

# Official Report

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012-2014) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN*

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68<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Thursday, 23<sup>RD</sup> January, 2014

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*The Assembly convened at 2.12 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Presiding Member in the Chair]*

## **ELECTION OF A PRESIDING MEMBER**

**The Clerk:** I wish to inform you that the Hon. Speaker Mr. Raphael Trotman and Mdm. Deputy Speaker Mrs. Backer are both unavoidably absent from today's sitting therefore in accordance with Standing Order 4 (1) the Assembly is required to elect a Member who is not a Minister of the Government or a Parliamentary Secretary to preside at today's sitting. I accordingly invite nominations.

**Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. Hinds]:** Mr. Clerk, in according to the circumstances which we have just outlined I would like to nominate Hon. Member Ms. Bibi Shadick to preside as Speaker for this sitting.

**The Clerk:** Can someone second the nomination?

**Ms. Ally:** I rise to second the nomination.

**The Clerk:** Are there any further nominations? Hon. Members, I proposed the question that Ms. Bibi Shadick be nominated to preside at today's sitting. I will now invite Ms. Shadick to come to the Chair.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Ms. Shadick assumed Chair.*

## **ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

### **Thanking Members**

**Presiding Members:** Hon. Members, I would like to say thank you to the Members of this House for reposing confidence in me to preside at today's sitting in the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker who, by the way, I think you should all pray for a speedy recovery from her illnesses. I hope that the sitting will be an uneventful one, that heckling will be used as an art rather than harassment and that we can get through the business for the day with due respect to each and every one of the persons who will be speaking. I need to remind the House that heckling is an art. Thank you very much.

### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Members, I wish to draw your attention to a ruling, ruling No. 1 of 2014, by the Speaker, the Hon. Raphael Trotman, which was circulated at today's sitting with respect to the admissibility of the two motions by Hon. Member Mr. Trevor Williams. That ruling has been circulated. Secondly, I was informed by the Hon. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment that the Wild Life import and Export Bill 2013, Bill No. 20/2013, standing in his name, will not be proceeded with at this Sitting.

### **Invitation from Dr. Ramayya**

**Presiding Member:** Also the Members of Parliament have been invited by Hon. Member Dr. Veersammy Ramayya, to attend a one year Sharad and Gita Puja in memory of his late wife. The function is to be held on Sunday the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014 at 10.00 a.m. at the Whim Village Corentyne Berbice, Dr. Ramayya's resident. All Members of the National Assembly are invited to attend.

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Paper was laid:

The Occupational Safety and Health (HIV and AIDS) Regulations 2013 – No. 9 of 2013.  
[*Minister of Labour*]

**Presiding Members:** Hon. Members, I am hearing like a conversation speaking that is impeding us.

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **Written Replies**

#### **1. PAYMENT OF 5% INCREASE IN WAGES AND SALARIES TO PUBLIC OFFICERS**

**Mr. B. Williams:** Could the Hon. Minister provide, with particulars, the specific amounts utilised in relation to the following components of the \$4.4 billion allocated under the head “Revision of Wages and Salaries” in the 2013 Budget? These are:

- (1) Increase in wages and salaries;
- (2) New employment; and
- (3) Promotions.

**Minister of Finance [Dr. Singh]:** Further to Parliamentary question (Notice Paper No. 274 – Q 180 Opp. 178) on expenditure incurred in 2013 under line item 6141 – Revision of Wages and Salaries, please find details below:

1. Payment of 5 per cent Increase in wages and salaries - \$ 1.6 billion
2. Employment cost shortfalls arising from new recruits - \$ 1.3 billion
3. Employment cost shortfalls arising from promotions - \$ 0.3 billion
4. One month bonus paid to disciplined services - \$0.5 billion

5. Payment of employment cost shortfalls as subvention agencies - \$0.7 billion
6. Other employment cost shortfalls arising from, payment of salary in lieu of leave, etc. - \$0.1 billion

Note that some agencies met part of the 5 per cent increase in wages and salaries from their own voted provision, where available.

**[Oral Replies]**

**2. CLIFF ANDERSON SPORTS HALL**

**Mr. Jones:** I beg to ask the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport Question No. 2 on the Order Paper standing in my name:

- (i) Could the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport inform this House whether in addition to sports the Cliff Anderson Sports Complex can also be used to slaughter goats and other meat products?

**Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport [Dr. Anthony]:** Thank you Mdm. Presiding Member. Allow me, before answering the question, to extend congratulations to you for sitting in for the Speaker at this sitting. Coming to the question, the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall is used primarily for sporting and cultural events.

**Mr. Jones:** Follow-up question Comrade Presiding Member. Could the Hon. Minister inform this House what led to goats being slaughtered at the sports hall?

**Dr. Anthony:** I am not aware that goats were slaughtered at the sports hall.

**Mr. Jones:** Final follow-up question. Is the Hon. Minister saying that he was unaware of the newspaper article that was carried in the *Kaieteur News* of Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of November?

**Presiding Member:** I do not think the Hon. Minister said that, Hon. Member. He said that he was not aware that goats were slaughtered.

**Mr. Jones:** That is right so I am asking him...

**Presiding Member:** Then you have another supplementary question.

**Mr. Jones:** Yes. Is the Hon. Minister informing this House that he was unaware of the newspaper article carried in the *Kaieteur News* of Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of November which carried the head line “Cliff Anderson Sports Hall also an abattoir”?

**Dr. Anthony:** I heard there was an article. I have not seen the article.

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Member, you should not believe all the things you read in all the newspapers, but go ahead.

**Mr. Jones:** The final follow-up Comrade Speaker, the Hon. Minister said he heard of an article in the paper. Could he inform this House, having heard about the article in the papers, what action he has since taken as a Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport?

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Member, you are asking the Minister what action he has taken regarding the article in the newspaper which he said he did not read.

**Mr. Jones:** Regarding that, he said that he heard about an article in the papers. What action has he since taken to confirm whether or not the article is true?

**Dr. Anthony:** One of the things I did when I heard about the article is to enquire what was alleged in the article, whether goats were slaughtered there, and the persons, who I have enquired from, have assured me that no goat or goats were slaughtered at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall.

**Mr. Jones:** The second question.

- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House who granted permission for goats to be slaughtered at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall?

**Dr. Anthony:** Nobody from the Ministry granted permission for goats to be slaughtered at the Cliff Anderson Sports Hall.

**Mr. Jones:** Follow-up question. In the said article of the *Kaieteur News* carried on Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of November stated, “eye witness said that the Director of Youth and Sport Mr. Neendkumar was on the premises at the time of goats being slaughtered.” Is the Minister aware of this?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I am trying to get your attention. The Hon. Member is asking a number of questions, but under “Contents of Questions”, Standing Order 20, a Member cannot ask whether statements in the media are accurate. Therefore I think some of these questions are out of order. In addition, under oral questions, usually it is two supplementary questions per persons on a matter that is brought under oral questions by a Member.

**Presiding Member:** Thank you Madam Teixeira, but hold on a minute. I am understanding that the Hon. Member Mr. Jones to be taking whatever is in this article as being accurate. He is not asking whether it is as being accurate; he is stating it as being accurate. Having said what I said earlier, you do not believe everything that you read in the newspaper. That being said, however, the Minister has answered and said that nobody from the Ministry gave permission for goats to be slaughtered anywhere. I would have thought, if I was asking the questions,... I would like to ask the Minister: Does the Ministry give permission for any kind of animals to be slaughtered at this place? It is not an abattoir. I would like to know that.

**Dr. Anthony:** We do not give any permission for animals to be slaughtered at the sports complex.

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Member Mr. Jones, without assuming that what you have in the article is correct, if you would like to ask another question, which the Minister may be able to answer, then I will allow you one more.

**Mr. Jones:** Well then, again, Comrade Presiding Member, I will have to depend on the article, which was carried, which includes a photograph of persons at a table of which goats have been slaughtered. As I mentioned earlier, in the article, it is stated that the eyewitness account said that the Director of Sports was also present at the premises at the time. The relationship between the Minister and the Director of Sports, I am asking, now, if by chance the Director of Sports, through the Ministry, has granted permission.

