuming that the entire twenty-five million dollars was spent on national awards when I have already stated to the Assembly that the cost for preparation and actual hosting of the investiture ceremony was just over ten million dollars.

Mr. Ramjattan: No.

Bishop Edghill: And that had to do with one hundred and thirty-one awards being prepared and the actual activity, where there were two thousand persons invited, which was hosted at the National Cultural Centre.

Mr. Greenidge: The request that is before us is for an additional amount of twenty-five million dollars. We have been given an explanation concerning ten million dollars of the twenty-five million dollars, and question that was asked about the time the decision was taken has not been answered. It is relevant because in September the Minister submitted a request for Contingencies Fund, and if at that time he was aware that the amounts available under the head would not be sufficient then this House should have been informed. So the question is: Can we have a detailed breakdown of the expenditures associated with the twenty-five million dollars and a proper explanation as to why this request is being made at this point in time as opposed to September or earlier in the year?

Bishop Edghill: I will answer the question as it relates to the twenty-five million dollars. The investiture ceremony cost just over ten million dollars. There was the swearing in of the new

President and the swearing of the Cabinet which cost just over five million dollars; a cost that was associated with two national sports, which are cricket and football, which were held at the Guyana National Stadium. That cost was approximately \$1.8 million, and donations to a number of organisations came up to approximately eight million dollars.

Mr. Greenidge: I would like to say that the explanation is not really satisfactory, whilst we have been given figures for the twenty-five million dollars. I think what would have been more helpful would have been to know what proportion of the previous amount, which was voted, was spent on those. In other words, was ten million dollars the total sum spent on the investiture? Or was an amount that was part of the \$8.6 million, as shown here, also spent on the investiture? The question has to do with whether those expenditures could have been unforeseen as stated in the law governing these Contingencies Fund. I notice the Minister has failed to answer the question about timing.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, are you prepared to answer the question? We know that there is a convention that the Minister cannot be compelled, but I do have a duty, and a responsibility, to enquire of the Minister whether he is prepared to answer.

Bishop Edghill: Mdm. Chairperson, at this stage I am not prepared to answer that.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Is the Minister aware, bearing in mind the answer just given, or a non answer, of the provisions of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act of 2003, as amended, section 41 (5):

“The Minister shall report at the next sitting of the National Assembly on all advances made out of the Contingencies Fund since the previous report of the Minister, which report shall specify -...”

The word “shall” is mandatory.

“(a) the amount advanced;

(b) to whom the amounts were paid;...”

That question was asked and not answered.

“... and

(c) the purpose of the advances.”?

Is the Minister aware of this provision of the Act of Parliament?

Bishop Edghill: Mdm. Chairperson, I am aware.

Mdm. Chairperson: The Hon. Member is aware.

Question put.

Hon. Members (Government): Division.

Mr. Hinds: I withdraw.

Mdm. Chairperson: The Hon. Prime Minister has withdrawn his request for a division. It is my ruling that the noes appear to have it; and I so rule.

Question put and negatived.

Item 2 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister - Prime Minister’s Secretariat - \$1,200,000, 2,750,000, 1, 533, 700, 000

Mdm. Chairperson: Just bear with me one minute please. Members, I want to remind you that if you want to stand, on either side of the House, please stand. I cannot recognise you unless you stand.

Mr. Scott: The Prime Minister’s vehicle...and I notice in the line of loads that it is one vehicle that is involved here, the period of time is two months, and the Prime Minister had asked for \$1.2 million for fuel. What extra work and travelling did the Prime Minister do locally that would require his vehicle to use \$1.2 million in fuel for two months?

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]: The vehicle has only been used in doing the work it ought to do. You may notice, Mdm. Chairperson, and other Members may have noticed, that I have been using, as a backup, a 4x4 with one blue lamp on it. Members may recall earlier that the Prime Minister’s escort normally has a fully equipped vehicle behind with lights at the top and a horn, and so on. As it happened, towards the end of

2010, that vehicle went down for maintenance and it was subsequently ruled, towards the beginning of 2011, that it was not economical to restore it. So we are waiting for it to be replaced as a capital item. The difference here is that the vehicle which is the normal backup vehicle is provided by the President's Guards and comes under their charging system, so that throughout 2011 we were carrying two vehicles at a time, in terms of fuel and lubricants, instead of one vehicle. From this heading, we were carrying two vehicles, both the vehicle which I sit in and the vehicle which is the backup vehicle.

Mr. Greenidge: I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's explanation. It does appear that the planning in this particular case was faulty, because if you have the vehicle you must have planned to fill it with fuel. Fuel prices I do not think would have risen for the Prime Minister's vehicle as opposed to anyone else's.

But may I say that in relation to the...Sorry, you are not yet ready for the other item, Mdm. Chairperson.

I think if what the Prime Minister said is accurate then it suggests that they have not properly planned for... Why did he not adequately plan for the vehicles available to him to be fuelled? That is the question.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, before we proceed, I just want to remind you that at item 2 there are three charts of accounts - 6231, 6265 and 6321. As we are under item 2, Members should feel free to ask questions on anyone of those three that falls within it. I just want to make that clear. Hon. Prime Minister, do you want to respond?

Mr. Hinds: Yes. I was going to respond and say, as I said just now, that the backup vehicle which is supplied by the President's Guards went down late in 2010 and then, sometime early in 2011, it was deemed that it was not economical to replace it and I filled the gap with another vehicle. I have been filling the gap with another vehicle that is on the Office of the Prime Minister's (OPM) list of vehicles and so it has had to be fuelled and lubrication supplied, and any other things, from the OPM's account. If the backup vehicle was being supplied by the President's Guards then those charges would not have been on this account.

Mr. Greenidge: In the event that advice is needed on the choice of cars, I can do that, but I am understanding, from the Prime Minister, that two cars were available to his office in both years, and in this particular case we are looking at a supplementaries requested for the period September to the end of the year. It is only three months and the Prime Minister is using two vehicles in two years, and in the second year the additional quantum required is a little less than fifty per cent more than the expenditure in the first year. The arithmetic does not make sense. Okay. May I put a query on the second one...?

Mdm. Chairperson: No. We have to go one by one. If not, we will have confusion. I sense that the Hon. Prime Minister does not wish to continue to engage on this head. Hon. Prime Minister, should I then ask you, formally, whether...? If I am inaccurate, please correct me. But please do not let it be said that I am trying to twist your hand.

Ms. Ally, do you want to ask a question? We are still on item 2 and, as I said, Members from either side of the House are free to ask questions.

Ms. Ally: Specifically to line item 6265: Could the Hon. Minister indicate whether these visits to the Hinterland were associated with electioneering purposes? And if no, please state what were the purposes of those visits?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, as it happened, 2010 was a year of substantial rainfall and a lot of the activities that I manage in the Hinterland - Hinterland roads and rural electrification - were greatly constrained in that year, and so in 2011 we did have quite a lot of catching up to do. The Hon. Member before me made reference, on another account, I think at the Office of the President, to the expenditure of the previous year, and I would say that if you look back at this account in 2010 you would see we just spent \$1.34 million instead of the budgeted \$ 3.3 million. So we have started 2011 with quite a lot of projects behind time and we needed to hurry those projects up and get them done. So I can say, yes, that those trips were to further Hinterland roads and rural electrification and also to inspect the situation in mining in the Hinterland.

Mr. Greenidge: Is the Prime Minister saying that he was aware that those activities would have had to be carried out and yet they were not budgeted for?

Mr. Hinds: I may have to agree a bit with the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge in that...

2.39 p.m.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Prime Minister, could I remind Members of the House that this is the... well I do not know how long the maiden speech will go on, but in regard to any new Member standing to ask questions and who is now in the House for the first time... but then we are all new, I suppose. Hon. Prime Minister, could you bear with me and be seated for a minute. Members... *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Lawrence: Mdm. Chairperson, I rise in this House to ask that the Members give the same respect to you as they did to the previous Speaker. I find it very disturbing that you are speaking to the House and Members are carrying on in their own way disturbing us from hearing what you are saying. They are showing no respect for the Chair.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Mr. Prime Minister, before you rise... *[Interruption]* Members, I am on the floor. Mr. Odinga Lumumba, I am on the floor.

Mr. Lumumba: Mdm. Chairperson, I have been silent.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Lumumba: Thank you Madam.

Mdm. Chairperson: I had hoped that with my chairing the National Assembly it would be somewhat quieter. I wanted to make a general suggestion that for the new Members who are here, we give them some little leeway. When the Hon. Bishop Edghill or any other new Member is asking a question, he or she will be a bit nervous. Mr. Greenidge will be a bit nervous. We should give new Members that opportunity to settle in. We have five years together. Could I invite the Hon. Prime Minister to continue?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson. I was saying that maybe for once that I can agree to a little extent with the Hon. Member who put the question. I would say that in trying to get those things done day by day during 2010 and getting into 2011, I did not realise the amount of backlog that we had to get done. Mdm. Chairperson, you know that we had to hurry up, for very good reasons, and get all the roads and electricity in place. That is it.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Prime Minister. We are still on item 2.

Mr. Ramjattan: Chart of Account 6321: could the Minister please indicate to whom the amount - \$1,533,700,000 – was paid?

Mr. Hinds: It was moneys paid to the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) and it helped the company to cover its increased fuel cost – the \$1billion - and the remainder was paid to Lethem Power Company Inc. and it also helped that company to cover its increased fuel cost.

Mr. Scott: Mdm. Chairperson, I am seeing that \$1 billion in fuel for GPL. Of course we still have blackouts. In 2010, we spent about \$70 million and in 2011, we spent about \$100 million. So the increase is about \$30 million. But to now jump to \$1 billion, I would expect the Prime Minister to explain to us how much more efficient GPL has become and what he has bought with that money.

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, the GPL generation is pretty efficient. It meets the specifications of the manufacturers. The issue is that oil prices have increased quite a lot since we last had a tariff increase. The Government has been supporting the customers of GPL. We say that we supplement GPL here with \$1 billion but, in fact, this money went to subsidise charges which the customers of GPL should have been meeting. The customers should have been meeting the costs of running the system, but because we have been thinking that there would be a significant impact on the very many hundred and forty thousand customers who might find it difficult, we have been constraining the price increases even less than what the formulation allows. However, the gap still has to be made up; the fuel still has to be paid for. Suppliers threatened not to load boats and even to hold them up so we have had to support GPL to cover the increase in fuel costs.

Mr. Ramjattan: The voted provision was just \$100 million Hon. Prime Minister, so what necessitated not planning for, after appropriating just \$100 million, \$1.5 billion during the months of September to December?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, it is the way things happen – the timing of it: the new price for electricity is calculated in January and there is a procedure. The prices that are being realised in the market as the time goes by should also be noted. One does not want to rush from the beginning and put large sums which may not be materialised and we may want to hold still the possibility of taking some of it in increased tariffs. So because of those timing considerations, we

would not have put this sum in at the time of the beginning of the Budget. We have tended to follow rather than be in front of the support that is required for electricity consumers; the support we must make to GPL on behalf of the customers of corporation.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, for a moment I thought that when the Prime Minister hesitated over the first part of the word “electricity” – “elec” – he was going to say something about elections in relation to this increase in expenditure. I look, with some concern, at the quantum of this request and...

Mdm. Chairperson: Are we on chart of account 6321?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson we are on the same one he spoke about a moment ago. I would like to know the conditions under which this transfer was made. What was required in return from GPL - an entity that showed a profit in 2010 - for a transfer of this size? And in return for this subsidy, did the Government require of GPL any improvement in its efficiency such as in relation to line loss? The amount is substantial. The Prime Minister seems to be suggesting that he was following events rather than anticipating them and that harks back to the answer to the previous question – poor planning. In this particular instance, I am saying that for us to be sure that it is not going to happen again, were there any conditions attached to GPL for the amount made available?

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Chairperson, the big problems in GPL have been, I agree, hinted by the Hon. Member, the technical and commercial losses, and I can say that we have been addressing them. The technical loss requires significant investments. At this moment, there is an investment of some forty plus million and there are people who feel that it should be increased even more; a much bigger number is required, maybe even five times that initial \$40 million. There are people who believe so. The Government has not taken that position but there are consultants who believe there should be an additional five times of that money going into improving transmission and distribution. In the case of the other part – commercial losses – that has been dogging electricity in Guyana, maybe from when I first knew myself, maybe in the 1950s, hearing about the stealing of electricity all along. We have been trying various methods in curbing that. And in this Honourable House, not too long ago in the last Parliament, we increased the fines as well as the ability to send people to jail for stealing electricity and that sort of thing. It is not what we

would want to do, but, certainly, it is a challenge in our society. We have to stop stealing electricity because if for no other reason, we are being forced to consider approaches to reduce the theft of electricity which encourages even more costs. We are being forced to consider that and it will incur even more costs. We should know that every time we make investments, it translates into increases in revenues and tariffs. That is my answer.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you Hon. Prime Minister for such a fulsome explanation.

Mr. Ramjattan: At the time when the appropriation, Hon. Prime Minister, of \$100 million was voted on, were you or the authority aware that later on you would need to spend \$1.5 billion or in that vicinity? Was that foreseen?

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, had the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, taken the time to examine the Estimates for 2011, he would have seen, on page 386 of Volume 1, a breakdown of the \$100 million originally budgeted, and he would have observed that that \$100,000 million comprised and anticipated subsidy to the Lethem Power Company of \$70 million and an anticipated contribution to Mahdia and Port Kaituma in relation to anticipated electricity operations in those locations. At the time of the Budget, these are the sub items that were contemplated to be met under this sub-head and within the total of \$100 million. At that time, a particular world market price for fuel would have been prevailing and a particular world market price would have been assumed for the purposes of the Budget. Let us say, hypothetically, that that world market price was US\$80 per barrel. At that time, GPL's financial projections would have suggested that that company would have been able to finance its operations without the requirement of external support, without the requirement of a subsidy from the Government. So the Central Government's National Budget would not have included a subsidy for GPL. As the year would have progressed, the world market price for oil would have moved - and it did move - and would have increased indeed to as much as, at times, US\$126 or US\$127 per barrel for the entire world. In the case of GPL, with the passage of time, it was ascertained that GPL would be able to finance its operations up to a particular point in time, but would not be able to come to the end of the year and finance its operations without external support and without an adjustment to tariffs. As a result, Government made the determination that in order for GPL to have the financial capacity to meet the cost of its fuel bill which, incidentally, is in the vicinity of \$20 billion- so a subsidy of \$1.5 billion is really relatively speaking, a modest percentage of the total fuel bill.

Government would have made the determination that a subsidy of \$1.5 billion, roughly speaking, is required to be injected into GPL in order to ensure that that company is able to continue to provide services to the people of this country without an increase in tariffs. And that, Mdm. Chairperson, is the reason why this supplementary provision is sought.

In response to Mr. Greenidge's aside on whether fuel prices increased for GPL only...

Mdm. Chairperson: I did not hear Mr. Greenidge's aside but of course you are free...

Dr. Singh: I will have no difficulty ignoring Mr. Greenidge's aside.

Mdm. Chairperson: You are free to continue.

Dr. Singh: No. I have no difficulty ignoring Mr. Greenidge's aside. That, Mdm. Chairperson, is the reason why this item is now sought.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what the price of oil was when the Government appropriated only \$100 million and at what point it rose so much that it had to make a subsidy of \$1.5 billion?

Dr. Singh: I will indicate with pleasure Mdm. Chairperson. The Guyana Power and Light Inc. uses two types of fuel – diesel and heavy fuel oil. In the case of diesel, in 2010 the average was US\$73 per barrel; in 2011 it was US\$98 per barrel, an increase of almost 25%. It is now in the vicinity of US\$112 per barrel. In the case of light fuel oil or diesel, in 2010 the average was US\$97 per barrel; in 2011 the average was US\$136 per barrel, an increase of almost 40% in 2011 relative to 2012. This is publicly available information. Anybody who wants to come to the Parliament and make pretence of commenting on matters of national importance within a global context must surely be acquainted with these facts. Rising oil prices is a matter of global awareness!

Mr. Ramjattan: Agreed. With just 45% and 35% ...

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, please wait until I recognise you before you start to speak, lest I think it is someone else.

Mr. Ramjattan: Yes. Could the Hon. Minister indicate then, with a 25% increase in 2011 and a 43% in 2012, how come from \$100 million it is appropriated to \$1.5 billion?

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, the Hon. Member clearly has a difficulty paying attention. I said very clearly that at the time of the Budget a subsidy to GPL was not contemplated because GPL was expected to be able to finance its operations using its own revenue. And I also said clearly, Mdm. Chairperson, that GPL's fuel bill is in the vicinity of \$20 billion and a subsidy of \$1.5 billion on a fuel bill of \$20 billion is, in fact, less than the rate of increase on the world market with respect to world market prices. GPL generates revenues of its own that it uses to finance its operations. At the time of the budget, GPL's revenues were anticipated to be able to meet the cost of its operations, including its fuel bill. As a result, the \$100 million in the National Budget did not include a single dollar for GPL. This is simple. I do not see the difficulty in comprehending simple facts like these!

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member ... *[Interruption]* Hello! Dr. Singh, I will be grateful if when I am speaking everyone is quiet.

Dr. Singh: I apologise Madam.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. I wanted to protect you, Sir, and to suggest to you that there is no need to get so agitated. We do not want anyone taking ill.

Dr. Singh: I am only following your own good example, Mdm. Chairperson, when you were sitting opposite us.

Mdm. Chairperson: Women may have certain peculiarities that you may not have, Sir. I really want us all to leave here in the same health with which we came.

Members, I want to suggest that for clarity and unambiguity we take the three Charts of Accounts separately. We are still on item 2. I now, therefore, put that chart of account 6231 – fuel and lubricants – stand part of Financial Paper No. 7/2011.