**Presiding Member:** Did the picture show the Director of Sports at the table?

**Mr. Jones:** It shows several other persons.

**Presiding Member:** Does it show the Director of Sports?

**Mr. Jones:** No.

**Presiding Member:** Then we are still assuming. As a lawyer, I am looking at you making assumptions, that the table is at the Sports Hall. Again, I am saying if you have a question that the Minister can answer, having regarded what he has said before, then, please ask it.

**Mr. Jones:** I am unaware of what the Minister could answer. I could only ask the question.

**Presiding Member:** Well, he has already answered that no permission was given for goats to be slaughter there.

**Mr. Jones:** Is it including whether it is from the Director of Sports?

**Presiding Member:** Well, the Director of Sports is a part of the Ministry. Is he not?

**Mr. Jones:** That is my question to the Minister now.

**Presiding Member:** You should ask that one.

**Mr. Jones:** Could the Minister inform the House whether or not the Director of Sports had granted permission?

**Dr. Anthony:** No person from the Ministry was given permission to slaughter any animal at the sports hall.

**Presiding Member:** Thank you Hon. Minister, I think we could put this to rest.

**Mr. Jones:** Follow-up question.

**Presiding Member:** This is the last one. Take one more.

**Mr. Jones:** Again in the same article it stated that after the goats were slaughtered, at the sports hall, a vehicle bearing registration number PGG 9139... I have checked with the Guyana Revenue Authority and this vehicle is registered to the National Sports Commission. Could the Minister inform this House whether he granted permission to anyone in the National Sports Commission to use its vehicle to transport goats after being slaughtered at the sports hall?

**Presiding Member:** That is a new question to all of these. It is not really a follow-up. I think we will have to bring this to an end somewhere. What I have been hearing is your reading from a newspaper article which may or may not be factual. That still has to be decided. The Minister has not read it he said that he heard about it. The Minister said nobody gave permission for the goats to be slaughtered. A vehicle belong to the National Sports Commission has every right to be near to the sports hall.

**Mr. Jones:** It was transporting.

**Presiding Member:** Yes, but if the Minister does not know at what day and at what time then there is another problem.

**Mr. Jones:** It was Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> of November.

**Presiding Member:** He never even heard that, so please Sir... I will suggest that you write all these things and ask for a written answer in details so that you could be given that information. I think you will get more information that way, which will be circulated to everyone.

**An Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Presiding Member:** I am trying to preserve the dignity of the House so let us move off from the goats and slaughtering.

Hon. Member Mr. Jones, when you ask your second question, I thought that was question number 2 so you had two questions. I have three questions on the Order Paper, two for oral replies, both of which had to be asked by you of the Hon. Minister. According to what I have heard you have asked two questions and there is a third question which is for written reply. The answer has been received and circulated in accordance with the Standing Order.

Now Hon. Member Mr. Jones, according to the Order Paper, it is one question that concerns the killing of goats and when you said your second question that was not right, it was the second part of the one question so your one question has three parts. You have asked the second part and within that you have asked six supplemental. I will give you leave to ask your third part and if you need to have two supplemental, that should be enough.

**Mr. Jones:** Thank you Comrade Presiding Member.



**Presiding Member:** Please remember that we have 40 minutes for questions.

**Mr. Jones:**

- (iii) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House what fees or charge to clubs/groups to utilise Cliff Anderson Sports Hall and what criteria is used to determine those fees?

**Dr. Anthony:** There is a standard fee for commercial activities at the sports hall and that is \$50,000. There are a number of other entities, clubs that used the facility and that is granted to them free of cost. For example, there is the Guyana Table Tennis Association which is there on a regular basis; it is using it free of cost. Volleyball club uses it, hockey and netball clubs all use it free of cost.

**Presiding Member:** Is there any follow-up on that?

**Mr. Jones:** There is no follow-up for that one.

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Member Mr. Jones, you have another question which has two parts. You may ask your question now.

### 3. BASKETBALL COURT AT THE GYMNASIUM

**Mr. Jones:**

- (i) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House when would the lights on the basketball court at the gymnasium be replaced?

**Dr. Anthony:** There were some problems at the gymnasium with a few of the bulbs not working and those have since been replaced. There is now adequate lighting on the basketball court and in the parking facility.

**Mr. Jones:** Follow-up question. My question is specifically on the basketball court, not the parking lot. I am aware that on December last, before the last sitting of the National Assembly, electricians were busy at work to restore those lights but I am talking specifically about the lights on the basketball court. There were huge stand lights, which were there a few years ago, that have since vanished.

**Dr. Anthony:** As far as I know there is now adequate lighting on the basketball court. If as the Hon. Member is saying that there was some other form of lighting that was removed, I am not aware of that. I can say now the basketball court can be used in the nights because there is adequate amount of lights for the playing of basketball.

**Mr. Jones:** Just to inform you Comrade Presiding Member, I normally go to run on the basketball court at the gymnasium and I am unable to do so because at 6.30.p.m. it is dark. It is just to inform the Minister.

- (ii) Could the Hon. Minister inform this House why and under whose instructions the lights that were on the basketball court at the gymnasium were removed?

**Presiding Member:** I think that the Hon. Minister just answers that one, in his first answer. He said if there were lights...

**Dr. Anthony:** If there is a problem at the gymnasium just let me know so that we can fix it. As far as I am aware the gymnasium, the basketball court, the lights are working. I know for a fact it had a problem with the parking area and that has been fixed. If there is a problem let me know and we can remedy that. As far as I know, it is working.

**Presiding Member:** Thank you Hon. Minister. You are not answering questions from everybody else on the floor. Hon. Member Mr. Jones, I would advise you to do some bilateral with the Minister's office to get what you are talking about and that would be most helpful to everybody.

## **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

#### **BILLS – SECOND READING**

#### **THE MARRIED PERSONS (PROPERTY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 9 of 2013**

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Married Persons (Property) Act. [Mrs. Backer]

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Members, the first item on the Order Paper is the Married Persons (Property) (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 9 of 2013 which is in the name of Mrs. Deborah Backer. I would like to ask whether it would be proceeded with.

**Ms. Ally:** I wish to ask that this Bill be deferred. As you know the Deputy Speaker is not in the Assembly and we would not like to proceed with it on this day.

*Bill deferred.*

## **MOTIONS**

### **REINTRODUCTION OF THE BERBICE RIVER FERRY SERVICE FROM NEW AMSTERDAM TO KWAKWANI**

WHEREAS the Berbice River Ferry previously served a number of communities from New Amsterdam to Kwakwani, providing critical and affordable transportation to hundreds of Guyanese families and their goods to and from the Berbice Coast;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana with no explanation unilaterally removed this critical service which linked the hinterland with the coast;

AND WHEREAS individuals, families, organisations and institutions from communities of the Berbice River benefited from this service in the past and now have to severely alter their way of life to the extent of relocating and abandoning their primary economic activity;

AND WHEREAS many of these communities have now become abandoned and deserted due to lack of significant economic activities;

AND WHEREAS many young people can no longer embrace a future in agricultural activities to further develop themselves;

AND WHEREAS this ferry service remains a critical component to the development of the Berbice riverain communities;

AND WHEREAS other far-flung areas in Guyana which remain accessible by river mainly Northwest, Bartica and Essequibo Coast have had the ferry services maintained, thereby providing critical support to residents and facilitating the transport of large scale commodities,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly immediately calls on the Government of Guyana to restore this service thereby reviving those communities and giving hope and stability to the many Guyanese who wish to venture into agricultural entrepreneurship.

*[Mr. Trevor Williams]*

**Mr. T. Williams:** I rise to request a deferral of this motion until further notice.

*Motion deferred.*

### **RESTORATION OF THE ANNUAL SUBVENTION/GRANT TO THE CRITCHLOW LABOUR COLLEGE**

WHEREAS the Critchlow Labour College through its three campuses in Georgetown, Linden and Berbice served to educate thousands of Guyanese, both adult and youth, for decades and giving many a second chance at educating themselves;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana, both PNC and PPP/C, through the Ministry of Finance, provided a subvention to the Critchlow Labour College thereby subsidising the cost of education to thousands of Guyanese from all walks of life;

AND WHEREAS through the benefit of this subvention the Critchlow Labour College successfully entered into partnerships for developing education within Guyana and abroad with reputable institutions;

AND WHEREAS through its offering of academic courses hundreds of young Guyanese entered and re-entered the job market and rose through the ranks to become highly skilled and successful professionals;

AND WHEREAS parents and guardians alike were able to access affordable education at a convenient time, thereby developing themselves and making their families more stable;

AND WHEREAS after the withdrawal of this subvention the institution eventually collapsed thereby bringing to ruin the hopes and aspirations of thousands of young Guyanese from all walks of life;

AND WHEREAS the Critchlow Labour College now offers a significantly reduced curriculum thereby limiting the options of those desiring higher education,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to restore the full subvention thereby allowing the Critchlow Labour College to be re-opened to its full capacity.

[*Mr. T. Williams*]

**Mr. T. Williams:** Again, I rise to request a deferral of this motion until further notice.

*Motion deferred.*

### **THE BROADCASTING (AMENDMENT) BILL 2013 – Bill No. 19 of 2013**

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly, in accordance with Standing Order No. 52(1), grant leave for the introduction and first reading of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2013 – Bill No. 19 of 2013:-

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Broadcasting Act.”

[*Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon*]

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mdm. Speaker, I wish to request that the amendment tabled in my name be deferred to another sitting.

*Motion deferred.*

2.42 p.m.

### **BERBICE RIVER BRIDGE**

WHEREAS the Berbice Bridge was built with significant investment by the Government of Guyana on behalf of the People of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS the Berbice Bridge is owned and operated by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc (BBCI), a company incorporated under the provisions of the Companies Act No. 29 of 1991 of the Laws of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Guyana through National Industrial & Commercial Investments Ltd (NICIL) is a preferential shareholder and a member of the Board of Directors of the Berbice Bridge Company Inc.;

AND WHEREAS since it's commissioning in December, 2008 the Berbice Bridge has facilitated crossing of over 650,000 vehicles (of the Berbice River) resulting in an annual revenue of over \$1,500,000,000 (one billion five hundred million dollars) for the Berbice Bridge Company Inc.;

AND WHEREAS the toll for vehicles crossing the Berbice Bridge presently is:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Present Rates</b>
Motor Cars	\$2200
Mini Buses	\$2200
Motor Cycles	\$200
Four-wheel drive/ SUVs/Pick-ups	\$4000
SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	\$4000
Four-wheel drives, SUVs and pick-ups pulling horse buggies	\$4000
Four-wheel drives/ SUVs / pick-ups transporting BBQ Grills, coolers	\$4000
50-seater bus	\$12,800
30-seater bus	\$7,200

Large Trucks	\$13,600
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AND WHEREAS the toll for crossing the Berbice River is exceedingly high when compared to a similar crossing of the Demerara River by the Demerara Harbour Bridge and represents a significant devolution of wealth from the people of Berbice in particular to the benefit of a private company;

AND WHEREAS in recognition that the toll was too high the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for a specific period over August 1, 2013 to August 12, 2013 reduced the toll for the crossing of the Berbice Bridge to the following rates:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Current toll charges/freight charges</b>	<b>Reduced toll charges for the month of August/no freight charge</b>
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups	G\$4000	G\$3000
SUVs/Pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge for tourism and pleasure activity
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups pulling horse buggies	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge
Four-wheel drive/SUVs/Pick-ups transporting BBQ grills, coolers	G\$4000	G\$3000 and no freight charge for tourism and pleasure activity
50-seater buses	G\$12,800	G\$9,000
30-seater buses	G\$7,200	G\$6,000
Large trucks	G\$13,600	G\$10,000

AND WHEREAS section 3 and section 4 of the Berbice River Bridge Act 2006 - No. 3 of 2006 provides for the Minister responsible for public works to make “Toll Orders”,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana to instruct its representative on the Board of Directors of the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. to demand an immediate reduction in tolls charged by the Berbice Bridge Company Inc. for crossing the Berbice River; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls upon the Minister responsible for Public Works to make the following Toll Order:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Present Rates</b>	<b>Proposed Rates</b>
Motor Cars	\$2,200	\$1,000
Mini Buses	\$2,200	\$1,000
Motor Cycles	\$200	Free
Four-wheel drive/ SUVs/Pick-ups	\$4,000	\$3,000
SUVs and pick-ups pulling a boat for recreational activities	\$4,000	\$3,000
Four-wheel drives, SUVs and pick-ups pulling horse buggies	\$4,000	\$3,000
Four-wheel drives/ SUVs / pick-ups transporting BBQ Grills, coolers	\$4,000	\$3,000
50-seater bus	\$12,800	\$9,000



30-seater bus	\$7,200	\$6,000
Large Trucks	\$13,600	\$10,000

**Lt. Col (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I respectfully request that this motion in my name on the Berbice River Bridge be deferred.

*Motion on the Berbice River Bridge deferred.*

## **GOVERNMENT'S BUSINESS**

### **MOTION**

#### **CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 4 OF 2013**

“Be it resolved that this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2013 – Schedule of Supplementary provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totalling \$1,062,179,646 for the period 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*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. 4 of 2013 and I now move the motion.

*Motion proposed.*

## **CURRENT EXPENDITURE**

### **Item 1 03-031 – Ministry of Finance – Policy and Administration - \$276,307,287**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I take the opportunity to congratulate you on your election to this position and look forward, of course, to cooperating with you in ensuring that you can acquit yourself of this task with our full and efficient participation also.

The item identified pertains to two different subsidies – one pertains to the Linden Electricity Company Inc (LECI) and the other to the Kwakwani Utilities Inc. I wonder whether the Minister might be good enough to give us some details as to what gave rise to these specific amounts.

Might I take the opportunity, as I am on my feet, and to avoid having to repeat these comments later, Mdm. Chairperson, to say to you that this side of the House was very appreciative of the indication that the substantive Speaker gave, namely that he would not be allowing consideration of supplementary provisions and contingencies requests unless they conform fully to the requirements of the Fiscal Management and Accountability (FMA) Act.

I have noted that the Colleagues on the other side have, at least, taken the trouble to have an additional document attached. Let me say that the article referred to by the Speaker required not merely the document but that it should provide certain details, details including payees and so forth. This attempt to move to satisfy what the law requires is only a very, very first step. In fact, the details provided in the additional document are no more informative than the legend alongside the main paper.

We have, in a sense, conformed to the Speaker's injunction, as it were, in terms of the letter, but not in terms of the spirit of the intention.

**Mr. Neendkumar:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Greenidge.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I had not finished, Mdm. Chairperson. I noted that on the other side of the floor there seemed to be competition. I was just giving him a chance since, apparently, he [*inaudible*].

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I think he was trying to artfully heckle.

**Mr. Greenidge:** There are two points being made here and I hope that the Prime Minister and his colleagues will take that into account. Thank you.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Greenidge. As you said, trying to conform is a step in the right direction, and I think we need to commend any step that goes in the right direction. However, for today, at least, the details can be asked and can probably be provided and, hopefully, the next time we will have full compliance with whatever is needed.

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Chairperson, first of all, permit me to say that I do not agree with the characterising of the details supplied as not being in conformity with the law. They are, in fact, in full conformity with the law.

**Mr. Greenidge:** You said that before.

**Dr. Singh:** And I am saying it again, sir. The details supplied are in full conformity with the relevant provisions of the law and are supplied as further elaboration of the information provided in the Financial Paper.

It would be noted that in relation to this particular item, the disaggregation of the \$276,307,287 is as follows: \$263,000,000 for Linden, comprising additional subsidy to the Linden Electricity Company Inc and \$13,307,287, comprising additional subsidy to Kwakwani Utilities Inc. These amounts represent additional expenditure required to meet the cost of the subsidy provided in relation to electricity generated and supplied in these communities.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I would take the opportunity to refer the Committee to the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act which, in discussing the Contingencies Fund, has a section which calls upon the Minister. Section 41 (5) states:

“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 –

- (a) the amounts advanced;
- (b) to whom the amounts were paid; and
- (c) the purpose of the advances.”