Item 2 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister's Secretariat – 6231 - \$1,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

I now put that Chart of Account 6265 – Other Transport, Travel and Postage - stand part of Financial Paper No. 7/2011.

Division

[Interruption]

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, we are in a Division. Could I ask that the only person who speaks apart from the Clerk is the person whose name is being called? Thank you. Mr. Clerk, please proceed.

Ayes (39)

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Allicock

Mr. Jafarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Noes (24)

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kisson

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (Ret'd) Granger

Item 2 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister's Secretariat – 6265 - \$2,750,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

I now put that Chart of Account 6321 – Fuel and Lubricants - stand part of Financial Paper No. 7/2011.

Item 2 02-021 Office of the Prime Minister – Prime Minister's Secretariat – 6321 - \$1,533,700,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

3.09 p.m.

Item 3 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry Administration – Chart of Account: 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations – \$4,120,000

Mdm. Chairperson: I propose that Item 3 stands part of Financial Paper No. 7. Members I would like to remind you that we are going item by item. Please do not be slow, hesitant or afraid to stand.

Mr. Scott: Mdm. Chairman, a request for \$4.1 million for El Salvador, my question is how much whether I can be told how much of this actual money that was voted was sent to El Salvador.

Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]: Mdm. Speaker, this same amount, \$4,120,000, as indicated there Hon. Member Scott.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, can the Minister tell us whether in a previous Supplementary in 2010 a request was made for this item?

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: No, Hon. Member; that would have been Japan.

Mdm. Chairperson: That would have been where? I am sorry I did not get that.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: In 2010 that would have been for Japan.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you so much.

Mr. Greenidge: Amongst the Supplementary for 2011, Mdm. Chairperson, I am asking whether there was a previous request for assistance to El Salvador.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett: The answer is no, Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: I would like to remind persons that we are in the Committee of Supply, so the proper designation would be Mdm. Chairman. I see no one else.

Item 3 04-041 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry Administration – Chart of Account: 6322 – Subsidies and Contributions to International Organisations – \$4,120,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 4 16-161 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Amerindian Development – \$15,000,000

Mdm. Chairperson: Just to be clear Members, Item No. 4 like item No. 2 has more than one Charts of Account. Are we in favour of going through each chart of account or do we want to take it as a whole? Okay, as a whole.

Item 4 16-161 Ministry of Amerindian Affairs, Amerindian Development – \$15,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Item 5 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry Administration – Chart of Account: 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$206,000,000

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson could the Hon. Minister outline what maintenance of drainage and irrigation was done in preparation of the heavy rainfall?

Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]: Mdm. Chairperson, the allocation for 2011 for the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) was \$1,001,696,000. In the submission to the Ministry of Finance for this department, the Ministry of Agriculture had requested \$1.5 billion. We were not given that amount; we were given \$1.001 billion. In July, we had indicated to the Ministry of Finance that in anticipation of the recess and the possible corrugation of Parliament that we would need a supplementary of \$410 million to take us to the end of the year. The activities would include ensuring that of all the pumps were working, making sure that there is fuel and lubricants, etcetera. The Ministry of Finance in September through a supplementary – I believe it was Financial Paper No. 6 – gave us \$210 million in a supplementary to the Ministry of Agriculture out of a supplementary of \$350 million. \$210 million was for the Ministry of Agriculture’s National Drainage and Irrigation Agency, which still left us short. Soon after, the corrugation of Parliament we had to carry out a number of activities which caused us to incur further expenses.

Presently, we have in our fleet of equipment 60 excavators, bulldozers, draglines etcetera, and we also operate 43 pumps across the country. We also support 11 Water Users Associations across Guyana that are in charge of 4,007 rods of drains, canals and channels. So, in anticipation of the question about planning, we had actually submitted the budget, if this is approved, that we would have ended up with. So, the \$206 million dollars that we are requesting is broken down into \$52 million for emergency works and maintenance of approximately 376,916 rods of Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) channels within the Water Users Association Areas.

\$42 million was used to offset expenses of purchasing fuel and lubricants. During the year we procured seven new excavators, five bulldozers and two fixed-site pumps that required us to spend more money on fuel and lubricants. \$82 million was utilised for maintenance and for procurement of spare parts, and \$30 million was used to support additional labour costs and other management expenses.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. I recognise Hon. Member Ms. Ally, and Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, in that order.

Ms. Ally: Mdm. Chairperson, I laud the Minister for outlining these 43 pumps, draglines and excavators and so on in preparation for the inevitable. My question is why has this preparation not prevented the continuous flooding of Mahaicony, the East Coast, Pomeroun and other areas?

Dr. Ramsammy: Mdm. Chairperson, I do not know about inevitable, but we for example in the last flood...

Mdm. Chairperson: The one today Hon. Minister? The reason I ask is because outside of the Court was flooded today, so I am not sure which flood, but I am sure that is not the one you are talking about.

Dr. Ramsammy: No, I am not talking about that Mdm. Chairperson. The flood that the Hon. Member was talking about started on the 29th of January 2012; these expenses were incurred in 2011.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson I would also like to thank the Minister for setting out for us some more detail, which we believe that the legislation required should have been in the paper. I do appreciate the explanations. I extend to him some sympathy for the difficulties he had with the Ministry of Finance, but I still have some other questions to ask on this item, namely, some parts of the expenditure associated with the NDIA. I would like to know the list of other organisations that would have received money from this and whether NDIA itself is only funded under this head, also the question of whether we can also be provided with a list of the areas in which the pumps have been located.

Dr. Ramsammy: The amount of money we are asking in this Supplementary paper is for the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority. The other beneficiaries under this line item – I do not know if you have the Budget book, but in the list of organisations they are there under this heading, because it is other organisations like National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and so on that are funded through this line item. This request is for the National Drainage and Irrigation Agency.

Dr. Roopnarine: Mdm. Chairperson, may I ask the Hon. Minister whether or not the observation made in the most recent Auditor General's Report about the failure of the Ministry

to hand over NDIA appropriations to the entity, so that they can in effect spend their money and make a report to the National Assembly. The response to the Auditor General is that there are still difficulties getting that programme going. I want to know what advances the Ministry has made in relation to this and whether we are closer to the point where the NDIA will receive its appropriation and account to the National Assembly for it.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, if you would wish to answer the question...

Dr. Ramsammy: It is not really related to the line item, but I will answer it. Indeed a number of what used to be programmes and departments of the Ministry of Agriculture over the years, through acts of this Parliament, have been made semi-autonomous agencies. One of the reasons why they in fact use all their money, but we have not established separate accounting units for each one of these for obvious reasons, the increase in terms of staffing that would be required. We have one accounting department that manages the accounts of each of these agencies.

Item 5 21-211 Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry Administration – Chart of Account: 6321 – Subsidies and Contributions to Local Organisations – \$206,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Item 6 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs, Secretariat Services – Other – \$1,500,000

Mr. Felix: Mdm. Chairperson, could the Hon. Minister say whether he did not know at the time of the budget that it was necessary for adequate dietary items for the inmates of the Juvenile Holding Centre at Sophia, and by what number have the young inmates increased?

Mdm. Chairperson: Okay, it is a two pronged question. I will allow it because they are both fairly short.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]: Mdm. Chairperson, the effectiveness of law enforcement in this respect is not something that can be easily predictable. I was therefore not in a position to predict the increase in the number of inmates. There were currently 44 inmates at this facility just before the elections, between November and December of 2011 and of that 44, 27 were additional inmates. So, the money that is being asked for to increase the dietary for the inmates, I think is quite justifiable given the effectiveness of law enforcement in bringing to this figure to this number of inmates at the prison.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I hope I understood correctly that the Minister was saying that during the time of the elections there was an increase in the number of people incarcerated. Is that what is being said.

Mdm. Chairperson: As regards to juveniles I think he was speaking about.

Mr. Greenidge: This is something that is felt to be unanticipated and justifiable; I understand that is what he is saying. I find this a little puzzling. Can I ask in relation to this item – which I believe I am reading correctly – which makes reference to communications?

Mdm. Chairperson: No, we are item no. 6; the only Chart of Account is 6294. I recognise Mr. Scott and I recognise Mr. Sharma. Remember please that we are on Chart of Account 6294.

Mr. Scott: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I presume that the inmates do not ever get sick, Dr. Ramsammy, bearing the increase. There has been a request for \$31 million, followed by \$1.5 million which is above what it was the previous year, which is \$24 million for the inmates. Can the Minister explain why the large amount of money for 44 inmates or 71, if you want, at a maximum? Do they need \$1.5 million in two months of food?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I cannot say that it is in that relatively short period of time. What I can say is that we want to feed them well.

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson, the question to the Hon. Minister is whether he is indicating that to maintain 16 to 17 inmates cost \$31 million. I am looking at the estimates for the previous year of 2009 where \$24 million was spent; and in 2010 where \$24.2 million was budgeted and in 2011 \$31 million is budgeted. Is this in accordance with 17 inmates? I would just like some clarification on that. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, are you inclined to answer the question?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I do not have an answer to that.

Mdm. Chairperson: You do not have an answer. Thank you.

Mrs. Lawrence: I have a Supplemental question, Mdm. Chairperson. Could the Hon. Minister then tell us what was the base number of inmates used to arrive at the figure \$31 million in the budget?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I think that I had explained that to facilitate this increase we had 18 inmates at the time, 27 inmates were then added, and as result of that addition to the intake of the facility we eventually had to provide them with better meals and better living conditions.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister.

Item 6 51-511 Ministry of Home Affairs, Secretariat Services – Other – \$1,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the schedule.

Mdm. Chairperson: Item No. 6 now stands part of Financial Paper No. 7.

Item 7 51-512 Ministry of Home Affairs, Guyana Police Force – Chart of Account: 6322, 6231, 6243

Mdm. Chairperson: Members will see that this programme goes over to the other page. So there are many Charts of Accounts. I propose that we deal with the three that are on page one for ease and then we can perhaps turn the page to the other six heads. I will now propose that Chart of Account 6222, 6231, 6243 stand part of Financial Paper No. 7.

Dr. Singh: May I, Mdm. Chairperson, merely point out that if you were putting the entire of Guyana Police Force that there are in fact items relating to the Guyana Police Force on the next page also.

Mdm. Chairperson: I did say that Item No. 7 goes over to page 2, but I said perhaps for ease we can deal with the three here. I will take questions on any of the three which are here and then we will go over to the next page and then vote.

Mr. Greenidge: The query I have is in relation to Chart of Account 6222. I am little concerned to see amongst the causes listed, an item called “communications equipment” which would normally not be considered as part of Current Expenditure. Could we have a breakdown for this particular component? Again, coming back to the question of the inadequacy of the explanations provided not in keeping with the Act, this would have saved us the time of having to hold you up

to ask a question like this. I would details as just what exactly this is. What equipment are we exactly talking about?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, this has to do with the procurement of radio sets and batteries for various police stations.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you Hon. Member.

Mr. Felix: Mdm. Chairperson, could the Hon. Minister explain...

Mdm. Chairperson: Please explain to us, so that we can all be at the same Chart of Account; which of the three Charts of Account you are asking about.

Mr. Felix: Chart of Account 6231.

Mdm. Chairperson: Chart of Account 6231 “Fuel and Lubricants”, go ahead please.

Mr. Felix: Could the Hon. Minister explain why this expenditure could not have been anticipated at the time of preparation of the Budget, since the holding of the General Elections is an event known to be taking place in 2011, and if not, why not? Also, what other operational expenses have been incurred? We need details.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. Members, please remember to make it easy and in fairness to the Minister answering. We can have one question at a time, and if they are very short, perhaps I can have two. You want our Ministers to be given a fair opportunity to answer the questions that they are asked.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, the first part of the question has to do with the increase in the cost of fuel for vehicles that were used to carry out patrols during this period of time. The second part of the question has to do with the fact that the Police had acquired new vehicles, and therefore required gasoline and other “*cuchuments*”.

Mdm. Chairperson: Lubricants, I think is what you mean. Lubricants may be a better word.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, the Minister did not answer the question.

Mdm. Chairperson: Which Chart of Account please?

Mr. Greenidge: The same Chart of Account. The Minister answered to the effect that the communications equipment pertained to radios sets, but in my view radio sets were to be properly classified as a capital item. I am wondering what they are doing in here. Batteries depend ..., but why are radio sets in here?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Rohee, is there any answer to the Hon. Mr. Greenidge?

Mr. Rohee: Not at this point in time Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: I recognise in the order of the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman, the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma and the Hon. Member Mr. Williams.

Mr. Trotman: Mdm. Chairperson, in relation to the answer given by the Minister in response to the Hon. Mr. Felix's question, I would like to ask the Minister if in planning his activities for 2011, whether his Ministry and the forces aligned to his Ministry did not take into consideration the fact that there would be new vehicles acquired for the year? If in fact they took that into consideration and the fact that the elections were always slated to be held in 2011; how is it that we are now faced with this additional expenditure referred to?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I believe that when we go into the budget, those new Members, with due respect, would have a better understanding of the process of procurement of vehicles for the Guyana Police Force, particularly. It has go through a tendering process, it has to be advertised; there are many aspects of the procurement process which is not under our control and therefore there is no fixed time that you will know that these vehicles would eventually come to the Guyana Police Force.

Mr. Ramjattan: Just a...

Mdm. Chairperson: No, Mr. Ramjattan, not unless the other persons would give way. I did indicate that the next person I recognised was Mr. Sharma followed by Mr. Williams.

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson, my question is in relation to the entire Ministry of Home Affairs and the provision in which the money was allocated.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, please give Mr. Sharma an opportunity, at some point in time we were all new Members of the National Assembly. Mr. Sharma, we are dealing with Chart of

Account 6222, 6231 and 6243; the last three Chart of Accounts on the first page in Item 7. So any questions that you would like to ask the Hon. Minister must be referable.

Mr. Sharma: Correct Mdm. Chairperson, but the Minister of Finance mentioned that the Ministry of Home Affairs has a number of pages, so I would like to make a general comment on this matter. What I notice is that the entire process of the Ministry of Home Affairs...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Sharma, just listen carefully. We are dealing with these three items, so if you want to ask a question you have to find way to fit it into one of these questions, if not you can wait until we got to the second page where there are several other Chart of Accounts, and you may find a way to ask your question.

3.39 p.m.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you. At Chart of Account 6321 - Fuel and Lubricants, I notice the explanation provided there is, "Provision for expenditure associated with the General and Regional Elections for 2011" My question is, was GECOM preparing in isolation for the elections, or did the other agencies take on board that the elections was on us, and made the appropriate budgetary allocations? Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Hon. Minister Rohee?

Mr. Rohee: Did I hear the Hon. Member say something about GECOM?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee I hope that we would listen to each other.

Mr. Rohee: I listened to him very attentively. I think I heard him made reference to something about GECOM.

Mdm. Chairperson: I think he related it to the other agencies, but as you know the rules, you can either answer or decline to answer. But I would want to think that we should all listen to each other as we speak, so that we all come away from here a little more knowledgeable than when we each came here. So I assume, Hon. Member, that you are not inclined to answer the question.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, if the Hon. Member is prepared to reframe the question, I am quite prepared to answer it.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you for your graciousness. Hon. Member, Mr. Sharma would you be kind enough...?

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson, I was just reading from the remarks that were provided in the Financial Paper, in which it said: it was for the General and Regional Elections. I did not say anything about GECOM, I said the General and Regional Elections.

Mdm. Chairperson: What is your question Hon. Member?

[Interruptions]

Mdm. Chairperson: Just allow him Hon. Members.

Mr. Sharma: When this supplementary provision was provided, apparently there were not any calculations for the elections; that is my question. They are asking for \$5 million for fuel. In particular, for fuel, it is \$94 million more. My question was, did the Ministry of Home Affairs budget for the elections or elections related matters?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member Minister Rohee?

Mr. Rohee: Thank you for your patience and understanding Mdm. Chairperson, but simply to say that...

Mdm. Chairperson: With both sides of the House.

Mr. Rohee: The Ministry of Home Affairs and the Guyana Police Force, was part of a general plan called Plan Plexus, in preparations for the elections. There were certain projections with respect to the security arrangements for the elections. As I pointed out, the additional vehicles that were apportioned to the Guyana Police Force and in addition to that, the increase in the cost of petroleum for these vehicles, lent an additional cost to what was already budgeted for the Guyana Police Force. It was not that we did not have resources allocated, what we required were additional resources based on the additional vehicles and the increases in the prices of petroleum. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Trevor Williams?

Mr. Williams: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. Notwithstanding the claims of additional increases in fuel prices, I would like to ask the Hon. Minister, what mechanisms are there in place to prevent fuel smuggling in this Ministry, and how can we be sure that taxpayers are getting value for their money? What control mechanism is there, in place, in the Ministry to prevent corruption?

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Williams, Hon. Member, what Chart of Account... are we on Chart of Account...

Mr. Williams: Mdm. Chairperson, Chart of Account 6231.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Williams I am restrained to indicate to you that your question seems outside of the ambit of Chart of Account 6231. I do not know that it is an occasion to clap or to applaud. Mr. Williams is a new Member of the House like many persons...

[**Ms. Shadick:** A young Member] ...a young Member. In fact, there are many not so young Members, including myself when I sat there, who make mistakes. I said it is a learning experience; let us try to be more gracious, particularly to our younger Members. Are there any other questions on Chart of Accounts, 6222, 6231, 6243? If not, we are going to come back for me to put the question. I will now propose that, Hon. Minister of Finance, on page two, we now look at the sixth Chart of Account. I am now proposing that Chart of Accounts 6261, 6264, 6265, 6271, 6283 and 6284 stand part of Financial Paper No. 7/2011.

Questions should be asked now, if not I will proceed. I recognise the Hon. Member, Mr. Sharma.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Just indicate which Chart of Account, so that it will be easy for the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson it will be in relations to all of them, Chart of Accounts 6261 right down to 6284.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Sharma, the description of the heads are different. We are varying from "Local Travel and Subsistence" to "Cleaning and Extermination Services". It would help everyone, I think, if we go...we do not have to go to each one of them. Whichever

one you want to ask the question on, identify the Chart of Account, ask your question, which will then give the Hon. Minister the best opportunity to provide an answer that would satisfy not only the House, but the people of Guyana. Please proceed.

Mr. Sharma: Okay Mdm. Chairperson. Chart of Account 6261, again it speaks about General and Regional Elections. The money was provided for General and Regional Elections; and again at Chart of Account 6264, it speaks about providing money for General and Regional elections; again at Chart of Account 6271, speaks about providing money for General and Regional Elections; again at Chart of Account 62823 it speaks about providing money for the General and Regional Elections; and again at the Chart of Accounts at 6284 it speaks about providing funds for the General and Regional Elections for 2012. In addition, for Chart of Account 6284, I am requesting information as to the rental of radio sets, and the amount expended on the rental, the quantity and type of radio sets. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: So your question is confined really to Chart of Account 6284, about the radio sets?

Mr. Sharma: And also... Were funds...

Mdm. Chairperson: No. Hon. Member you have to understand that the Hon. Minister has to follow, he has to digest and he has to be given an opportunity to answer fairly and properly. So I would suggest that we allow the Hon. Minister to answer *vis-a-vie* the radio sets, the questions pertaining to that, and if you have a supplementary on additional questions, you can ask at the appropriate time.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, with your permission, I would like to give a general answer to the rafter of questions which the Hon. Member asked. Just to dispel what appears to be, for want of a better word, a misconception as to why these sums have been asked for, especially in relations to the General and Regional Elections.

There are some specifics here the Hon. Member should know about Mdm. Chairperson. For example, during the elections all the ranks of the Guyana Police Force were in line. Meaning that they were not allowed any leave, special leave or any kind of special dispensation, other than duties to which they were assigned for the purpose of the elections and for the general safety and security prevailing in the country.

In addition to that, ranks had to be move from one police division to another police division. In other words, to reinforce ranks that required additional ranks, and that meant that money had to be gotten to facilitate the movement of these ranks. In addition to the movement of the ranks, furniture and many other things, in order to ensure that they were comfortably situated where they were located. Mdm. Chairperson, Rural Constables (RC) in addition to the Police, those of us who exercise the franchise, would have gone to polling stations and would have seen a number of RCs who were specially conscripted by the Commissioner of Police, to assist the Police ranks in the execution of their duties at polling stations. They had to be fed. We had to provide them with an honorarium or a guerdon which is a normal thing for elections.

In respect of the specific question that you asked that I deal with, we had to rent 39 hand held radio sets for intelligence gathering and other purposes specifically for the period of elections. The rental of the radio sets have now come to an end. They have been returned to the company from which they were procured. So just to allay the concerns of the Hon. Member that any costs associated with the elections, had certain specificities associated with them in keeping with the roles and functions of the Guyana Police Force during that specific period, no other period. Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Scott. Mr. Sharma, do you want to ask...

Mr. Sharma: Yes Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Okay, after the Hon. Member Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott: Getting back to the rental of communication equipment. Earlier at the Chart of Account 6284, where communication sets were purchased for the Guyana Police Force, why then later on down the line do we have to rent communication sets? What was the need for us to

rent, if it does not reflect a lack of previous planning or poor planning? Why do we need to rent when we have provision for buying?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Rohee: The work of the Guyana Police Force at elections time sometimes appears to be insurmountable and overwhelming. Though the Guyana Police Force would have purchased a number of pieces of communication, it was obviously found that it was not sufficient. You may want to call it bad planning or whatever, but I do not think that really matters. What matters is how effective they were during the period. I think at the end of the game it is the effectiveness of the Guyana Police Force and of the law enforcers that matters. Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Scott: This is a supplementary question. Can the Minister say from whom...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Scott, please wait until you are recognised before you proceed.

Mr. Scott: I am sorry, I apologise most profoundly.

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes, you may proceed.

Mr. Scott: From who were these equipment rented?

Mr. Rohee: It is a well established private company as you approach the turn on the East Bank of Demerara public road, just before you reach Banks DIH Company.

Mr. Scott: I want to know what the name of the Company is.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, should I be allowed to give the name of a private company?

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Rohee you have been in the National Assembly long enough.

Mr. Rohee: I do not know how far we are going to stretch this thing. I know that it is public funds that have been used for it.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Rohee you have been a part of the National Assembly long enough to know that the Speaker or the Chairman... Members, Ministers are well aware that there is nothing that can be used to force them to answer questions. So, questions are asked. We hope that in the twenty-first century questions will be answered and when I say we, I mean the people

of Guyana. There is nothing to force a Minister and I think we all recognise that right of the Minister, that right of any Minister not to answer.

Mr. Sharma: One of the questions was the cost for the thirty nine radios, which the Hon. Minister did not answer. I want to establish the cost to know if it was better to buy than to rent. In addition, Mdm. Chairperson, in relations to the Chart of Accounts 6261, 6264, 6265, 6271, 6283 and 6284, this is a contingency advance which was taken to carry out additional work associated with the elections. Was this exercise unforeseeable, could they not plan for this exercise? If they did plan, what amount was in the Ministry of Home Affairs budget and the Guyana Police Force for this exercise?

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Mr. Sharma. Hon. Minister?

Mr. Rohee: I think it is important for Hon. Members to understand that the Security Sector is not always a predictable sector. There are issues which one has to deal with, that are not necessarily of a predictable nature. Therefore, it is not that we do not want to account for the spending of public funds in the Security Sector. The use of funds that we are asking to be settled here in this House, I wish to assure Members, was well spent and well used. There will always be a debate on whether we got value for money, but I think at the end of the day when you assess the extent to which the security arrangements were in place during the elections, I think a reasonable person would conclude that the security arrangements were *par excellence*.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, and then the Hon. Member Mr. Trotman.

Mr. Greenidge: I am afraid I cannot agree with the Cde. Minister regarding the concurrence over the quality of security, but that is not before us now. I think the issue that is before us is this; you have on two different heads, two different organs falling under the Minister's surveillance, the equipment being used and that equipment is being used, but acquired on a basis that does not seem to be consistent. On what basis has the Ministry decided to rent equipment for one entity and to purchase it for another? I had also made reference to fact that it may be that some of this equipment should have been classified under Capital. I do not want to jump to something else, but if you look further in this document you will see again reference being made to equipment being purchased. What is the policy, and is it informed at all by cost or what considerations.

I may have a follow up question depending on the answer. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Rohee: The cost factor is always a factor when using public funds. We do not believe in abusing Public Funds. I am insisting that the cost factor is always a consideration when using Public Funds under the Ministry of Home Affairs?

Mdm. Chairperson: Is it a Supplementary question?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes Mdm. Chairperson. Whilst I trust the Minister implicitly, as he is urging us to do, as to his own honesty that is not the issue before us. The issue is one of policy.

In giving directions to your agencies, those directions should be informed by a principle. What has happened here in relations to the rentals? For example, the Minister told us thirty-nine radio sets were acquired, I believe. The average cost which was requested has not been given, but I think we looking, and I hope that I am wrong, at an estimated cost of \$102 000 each for the rental of equipment. Is that correct and is that a lower cost than purchasing them?

I mean the issue is this, there is a simple mode of deciding whether rental or purchasing is more economic. What we are seeking the assurance of is whether that was done. The fact that both are being employed under the same Ministry suggests that no such policy is in existence. It is not a question of anyone's honesty.

[Interruptions]

Mdm. Chairperson: Before I ask the Hon. Minister to respond, I want to indicate that we are fast approaching our statutory break at 4.00 p.m. I would want to suggest that we at least try to finish Item No. 7 before we go to that break. I want to suggest to Members that, everyone is very excited on both sides of the House, when we are finished with Item No. 7 and we take our break and resume, that we try to contract our questions, on the side that tends to ask, which is the Opposition's side, in the sense of making it simple so that we can get the answers. The people of Guyana can get the answers they want. On the other hand, I want to encourage the Government to keep their answers as short as possible so that everything could be balanced, and we could, as

I have said, all go away from here having had proper explanations coming out of proper questions.

We are still on those six Charts of Accounts. Are there any further questions on those Charts of Accounts? Mr. Trotman you had indicated some time ago, I recognise you, and then I will recognise Ms. Ferguson.

Mr. Trotman: Notwithstanding the fact that the Minister had said that the moneys voted under these heads were moneys well spent. This Hon. House cannot accept that moneys are well spent unless there is evidence that that is so.

Under Chart of Account 6261, we are being asked to approve additional expenditure of \$90,649,200. For my satisfaction and I believe for this House's satisfaction, the Minister ought to be in a position to say what are the amounts expended under the respective items that he refers to here in the request? I am asking the Minister to so answer.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member...

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I am sorry, my question was not answered, and I believe that you might have overlooked that fact. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Okay, before I ask the Hon. Minister to answer the question from Mr. Trotman, the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge did speak about the policy *vis-a-vie* rental as opposed to purchasing. So could you, if you are kind enough, deal with the answer to that question first, before you proceed to Chart of Account 6261, where Mr. Trotman is asking, if possible, for a breakdown of the \$90,649,200?

Mr. Rohee: I personally do not believe that this is a policy issue, that is to say purchasing versus rental. A policy has to do with the methodology of procurement. How do you procure? That is the policy. That is my view, you may have a different view; we can always agree to disagree. What I am saying is that the procurement of telecommunications equipment has to go through a process, a tendering process and so that takes a certain amount of time before you can have the equipment in your hands. The police distributes it, tests it, make sure that it is not penetrated by persons who wish to eavesdrop on police networks. We have persons like that around these days; yes we do.

Having procured a certain number of communication sets, and confronted with a situation during the elections where GECOM announces far more polling stations than were anticipated. Now obviously you cannot go through the same tendering process to be able to procure the equipment on time for the police ranks. So what do you do? Do you sit on your hands, or do you make a decision to rent the equipment rather than purchase it? To purchase it means an inordinate amount of time is required. You have to have some elements of flexibility and expediency in treating with this matter. And I am afraid that if you do not understand the security sector, again from this perspective, you will fall in the trap of a whole host of technicalities.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much for that, can you proceed to the question posed by the Hon. Member, Mr. Trotman, which has to do with the breakdown of the ...

Mr. Rohee: Which Chart of Account is Mr. Trotman referring to?

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Trotman asked about Chart of Account 6261 – Local Travel and Subsistence. He is asking you kindly for a breakdown of that \$90,649,200.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, take for example the cost for feeding Rural Constables, whom I referred to were hired to work on elections day, \$7.5 million was used for feeding Rural Constables. The feeding of police ranks cost \$35.4 million and travelling expenses for police ranks across the country cost \$8 million.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Ms. Ferguson, Hon. Member?

Ms. Ferguson: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson. My question is more or less based on Chart of Account 6264 – Vehicle Spares and Service. An initial amount of \$160 million was approved to have vehicles serviced and spare parts procured. A further \$5 million is now being sought. My question to the Hon. Minister is; can you say to this Hon. House, how many vehicles were serviced, since you alluded to earlier that the Guyana Police Force was given a new fleet of vehicles. Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, in the first instance you do not service new vehicles, as far as I know.

[Interruptions]

Mdm. Chairperson: One minute Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge. Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee, is that the totality of your answer to the question?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, given the ruckus on that side of the House, I prefer to sit, but if you can protect me I could proceed.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mr. Rohee protecting you has been a long dream of mine.

[Laughter]

Mr. Rohee: May I proceed Mdm. Chairperson?

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes, you may and you will have my protection. Members please allow the Hon. Minister.

Mr. Rohee: I can assure you that in the question of protection there will be certain reciprocities.

Mdm. Chairperson: I am obliged.

Mr. Rohee: The servicing of vehicles had to do not specifically with the newly acquired vehicles. It had to do with vehicles in the current fleet of the Guyana Police Force. In order to ensure that they are mobile enough, and that there are sufficient vehicles, they do something that is called, "Preventative Maintenance". To ensure that all the vehicles within the fleet are adequately serviced and ready.

Patrols had to be conducted on a regular basis and in addition to that ballots boxes and a number of other things had to be escorted during the period of the elections. I come back to the original question, that the servicing of the vehicles was critical in other to ensure that the fleet of vehicles within the Guyana Police Force, and in all the Police Divisions, not only in Georgetown, were adequate and all the vehicles were up and running in order for them to carry out their function during and to the run up to elections.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Hon. Minister. Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge.

Mr. Greenidge: Sorry Mdm. Chairperson, just to remind you that the Hon. Minister has not yet answered the question about the cost of rental of the radio sets.

Mdm. Chairperson: Well the Hon. Minister, Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge did indicate, he asked whether he had to provide that answer and I reminded him that no Minister could be compelled to answer a question. I take it that that was his answer.

4.09 p.m.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. I am not sure. I think that you are perhaps extending your protection to the Minister too far.

Mdm. Chairperson: That is my recollection.

Mr. Rohee]: Mdm. Chairperson, the cost of the rental of additional sets was \$206,622.

Mdm. Chairperson: \$206,000...

Mr. Rohee: \$622,245.

Mrs. Lawrence: As a supplemental, Mdm. Chairperson, when I look at the amount that the Minister is asking for at 6284 and the remark, it says here, "Provision to meet expenditure for the rental of radio sets for ranks for the General and Regional Elections 2011." My question is, with the answer given just now, is the Minister inferring that there were other costs here for other items? If so, can he tell us what those other items were?

Mr. Rohee: I am sorry, Mdm. Chairperson, I cannot provide the answer at this point in time.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Mrs. Lawrence, would you care to elaborate a bit, perhaps to make it clearer to the Minister?

Mrs. Lawrence: Certainly, Mdm. Chairperson. Under Line Item 6284 the "Description" says "Other". The amount sought is \$4,000,000. In the "Remarks" it is indicated that this amount being sought is only for the rental of radio sets.

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes.

Mrs. Lawrence: The Minister, in his answer prior to me standing, did indicate that part of this was for the rental, so I am asking what the other part of the \$4,000,000 represents. What was it spent for?

Mdm. Chairperson: I think that that is very clear Hon. Minister.

Mr. Rohee: I do not recall saying that part was spent for rental. I do not recall saying that at all.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mdm. Chairperson, could the Minister say how much of this \$4,000,000 was spent for the rental of the radio sets?

Mdm. Chairperson: Mdm. Chairperson, I think somewhere reference was made to \$4,000,000; that is the amount.

Mrs. Lawrence: \$4,000,000 was rental for thirty nine radio sets? Am I correct in saying that the rental of one radio set cost us in the vicinity of \$103,000?

Mr. Rohee: I am sorry, I did not do the calculation neither do I have the invoice here with me.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mdm. Chairperson, the Minister is indicating, in my interpretation, that he did not come prepared although these questions here refer to his Ministry. I would ask you, Mdm. Chairperson: Is this a rich party? Could the Minister provide the House with the breakdown for the cost of the rental of the radio sets and also the period for which these sets were rented?

Mr. Rohee: Of course, Mdm. Chairperson, we could do that. There is no question about doing that. We need to do things in order to dispel Members minds of any lack of transparency.

Mrs. Lawrence: Thank you, Sir.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much for that undertaking, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson, thank you. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister about the number of vehicles in the fleet under Line Item 6264, "Vehicle Spares and Services", and if he could also state the type of radio set that was provided – the model. One has to know the type. The type would result in the amount of money paid towards them.

Mdm. Chairperson: With regards to the second question, could I suggest, seeing that the Hon. Minister has given an undertaking to provide the cost of the renal for each radio set, would he be kind enough to also indicate the make, which would not be difficult to ascertain from the invoice, so that we could have a complete answer at a subsequent time, Hon. Minister. As regards to the Hon. Member Mr. Sharma's first question, which as relates to the number of vehicle in the fleet, Hon Minister I now invite you to answer that question.

Mr. Rohee: The information, you are quite correct, as to the specifications on the invoice will be there – all the pieces of information will be there. I do not think I need to answer that. With respect to number of vehicles under the command of the Guyana Police Force – I understand that that is the question...

Mdm. Chairperson: That is my understanding.

Mr. Rohee: I cannot say at this point in time how many vehicles they have under their command but I wish to ask the Hon. House to understand that there are certain security implications in providing all that information at one given point in time.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. I take it that there are no further questions on Item No. 7.

Members, I seek your guidance in Item number 7. We have three and six, nine Charts of Accounts, is it the wish of the Committee that we go through them one by one or I put all of them under Item No. 7?

Members: All under one Item No.

Mdm. Chairperson: That is the consensus, I sense.

Item 7, 51-512, Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Police Force – \$206,622,245 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

We are now into our afternoon break. I therefore propose that this is a convenient time for us to take that break. Before the Committee resumes, let me indicate that there would be several Members of the National Assembly that have not had the opportunity to have their photographs taken and I would like to encourage all of those Members who have not done so to do so during

the break. The photographer/s is/are here and I want to suggest that we seek to resume at 5.00 p.m., in about 42 minutes.

Committee suspended at 4.16 p.m.

Assembly resumed at 5.08 p.m.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Please be re-seated the Assembly has now resumed.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Item 8 51-513 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Prison Service – \$24,331,036 – to stand part of financial paper No. 7

Mdm. Chairperson: If there are no questions, I will now put... Mr. Sharma, sorry... Members please remember that as soon as I propose the question or if there are any questions, one should stand and ask the questions.

Mr. Sharma: Mdm. Chairperson, thank you. In relation to 6231, Fuel and Lubricants, I noticed in the Remarks mention was made of fuel in cooking of inmate meals and baking of bread at prison location. Is this part of Fuel and Lubricants? Thank you.