This is what is required under that section.

In relation to supplementary provisions, section 24 (4) states:

“The Minister, when introducing a supplementary appropriation Bill, shall present to the National Assembly the reasons for the proposed variations and provide a supplementary

document describing the impact that the variation, if approved, will have on the financial plan outlined in the annual budget.”

What I am saying, just for clarity, is that what is here, by and large, is an explanation provided in the legend, which is not significantly clarified in the document itself, and I see no reference in the document, as a whole, to the payees. That is what is also required as regards Contingencies Fund.

The subsidy is a general subsidy, presumably. What specific period is it applying to? The Paper specifically states that these are advances from the Fund made between 11<sup>th</sup> November and 31<sup>st</sup> December of last year. Could the Minister indicate when exactly these advances were made and against what that was specific to that time of the year?

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Chairperson, let me clarify, once again, that all aspects of the law, as they relate to Contingencies Fund advances and supplementary appropriation Bills are complied with. The law requires the amounts advanced and that is indicated; and it requires to whom the amounts are paid. The law does not say anything about payee. It says to whom the amounts were paid. These advances, as Mr. Greenidge would be well aware, are granted by the Ministry of Finance to the budget agency concerned. The purposes of the advances are listed and provided too. But in addition to that, we are quite happy to answer any further questions that are tabled in this National Assembly. We have absolutely no problem in doing so.

Mr. Greenidge enquired about the time period. He went a significant distance in answering his own question because he quite rightly pointed out that the Financial Paper is headed up “Advances Made from the Contingencies Fund for the Period 2013-11-06 to 2013-12-31”.

I am sure Mr. Greenidge would know that essentially we would utilise the voted provisions that are available, in the first instance, and until those are exhausted, once they would have been exhausted, then and only then would a Contingencies Fund advance be granted. In this instance, these Contingencies Fund advances were granted in relation to invoices issued by the relevant companies, that is to say Kwakwani Utilities Inc and Linden Electricity Company Inc, in the last two months of the year, as indicated in the heading of the Paper.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I would like to know whether the advances are tied to any particular elements of the operating cost of the entity.

**Dr. Singh:** They are not because we do not pay against a particular cost centre within the entity. The entity generates electricity, sells the electricity at a particular price in the community concerned, and bills the Government the difference. There is a formula which I think the Prime Minister has previously explained in the House and which I am sure he would be happy to elaborate on once again if it were deemed to be necessary. The invoices received are not broken down into categories of fuel, line maintenance or employment cost as such, although that disaggregation is available within the company. The amounts provided by Government are essentially to meet the difference between the generating cost of the electricity and the amount that is paid by the community.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Can the Minister let us know why the shortfall has arisen? Why is the subsidy necessary? The Prime Minister, as he indicated, gave us a formula last year. We have known the formula for some time. The entities would have known the formula. We know the operating cost. The question then is: why has this arisen as an urgent matter?

**Dr. Singh:** Almost like our own electricity bills in our own homes, we cannot anticipate with perfect foresight volume of electricity that would be consumed, especially in a large community such as Linden. At the time when we come to the National Assembly with the budget, we assume a level of consumption of electricity, much the same, like I said, as we do in our own home. However, if we consume more, then the call on the national Treasury will be greater. There is a volume variance that is relevant.

In addition, the formula that is applied for the purpose of computing the subsidy is sensitive to movement in oil prices as well. Any movement in oil prices affects the cost of generating the electricity and, by extension, the subsidy that would be granted by Government. There are essentially two variables over which we do not have perfect foresight: those are a volume variable, essentially the number of kilowatt hours of electricity generated, and a price variable, which is essentially the price of oil that is used for generating the power.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Regarding the question that Mr. Greenidge asked about what gave rise to the shortfall, because the companies asked for more money, can that information be gotten from

the company and then shared with Mr. Greenidge and the House? What I hear the Minister saying is that an invoice comes and although the information might be available at the company, the invoice does not point to any particular area that caused the shortfall.

I am asking the Minister if that information is available at the company and whether that information can be brought and shared with Members of the House. Would that make sense, Mr. Greenidge?

**Mr. Greenidge:** I thank you very much for your assistance, Mdm. Chairperson, and you are very much going in the direction to which I am pointing. I am pointing to a bigger issue, however.

The Ministry of Finance, as the Minister well knows, whilst it may represent here that it is providing to an agency a blanket cover, in other words any excess over what was anticipated would be covered, in deciding whether or not to provide the amount of the shortfall and whether or not it would be done in future years, the Minister has to look at what gave rise to the shortfall and to decide whether he, as the Minister, or the agency overseeing the beneficiary, as it were, is in agreement with it.

As regards the two areas that the Minister has identified, to simply say that they varied is fine as a principle, but what we would like to know, and that is where you, Mdm. Chairperson, have gone is: what was the anticipated volume? Has it actually changed compared to last year? What were the anticipated costs of the inputs? How have they changed compared to last year?

This is a contingency. It is a request based upon unanticipated and urgent requirement and it could not have been unanticipated and urgent if the company has been doing the same thing for the last four or five years. In other words, we need to be sure that, in fact, the volume of electricity consumption has changed and the change is making a difference to the subsidy. It does not follow that because the community is consuming more electricity that the subsidy itself has to be more. It depends on the formula that is agreed the subsidy will be provided and the same point in relation to cost.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** What I would also like to ask the Minister is to ask the company that if, for instance, the Minister of Finance was not in agreement that it was necessary for this additional subsidy, what the impact of the electricity situation would be. Perhaps, the companies could also

supply that information so that we can have a full picture of what could happen if the call was not made on the Contingencies Fund.

Hon. Minister, do you think that can happen?

**Dr. Singh:** I think it should be able to. Mdm. Chairperson, the Prime Minister was about to speak on the matter. It is material that he is intimately familiar with and has spoken on before.

**Mr. Hinds:** Every month, the Linden Electricity Company Inc is served with a billing that includes the weekly price postings of fuels that are used and also the quantities of electricity that have been generated during the month. There is an agreement between the Linden Electricity Company Inc, which started from the time of OMAI Gold Mines Ltd, which lays out how the calculation is to be done. They send this to me, first of all, and I review it and confirm that it follows the calculation and then I sign off on it and send it on to the Minister for him to arrange for making the payment.

The Ministry provides moneys to LECI so that LECI can make the payment to BOSAI for the electricity generated and supplied.

I have confidence that the invoicing is in accord with the agreement. If it is that greater details are required, I think it goes beyond this exercise here this afternoon, but we would be willing to have a review of the quantities of electricity being used in the Linden area. We will be very happy.

As you know, Mdm. Chairperson, for us this is a very sensitive area. We read in the newspapers all sorts of issues. This is an area where we have been maintaining and meeting 90% of the cost of the generation of electricity in Linden. This is an area where, maybe, we might have been holding back looking into because of the sensitivity of this matter. If the other side openly here wants us to get very deep and public into the use of electricity in Linden, then we are ready to do that.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I think that is what Mr. Greenidge was asking for, for openness and to know why more subsidies had to be given. Mr. Greenidge, am I understanding you right?

**Mr. Greenidge:** You are, Mdm. Chairperson. I wish to say that the Prime Minister has provided something by way of a diversion, in a sense, because he has provided no explanation of what it is I asked.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I have asked for us to get that information and I heard the Hon. Prime Minister say that they are quite willing to make it open and public.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I bothered to respond, if you like, simply because the Prime Minister, by pointing to the sensitivity of the area, almost implied that it is imprudent to have asked the question because somehow in answering somebody is to be embarrassed.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I do not think he meant that.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I am interpreting it that way, Mdm. Chairperson. I am glad that you are of that view.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I did not understand it that way.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I have no doubt that you did not, but I am of that view. What I am saying is that that perception is immaterial, really. What I am asking is a simple question. The plan for the year had certain numbers in them. The Minister of Finance indicated that there have been variations on two fronts. Since there have been those variations, when the decision was taken, presumably, he knew and that is why he could have answered so definitively. We are asking for that information.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, I heard him give examples of two fronts. I do not know that he said there were variations in those two fronts, but he has agreed to get the company to provide the details and to say why the shortfall occurred and I think that should end the matter.

*Item 1 03-031 – Ministry of Finance – Policy and Administration - \$276,307,287 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 2 04-041 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Development of Foreign Policy - \$69,345,000**

**Mr. Greenidge:** The item before us has a number of elements which are listed in the annexe that has been provided. Can the Minister give us an indication of the arrangements under which this



financial assistance to the Caribbean were made? Presumably, assistance to the first two – Philippines and Somalia – were given under the rubric of the United Nations. Can the Minister tell us something about the other three? What exactly was the framework within which that provision was provided and was there a formula that CARICOM fashioned or were the amounts unilaterally determined by the Government?

**Minister of Foreign Affairs [Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett]:** For St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia and Dominica, the amounts were paid directly to accounts provided by the Governments of these three countries. The amounts were decided by the Government of Guyana. The CARICOM Secretariat provided a list of items as determined by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) that would be needed but also indicated that the Governments preferred cash because several of the same items can be received from different countries and this is why we made the decision to provide cash and to provide it directly to the Governments.

**Mr. Greenidge:** The Minister has not indicated whether these amounts were informed by an item. In other words, I am just interested in how the specific figures were arrived at. I understand the logic that the Minister explained; I have no difficulty with it. I am just wondering in terms of the amounts.

**Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett:** It was arrived at based on our affordability. The reason why there is US\$100,000 each for St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines and a slightly lesser amount for Dominica is because the information we received from CARICOM is that Dominica was slightly less affected than the other two countries.

*Item 2 04-041 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Development of Foreign Policy - \$69,345,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 3 13-133 – Ministry of Local Government & Regional Development – Regional Development - \$24,200,000**

**Mr. Greenidge:** As regards the request, you will note, Mdm. Chairperson, and I note with some concern, that the voted provision is \$5 million and the request for supplementary is \$24 million. That is one side. It is really not consistent with a principle of good management to see a

supplementary of this size compared with the original vote, and I wonder whether the Minister has some acceptable explanation for this.

The second question is, in a sense, related. The question is: what makes this expenditure urgent and unanticipated?

**Minister in the Ministry of Local Government & Regional Development – Regional Development [Mr. Whittaker]:** The voted provision was \$5 million and we requested a further \$15 million.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I am sorry, Mdm. Chairperson, I do not think we are looking at the same supplementary request. Can the Minister get his figures together, please?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, it is as a total there, but in the explanations it is separated. The total is \$24,200,000 but it is for two things. One is for the clean-up campaign and one is for support to the municipality.

**Mr. Whittaker:** What was requested was \$15 million. That is what was requested.

*3.12 p.m.*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** You are disaggregating then the \$24 million into \$15 million and \$9 million.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, are we in the same... Thank you very much colleague. I asked two questions and I have not heard the Minister answer either.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** The Hon. Minister probably did not hear it. Could you repeat it for him?

**Mr. Whittaker:** I am sorry about that. I have it here. In fact, the amount of \$24.2 million, \$15 million of that amount was allocated in respect of the Georgetown clean-up campaign and the other \$9.2 million was supporting the Linden Municipality in meeting employment costs for the last quarter of 2013.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you very much. Madam, you understand the concern that we have at all stages when the Ministers come with these details which are not even reflected in the documents that have been provided. Let me also say to you, Mdm. Chairperson, that the details to which he is referring in terms of the question of what... I asked a question and there was a purpose behind it.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I ask that you ask it again so that the Minister can be reminded.

**Mr. Greenidge:** First of all, why is this treated as an urgent matter? An employment bill could not be something unanticipated and urgent. Secondly, as regards the clean-up...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Please, Mr. Greenidge. I think you should ask it one at a time.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, with respect to the Linden situation, consequent to the rescinding of the illegal toll, the Linden Municipality found itself unable to meet the revised minimum wage requirement to pay staff during the final quarter of 2013 and it wrote us seeking assistance. We, in turn, asked for the details and that is how we requested \$9.2 million to cover the revised minimum wage during the final quarter of 2013; that is \$9.2 million.

The \$15 million is a different request that had to do with the clean-up of Georgetown. We worked with the City Council, identified the areas, what needed to be done, cost it and we requested the additional funds to do that clean-up exercise because the Council pleaded that it did not have sufficient resources to do that.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, the issue once more... I hear mention of a toll and a whole set of things. I do not see them here. What I am saying is that if the Government, at the beginning of the year, receives from municipalities proposals for expenditures and requests for subventions and it is aware that some element of the subvention or income that the municipality anticipates is either irregular, will not be allowed to stand or is illegal, then it would have known that as a consequence some adjustment either has to be made or additional provision needs to be made. We are now in a new year. That is why I am asking, how could this be urgent? That is really the issue. A clean-up and maintenance operation is part of a routine [*Interruption*]. Madam, I have not finished. I hear someone else taking the floor.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, please wait for the question to be finished. He is not finished.

**Mr. Greenidge:** The question of a clean-up operation, unless it is something equivalent to the exercise pointed out by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it should be part of the provision, in terms of routine. We have this in relation to agriculture also. We had a long discussion on this last year. These are routine things, so why are they treated as contingencies as urgent and only arising at the end of the year and the expenditure is unavoidable? We need an explanation but not an explanation shouted by the Minister when I am asking the question. It should have been in the documentation, Mdm. Chairperson. That is what I am saying.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** First of all, could I say something? I agree that a clean-up exercise is routine. I think it is routine by the municipality. I heard the Minister say that the municipality said to the Government that it could not undertake the clean-up exercise on its own so the Government had to, of necessity, assist. All of us live in Georgetown. We know of floods, sicknesses that could have gone on and all kinds of things that happen, so unless the Hon. Member does not live in Georgetown, it did become a dire emergency. The routine has to do with City Council. If City Council says it is strapped, then I would think that is an emergency. Mr. Greenidge, thank you. I will allow the Minister to answer your question.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, at the time of the preparation of the 2013 Budget, the Ministry would not have been aware that there would be an issue with the toll and that it had to be withdrawn. Consequent to that happening and because we care about people, there was a request for support to meet the wage bill for the last quarter, close to Christmas, so Government decided to support, and that is the \$9.2 million.

The Municipality would have gotten subventions from the Government. It is a fixed amount all of them get - \$20 million from City Council - to do projects they would have identified. Other projects outside of that are funded from rates and taxes. They had a shortfall. The public was calling on us to clean up the city. They sought our support. As an oversight ministry, we saw our self positioned where we ought to help and that is just what we did. It was all about assisting the Municipality to meet its responsibilities. That is all we did.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I regard as completely unacceptable the explanation that the Minister provided as regards the question of urgency in this particular case. Let me say I get the impression...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Which case is that, Mr. Greenidge? Is it the Linden case or the Georgetown case?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Either. Mdm. Chairperson, the explanation the Minister gave us, based upon the intense humanitarian concerns of the Government, is very touching. But the suggestion here that it is a response to a request leads to the impression that in response to any request the Government is prepared to provide resources. We know this is not the case.

**An Hon. Member:** What is not the case?

**Mr. Greenidge:** You do not simply provide money because it was requested by a municipality. That is the point I am making and that is the explanation the Minister provided: the request came and therefore it was met. There are a number of other requests that are not met and what is more... I am saying to you, Mdm. Chairperson, that in terms of the request from the municipality in the first instance, I am sure... Perhaps we should ask instead of me saying I am sure before you get there Mdm. Chairperson. What was the request that the Municipality made for the budget support in 2013?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Mr. Greenidge, I would first remind all Members of the House that while we are in Committee, the proper form is to address me as Chair.

Secondly, I did not hear the Minister say that every request that is given they agree to. What has come here is held in response to two requests from the Georgetown Municipality and the Linden Municipality. That is what I heard the Minister say. I do not know if other municipalities have made requests which might not have been granted which are not here before us. I do not think the Minister said that they did not grant any, and I have no doubt that could have been... I have no doubt that the Linden Municipality would have asked for more, but was given this because this is what was agreed. I do not know how much.