Mr. Rohee: We have moved from wood-fuel to the cooking with gas of the food for the inmates.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. The question is: Is it properly classified in the Chart of Account? I am requesting that the Hon. Minister answer the question: Is it properly classified? It is fuel for vehicles and not fuel for cooking. It should be classified under the appropriate Chart of Account.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairman, I want to suggest that it is so properly classified – LPG/cooking gas.

Mdm. Chairperson: Are there any other questions on Item No. 8?

Item 8 51-513 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Prison Service – \$24,331,036 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

Item 9 51-515 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – \$12,345,786

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I would just like to ask the Minister what occasioned the increase of this magnitude associated with the item 6261, Local Travel and Subsistence? It seems rather large compared to the budget provision. Was it associated with an exceptional number of incidences calling upon the fire brigade? It needs an explanation.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rohee: Again, during the elections period we obviously had to, in keeping with the concept of the Disciplined Services conducting an operation of a special type, all and sundry kept in line, including the Guyana Fire Service. Keeping them in line required providing them with certain basic necessities so that they would be comfortably so in line. For example 63 additional mattresses had to be purchased, fuel and lubricants. There were a number of “fire calls” and bomb threats that the Fire Service had to respond to that incurred a cost in terms of fuel and lubricants. Ranks also had to be cross posted and posted to various locations which also had a cost attached to it – moving the ranks across the country – so that 404 ranks over a period of 14 days required these additional resources to be made available.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you, Hon. Minister.

Mr. Greenidge: Are we looking at the same item? I am referring to the Local Travel and Subsistence in which a provision was made in the Budget of \$5.5 million. The Minister informs us that 404 persons needed to be in line and to move around and that was almost equivalent to what was budgeted for the year. This is the difficulty that I am having. We are making reference her on a number of occasions to the problem of budgeting. We have a responsibility, I think, to ask as to why an anticipated activity could have been so under budgeted for. This is the issue. There are conditions set out in the Act which require that we establish that these things are unanticipated and I am not hearing anything from the Minister... There may be a few more “fire calls” than normal but surely you would know that an election is coming, the plan is to have ranks in line; that could not have been a surprise. It needs to be explained why there was an increase and the additional amount is as large as it is. That is what I am asking.

Mdm. Chairperson: I understand that Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge is concerned about the quantum. Would you care to answer that question, Hon. Minister?

Mr. Rohee: It is highly appreciated that the Hon. Member recognises that running an election has not to do only with GECOM's preparations but it has serious security implications as well, and that has a cost, and if it costs the nation this amount of money to ensure that the nation is in safe hands then we have to do it.

Mr. Greenidge: Sorry, Mdm. Chairperson. That is not what is written in the Act. The Act does not say that you spend whatever you like if security is involved. The Act requires that the activity that one funds be unanticipated... There are a number of criteria here. Whilst I understand that the Minister is urging us to take account of the fact that he may not have properly budgeted I do not think that the answer that he is giving which suggests that there is *carte blanche* to spend anything in circumstances when there are elections. That is not provided for here.

Mdm. Chairperson: I am sure that the Minister is aware of the Act.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Speaker, if I may. Let me give the Former Minister of Finance information, which I think he ought to know. A certain amount of money is budgeted for the joint services – the Guyana Defense Force, the Guyana Police Force, the Guyana Fire Service and the Guyana Prison Service. That amount of money is then apportioned to each of the members of the Disciplined Services. The Guyana Fire Service gets a specific amount and it is that amount that we have to work with and as a result of that we are not here asking for approval. We are very aware of what the Act says, Hon. Member. Nobody is here to ransack the Act. We are very much aware of what it says but one has to recognise as well that faced with elections and in keeping with what the Act says and in keeping with what is provided, given what is provided to the Joint Services that there are certain limitations. We are not saying and I am not saying that there is a *carte blanche* approach to this matter; not at all. We have to work with what we have and when we do not have enough we have to ask for supplementary provisions. That is the position, if we are to argue politically. I am not here to argue technically. I am arguing politically as the Minister responsible for this sector that this is the approach we need to take.

Mdm. Chairperson: We are still on Item No. 9. Are there any other questions?

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. I would like to ask the Hon. Minister a simple question; a “yes” or “no” answer would suffice. Did the \$5.5 billion that was budgeted include any contingency for GECOM’s security for elections related work?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I think that the deeper we get into this the more Members will be educated. GECOM has its own security arrangements. GECOM has its own security budget to provide for the requisite security arrangement that GECOM requires to put in place. The Guyana Police Force, thru’ the Ministry of Home Affairs, has its own arrangement as well where they work from time to time together with GECOM.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. I have been advised on very good authority that in the remarks column – and I suppose that I should direct this to the Hon. Minister of Finance – Item No. 9, under 6261, “Provision to pay subsistence for personnel “In lyned”...” I have been advised that correct word is “i-n-l-y-i-n-g” (in lying). That is the correct term but I just thought that we should look it up. I have been advised by the Leader of the Opposition, who has a military background that is something that we say all of the time but the correct thing to say is “in lying”.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, during the break this fact was brought to my attention and I made the point that this is a transcription of the subscription made by the agency requesting...

Mdm. Chairperson: I am sure it is. It is something that I...

Dr. Singh: I am quite happy to take note of the observation made and I will ensure that the error is not made, as I am sure the subject Minister responsible...

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Item 9 51-515 Ministry of Home Affairs – Guyana Fire Service – \$12,345,786 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 10 51-516 Ministry of Home Affairs – General Register Office – \$6,525,000

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. The explanation puzzles me somewhat here. There is a voted provision and we have an exceptionally large contingency request and then the explanation speaks to the question of the claims and objections period. Can the Minister tell us what claims and objections period he had in mind here?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, those of us who would have been involved in the preparation for the elections would know that during the claims and objections period the question of birth certificate, source documents, was a very contentious matter. Without the source documents, registration of persons was almost impossible so we had to ensure that every citizen had a source document. We had a relatively short period of time to do that during the claims and objections period which reopened the question of registration of voters to ensure that everyone had a source document; we even extended that period. In order to get as much work done as possible we formulated a project which required the performance of overtime of 53 of the persons employed at the General Register Office. They worked for a period of 336 hours and during that period... [Ms. Ally: Which period?] ...18,000 birth certificates were issued. I am talking about the period when there was a special dispensation that was given for the reopening of the claims and objection period. Whatever that period is, Mdm., you would know that. You were very active in the PNC and you would know that period. I do not have to come here to tell you that. Thank you.

Mr. Felix: Could the Hon. Minister say, in the absence of adequate explanation in the Remarks column, what categories of workers are to be paid this honorarium and what is the purpose of the honorarium? Are there vouchers in support of the claim?

Mdm. Chairperson: So there are three parts to the question.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, these, as I said are persons employed at the GRO; some are Public Servants, some are on contract. If we are talking about the category of workers at the GRO they fall into those two categories. I think that I mentioned the hours that they worked. If there are records the Hon. Member is free to go to the GRO's Office, I can call Mrs. McDonald to make available to him the records so that he can examine the number of persons that were...

Mdm. Chairperson: I recognise the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, but it is my expectation and hopes that when promises are made from either side of the House that they are promises which Members are prepared to honour. When promises are made within the House by any Member, elected or non-elected, it is my hope that those are promises which if called upon to perform or to honour that they would be honoured.

Mr. Greenidge: I am sincerely appreciative of the dialectic exercise that the Minister undertakes each time he answers. The question I put just now was really clear; it did not really need that

exercise. I am asking what specific period claims and objections are at issue here. There is a reason for this. It is not a frivolous question. The question is this: we have budgeted here a sum that is considerable for expenditure that purports to have taken place during the claims and objections period and the period for which this contingency has been submitted is October, November, December. What claims and objections period took place during that time?

5.28 p.m.

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I fully agree with what you said about promises being made. We are all Hon. Members here and I would suspect that being Hon. Members we will honour. I just gave an undertaking to the Hon. Member. If he so wishes to go to the General Registrar's Office (GRO) to inspect the vouchers, he is free to do so. Simply a phone call from me will facilitate that. There is no difficulty with that.

Secondly, with respect to Mr. Greenidge, the Hon. Member, I specifically pointed out that the claims and objections period we are referring to was, what I would call, the second claims and objections period. Do you recall that? [**Mr. Greenidge:** What were the dates?] I am sorry. I cannot recall that, Mdm. Chairperson, "what were the dates?", because I suspect that the next question, without being cynical, he might want to ask me is: "what were the numbers of the birth certificates?" I simply cannot remember the period, but I know, and I think those on the Opposition side of the House would know, that there was a second claims and objections period which was reopened by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). My specific reference to this expenditure is with respect to that particular second claims and objections period. We can get them from the records.

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes. I understand that the Minister is saying, very clearly... [**Ms. Ally:** It is not fair.] No. The Minister is saying that this figure relates to the second claims and objections period. Mr. Greenidge, do you have a supplementary question to that answer?

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson, in which case, I can say to you that I believe that...

Mdm. Chairperson: I am asking you, Sir: Do you have a further question?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes. Why, then, is it included here as an item that, if you like, surprised or unanticipated expenditure? This House approved supplementary expenditure in September at which time the claims and objections periods, to which the Minister made reference, would have expired. So, it is inappropriately located in this request for supplementary expenditure and it should be voted against.

Dr. Singh: Merely, again, to elaborate on the response given by the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, and simply to say, in response to the Hon. Member's question, that the Contingencies Fund advance was granted not at the commencement of the claims and objections period, or during, but, in fact, at the time when the decision to pay was made and the time of the computation of how much would be payable was made, and that time was a time that was after the previous Financial Paper was approved.

Mr. Greenidge: If the Hon. Member is merely telling me that the claim was made in relation to when the payment was made, the point is that at the time when the last supplementary request came the Ministers would have been aware that that commitment would have been incurred. It should have come at that time.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, they would not have been aware of how many persons would have been involved and for what period.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Minister indicating...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Ramjattan, please wait to be recognised. I understand your anxiety. Yes, Mr. Ramjattan, I recognise you, but, at least, let me...

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Minister...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Ramjattan, Hon. Member, allow me to recognise you, to give you that courtesy, and then you proceed.

Mr. Ramjattan: Thank you very much, Madam.

Mdm. Chairperson: Please go ahead.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Minister saying that when the supplementary expenditure was added, late last year, at that stage he did not know that the honorarium was paid or whether it was advanced and to whom?

Dr. Singh: I appreciate that the Hon. Member is still trying to recover from the rebuke that he received earlier. I have no further information to provide on this matter. I believe that what I said earlier was sufficiently clear and I do not wish to provide any additional information.

Mr. Ramjattan: Is the Hon. Member aware that the Minister shall report to the next sitting of the National Assembly on all advances made out of the Contingencies Fund - at the next sitting of the National Assembly? If this was known since June or when there was that period of claims and objections – June, July, August and September - did the Minister not know that he had to come here before now?

Dr. Singh: I really do not understand what we are engaging in here. I think that it is reasonably clear...I believe that what I said was reasonably clear, that at the time that the decision was taken to pay the honorarium and the quantum of the honorarium was computed, having regard to the number of persons who worked, and the length of time that was worked, the volume of work completed, it was at that time that a request for a Contingencies Fund advance was made by the Ministry of Home Affairs and that request was granted by the Ministry of Finance. That time was a time that was after the last Financial Paper had been approved by the National Assembly. That, Mdm. Chairperson, I regret, is really all of the information that I can provide on this matter at the current time.

Mr. Greenidge: Whilst I am sure that the Minister speaks with conviction, it is not the case that I am convinced by his explanation. I think we need to ask the Minister two things: One is, when exactly was the time to which he is making reference? When did the Minister decide to make the payment? I think one could signal that it would be helpful for the Auditor General to have a look at these claims to ensure that they are consistent with what is put on this Contingencies Fund advance claim.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister of Finance, do you like...

Dr. Singh: As I indicated, I provided the totality of information that I care to at the current point and time on this matter.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Hon. Member Mr. Sharma, if you require to ask a question you have to stand in your place. The coming of the light on ... Sometimes I would not see it, so you will need to stand. That is a general reminder to everyone. If you want to ask a question, please stand and you will be recognised.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson. I was standing, you said to sit and then you gave a next person the chance to ask a question.

I do not know if the Hon. Minister is aware that in 2008 Guyana had a national house-to-house registration exercise. In 2010, there was a continuous registration exercise. In both of those exercises the contentious issue was birth certificates. Why did the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the General Registrar Office, not put systems in place to have staff working continuously on the birth certificate issue?

Mr. Rohee: Mdm. Chairperson, I applaud you for your patience and your understanding on this matter. I think we are probably reaching a point of exhaustion on it, but we have to carry on.

Mdm. Chairperson: The Chairperson is very alert and is prepared to go beyond the call of duty. Go ahead, Hon. Member.

Mr. Rohee: Birth certificates are issued on an ongoing basis at the General Registrar Office. To answer the question on “why were birth certificates not issued on an ongoing basis?”, I believe that is a non-starter. Birth Certificates are issued on an ongoing basis. We have to recognise that election is a very sensitive issue. Now, Mr. Greenidge may not like to hear this, but that is the reality. Elections throw up a lot of challenges and even persons who may have had birth certificates issued before may have lost them, may have misplaced them. Lots of people are coming, requesting birth certificates over and over again. While the GRO may normally issue five hundred birth certificates a day, in an election situation the GRO may be issuing one thousand birth certificates a day. It has to issue them, because if it does not it may very well be a case of disenfranchising a person.

Question put.

Ms. Teixeira: Division

The Committee divided: Noes 32, Ayes 31, as follows:

Noes

Ayes

Mr. T. Williams

Mr. Jaffarally

Ms. Marcello

Mr. Damon

Dr. Ramayya

Dr. V. Persaud

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Mrs. Hughes

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Ramjattan

Mr. Neendkumar

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Morian

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Allen

Mr. Chand

Mr. Jones

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Adams

Mr. Nadir

Mrs. Baveghems

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Sharma

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Bond

Mr. Baksh

Ms. Kissoon

Mrs. Sukhai

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Webster

Ms. Selman	Ms. Manickchand
Mr. Allicock	Mr. G. Persaud
Ms. Wade	Mr. Benn
Mr. Felix	Dr. Anthony
Ms. Hastings	Mr. Ali
Mr. Scott	Dr. Ramsaran
Mr. Harmon	Mr. R. Persaud
Mr. Greenidge	Dr. Singh
Dr. Norton	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Mrs. Lawrence	Mr. Nandlall
Mr. B. Williams	Dr. Ramsammy
Ms. Ally	Mr. Rohee
Dr. Roopnarine	Mr. Hinds

Brigadier (ret'd) Granger

Motion negatived.

Item 11 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$43,100,000, \$12,100,000, \$11,900,000

Item 11 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$43,100,000, \$12,100,000, \$11,900,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 12 76-762 – Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$33,326,128

Mr. Greenidge: Once again, the amount being asked for here seems to be exceptionally large. The question that I would like to put is: Given that such a large amount was expended on the

pumps, what do we have to show for that? I gather that there were problems in this area in relation to the delivery of the services.

Mdm. Chairperson: Who will answer that question? Go ahead Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Ganga Persaud]: The expenditure reflected in the supplementary request was used to service the operations of the pumps and that was because of the weather condition in the last quarter. We required more operational hours for the pumps. The rising cost of fuel played a big role in relation to the request. As well as, in the last quarter of the year, there was the opening of an additional two thousand seven hundred acres of land in the Black Bush Polder area that was put under cultivation.

Mr. Greenidge: Can I just remind the House that the amount approved in the budget was one hundred and sixty million dollars? That was in 2011. For 2009, roughly one hundred and twenty million dollars was approved. In 2010, it was one hundred and thirty-five million dollars. So, already, there was a twenty-five million dollar increase over the amount that had been spent in 2010. We are looking at a total under sixty or fifty-eight million dollars compared to the previous year. So an explanation that there was some unusual weather is not a satisfactory one because in the end the farmers still got flooded. Yakusari and elsewhere were flooded. The question is... [**Hon. Members (Government):** *inaudible*]...Pardon me.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Greenidge, Hon. Member, do not be distracted by the other side, or any side of the House.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I was being amused. I do not think I was distracted.

Mdm. Chairperson: What is your question? I think we have lost it.

Mr. Greenidge: My question is whether we can justify an additional fifty-eight million dollars expenditure when there were still problems in Black Bush Polder in terms of flooding and difficulties, particularly at Yakusari.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am unaware of the supplementary request seeking fifty-eight million dollars. What I know that we are seeking is thirty-three million dollars. I am not sure that we can predict the amount of water that has to be removed in and out of the farming communities. As I said, if new acreages are going to be opened up and those acreages are put under cultivation, then the issue of drainage and irrigation is extremely pertinent. It is for that reason that we had to incur this expenditure, in order to cause the farming communities to benefit from proper drainage and irrigation services.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, I will allow you one supplementary question, once it is coming out from that answer given by the Hon. Minister, and then I will recognise Dr. Ramayya.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson. You are very kind.

I just want to make a point clear, because the Hon. Minister did essay an answer but he also misunderstood what I said. I am saying that the supplementary expenditure which was being requested was thirty-three million dollars. The Minister explained that in relation to the needs in Black Bush Polder and Manarabisi, which are very specific – it is not the whole country – the House provided an additional twenty-five million dollars relative to 2010. So, the increase over 2010 that the Minister is looking at is nearly fifty-eight million dollars. That is what I am saying. And it was just for two areas. Yet, in those very two areas there were major floods. It was only supposed to be for one crop; it states the autumn crop. It is astonishing that there would have been fifty-odd million dollars being provided for one crop for a limited area of such magnitude compared with what was voted in the first instance. That is what...