You want to now find out what request was made when...now or for the appropriation. Having sat on a Select Committee for Local Government Bills, I am aware that a subvention is given by

Government to the municipalities and the Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs), which is a fixed subvention. I think they give Georgetown \$20 million and the others get a lesser amount and each NDC gets \$3 million. Now that is a subvention that they give for projects the municipalities have to do because municipalities and NDCs are supposed to be run utilising taxes are rates they collect. Are you asking what the request was to which this was given or are you asking for the original budget request of the municipality?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I am in search of the original budget request and I am saying to you that the words of the Minister were such as to suggest that the Government approved this because it was requested. I went on to say that it gives the impression, and I know that is not the impression. I thank you very much for helping the Minister. I note the length of the answer and the care that you have devoted to trying to ensure that the answer is acceptable, but it cannot save the Minister from it.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I am just trying to move the business of the House along, sir. That is my principle concern. Do you have any more questions?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** I have a question, please, Mdm. Chairperson. My question to the Minister is: having regard to the fact that he said that the City Council had made a request for the sums of money amounting to \$15 million, were these sums of money paid directly to the City Council or were they paid to contractors specifically identified by the Ministry for these projects that were done?

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, the City Council did not make any request for any specific sums of money. What we had was an exercise that involved an officer of the Ministry. They did not make request for specific sums of money; they made request for assistance with the clean-up of Georgetown. What happened was that officers of the Ministry, along with the Solid Waste Department of the City Council, went around the city of Georgetown and determined the areas that needed urgent intervention and we cost that.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Who received the money?

**Mr. Whittaker:** The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development requested the money. The money came to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Who did you contract?

**Mr. Whittaker:** Secondly, there was no contract awarded to anybody. We used the Community Development Councils and it would be interesting to know, and I know they will be happy to know, that in two of the communities that we had an extensive clean-up exercise, we used Councillors from the City Council to supervise the activity. So in the case of Agricola, Meadowbrook and Lodge, we used Councillors from the municipality. There was no contract. People from the very communities were involved in the clean-up exercise.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** To follow up, please, Mdm. Chairperson, I understand the Minister to be saying that the City Council indicated to the Ministry that the city needed to be cleaned up and the Ministry, on its own, took... Members of the City Council went around and identified these projects to be done and then paid persons who were not under the purview of the City Council to do these projects. Is that what the Minister is saying?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon, I heard the Minister say, and I do not know if you heard differently, that say people from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, along with the Department of Solid Waste Management from the municipality, went around Georgetown. He did identify Solid Waste Management Department. He did not say they just took anybody. The Solid Waste Management Department together with the Ministry's employees went around, identified the areas of highest priority and... Did you hear the same thing I heard?

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Yes. The point I was making, please, Mdm. Chairperson, is that the City Council itself was not involved in setting their priorities for these exercises. The Solid Waste Management is plucked out of the Ministry and out of the City Council and taken by the Minister and by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and is sent around an area for which the City Council has responsibility and then award contracts. That is what he is saying.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. He did not say that. He said contracts were not awarded. You are saying Councillors were not involved, but I distinctly heard the Minister say that members of the City Council supervised activities in certain areas such as Agricola. That is what I heard.

**Mr. Greenidge:** The supervision of a contract is different from awarding the contract.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I specifically heard that no contract was awarded.

**Mr. Greenidge:** What is being raised, Mdm. Chairperson, is that the City Council or local democratic organs have statutory responsibility for defining priorities. Having identified the need for a set of work to be done, it seems a little odd that the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development would be the agency that would decide on the priorities, leaving some areas out and taking other areas. That is really the point that is being made. Whilst we appreciate your input, I again say that I appreciate the extent you have to go to rescue the Minister. Often you seem to be speaking twice as long as he is on these issues.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I am not rescuing the Minister, sir. I am just saying what I heard as against what Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon is saying he heard. Thank you, Hon. Minister and Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon. Do we have any other question?

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson, a follow up to the Minister: could the Minister indicate what part of the \$15 million went to labour and what part went to rental of machinery and equipment?

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, the focus was on removal of thick vegetation and drains. I say this because I do not want the picture to be painted that we had a big set of machinery. That aspect of the work was undertaken by other agencies. The only hiring we did was for two trucks to remove the vegetation at the end of each working day and take them to Haags Bosch. There were no contracts awarded to anybody.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** The Member is asking for the cost of hiring the trucks.

**Mr. Whittaker:** I do not have the finer details, but I can tell you it does not exceed \$1 million. I can provide that information.

**Mrs. Lawrence:** I would be happy if you provide it. My follow up to that, Mdm. Chairperson, is whether the Minister sought the use of any of the machinery or equipment from the Mayor and City Council or from the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development before going outside to hire.



**Mr. Whittaker:** We would have. They came to us for help because they did not have machinery in working order. That is why they came for help.

**Mr. B. Williams:** If it pleases you, Mdm. Chairperson, with reference to the Linden Municipality, I understand the Hon. Minister to be saying that he rescued the Municipality by paying the salaries. Is that what I understood him to have said?

**Mr. Whittaker:** I did not say any of that.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, is that your question?

**Mr. B. Williams:** That is the beginning of my questioning.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, the Linden Municipality said to the Ministry that it did not have sufficient financial resources to meet employment cost of its workers for the last quarter of 2013. We asked for details and, premised on the details, we sought the support they requested.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I understood the Hon. Minister to have said that due to the toll being declared illegal, they were unable to pay those salaries because when the toll was in effect they were paying salaries. Is that what you said Minister?

**Mr. Whittaker:** The Linden Municipality has four or five sources of revenue. If we check, there is none of those sources where they collected even 40% of what they ought to have collected.

**Mr. B. Williams:** That is not what I am asking you.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Just let the Minister answer. You can ask the question afterwards.

**Mr. Whittaker:** To say that because of the removal of the toll they could not pay is not correct.

**Mr. B. Williams:** You said so.

**Mr. Whittaker:** I was merely quoting what they said in their request. They said that.

**Mr. B. Williams:** You said that because of the illegal toll, they were unable to pay the salaries and so you had to rescue them.

**Mr. Whittaker:** That is what they said. They told us that.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow up, Mdm. Chairperson: could the Hon. Minister say who determined that the toll was illegal?

**Mr. Whittaker:** I am not getting into that.

**Ms. Teixeira:** It is not relevant to this.

**Mr. B. Williams:** It is relevant.

**Mr. Whittaker:** I am dealing with the \$9.2 million

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

**Mr. Whittaker:** I am not prepared to answer that. We went through that before.

**Mr. B. Williams:** You just made that statement. Is it not true, Hon. Minister, that you determined the toll to be illegal?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Mr. B. Williams, are you asking whether he said the toll was illegal?

**Mr. B. Williams:** I did not introduce it into this honourable Chamber. The Minister said that because of the illegal toll, and we could get the record...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So your question to him now is...

**Mr. B. Williams:** Yes. Who determined that the toll was illegal?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, can you answer that question?

**Mr. B. Williams:** You had better not libel yourself.

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, on issues of legality and illegality, the Ministry depends on the advice of the Attorney General's office.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Let me ask you a direct question. Did the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development indicate to the Municipality of Linden that the toll was illegal and they must stop it?

**Mr. Whittaker:** It is a statement of fact. That answer is yes; we told them that.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Therefore, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development would have caused the inability of the Linden Municipality to pay the salaries which you ended up paying. Is that so?

**Mr. Whittaker:** That cannot be a logical conclusion because the Municipality has several sources of revenue.

**Mr. B. Williams:** You only named one.

**Mr. Whittaker:** To say that is to say that the only source they could have depended on was the toll.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, the cessation of the collection of the toll could have contributed to the shortfall. Could the cessation of the collection of the toll have contributed to the shortfall in them being unable to pay? It might not have been wholly, but... Could it have contributed to them being unable to meet their cost?

**Mr. Whittaker:** Mdm. Chairperson, I would say that putting all your eggs in one basket is what caused that. Everybody used the toll as a milking cow. I hope that is good parliamentary language.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Well he is admitting. Confession is good for the soul. Because they were using it, in his opinion, as a milking cow, he declared it illegal and so they were unable to pay salaries.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member Mr. B. Williams, I know you are a lawyer, but your logic does not follow.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I rest my case.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** It is not logical. Do you have another question? Are there any other questions?

*Item 3 13-133 – Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development – Regional Development - \$24,200,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 4 14-141 –Public Service Ministry – Public Service Management – \$50,000,000**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, if I may, this item is a little puzzling. The Public Service Ministry requested an amount of \$634 million or thereabout for the year and is asking for an additional amount. Normally, one would want to know why an agency... The moneys are used for funding programmes that are reasonably well defined. Is that so or are there new programmes here?

**Minister of Public Service [Dr. Westford]:** Mdm. Chairperson, as the legend states, some of the explanations here were defined programmes but new expenditure on the defined programmes – new expenditure being that we had defined the travel of students coming home. We charter aircrafts for students to come home. The cost that we envisaged for those aircrafts went up by more than 10% because of the change in fuel prices. Outside of that, again for transportation, we had over 25 students and the end of their study programme did not coincide with the others for several reasons. Some of their projects were finished late so their graduation date was actually later than the others so we had to incur additional expense to bring those 25 students home because we could not have had over 200 students sitting and waiting on those 25 to come home.

Remember, we were chartering an aircraft. If each aircraft carries 100 seats and 25 students are missing from the over 300 students we had to bring home, we still have to charter three aircrafts to bring the others home even though there were vacancies on the aircraft. We had to bring them home because we could not leave them there.

There was also a new additional item in our scholarship where four additional students – two of the top Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) students and two of the top Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) students – were given an opportunity of having scholarships to study. Four of those students went off to study and that was an additional expense which was announced after the budget. The cost is listed here for those additional students. It is broken down here, sir.

*3.42 p.m.*

Stipend-wise also there was an additional cost because, again, the US dollar went up. We catered for a transfer rate – we have to transfer moneys to pay stipends on a monthly basis – based on bank information for G\$204 per US dollar. Part of the year it was G\$205 to the US dollar and

coming to the latter part of the year we paid as much as G\$209 to one US dollars. That caused some of the shortfall of money.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chair, I again point to the explanations being provided which fall far outside of what appears on this document. That is my understanding Mdm. Chair. [An Hon.

**Member:** You are not satisfied with the answer.] No, I am not satisfied. The question of postage for example, how does the additional postage fit? I can understand students that might have been left off the aircraft because they were not ready so you have to find separate airfares for them. What about the postage of personal effect? How would that have been dealt with before?

The other point is this: the exchange rate even in Guyana has fluctuated. The Guyana currency has appreciated and depreciated during the course of the year. What the minister has to indicate not that it depreciated at a particular time but that for the year as a whole it was either more or less than they had budgeted. What was the rate they set and what was the average for the year?

**Dr. Westford:** Mdm. Chairperson, I just said we catered for an exchange rate of G\$204 to one US dollars. Between the months of June and July we paid G\$205. In the months of September, October and November we paid G\$208, and in December G\$209 to one US dollar.

**Mr. Greenidge:** And for the first half of the year, Mdm. Chair?

**Dr. Westford:** For the first half of the year it fluctuated between G\$204 and G\$205. Every month, and not even every month, we have had fluctuations within days. We transferred money on Monday and on Thursday when we go to transfer moneys for another set of students we get a different price.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister there was another question that Mr. Greenidge asked that you did not address about the posting of personal effects.

**Dr. Westford:** Mdm. Chair, the students' personal effects comes with them on the charter flights. We do not send their things separately. In this instance when the students were not on the flights obviously when they were coming they had to have their personal effects coming with

them. When we say postage it was not coming without them; it came along with them, but we had to pay additionally for it. So it came as cargo postage.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So the 25 students came on a regular commercial flight not on a charter.

Hon. Minister you stopped short of saying whether these 25 came on a charter or on a commercial flight.

**Dr. Westford:** No Madam, as stipulated here, they came on the regular commercial flight.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Mr. Greenidge is there another question on this.

**Mr. Greenidge:** No, Madam.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Are there any other questions?

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mdm. Chairperson could the Hon. Minister inform the House when the 25 students returned to Guyana and which media house would have announced their arrival?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member I do not know whether that is a proper question for this. You can ask her that question and she can give you that answer in the regular thing. We are looking at the cost here and I doubt whether she would have paid a media house. She does not have that as a cost. Are you sure that is the question you want to ask? Or do you want to ask one related to the expenditure? If there are no other questions I would like to put the question.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mdm. Chair, in the particular line item 6302 – Training (including Scholarships) in 2011 \$228,637 million was paid in relation to training; in 2012 there was a double-up in the cost of training. It was in excess of \$500 million. In 2013 there is an increase. The Minister indicated there was additional cost as the reason for the increase. I would like the Minister to explain the six sponsored students. Who are the six, the countries they went to, the course they proceeded on and the duration of the course.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Just for clarity. The first part of your question has to do with increases in the annual budgetary allocations. Do you want the Minister to answer why those increased as well?

**Mr. Sharma:** I was setting the stage that for some reason there was like a 300% increase.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Is there a question for the Minister in that?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, because there was sufficient money, I would assume, in the budgeted amount.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So you are saying it was not necessary for this supplementary to come. I just want to clarify what the question is so that we can get the answer.

**Mr. Sharma:** Correct.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So your question is that there were increases over those years so she should not have a need for this supplementary paper.

**Mr. Sharma:** That is the first part.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** And the second part you want is about the students. Hon. Minister can you answer those questions?

**Dr. Westford:** Mdm. Chair, I want to believe I went to pains just now to explain why I was standing here justifying this amount of money we asked for; why it was needed. I do not know what else I have to say.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Sharma is going historically.

**Dr. Westford:** There is not anything else I would like to say or have to say on it.

I think I stood here also last year and 2012 and explained why there was an increase in the scholarship allocations; how many additional scholarship students we had; where we had them; and what they were studying. I think I did all of that here.

In relation to the second question as to where the six students are, four are undergraduate students - two are at the University of the West Indies; one is in Grenada - they are studying medicine. We have one other undergraduate student in the USA studying engineering science. We have two post-graduate students, one in the USA and one in Canada - one is studying neurology and the other is studying pathology.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you Hon. Minister. Mr. Sharma do you have any other supplementary questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** I asked if they could identify the individual or the agency they came from. I do not know if this is from the batch of graduates recently.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I think originally I heard the Minister say two of the top achievers in CXC and two of the top achievers in CAPE; those are four.

**Dr. Westford:** I did not hear your question, Sir. [**Mr. B. Williams:** We want the names.] Do you want the names of the students, of the six persons? He can have the names.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Perhaps you can provide that to Mr. Sharma. Mr. Sharma will that suffice?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, Mdm. Chair, but a number of occasions from the last budget a lot of promises were made and nothing was submitted.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister can you say how soon you will provide Mr. Sharma with that information?

**Dr. Westford:** Probably before he leaves this afternoon.

*Item 4 14-141 –Public Service Ministry – Public Service Management – \$50,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** We have ten more minutes before 4.00 O'clock. I am hoping we can get through item No. 5.

**Item 5 21–211 - Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$160,000,000**

**Dr. Roopnarine:** Mdm. Chair, turning to the attachment that has been provided I note that the information given there is that this amount is for the maintenance of D&I infrastructure in Water Users Association (WUA) areas, Community Development Council (CDC) areas and Neighbourhood Democratic Council areas. Since a number of these are areas contained within areas I am wondering if the Minister can indicate exactly where these areas are. If you do not have a list right now I will be happy to get one.



**Minister of Agriculture [Dr. Ramsammy]:** Yes, Mdm. Chairperson, I would be willing to give the breakdown to the Hon. Member and to Members on the individual CDCs and WUAs. At this time since I did not anticipate we would get to this financial paper, I did not bring the list, but I can do that.