My colleagues are offering all sorts of amusing anecdotes and explanations, but the problem is that this is a very large amount relative to what was budgeted and at the end we seem not to have had any benefit of consequence. They were still flooded. Yakusari farmers were flooded out.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, are you going to essay a reply?

Mr. G. Persaud: I really thought it was a statement rather than a question. I have not seen a question to which I could have responded. What I heard was a statement.

Dr. Ramayya: I would really like to address this question to the Hon. Minister: How many acreage of extension was done in Black Bush Polder? And what transparency is there with regard to lubricants and fuel in Region 6? I originate from Region 6 and I can tell you that there is no transparency as to how the fuel is being used. This is very important. When I looked at the budget and the amount of money that was being allocated to fuel and lubricants, one of the members of the Government was saying that there was no record. [Ms. Manickchand: What is the question?] I asked: What is the extension of the lands that so much of money is required for fuel and lubricant?

Mr. G. Persaud: As was stated before, and for the benefit of the Member of the House, I repeat: two thousand seven hundred acres of land - additional.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, before we proceed, let us on both sides of the House remember that we will get the best out of each other, I believe, if the questions are as clear as possible and, hopefully, that will lead to as clear as possible answers with supplementaries if the person asking the question, or any other Member, is unsatisfied or is of the opinion that a more expansive answer is required.

I see no other indication. Are we still on item 12, Hon. Member Mr. Trotman?

Mr. D. Trotman: Yes Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Could I remind people that as soon as...get up and make your presence felt?

Mr. D. Trotman: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. The Minister did say in his explanation that some of these moneys were spent for the servicing and the operationalising of pumps in the two areas. Can the Minister say how many pumps are there and how often were they serviced?

Mr. G. Persaud: There are two pumps at the Manarabisi station and there are two pumps at the Mibikuri station. The number of pumps may not really give the kind of picture that we want to share here. It is more about the operational hours of the pumps. In Region 6 there are twelve pumps which operated during the year 2011.

Mr. D. Trotman: I would like to remind the Minister that in his answer, in response to the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, he did say specifically that these sums were used in the two areas that he has identified here. I am not talking about the entire area of Region 6 - the twelve pumps in Region 6. I am talking about the Black Bush Polder and Manarabisi areas. It is for those areas that my question has been directed to the Minister. How many pumps are there and how often were they serviced?

Mr. G. Persaud: I thought volunteering some additional information would have been helpful. I repeat: two pumps at the Manarabisi pump station and two pumps at the Mibikuri pump station.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, I think there was a second part to the question - How often were they serviced? Or it was the hours that they worked. Sorry.

Mr. G. Persaud: Service would have been effected based on the number of hours worked and whenever needed, Mdm. Chairperson.

Item 12 76-762 – Region 6: East Berbice/Corentyne – Agriculture - \$33,326,128 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 13 77-773 – Region 7: Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery – \$3,106,000, \$18,500,000

Dr. Norton: Referring to the remarks to the chart of account 6292, where \$18,500,000, as supplementary provision, was sought to meet expenditure associated with dietary supplies for dormitories at Bartica and Waramadong secondary schools, and since there have been ongoing complaints of insufficient meals being provided, especially during the months of November and December, my question to the Hon. Minister is - taking into consideration the increase per month of that which was necessary, practically from about nine hundred thousand dollars to actually nine million dollars a month - if this \$18.5 million sufficient? It is if it should not be more.

5.58 p.m.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am happy for the support given by the Hon. Member. Unfortunately, we only ask for what we need and so used what we requested.

I am unaware with regard to the quality of meals, but I would be happy if the Hon. Member can provide me with supporting documentation so that the issue can be addressed.

Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Greenidge: I must say the explanation, to me, is completely unsatisfactory. In 2009, the Ministry budgeted sixty-nine million dollars. In 2010, it actually spent roughly one hundred and twelve million dollars. So the increase that took place, in terms of expenditure for 2011, if the supplementary expenditure is anything to judge by, was something like fifty-seven million dollars. How is it possible that the requirement for dietary arrangements could involve such a substantial increase and at the end of the time...? Mdm. Chairperson, just in case I am not making myself clear, the issue is that notwithstanding an increase of nearly fifty-seven million dollars over the previous year, the interns, as it were, still found themselves without food. That was the point that was being made earlier and the Minister needs to explain that, that there could be such an exceptionally large increase and children are... In other words, it is being suggested here that the money was not spent on the items identified in the column on the right hand side.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, do you wish to reply?

Mr. G. Persaud: Yes Mdm. Chairperson. Let me say to the Hon. Member that I was responding to a question that stated in parts whether I thought that we requested too small a sum of money by supplementary provision. So if the Hon. Member found that response that I gave inadequate, well I am sorry, but I wish to repeat that response - we requested what we needed and used what was granted by the Ministry of Finance.

The bit in terms of increase, we must understand that no one can definitively predict what will be the enrolment in a new school year. Fortunately for us in Guyana, there is a new school year in every year. This was the case at Waramadong and Bartica. I stand willing to accept any guidance that the Hon. Member's evidence can provide to show that the money was not spent based on the line item that is recorded.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member Dr. Norton, I recognise Hon. Member Ms. Hastings before you. Go ahead Hon. Member.

Ms. Hastings: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House if there is any macro plan for taking care of our dormitory students, in all respects, and, particularly, for the provision of meals for those students?

Mr. G. Persaud: The Hon. Minister of Education, I am advised, will be, very shortly, unrolling a programme with regard to dormitory management and issues related to the management of dorms across our country.

Dr. Norton: Could the Hon. Minister tell this House, when the Ministry had planned for the one hundred and fifty million dollars, as voted provision, how many students it was catering for then, as compared to the end of the year where there was another supplementary expenditure for \$18.5 million? What was the difference in the numbers?

Mr. G. Persaud: The enrolment for Waramadong, January to July 2011, was five hundred and nineteen. From September to December, it was six hundred and fifty-six. For Bartica, the enrolment that was catered for, from January to July, was eighty-seven. September to December, it was one hundred and fifteen.

Item 13 – 77-773 Region 7: Cuyuni/Mazaruni – Education Delivery - \$3,106, 000, \$18,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule

CAPITAL ESTIMATES

Item 1 01-011 Office of the President- Head Office Administration - \$18,494,478

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to this item, can the Minister tell us what was the nature of the security equipment and what was it used for?

Bishop Edghill: The equipment referred to are electronic security surveillance equipment and those were placed at sensitive security locations.

Mr. Greenidge: Is the Minister satisfied just to say that surveillance equipment is an explanation as per the law? The question is: Was it wiretapping equipment? What surveillance equipment is it?

Mdm. Chairperson: You are now asking that question. Hon. Minister, please be seated.

Mr. Greenidge, you are asking a supplementary question.

Mr. Greenidge: In relation to the first, I asked about the nature of the equipment, and, for the nature of the equipment, to simply say it is surveillance, I did not think is sufficient. In section 41 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act it is very specifically. It states that we be provided with details. What I am asking, if I may, is that the Minister specifies the nature and types of equipment. I did also say the purposes for which they are used. Surveillance is the purpose for which they are used, but the nature of the equipment is not explained by that title alone.

As regards the supplementary, if he wishes, I am standing, the question is: Was this equipment tendered for?

Bishop Edghill: I would like to assure the House that that equipment was not for the purpose of spying. It has to do with cameras and other electronic surveillance equipment but was not used for the purpose of spying.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, if you wish to ask a supplementary question please stand.

Mr. Greenidge: Sorry Mdm. Chairperson. I did ask a question which has not been answered. I asked about the tendering – the tendering arrangements. I urge that the Minister answer because it is important. This is related to the question of whether it properly falls, again, within the requirements of the Act. If there was tendering arrangement, when was the tendering launched?

Bishop Edghill: I wish to refer to Standing Order No. 22(3) and I read:

“In the case of a Question for oral reply, the Minister questioned shall rise in his or her place and give his or her reply. However, a Minister may decline to answer a Question, if the publication of the answer would in his or her opinion be contrary to the public interest.”

As it relates to the procurement, we would like to assure that the standard procedure for procurement was followed in acquiring those surveillance equipment.

Mr. Nagamootoo: With regard to the chart of account 2500100, we note in the answer that it was not payment for surveillance equipment. It simply states, blandly, “Provision for security

equipment”. The question is, under the relevant Act, to whom was this sum advanced? To whom or to what company, or entity, was this sum, in excess of eighteen million dollars, advanced?

Bishop Edghill: Unfortunately, I do not have the invoice here with me to be able to name the particular company.

Just give me one second, please.

Mdm. Chairperson: I believe the invoice may have arrived.

Bishop Edghill: Yes Mdm. Chairperson. I have been helped by my technical people.

Mdm. Chairperson: I know. That is what they are and I commend them.

Bishop Edghill: The company was Mekdeci Machinery & Construction Inc. (MMC). Thank you.

Mdm. Chairperson: On the question of tendering, was it put to tender, Hon. Minister? Would you care to answer that question?

Bishop Edghill: I do not want to commit to mislead the House, but my understanding is that the procurement rules were followed. If there was an exemption sought from the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board for sole sourcing because of the sensitive nature, I can assure that the procurement procedure was followed.

Mrs. Lawrence: I wonder if the Minister could confirm whether, on Financial Paper No.1 of 2011, some thirty-six million dollars was sought for this same item, chart of account 2500100.

Bishop Edghill: I am sorry, but I would not be able to answer that. I do not have that information available to me at this time.

Mrs. Lawrence: A follow-up, because I hope that the Minister will commit to providing the House with the answers.

In the remarks here it states “security equipment”. In the profile, the budget profile, it states: “The project includes acquisition of cameras, camcorders, photocopier and printers.” My question to the Minister is when did they realise or recognise that they had to spend some

eighteen million dollars more, so that this is now coming to us. I would appreciate if the Minister could share with us the invoice from MMC - if we could get a copy right now. Thank you.
[*Interruption*] Yes, the Parliament Office has the facilities.

Bishop Edghill: I think the Government is prepared to be transparent at all times. But as it relates to matters of national security, I would like to assure the House that Members of the Opposition might be aware, or should be aware, that what we are talking about also included security surveillance equipment for the Leader of the Opposition, as well, and constitutional office holders. Thank you.

Mr. Jones: A supplementary question. Could the Hon. Minister say to this House where those equipment are housed or placed?

Bishop Edghill: I do not think it would be proper at this stage, but I would like to indicate that all of those equipment which were purchased are located at sensitive locations as it relates to the matter that is under discussion. It is not at one place. It is at several places that would include constitutional office holders.

Question put.

Hon. Members (Government): Division.

The Committee divided: Noes 32, Ayes 31, as follows:

Noes

Mr. T. Williams

Mrs. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrido-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Ayes

Mr. Jaffarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. V. Persaud

Rev. Dr. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Mr. Morian

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Mrs. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kissoon

Mr. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Harmon

Mr. Greenidge

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Brigadier (ret'd) Granger

Motion negatived.

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickchand

Mr. G. Persaud

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Item 2 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$23,680,398

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Greenidge, we have already passed that. I have proposed. Members, please be reminded that as soon as I propose that is when you have to stand. We are at the stage where I am now putting item 2, agency code 31-312.

Item 2 31-312 Ministry of Public Works and Communications – Public Works - \$23,680,398 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Item 3 47-474 – Ministry of Health - Regional & Clinical Services - \$29,100,000

Dr. Norton: The supplementary provision sought was \$29,100,000 as “Provision for mobilisation payment on infrastructure works”, but the legend of capital expenditure speaks of provision for design and study. It states nothing about mobilisation for payment on infrastructural works. My question to the Minister: Is this not going outside of the project and involving a phase that was not presented to this House?

Minister of Health [Dr. Ramsaran]: These are funds which are an advance on the contracted sum for the preparation of the land site.

Dr. Norton: It is a follow-up.

Mdm. Chairperson: I did not hear that. Sorry about that.

Dr. Norton: A follow-up question. I am going to repeat. I am saying while the supplementary provision in the remarks states that it is a “Provision for mobilisation payment on infrastructural works”, the legend on capital expenditure states nothing about that and speaks much more so for provision of design and study.

Dr. Ramsaran: This, Dr. Norton, is a correct observation. That is why we are seeking these funds to facilitate the land site preparation. I can tell you that the contract has been won by the Bovell Construction Services, and the work is well advanced.

Dr. Norton: Could I get a supplementary, Mdm. Chairperson?

Mdm. Chairperson: Yes, please.

Dr. Norton: My question to the Minister is: Why the urgency at the end of the year, rather than waiting for this provision...? The fact that it was nearing election time, does not that say something?

Dr. Ramsaran: Now, governments, and especially the health sector, have to work with or without the election season. What you would observe, Dr. Norton, is that this project originated way back early in the year. If you would have observed the comments by the administration, we were moving to a second wave of infrastructural development in the health sector. We had Diamond, Leonora, Suddie, Mahaicony and Port Mourant as the first phase, and way back we were speaking about this matter without the election year being here, even before. So there was no hurry up; this was getting the people's business done, and it came about towards the end. It was totally coincidental. The preparatory work for such a thing would have started months before and the tender process takes time and so on, and so forth. There was no hurrying up.

Mr. Greenidge: Again, I do not understand what we are being told. I see in the request an amount of one hundred and fifty million dollars, and as it came to the end the year... The Minister assured us that they started at the beginning of the year, so there was no hurrying up, and yet mobilisation took place at the end of the year. One hundred and fifty million dollars was spent in the rest of the year already. It does not make sense. You cannot mobilise at the end of a project; you mobilise at the beginning, and in mobilising you cannot be mobilising contractors after one hundred and fifty million dollars was spent. What exactly is this for?

Dr. Ramsaran: We are speaking about mobilisation for the site preparation. That is what these moneys went for, as an advance towards that contract.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister indicate what was the one hundred and fifty million dollars spent on?

Dr. Ramsaran: This sum was to be for the design of the project, as is listed there.

Mr. Ramjattan: Could the Hon. Minister state for the benefit of the House to whom the amounts were paid – the one hundred and fifty million dollars for design and the twenty-nine million dollars for mobilisation?

Dr. Ramsaran: The twenty-nine million dollars, which was an advance on the contracted sum to the Bovell Construction Services, is for the site preparation, not for the design and building of the facility.

6.28 p.m.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, the first part of that question actually was about the one hundred and fifty million dollars also. It was two parts of Mr. Ramjattan's question. Would you be kind enough to answer the first part *vis-à-vis* the one hundred and fifty million dollars.

Dr. Ramsaran: That was for the design and construction. That phase has not been done. The land preparation is now ongoing. [*Interruption*]

Mdm. Chairperson: Alright, let us have some order.

Mr. Ramjattan: Are you saying, Mr. Minister, that the design has not been completed as yet nor any money is paid to the design and you are going for land preparation/mobilisation?

Dr. Ramsaran: We need to remember that there is a funding from the Indian Government and this is what that one hundred and fifty million dollars would be reflecting. The land preparation is being done preliminarily in a run up to the design and construction of the actual facility.

Mr. Greenidge: So Mdm. Chairperson, I am in a lot of troubles here and I hope that you can assist. In looking at the capital estimates, volume 3, the page that deals with this project, it states that the total project cost, this is the 2011 budget, is one hundred and fifty million dollars. The one hundred and fifty million dollars was spent and the Minister is asking for mobilisation...[**Hon. Members (Government):** It was not spent.] No! What is the sum total?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, my understanding was that the Hon. Minister was saying that the one hundred and fifty million dollars has not yet been spent, but I recognise Dr. Singh who, I hope, will be standing to bring some more clarity to this matter.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, I will endeavour my utmost in this regard. The Hon. Minister is in fact absolutely correct that the one hundred and fifty million dollars originally voted has not yet been spent. The background to this is that the one hundred and fifty million dollars originally budgeted, as reflected on page 427 of volume 1 of the estimates, was in fact voted under specific

rather than local appropriations. As Members of this Hon. House would be aware, a specific appropriation is an appropriation that is provided with respect to expenditure funded by donor supported projects - projects supported by development partners, whether multilateral or bilateral. This project, in fact, is supported by the Indian Government, and in particular Indian EXIM Bank. At the time that the budget came to the National Assembly we had anticipated that the project would have gone through its review and its processes, and that we would have commenced execution of the project and would have disbursed an estimated sum of one hundred and fifty million dollars under the Indian funded arrangement. This is the reason why the budget reflects an amount of one hundred and fifty million dollars under the specific column as distinct from the local column. With the passage of time, the project, of course, since it has been approved - it has been approved since at the end of last year -... The scope of the project having been discussed with the Indian authorities, and having been defined now, and having been subject to the approval processes, the India EXIM Bank supported project will finance the construction of the hospital and acquisition of certain basic equipment but will not include site preparation. So the site preparation contract, in fact, has to be executed, funded by local appropriations, hence the request for a Contingencies Fund advance by the Ministry of Health, and the granting of that Contingencies Fund advance, to execute the site preparation. I hope that, Mdm. Chairperson, lends some clarity to the matter.

Mr. Greenidge: If a project is to be implemented during the course of a year and it is to be funded in parts or in its entirety, unless it is to be funded in its entirety from an external source, the total cost cannot be the same. Let me put it another way. In looking at the estimates, page 427 to which the distinguished Minister made reference, the total cost of the project is one hundred and fifty million dollar, okay. It was for 2011. We are speaking to 2011. The project in its entirety is described as: "The provision for the design and study..." That is the project. How come construction, mobilisation associated with construction, appears as a request for Contingencies Fund as part of the project? Because if it is part of the project it should have been in the total cost in the first instance, whether it was land preparation or not. Land preparation is not the design or study, not in my understanding of the language. Land preparation is not design and study. How come thirty millions dollars, or whatever it is, is now being appended, because the project...? In effect, the Minister is telling us now that it is more than simply the design, but

then we are not authorised to approve it because what it is here, what was approved in the first instance, is a different project.

Dr. Singh: Like I said, at the time that the budget was brought to the National Assembly, and approved by the National Assembly, the matter of concluding the scope of the project, and estimating the cost of the construction of the entire hospital, and the cost of acquisition of equipment to be installed at the hospital, was at an extremely early stage and so it was difficult at the time to anticipate what the hospital would cost to construct, what it would cost to be equipped and indeed, and perhaps most importantly, how much funding would be provided by the Indian authorities. Those matters were not, at the time of the budget, determined.

The Indian authorities had indicated a willingness to support the construction of a hospital, but the requirements had to be defined; the hospital had to preliminarily... I suppose, conceptual drawings or conceptual design had to be developed in order for some indicative cost to be determined and then for that indicative cost to be subject to approved of the Indian authorities. So that matter, not having been concluded but the Government of Guyana having received an indication that the matter was expected to be concluded later in the year, and that the Indian authorities were favourably inclined to support the project, an estimate of what the cost of the design would comprise was included in the budget, but we were not in a position at that time to say what the total cost of the project would be and, indeed, what the total financing provided by the Indian authorities would be. Hence, Mr. Greenidge is absolutely correct that in the estimate we do indicate design and an indicative sum of one hundred and fifty million dollars. The reason we included the project was because we anticipated that it would commence during the year but at the time there was no greater specificity to the details to which I have referred to earlier.

Like I said, with the passage of time, we have now determined what indicatively the hospital will cost and what the Indian EXIM Bank is prepared to fund. We have defined a scope of the project. That project has now been approved. The scope of the project that has been approved does not include preparation of the land - site preparation. So the site preparation will have to be funded locally.

Again, Mdm. Chairperson, I hope that answers the question.

Mr. Nagamootoo: I just wish to ask the Hon. Minister whether he did not think that the correct procedure, under law, would have been to bring a Supplementary Appropriation Act, under the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, provided for, so that there would have been a reallocation of the unexpended sum of one hundred and fifty million dollars – reallocation, because it has not been spent - to provide for a new or a variation of what was simply a project in conjecture. When we voted the last time, it was not a project that was a reality; it was really a conjecture that there would have been such a project. The design was not being done; nothing was done at that time. Then the design is still not done because the money is left unexpended. I am asking the question to the Minister whether that he did not think that sum of money could have been reallocated by a Supplementary Appropriation Act and not by way of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill to take it from Contingencies Fund as if it were an emergency and there was a shortfall of the proceeds voted for.

So that is my question, because it bothers me, as a Member of this honourable House, that we are being asked to give consent to replenish the Contingencies Fund for money already spent - money already spent - in this manner that is contrary to law.

Dr. Singh: First of all let me say that there is absolutely no basis for saying that this money was spent contrary to law - absolutely no basis for saying so. In fact, the incurrence of this expenditure is entirely within and in accordance with the laws governing expenditure from the Contingencies Fund - entirely and unquestionably within the provisions and in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Let me say too, without unduly detaining the House, that one does not reallocate specific expenditure to local expenditure. Specific expenditure is identified in the estimates separately; the source of funding is identified separately. In the case of the current project, it states clearly “India”. There are supplementary tables which identify donor-supported projects. I am sure that the Hon. Member, with his considerable experience in this House, must have noticed that one does not reallocate from specific to local. You can quite conceivably have an unspent amount under the specific but will have to come back to the National Assembly if you will require additional local funds.

The fact of the matter is that when, towards the latter part of the year, the scope of the project was finally approved by the India EXIM Bank and the amounts to be provided authorised by that institution, that scope, like I said, did not include this particular aspect of the project. It is going to be executed locally, hence the award of this contract. When the award was made, the contract sum was ascertained and the amount required to be paid under the contracted sum was then requested by the Ministry of Health and approved.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Supplementary, Mdm. Chairperson. Is the Minister aware, in view of his answer, of section 22 of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act that reads:

“Authority to vary annual appropriations. 22. (1) The Minister may reallocate spending authority amount annual appropriations during the fiscal year to which the appropriations relate, subject to the following restrictions -...”?

And that restriction applies that it cannot be moved across the appropriations and some other restrictions, but section 24 of this Act states:

“Supplementary appropriation Acts. 24. (1) Any variation of an appropriation, other than those variations referred to in section 22, shall be authorised by a supplementary appropriation Act prior to the incurring of any expenditure thereunder.”

I think that this is a law and what the Minister was saying that I was not aware of the provision and that it cannot be done is misleading this House for expenditure that has already been incurred - appropriated and incurred. We are asked now to approve an expenditure that took place during October to December at this point in time, and I am pointing out to the law, and I am told by the Minister...I am asking if the Minister is aware of these provisions because it attracts the issue. It attracts the other issue of the law, which is punitive.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, do you wish to respond?

Dr. Singh: Yes Mdm. Chairperson. The Minister is well aware... [**Mr. Ali:** Is it the current or former?] It is the current Minister. I am, yours truly...of the provision that grants the Minister authority to reallocate appropriations. That is an authority that says clearly that the Minister may reallocate spending authority. It has never been the practice that specific appropriations are to be

reallocated administratively. So, it is not only that I am aware of the latitude granted here..., and it is for various reasons which I am happy to say at another forum to elucidate. Notwithstanding the discretion granted to the Minister to vary appropriations, it has never, to the best of my knowledge, been the practice to reallocate foreign funded appropriations to meet locally funded expenditure.

Mr. Greenidge: I am not going to go in the direction of my distinguished colleague, Mr. Nagamootoo, simply because...**[Hon. Members (Government):...inaudible]** No...for no other reason than my understanding of what has happened or the part that concerns me is different.

First of all, I am saying to Minister that if a project is defined as the design and study, that is the project and that is what is authorised. A supplementary expenditure cannot be added to that. That is my contention. But more than that, in event that there is a problem with the inflow - it does not arrive and the Minister is not sure whether it is going to arrive - then, I would suggest, article 21 is an appropriate one which allows for the conditional approval on the part of the Minister. This is article 21. If you look at article 21 (3) (b) which speaks to additional authority to spend a specified amount of money conditional upon the actual receipt of it, am I correct in understanding that at the time when the budget was done that the Minister is saying that he was not sure about the inflow? Did I understand that?

Dr. Singh: Absolutely not. We were assured at the time that the project would be supported and we were simply supported by the India EXIM Bank, and we were assure at the time, equally, that the approval would be coming later in the year. What we did not have, with a high degree of specificity at the time of the budget, was the total cost of the project and the total amount of the financial inflow that would be approved for the totality of the project and indeed that could be anticipated to be disbursed this year. So that is what we did not have. We knew that the India EXIM Bank was supportive of the project because we were in discussions with it, but the design had not been concluded. The project had not been approved by its approval processes. The contracts which would have flowed from there were not tendered or awarded at the time and so one could not determine, with greater specificity than was included in the budget, how much would be spent and what the total cost of the project was. That is the reason why we included an indicative amount of one hundred and fifty million dollars which represented the best estimate at the time of what would be disbursed and expended under the project by the end of the year.

[**Mr. Nagamootoo:** It was the worst guesstimate.] It was the best estimate based on the information available at the time, like every other number in the budget.

Mr. Greenidge: I am very appreciative again, once more, the exposition by the Minister, but I am still saying to him that the legend in the estimate is clear. It states “design and study”. Why are we being invited to provide additional funds for something that is not designed and studied? If you are building a hospital, if you are building a railway station, if you are building an airport, it is normal to have design and study as part of the entire project. You do not define it as the entire project. If you define that as the entire project, then the construction phase is defined as an additional project. It has no place here. The law here requires that for a Contingencies Fund advance to be requested or for supplementary expenditure to be granted you will have to have a head. There has to be an item under which it appears and which describes it properly, and under which this transaction can be properly incorporated. We are being asked to do something here that is inconsistent with the laws which are before us. That is what I am saying.

So I am glad that the Minister cleared up the specific element, and he is right on that. That is not an issue. The issue, now, is why are we being asked for additional expenditure for something that is not part of the project?

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, I now put...

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, I have another question.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Ramjattan and other Members, if you want to ask question, please be alert. I know it is getting slightly late, but please be alert as you answer. I will entertain your question.

Mr. Ramjattan: To whom was this advance paid?

Hon. Members (Government): Bovell Construction Services.

Mr. Ramjattan: I did not hear that.

Mdm. Chairperson: I believe that question was answered. *[Interruption]* Members, please be quiet.

Question put

Mr. Hinds: Division.

The Committee divided: Noes 32, Ayes 31, as follow:

<i>Noes</i>	<i>Ayes</i>
Mr. T. Williams	Mr. Jaffarally
Mrs. Marcello	Mr. Damon
Dr. Ramayya	Dr. V. Persaud
Mrs. Garrido-Lowe	Rev. Dr. Gilbert
Mrs. Hughes	Dr. Mahadeo
Mr. Nagamootoo	Mr. Seeraj
Mr. Ramjattan	Mr. Neendkumar

[Interruption]

Mdm. Chairperson: Please suspend the taking of the division. Members, I would be very happy if we can be quiet during the division, lest a vote goes where it perhaps was not meant to go. So, could we please restrain ourselves during the division? Thank you.

Ms. Ferguson	Mr. Lumumba
Mr. Morian	Ms. Shadick
Mr. Allen	Mr. Chand
Mr. Jones	Mrs. Chandarpal
Mr. Adams	Mr. Nadir
Mrs. Baveghems	Ms. Teixeira
Mr. Sharma	Bishop Edghill

Mr. Bulkan	Mr. Whittaker
Mr. Bond	Mr. Baksh
Ms. Kissoon	Mrs. Sukhai
Mr. Trotman	Ms. Webster
Ms. Selman	Ms. Manickchand
Mr. Allicock	Mr. G. Persaud
Ms. Wade	Mr. Benn
Mr. Felix	Dr. Anthony
Ms. Hastings	Mr. Ali
Mr. Scott	Dr. Ramsaran
Mr. Harmon	Mr. R. Persaud
Mr. Greenidge	Dr. Singh
Dr. Norton	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Mrs. Lawrence	Mr. Nandlall
Mr. B. Williams	Dr. Ramsammy
Ms. Ally	Mr. Rohee
Dr. Roopnarine	Mr. Hinds
Brigadier (ret'd) Granger	

Motion negatived.

Item 4 71-712 Region 1 - Barima/Waini - Public Works - \$10,000,000

Mr. Bulkan: I note that this House has been asked to vote the sum of eight million dollars for additional expenses for the acquisition of a single piece of capital equipment, namely an eight hundred KVA generator, for which the sum of ten million dollars was originally budgeted for. My questions, Mdm. Chairperson, to the relevant subject Minister, and even though there is more than one, they are very short questions, are, firstly, what is the actual cost of this piece of equipment? Has it been purchased? Was it tendered for? And what is the name of the supplier? Has it been installed as yet? And is it operational? Is it a new piece of equipment? Or is it a replacement?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, you should really ask one question at a time, but if they are simple questions... I think you are at question seven now. I just want to make sure, because you are asking the questions so that you can be provided with an answer. For that to happen, the Minister has to be given an opportunity to, at least, make a little note so that he or she, whoever is the subject Minister, will be...

Mr. Bulkan: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: So could you, perhaps, ask four? I would allow you to ask four short questions and then perhaps you can follow up. I mean, you went through...

Mr. Bulkan: What is the actual cost for the equipment? Was it tendered for? And what is the name of the supplier? That is one question.

Mdm. Chairperson: That is three parts of one question.

Mr. Bulkan: Has it been installed/operational?

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. G. Persaud: The actual cost of the generator, I am advised, is eighteen million dollars. The tendered process has been followed and an award made.

Mdm. Chairperson: Just to assist you, Minister, the third part of the question was the name of the supplier, and has it been installed/working? So, it is if you would want to answer that rather than to have me going back to Hon. Member. It is the name of the supplier, if you are in a

position to give that information, and whether the generator has actually been installed and is working.

Mr. G. Persaud: I am not in a position to share the name of the supplier. I do not have that information here with me, but the equipment has not been installed as yet.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you so much.

6. 58 p.m.

Mr. Bulkan: Mdm. Chairperson, I note that the answer is that the cost of the equipment is \$18 million when the Government originally budgeted for \$10 million. So my question is: were the specifications changed? In other words, why does it cost 80% more than it was originally budgeted for? Thank you.

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, based on the tendering process that was the cost that came up and so we are seeking the additional provision so that we can acquire the generator.

Mr. Bulkan: Mdm. Chairperson, I just want to say that I note it is 80% over the original cost, so it is a query.

Mdm. Chairperson: I believe the Hon. Minister has already answered that question. Members if you desire to speak, please stand in your place.

Mr. Bond: Mdm. Chairperson, I wish to pose a question to the Hon. Minister. What is the upgrade of the kilovolt-ampere?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. It is an increase from 625 to 800 kilovolt-ampere (KVA).

Mr. Bond: Mdm. Chairperson, may I also enquire of the Hon. Minister, what is the expectant hours- daily- that members of the North West, Mabaruma community and surrounding communities can now expect?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I do not think the intention is to lengthen the hour of supply, but rather to expand the area of supply. The intention is to bring two new villages into the grid and those are Barbina and Bumbury Hill.

Mr. Jones: Mdm. Chairperson, could the Hon. Minister inform this House of how many hours of electricity the residents of Mabaruma presently enjoy?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, are you inclined to answer that question to the issue?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I do not see the relevance of that question.

Mr. Jones: Mdm. Chairperson, noting the fact that the Minister is asking this House to approve an additional \$8 million and he has pointed out to this House that it is not to increase the hours of supply to the residents of Mabaruma, in his view, could he inform this Honourable House if he thinks it makes sense?

Mr. G. Persaud: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I think that sometimes if we understand our Geography we will better appreciate when certain issues are discussed here. While we are not extending the hours to the present beneficiaries, we are extending the network so that others, who are not part of the grid and never received the kinds of supply, will now benefit from that.

Mr. Jones: Mdm. Chairperson, could the Hon. Minister inform this House of if he is aware if the residents of Mabaruma are currently satisfied with the hours of electricity supplied to them?

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Minister, are you prepared to answer that question?

Mr. G. Persaud: Mdm. Chairperson, I think that the Government and this entire House are more concerned with the number of persons who are out of the grid and not getting any supply of electricity, and so I think that we are more concerned with them having some hours of electricity.

Item 4 71-712 Region 1 - Barima/Waini - Public Works - \$10,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members that completes consideration of all the items on Financial Paper No. 7/2011. At this time, traditionally, the Chairperson would put the motion that the Committee of Supply approve the proposal set out in the Financial Paper and simply quote the two figures where we will get the total. As you are aware, certain of the line items have not been approved. I, therefore, to ensure the accuracy of my proposal, suggest the following: that we take a very short suspension and that during that time the Clerk of the National Assembly, ably assisted by the Hon. Minister of Finance, the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, and the Hon. Member, Mr.

Ramjattan, confer to ensure that... Members remember some of the items were not passed and some were passed. So when I put the motion to the House, I want there to be agreement on the figure that is being put in view of how the votes have gone as per head. So that is my respectful proposal. I am confident that it will find favour with all sides of the House. I now, therefore, seek a short suspension. If my proposal is not agreed on, we will still have to have a short suspension so that the Clerk can add and do the subtractions, then we will come back. I just thought that for everyone to be involved that we can have someone represented from the Opposition and the Government's side. It is for you to decide. I now move that we suspend for a few minutes.

Committee of Supply suspended at 7.04 p.m.

Committee of Supply resumed at 8.08 p.m.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you for your patience Members of the National Assembly. This completes consideration of all the items. I will now put the question which is that we approve of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 7/2011, supplementary estimates current and capital for the period ending 31st December, 2011, totalling – and this is the figure that is agreed on - \$2,161,281,593.

Motion carried.

Assembly resumed.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the following proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 7/2011, under Current Expenditure the items numbered 2 to 9 and 11 to 13, and under Capital Expenditure items 2 and 4, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee on the said Resolution.

Motion, as amended, is carried.

FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 8/2011

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: The Assembly will resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 8/2011.

Assembly in Committee of Supply

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, in accordance with article 171 (2) of the Constitution, I signify that the Cabinet has recommended for consideration by the Assembly, the motion for the approval of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 8/ 2011, supplementary provision on the capital estimates totalling \$3, 471, 47, 823 for the period ended 31st December, 2011 and I now move the motion.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I wish to move an amendment to the motion mainly that the Minister be asked to withdraw Financial Paper No. 8/2011 for resubmission to this House in a format and with the quantum of details that is consistent with the Act, and, in particular, the Act that stipulates the details that should be provided. I am speaking now of section 41 part VI, 41(3) of the Financial Management and Accountability Act.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, I rise to second that amendment that the Financial Paper be resubmitted with the additional and complete details since we have only details here “provision of additional inflow”. Such a description and explanation is not in keeping with the Financial Management and Accountability (FMA) Act and quite frankly is insulting to taxpayers as well as the Parliament.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, I would like, with your permission, to respond to the amendment proposed by the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, and the contribution made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, at the appropriate time. I am not sure if now would be the appropriate time. I would be guided by your instructions.

Mdm. Chairperson: I would think that now would be the appropriate time Hon. Member, Dr. Singh.

Dr. Singh: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson. Those Members of this House who have served previously or who have had the opportunity to read the relevant legislative provisions as they relate to financial matters or indeed who have had the opportunity to study what has transpired in the Parliament, historically, on the matter of public finance and, in particular, matters of supplementary appropriations, contingency fund advances, etcetera, would have no doubt observed that there are, in fact, two types of financial papers that are brought before the National Assembly. In fact, it is for that reason that the typical occasion of consideration of

financial papers sees two such financial papers before the House - 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 7 and 8 - as in the current instance.

On the one hand, there are financial papers that seek parliamentary *imprimatur* for advances made from the Contingencies Fund which fund is provided for and governed by the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003. That Act stipulates certain criteria that govern the operations of the Contingencies Fund and stipulates the basis for withdrawals from the Contingencies Fund and utilisation of those withdrawals. That Act further stipulates what is to be done when the Minister responsible for finance seeks the *imprimatur* of Parliament for the replenishment of the Fund. That is the first of the two categories or classes of financial papers brought to the Parliament.

The second is what in the craft – if I might describe it as such – is described as a straight supplementary, not advances withdrawn from the Contingencies Fund to meet urgent, unforeseeable expenditure, but a request for supplementary appropriation in the first instance. And those straight supplementary financial papers such as Financial Paper No. 8/2011 contain, typically, two types of expenditure within them: they contain possibly local expenditure or more typically specific or foreign expenditure. As such, you will see in the second financial paper, two columns under supplementary provision now sought. You will see a column called “Specific” and another one called “Local”. This is where you have the amounts: Supplementary Provision Now Sought – Specific and Local. The Local column would be populated by numbers if we were seeking, in the Parliament, an original supplementary appropriation to authorise amounts that were not previously appropriated to be spent in the Parliament, amounts to be drawn from the Consolidated Fund. The Specific column would be populated in the case of a foreign funded project which would have been, during the course of the year, disbursing funds in the course of execution of the project, and the donor, having disbursed these funds, does not interrupt his disbursement when we would have hit the amount appropriated in the original Appropriation Act passed by this Parliament. When we come to the budget, as I endeavour to explain in the case of the India Exim Bank supported hospital, we include under Specific appropriation, an estimate of what the donor will disburse for the particular projects in question. Those projects are executed. The donor does not stop disbursing if they achieve the level of disbursement that was anticipated at the time of the budget. If there is a donor supported road and we anticipate that we will spend

\$500,000,000 on that road and by October the donor disburses \$500,000,000 and the work is progressing, the donor must not say stop work, await next year's budget and then resume work. The project continues and the donor continues to disburse. In such a case, total disbursements by that donor could conceivably exceed the appropriation approved by Parliament. In order for us to bring into account, purely as a book entry, the expenditure associated with the disbursements made by the donor on the project in question, it is necessary for us to come to Parliament to seek a supplementary appropriation to increase the ceiling on that particular item, purely and solely for the purposes of bringing to account the additional disbursements, the disbursements in excess of the amount that was anticipated at the time of the budget. This, Mdm. Chairperson, enshrined by custom and practice over the years, indeed over what I can reasonably describe as time immemorial, certainly as far back as my own memory extends – of course my own memory will not extend to time immemorial- but this, enshrined by well established precedent and custom and practice, has been the approach taken by this Assembly that at the end of the year, or indeed periodically during the year where this situation is anticipated to arise where a donor has disbursed, at a time we are coming with financial papers, in excess of what is anticipated to be disbursed at the time of the budget, we come to the National Assembly with a financial paper with the specific column populated simply to say this donor has disbursed more than was anticipated and in order to bring into account this additional level of disbursement, we are seeking the additional appropriation.

Like I said, this is the reason why financial papers typically come in pairs – because we have these two types. This is the reason why the second financial paper typically has two columns. One has, merely, to look at the practice over the years to see that this is the norm. Indeed, the distinguished, late Member of Parliament, Mr. Winston Murray, I believe, is on record saying that he will not question additional disbursements at any time and the Hansard, I think, will reflect this. He said that he welcomes them and he regards it as good news that the donor has been disbursing funds in a more accelerated fashion than was anticipated. I recall, with considerable satisfaction, hearing Mr. Murray saying that and I believe he actually said it on an occasion when one of his colleagues attempted to question one of these items. Mr. Murray stood up and very quickly said he would be the last to question additional disbursements being brought to account. And I think the Hansard will reflect this. I do not recall the date.

I will go further to say that it is apposite to note that the section cited by Mr. Greenidge, and I suspect alluded to by Mr. Ramjattan – although I do not think he actually cited the section number – section 41, is a section that deals specifically with financial papers of the former, rather than the latter class.

Section 41, in the marginal notes, specifically says “Contingencies Fund” and in the entirety of the provisions of that section speaks to supplementary appropriation sought for the purposes of replenishment of the Contingencies Fund. Section 41 does not address supplementary estimates of the second category to which I refer, those that deal with originating supplementary estimates and specifically those that relate to specific foreign inflows. So I respectfully, Mdm. Chairperson, submit that the section cited is not relevant and that is clear. Financial Paper No. 8/2011 has nothing to do with amounts spent from the Contingencies Fund. It has to do entirely with donors disbursing resources in addition or in excess of what was anticipated. This is merely an administrative exercise intended to facilitate the recording of these disbursements in the public accounts. Indeed, Mdm. Chairperson, like I said earlier, it has been the tradition that Members of this House have generally not even essayed questions in relation to specific inflows. I would say that we on this side of this House are happy to receive any questions. Notwithstanding the purely administrative nature of the second subset of the second category of these financial papers, we would have no difficulty if the Opposition wanted to ask questions on these papers. We would have no difficulty responding to these questions. Like I said, it never really has been the practice and I would say that it is clearly the case that section 41 speaks to advances made by the Contingencies Fund and this is a financial paper of the second type and Specific Expenditure is expenditure of the second type within that second type of financial paper, Disbursements Made by Foreign Agencies.

You will see that the Local column is completely unpopulated. There are no amounts under the Local column. We are not asking for approval of any expenditure that was made using domestic resources. We are asking mainly for approval of Specific appropriations and by using “Specific”, we mean that the national estimates indicate clearly what Specific appropriation is. Under the capital expenditure, there are two columns: Local and Specific. And there are tables that list. In the case of the donor agencies, they are in the legend: India, China, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank. That is what Specific means. I say this really for the benefit of those

who are new to the Assembly. I, respectfully, submit that I am completely surprised by the position taken by the Opposition. We have no difficulty whatsoever answering any questions, but the citation of an irrelevant section of the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act really takes me completely by surprise.

I, respectfully, submit that there is no basis for requesting the resubmission of this Financial Paper. We are available to answer any questions that may be posed to us. This, indeed, is the reason why we bring these financial papers to the Parliament and the answers we can provide immediately we provide, and the answers we undertake to provide, we provide later. We are happy to answer any questions, notwithstanding the time-honoured tradition that both sides of the House speak out in favour of accelerated disbursements by donors, the time-honoured tradition that both sides of this House welcome additional disbursements being made to the people of Guyana.

That, Mdm. Chairperson, is my submission and I would like to invite my colleagues on the other side of the House to reconsider the proposal that they have made.

8.29 p.m.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much Dr. Singh.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. I would be happy to reconsider the matter, and having reconsidered it, I would be happy to tell you that I cannot agree with the conclusion that Dr. Singh has drawn.

First of all, if you start with the very last set of points he made, it is true and I do not think that anyone wants to doubt that this paper pertains to capital items funded by external inflows – that is not an issue – and that the paper essentially deals in an administrative way in recording these capital items – that again is not in dispute. The Hon. Member then went on to explain that those inflows could be from a variety of sources, which is true, but it is not in the paper. The paper points out specifically. You cannot even tell where it is in relation to this document. What we are saying Mdm. Chairperson, if I may continue to have your protection, is that the Section to which I made reference is the section that covers the format and the amount of detail to be provided by

the relevant Minister when this item is brought to us. If we want to engage in problems about timing [*Interruption*] I was not aware that I was on the floor to ask a question...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Greenidge, do not be distracted. The House was very quiet when Dr. Singh was on his feet. I think it would only be fair to extend that courtesy to Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge. Mr. Greenidge, please proceed.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you for your protection Mdm. Chairperson. Just in case there is any doubt that in relation to these foreign inflows, there are obligations as regard the formatting, specifically, even of the inflows when the Minister comes to bring them to the House, and when the timing is not as anticipated. I refer you as I did earlier to Section 21. Section 21 of the Act makes reference...

Mdm. Chairperson: Is this the same Fiscal Management and Accountability Act (FMAA) of 2003?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act which stipulates more information than is even provided here. The issue before us is not really whether there are foreign funds, it is not whether it is just an administrative procedure, but rather it is that when the Minister reports in relation to these Supplementaries and the Contingency Fund, those sufficient details are provided. The detail must be consistent with the legal requirements. All we are asking is that you be bound by the law which was passed. It was passed a little bit before Dr. Singh took up his post, but it was passed by the Members of the other side of the House. They should find no difficulties in honoring those obligations.

The fact that it is not a matter of substance as regards timing and the Administration means that they do not lose anything by withdrawing the Financial Paper and providing us with the details and coming back so that we do not have to go through the trauma that some of us had to go through earlier, where Members were asked questions and did not have the information and where they refused to answer. We have left that behind us. We are under a new dispensation. They are obliged to recognise that you cannot simply by virtue of having the vote not provide the information. It must not be discretionary Mdm. Chairperson.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, I wish to first of all indicate that the arguments just proffered by the Hon. Minister gives the impression that because, historically, it used to happen in that manner that is the law. That is not the position. Indeed, historically, it used to happen so until a statute was created. We all know as Lawyers, and we can better appreciate the analogy that the common law develops because of practices from time in memorial, but when it comes down to a statute then dictating the operation of that regime, it is the statute that governs and not what historically was the best practice.

In 2003, I was a Member of this Parliament. I was sitting over there as a Member of the Governing party when this Bill was debated, deliberated, passed, assented and all of that. Indeed, we the law-makers then indicated that we wanted a new regime in relation to the Contingency Fund, and we passed this Act under Section 41 dealing exclusively with those operational matters of how it should be in this Parliament.

We wanted to bring what is called “more sunshine”, unto the Contingency Fund. We wanted more transparency. We wanted what is called on the document itself “contingency paper” or whatever they are; we wanted all of that to be here on the report. That is why Section 41(5) made it quite clear. First of all that they must indeed come to the next opportune moment to bring these facts to the House, that they expended moneys and the moneys went towards certain purposes, to which the accounts were paid those advances, and the purposes of the advances. I wish to read it Mdm. Chairperson.

“The Minister shall report to the next Sitting of the National Assembly on all advances made out of the Contingency Fund.”

[Interruption: Members: There is no Contingency Fund]

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, please allow the Hon. Member to proceed.

Mr. Ramjattan: I am indicating Mdm. Chairperson, that when we had done this Act in relation to contingencies, we were asking for more transparency. We would like, on the score here, to deal with this supplementary as like every other supplementary with what is called the same “sunshine”. What sunshine do we have with provision for additional inflows? When we passed

the Act, we wanted more transparency for contingencies and all the rest of it. We are asking here, by virtue of what, I am using the argument; please let us have that which is more transparent.

Moreover, we are indicating that there is absolutely nothing here that can tell us – by the way, I do not know anywhere in the Act where it was decided that there was supposed to be a distinction between what is called “local” and “foreign related expenditure”. [*Interruption*] Listen to my argument. If my argument does not find satisfaction to your ...

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Ramjattan, do not be distracted. Address the Chairperson.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, if I may just be protected.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, we will soon get to 10 O'clock, and at five to ten I may have to move a Motion to extend the hour. So, let us give Mr. Ramjattan an opportunity as was given to the Hon. Member Dr. Singh and Mr. Greenidge and see how we could move forward.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, I support what was said earlier. We need sunshine in relation to all manner of funds that come as supplementaries, just like the contingencies. For that reason the amendment should be supported.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members, please let us try to restrain ourselves. If not, we may have to take a short adjournment for people to perhaps take a little walk or a smoke.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mdm. Chairperson, let me just close off by stating that what is before us is not in any format that shows transparency.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Nagamootoo, do you wish to make a contribution to the Motion?

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mdm. Chairperson, if it pleases you, and with your leave, I would like to make a contribution to this important discussion on the Motion. This contribution has nothing to do with the importance for the people of Guyana, of the electrification programme, the highway improvement on the East Bank of Demerara, the acquisition of ferry vessels, or the education for all fast track initiative, each of which has its own merit, and each of which could find expression of support from anyone. Indeed, I would be the first to support any of these initiatives once they are brought to the House in keeping with the law. Provisions for these projects must confirm to the law. We as Members of Parliament represent the sovereign will of the people of Guyana. We

represent the people of Guyana in free, perhaps not fair, but verifiable and acceptable Elections which was held on the 28th of November.

The Constitution of Guyana is the supreme law of this land. The Constitution – and I have had the privilege of chairing the Oversight Committee on Constitutional Reform and know very well the provisions of this Constitution – sets out very clearly the question of the Consolidation Fund and its definition in supplementary law Act of Parliament of public funds and money. My learned friend, the Minister of Finance, knows well that moneys may come from different sources, local and foreign. Once disbursements of those moneys are made, the Constitution provides this supreme law of the land that they shall be paid into something called the Consolidated Fund. The withdrawal of money from the Consolidated Fund shall be made in accordance with the law.

I read from the Constitution of Guyana, and I hope that Members on the other side will allow me. I will read from the Sections, unless my learned friend from the other side has some disputation with Article 216 and several of the other Articles. I shall read from Article 216:

“All revenues and all other moneys raised or received by Guyana (not being revenues and other moneys that are payable by or under an Act of Parliament into some other fund established for any specific purpose or that may be by/under such an be retained by the authority that received them for the purpose of defraying the expenses of that authority) shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Fund”

Therefore, that being so, the attempt here is misleading, to say that because these are foreign funded projects then the disbursement of any funds can be made in whatever fashion the Minister in his own judgement and within his own powers may decide. That is a derogation of the powers of this Assembly and a derogation of the representative constitutionally formed here as the people’s representative, the people’s tribune.

This attempt to hoodwink the Parliament cannot be passed unnoticed.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Nagamootoo, just take your seat for a minute. Members, I want to request again – I think it is in baseball that there are three strikes and then you are out – we are at strike two. Could I respectfully ask the Members to seek to control yourself and the person next

to you so that we can move this process forward? I have been in the National Assembly for years. This is the first time that a motion of this nature is being passed. I think that we owe it to each other to listen and to give people on the floor the opportunity. So, please continue Mr. Nagamootoo. I will continue to protect you.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson, and I thank you both for your charm with which you deal with the violators, and your firmness.

The Constitution provides specifically that no moneys shall be withdrawn from any public fund other than the Consolidated Fund, unless the issue of those moneys has been authorised by or under an Act of Parliament. The Act of Parliament I respectfully submit, Mdm. Chairperson, is the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act No. 20 of 2003 as amended. The Section that was alluded to by the mover of the Motion, the Hon. Member Mr. Carl Greenidge was an appropriate Section that addresses how the money could be accessed; either originally by way of an Appropriation Act or a Supplementary Appropriation Act or by way of a Supplementary Appropriation Bill. Those are the provisions of the law. We are here to uphold the law, because we are the makers of the law. We are here to protect public funds, people's money; from wherever they may come or for whatever project they may be earmarked. The disburser cannot be at the whims and fancy and at the timing and opportune for electioneering and other purposes on the side of those who were put to govern. They must be accountable to the law, and held accountable to the law, or the law shall deal with them in the way the law provides.

So, I say again, Article 217 of the Constitution, "No money shall be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund..." My learned friend, Minister Ashni Singh, was saying, "This is not from the Contingency Fund, this is from the Consolidated Fund". Well, you have to decide why you have brought a Supplementary Financial Paper and you are trying to put the money now... [Ms. Shadick: You are trying to put the money now into the fund.] A supplementary provision, we are asking now to put the money into the Consolidated Fund; that is what we are being told here. This not a comic opera to be playing around with \$3,471,047,000.

Mdm. Chairperson: Members please seek to restrain yourselves. The next time I have cause to call on you to be quiet I will suspend the house for a few minutes in the first instance. Mr. Nagamootoo, please continue.

Mr. Nagamootoo: Mdm. Chairperson, I think I have said what I stood up here to say and I hope I have said it with enough seriousness that this matter requires. I would have wished that the Minister who is competent and who is learned should reconsider that rather than coming to this Parliament with the legend to a supplementary provision that is as bald as this paper on which it is written, simply stating provision for additional inflows and which is treating this house as if it were a rubber stamp, and expecting the majority of the people's representatives, like parrots, to simply regurgitate what he wants us to regurgitate, and to vote willy-nilly without having sufficient explanations in the legend, I ask most respectfully that the time is now for sense to prevail, for us to recognise the new dispensation and for us to act responsibly. Take this paper back, amend it, and bring it with sufficient explanations or we will withhold support for these inflows as they say, whatever purpose may be the cause.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, do I have your permission to make some supplementary comments?

Mdm. Chairperson: We cannot go on *ad nauseam*, but I will allow you, Dr. Singh, to make your contribution. I however am inclining towards a certain position, but I will hear you, Sir.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, I assure you of the accustomed brevity for which I have become known.

Mdm. Chairperson: It is good that we can have a sense of humor at this time of the evening. Proceed, Dr. Singh.

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, I listened with astonishment to the submissions made by my colleagues on the other side of the House, and in particular at the most recent contribution by the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo. I repeat what I said earlier, that Financial Paper No. 8 of 2011 has nothing to do with the Contingency Fund. I am not in saying this responding to Mr. Nagamootoo's contribution of which I am coming to shortly.

Financial Paper No. 8 has absolutely nothing to do with the Contingency Fund. So, the suggestion by the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge, that Section 41 applies, I think is a suggestion that can quite easily be dismissed by a perusal of the said Section starting from its marginal note.

The Section and all that it contains relate to advances made from the Contingency Fund and Associated Financial Papers.

I believe I was at pains to explain this fact. I believe the Section is clear, and I do not believe that any amount of histrionics, whether by the master of histrionics, “Mr. Control-freakism” himself or by any other member, could disguise or alter the fact that Section 41 addresses the Contingency Fund and, Financial Paper No. 8 of 2011 has nothing to do with the Contingency Fund. So, the reference to a statute and the reference to what Section 41 says are all completely irrelevant.

Section 21 that addresses conditional appropriations is also irrelevant. There is in fact a section that speaks of conditional appropriations, but that section addresses a situation where a budget agency receives revenues and meets associated expenditure. For example, an agency that provides a service for which it receives revenues, whether it is a Passport Office that issues passports and receives revenues and incurs expenditure. The conditional appropriation concept, if the Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge would take his time and reads the Section closely, and I would be happy to have a discussion with him later on it, is that one can appropriate a level of expenditure in the first instance, and one can also appropriate an additional level of expenditure were agency revenues to exceed a particular target. That is a conditional appropriation. So, were an agency’s revenue to exceed a particular target, that agency is permitted to incur additional expenditure. That is the concept of a conditional appropriation, and the law is completely clear here. So, Section 21 is also completely irrelevant.

This brings me to the contribution made by the Hon. Member Mr. Moses Nagamootoo. He refers to Article 216 of the Constitution which says that indeed all revenues or other moneys raised or received by Guyana etcetera, shall be paid into and form one Consolidated Fund. He refers to Article 216. We have no difficulty or dispute with Article 216 and its implications. What escapes Mr. Nagamootoo’s presentation is a familiarity with the manner in which donor agencies operate and the manner in which donor supported projects are executed. The overwhelming majority of development partners do not disburse cash to a beneficiary country that then goes into a Consolidated Fund to be withdrawn by the beneficiary country to be utilized. None of these donor agencies disburses cash that you will then bank into your Consolidated Fund and then withdraw. Almost all of the donor agencies operating anywhere in the world and certainly all

concerned on this Financial Paper disburse funds typically using direct disbursement. So the projects are executed and the funds are disbursed to meet payment. Take for example the ferries from China. China did not disburse moneys to the Government of Guyana's Consolidated Fund to be withdrawn to pay for the ferry. China built for the ferries. The ferries were built by a company in China and the Government of China paid those companies directly. To record the grant provided by the Government of China and the associated expenditure, you require an accounting entry that has two sides. You have to record "Grant received" and "Expenditure on Ferries". There is no movement of cash here. A Chinese company built the ferry and the Chinese Government paid the company that built the ferry and the Chinese company arranged for the ferries to be delivered. There is no cash coming to Guyana or going into the Consolidated Fund.

We have an obligation, if we are to record completely and accurately our total receipts which comprise revenues from local sources and also disbursements from donor agencies. We have an obligation if we are to record our expenditure completely, to record an accounting entry that captures those two side; "Grant from China" on the one hand and "Expenditure on Ferry on the other hand.

The same applies to say that an IDB or a World Bank supported a road or school. They will disburse to the supplier of the service, whether it is a contracting service or the supplier of some goods. We have an obligation to bring to account the grant or loan on the one hand and the associated expenditure on the other hand. When we record that receipt, it is recorded as a receipt into the Consolidated Fund and a corresponding and identical entry that records the expenditure is also recorded.

8.59 p.m.

So our accounts will reflect, "Receipt of a grant from China in the value of the ferries, expenditure of an identical amount on the ferries." [Member: Which fund is it recorded from?] From the Consolidated Fund, but it is an accounting entry to record ... there is no physical withdrawal. So the business about withdrawing funds whimsically and fancifully is really solely for the purposes of political grandstanding. Mr. Nagamootoo's assertion and insinuation about funds being withdrawn whimsically and fancifully, must be seen for exactly what it is, political grandstanding, because no funds come into the Consolidated Fund as cash to go back out. At the

end of the year, when you ascertain how much the donor has disbursed to you, you have an obligation to record the disbursement from the donor and the associated expenditure.

That is an extremely simple matter. So all of this drama...Someone made reference to being in Whim or something, this is not a public meeting where we are looking to score cheap political points. I thought we were operating in a spirit of... what is the word? [**Ms. Teixeira:** Cooperation] of cooperation. I did not understand we were in the business of scoring cheap political points. I did not understand we would distort what is ...cite incorrect and irrelevant references in the law. Cite an irrelevant Article in the Constitution that has no relevance to the mechanics of how donor agencies operate and how donor support projects are executed, solely for the purpose of scoring political points. We have the World Bank's, "Education for all fast track initiative", they are disbursing these resources all the time to pay teachers in the Hinterland; our remote area incentive and to build buildings for teachers who go to work in the Hinterland. The World Bank is busy disbursing these resources all the time. We come at the end of the year to say that they have disbursed 'X' amount in excess of what we anticipated at the time of the budget.

We further say that we have no problem answering questions. If you want to table a question to ask every amount of detail, we will provide it. I believe we have a good track record at answering questions.

[Interruptions]

I regret to say that the citation of irrelevant sections of the law, the distortion of an Article of the Constitution, solely for the purposes of political drama, maybe for the cameras, is a most regrettable development in this House tonight.

The recording of disbursements by donor agents is nothing new. Last year you would have seen one come at the end of the year and the years before. In Mr. Greenidge's tenure he never use to produce Public Accounts and so on, so probably did not bother with this kind of thing. So Mdm. Chairperson...

Mdm. Chairperson: Are you rising on a Point of Order Hon. Member?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, I am.

Mdm. Chairperson: Dr. Singh, please allow him to make his Point of Order. What is your point of Order?

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson we are trying to get over a point which is quite problematic...

Mdm. Chairperson: What is your Point of Order?

[Interruptions]

Mr. Greenidge: Standing Order 40.

[Interruptions]

Mdm. Chairperson: The Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge is on the floor. He has stood on Standing Order 40, Point of Order. Mr. Greenidge, could you indicate very briefly what your Point of Order is?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes, Mdm. Chairperson. I heard, I am quite sure, well I hope I did not; having been exposed to the concerns of the Hon. Minister about accuracies, truthfulness and grandstanding, I heard him make reference to the fact that I never presented, as Minister of Finance, Public Accounts to this House.

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Ms. Manickchand, Mr. Greenidge is on the floor, I think he is about to make his Point of Order.

Ms. Manickchand: He has not cited which Standing Order has been breached...

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Chairperson, I have before me a list of the reports on the Public Accounts for the years 1965-1991, and I assure you that I was the Minister of Finance from 1983 until 1992.

Ms. Teixeira: This is elucidation.

Mdm. Chairperson: Just one minute. Elucidation is also in Standing Orders 40. Mr. Greenidge is obviously seeking to correct the point made by the Hon. Member, Dr. Singh. I recognise him, and I ask that Mr. Greenidge be allowed to make his point, uninterrupted and brief.

Mr. Greenidge: I see on the list before me the National Accounts laid during the period I was Minister of Finance. I am certain this makes different reading from what the Minister...

Members: Read it!

[Interruptions]

Mr. Greenidge: Madam, do you want me to read it?

Mdm. Chairperson: I will not need you to read it.

Mr. Greenidge: Okay, well I am going to correct... I have the list which I can make available to you. Ten reports were presented in my time, although I was the Minister for nine years. So he is required to withdraw that statement, because it is inaccurate.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Dr. Singh...

Dr. Singh: Mdm. Chairperson, what the Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge did not share with us was the years to which these ten years of audited accounts, he presented to Parliament, related.

Mdm. Chairperson: Dr. Singh my recollection... Members, please be quiet! My understanding of what you said is, during his tenure, not which years; the Hon. Member never presented any papers. He has stood on a Point of Order to indicate that that is not true, and he has given the years the papers were presented.

I would suggest respectfully in an effort to move this process forward, Mr. Greenidge having given you the information, you withdraw and proceed.

Dr. Singh: I will maintain my position, that Mr. Greenidge did not provide sufficient information. He did not state the years to which the audited Public Accounts, he tabled, related. I will say this though, Mdm. Chairperson, I am willing to say that during Mr. Greenidge's tenure as the Finance Minister, Public Accounts were not presented to the National Assembly in a timely manner. I am prepared to say that.

[Interruptions]

Dr. Singh: It is a well known fact that audited Public Accounts...

Mdm. Chairperson: Hon. Member, Dr. Singh, are you withdrawing? Mr Greenidge, please be seated thank you. Are you withdrawing the initial statement you made, and now seeking to substitute it by saying; ‘in a timely manner’?

Dr. Singh: I am saying Mdm. Chairperson that...

Mdm. Chairperson: The answer to that question Dr. Singh has to be yes, or no.

Dr. Singh: To be quite frank with you, I do not recall the exact language I may have used. If you would like me to be more precise I am quite happy to substitute what I said earlier, Mdm. Chairperson, with your permission. I am quite happy to substitute what I said earlier with the following...

Mdm. Chairperson: What do you now say?

Dr. Singh: I now say: ‘that, during Mr. Greenidge’s tenure, the Government of Guyana was not known for timely submissions of audited Public Accounts’. Further, I say that there was a ten years period, prior to 1991, for which no audited Public Accounts were tabled in this National Assembly.

Mdm. Chairperson: Mr. Greenidge, are you rising on a Point of Order?

Mr. Greenidge: Yes.

Mdm. Chairperson: We will continue.

Mr. Greenidge: Madam, I would like to advise our colleague that if he wants to deal with the matter which is before us, and which he is so concerned about, he refrain from making these inaccurate and inflammatory statements, as a matter of fact...

[Interruptions]

Mdm. Chairperson: I am not going to entertain any further discussion on this item, in terms of audited accounts, when submitted, when not submitted. Dr Singh do you have anything further to add outside of that in relation to your brief response?

Dr. Singh: Indeed Mdm. Chairperson, I was in fact about to conclude. That was on the point I was making. It was most regrettably in this era, in which my colleagues on that side of the House would like to profess a willingness to cooperate and to work collaboratively.

It is most regrettable that Constitutional provisions would be invoked and distorted, and irrelevant statutes cited, solely for the purposes of political posturing. This is really a very simple matter and it is extremely unfortunate, like I said, my colleagues on the other side of the House, would take this position in relations to this matter. So, I am reminding my colleagues that the details... this supplementary estimate is to be read in conjunction with the national estimates, which donor is concerned, what the project is about, all of that is provided in the national estimates. I maintain that is the case.

Mr. Ramjattan has not demonstrated any degree of familiarity with these estimates. I do not think he is in a position to pronounce on what is in them or not. Mdm. Chairperson, I will conclude my remarks there, by thanking you very much for accommodating them. And I will say that it is most regrettable that my colleagues on the other side of the House would take this obstructive stance, on a very simple and legitimate matter. That is what the stance has to be described as; completely and totally obstructive, and unproductive. Thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson.

Mdm. Chairperson: Thank you. Members, I want to thank all those persons who contributed. I think all Members of the House will agree that indeed we are in a new time, Hon. Member, Ms. Ally, we are in a new period. I have listened to presentations from both sides of the House, both individually and together, seeming quite compelling, logical and clear. Reference is being made to not only the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act 2003, but also to sections of the Constitution of our country.

Having listened to both sides of the House, I would like an opportunity to advise myself. I will not call on a vote to be taken at this time, but I would indicate to the Hon. Prime Minister, the Leader of the House, that I am asking and requesting an opportunity to advise myself. As such Hon. Prime Minister, at the appropriate time, I will ask you to move the adjournment because I believe that this is the last item on our Order Paper for today.

In the absence of a conclusion or decision on Financial Paper No 8/2011. It is my ruling that we cannot properly go to the Bill, because Financial Paper No.8/2011 is still under review. I still

have to rule. In view of that Mr. Clerk, I would ask that we resume the sitting of the House, and I will formally invite...

Assembly resumed

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Greenidge you keep getting up and sitting back down.

Mr. Greenidge: Because you keep stopping Mdm. Chairperson, I did not want to interrupt you in mid flow.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: That is my position Mr. Greenidge, Hon. Member.

Ms. Teixeira: Mdm. Speaker, this is a rather unusual train of events. I do not question your right to advise yourself. However, it puts a bit of a quandary in relations to the Standing Orders, because we have finished Financial Paper No. 7/2011, and, therefore, either the motion that is presented by Mr. Greenidge is put, or are you asking the House to defer the issue. Financial Paper No. 7/2011 was examined by this House, there were approval of some heads, and therefore the Supplementary Appropriation Bill can be amended. Financial Paper No 8/2011, we believe if you wish to advise yourself, I would like to suggest, and not with any attempt to influence what you do, but to merely say, we on this side of the House, are willing to move for an extension of the time, if need be, so that we can try to conclude this matter tonight.

The issue, therefore, is that Financial Paper No.7/2011 could be dealt with as a Supplementary Appropriation Bill in its own right, without in any way being of harm to the FMAA and the number of Bills that have to be tabled. Thank you.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: That is true because Financial Paper No.7/2011 has been approved as amended. In fact, as you rightly said, we are finished with Financial Paper No.7/2001. I have no problem with us proceeding with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, but the Bill would of course have to be amended to only deal with Financial Paper No. 7/2011, because that is the paper which has been debated and approved as amended. That is why I am looking at it and thought it would be simpler for us to have the adjournment before we deal with the Act. But, if we are going to deal with the Act and do the necessary amendments, so that it only deals with Financial Paper No. 7/2011, then I see nothing that can prevent us from doing that.

It was my hope, it still is my hope, that some common ground could be found. Perhaps even at this late stage. In the absence of that, if I am given some assurance that a short adjournment may lead to that resolution, but failing that, I am very firm that I would want to advise myself, before I deal with Financial Paper No. 8/2011.

Ms. Teixeira: Mdm. Speaker, certainly as I said, and I repeat, the wish to advise yourself is laudable and therefore we would not like to interfere with that. We were merely saying that it is not impossible or improper for us to have dealt with Financial Paper No. 7/2011. However, in the way you put it over, you appear to want to include both, therefore, if you wish more time, we will not stand in your way.

However, Mdm. Speaker, let me put my last lick in and that is that. We would hope, based on the arguments presented on the floor, and the convincing arguments however presented for particularly the Government side, to deal with this particular Financial Paper No. 8/2011, that we would not have undue delays in relations to dealing with this matter.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: I could see no reason for an undue delay. I, having indicated to the House that I needed time to advise myself, it is still the call of the Government as to when you would want to adjourn for. In fact, that is what I am about to invite the Leader of the House, the Hon. Prime Minister, to indicate when he would seek the adjournment to. Hon. Member Mr. Greenidge.

Mr. Greenidge: Mdm. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence. Before the Hon. Prime Minister's response, could I just draw to you attention, I do not know if to put it as a question, but if you look at...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Greenidge, I will allow you a very short time to make whatever point it is you want to make, if not, we will go on and on.

Mr. Greenidge: Thank you. I am opening an entirely new issue Mdm. Speaker, and it has to do...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Just proceed Mr. Greenidge.

Mr. Greenidge: It has to do with the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, section 41, it pertains to section (d). It has to do with the ceiling that the Minister is entitled to approve and seek approval for. I want to know whether he is satisfied that he is within that ceiling, when both the Financial Papers are taken. I do not know whether he has looked at it. The ceiling stipulated here states that it shall not exceed 2% of estimate annual expenditure. Do I need to say more?

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Dr. Singh, you are the last Member I am entertaining on this issue.

Dr. Singh: I am happy to hear that Mdm. Speaker. I have said, I believe, repeatedly tonight that section 41 relates to advances made from the Contingency Fund and so section 41 (4), which imposes a ceiling on advances made from the Contingency Fund, relates to Financial Paper No. 7/2011, which is the Financial Paper that deals with advances made from the Contingency fund.

Financial Paper No 8/2011 does not relate to advances made from the Contingency Fund and so is not relevant, or is not to be counted when applying the ceiling. So, I can assure the Hon. Member that I am satisfied that the ceiling is complied with. I go further to advise the Hon. Member that contrary to his misconception, Financial Paper No. 8/2011 has nothing to do with the ceiling, and I think that point has been made.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Members I believe...

Ms. Manickchand: Not on this big issue Mdm. Speaker, but something is niggling me sufficiently for me to bring it to your Honour's attention.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: Under what Standing Order are you standing on?

Ms. Manickchand: Your Honour I am not raising a Point of Order or an elucidation, but I am indicating to your Honour and the good Clerk that I am questioning, subject and guided. I will be happy to be guided by you, but while you are considering and advising yourself, Mdm. Speaker, the application by Mr. Greenidge, the Hon. Member is for there to be an amendment of a motion brought by Minister Singh. The amendment is to withdraw the motion. While your Honour is advising your Honour's self, perhaps your Honour may wish to consider whether that is even something that can happen. That we can amend by withdrawing the entire motion. So, even if fundamentally, the application made by Mr. Greenidge, I am respectfully questioning.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: I will certainly include that in my deliberations.

Hon. Prime Minister?

Mr. Hinds: I was going to ...Mdm. Speaker...

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: I understand you need a few minutes Hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. Hinds: Yes.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: I would be most happy to grant that. We would have to adjourn for a short while. The Assembly is adjourned, Members we are adjourning for a very short time, please do not go far. We will resume within five minutes.

Sitting suspended at 9.23 p.m.

Sitting resumed at 9.54 p.m.

Mdm. Deputy Speaker: The Assembly has now been resumed. Please be seated. Before we proceed, I am looking at the time, it is now 9.55 p.m., so the hours of sitting ... Hon. Prime Minister could I ask you to rise to...

Mr. Hinds: Mdm. Speaker, Hon. Members, I would like to say that over the last fifteen minutes that we took for the suspension, all sides made efforts to resolve the issue, but my judgement is that we have not resolved the matters fully. Therefore, we would return to your earlier proposal, that you be granted time to advise yourself on the matter. Therefore, following that, I would want to propose that the House be adjourned to 15th March, 2011.

Adjourned accordingly at 9.56 p.m.