**Dr. Roopnarine:** We would be happy to receive them.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. And I think the Hon. Minister of Agriculture usually keeps his word. We will look forward to that. Any other questions on this item?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chair, can the Minister explain the difference between what the Ministry regards as a routine maintenance and urgent and unanticipated expenditures, please? I cannot get that from this note.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Yes, Mdm. Chair, these are budgeted amounts that were not included in the estimates. In some of the WUA areas there were additional lands that came under cultivation. A lot of the rice farmers are moving into areas that were previously not cultivated. In areas like Cozier, Leguan, Black Bush, Mahaica, Mahaicony etcetera, an additional 4,100 hectares were put under cultivation particularly for the second crop. These were not budgeted for, so additional drainage and irrigation had to be put in place to support those farmers.

In addition, we made a decision during the year about some of our routine maintenance work and we changed how we used to do it. For example, cleaning the moss in the canal polder area, those main canals, used to be done two or three times a year but we began to do them monthly. We made that decision because of the weather changes that were causing high levels of water in that area. That is one type of expense.

The second one was that we added to the fleet 10 new excavators and six mobile pumps. The cost of operation of those also had to be included. I know the Hon. Member Greenidge would ask did we not anticipate addition those. The answer is yes, we did. But when we budget - whether it is right or wrong, I am just saying - at the beginning of the year we have to budget for the equipment we already have in our possession. We are not allowed to budget for the operational cost of equipment we may acquire later. So the addition of these required us to incur additional expenses. That is what is budgeted for here.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chair, the Minister's response gives rise to a number of questions all of which I think confirms the view expressed by the Auditor General at several points that we continue to abuse the Contingency. It is not for routine matters. The Minister started off by explaining that these figures pertain to budgeted amounts not included in the Estimates. I do not know what that means. If it is budgeted then it will be in the Estimates. Those were the words of the Minister; I am quite sure because I took them down. I am a little puzzled.

Secondly, if you are speaking to agriculture - I am sure he is not speaking to horticulture or tissue-culture or any of those - he is speaking about normal agriculture cultivation in the context of rice. He is speaking to a decision taken by farmers in the course of a year - that is in the course of 2013 - to expand their acreage. In that space of time the Ministry finds it appropriate to put in place D&I facilities to enable the farmers to carry that out. I suggest to you Mdm. Chair that the Minister would be hard pressed to explain how that would have been done within a year. The farmers decision and then the decision of the Ministry to be able to put the D&I in place in time for the farmer to carry out that work is most improbably within a year. The time span is normally longer. We maybe are being provided with an explanation that is an expose rationalisation of what the Government is doing, but in terms of the sequence at the time of events this does not wash.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Perhaps, Mr. Greenidge, we should give the Minister a chance to see whether he is hard pressed or he can tell us when the decision was first made.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Mdm. Chairperson, I used those words maybe inadvisably, but I was trying to explain that whilst we knew we were going to acquire more equipment and were going to budget for them those were not included in the Estimates since they were removed. The Ministry of Finance will allow us to budget for what we have and not for what we do not have. So this is always the negotiation that goes on. We budget for what we have and what we expect to have but by the time the estimates comes out it would only provide for what we have. That is part o it. Whether we are using the words rightly or not you will forgive me.

In terms of the new areas, these are not exactly new lands that are someplace else that were never in any cultivation area. So it is extending the drainage and irrigation structures we have in order to cater. For example, the irrigation never reached the land north of the highways, traditionally

used for cattle in Region 5, that are now being converted into rice fields. Now we have to find ways of bringing the irrigation water to that area. The farmers do not come to us first to ask whether they could do this or not and that is the challenge we face. This is quite different from identifying lands at some distance place that we are now making ready for cultivation, like Aurora which would take years. This is a little different how we do this.

Then there is the additional cost of operating new equipment, not just in terms of fuel but operators to operate the equipment.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I thank the Minister for the explanation but I am still not satisfied. Mdm. Chair, the Minister is suggesting if he has approval for the 50 tractors at the beginning of the year when the budget is passed and he plans during the course of the year to acquire another 25 - and the 25 will come during the course of the year - therefore the operating cost of fuel and so on will have to be borne and that the Ministry of Finance will not allow him to budget in order to take on board those higher levels of cost. I believe that is what he was saying. If that is the case could he confirm it?

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Yes, Mdm. Chairperson we are allowed to budget for operational cost for fuel, maintenance etcetera, for what we have at the time. The additional cost of operation of what we may acquire during the year, while we do submit it with our budget, it is usually not included in the Estimates.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Mr. Greenidge I think what the Minister is not making a clear difference in is what they propose to the Ministry of Finance as to what their expenditure would be and after all the discussions what... Their proposal would be for 25 new tractors but like with employment the Estimates only cater for the people you have at the time. So if you employ new people then it has to come additionally. I think that is what he is saying. So there is difference between the proposals the Ministry puts up and what goes into the Estimates. I think he is saying if he had 100 tractors that is all that would come in the Estimates – the maintenance cost and so on for those. And he had 25 more it would not have been catered for in the Estimates.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chair I find that very hard to believe and I would like the Minister to provide us with the request he made as regards the operating cost of equipment vis-a-vis what he got in the end. I cannot see that he could have gotten approval to import or acquire additional

equipment and that he would have budgeted operating cost which do not take that into account at all.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Perhaps Mr. Greenidge we can ask the Minister of Finance to clarify whether that is the policy. Is it the policy that you do not get money for what you do not have in the Estimates? Having been a Minister myself in one life time, I know what we propose is not what we get. The Estimates always give us less than we ask for. Minister of Finance can you say whether that is policy the Minister is adumbrating? That you only get for cost of what you have and not what you intend to acquire.

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Chair I am not sure what I am being asked to clarify.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** The Minister of Agriculture said in his answer that the Estimates only give moneys for maintenance and operation of equipment that the Ministry has on hand at the time of the budget. It does not give in the Estimates moneys for equipment that will be acquired during the year. I think that is the question. Mr. Greenidge finds that hard to believe. I am just asking the Minister of Finance to verify that is so.

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Chair at the time of the budget we provide our best estimate of what will be required for the year. I would have thought that would have been reasonably evident.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I thank you very much Mdm. Chairperson that is exactly as I anticipated and therefore the Minister's explanation cannot stand.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you Mr. Greenidge. Are there any other questions on this item?

**Mr. Trotman:** Mdm. Chair there is an item under this head which indicates that \$20 million was spent cleaning drains in Region No.10. I wonder if the Minister can, for the benefit of the House, give us an explanation as to where in Region No.10 these drains were cleaned and precisely the cost of each lot of work that was done, and more importantly the number of rods that were done as part of the cleaning.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you Mr. Trotman, but you are asking for details. Minister can you give the details now?

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Mdm. Chair I thought I had promised the Hon. Member Dr. Rupert Roopnarine that I will give the breakdown of all the CDCs and WUAs that received...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So the breakdown will be shared. Any other questions? Mr. Sharma, first of all, will you verify that you got the list from Minister Westford.

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, I received a note.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** But your question has to be on this line item.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mdm. Chair. In relation to drainage and irrigation there is a lot of confusion out there with farmers, the Water Users Association and other bodies. Exactly what is the purpose for the equipment that the National Drainage and Irrigation have. Who utilises the equipment? Farmers are confused because they would see private persons operating these equipment and they are operated in a manner which the residents believe is not suitable, because in some cases they are victimised. Because of the individual I am, and the television programme I have, there are a number of complaints I have in relation to that. Can the Hon. Minister take this opportunity to say these equipment are utilised not by his officer but are contracted so Members of the public could be satisfied.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Sharma is that question is specific to this line item or is it a general question about the use of machinery?

**Mr. Sharma:** It is specific to this line item.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** It is specific to this line item and you would like the Minister to answer.

**Mr. Sharma:** Correct.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Is that it or do you have another question?

*4.12 p.m.*

**Mr. Sharma:** I have more questions. I do not know if you want the Minister to answer and then...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** In the interest of time because we are over 4 o'clock, please ask the other one that you have there.

**Mr. Sharma:** Okay, well that is one. The other is in relation to the Hon. Minister alluding to the pumps; we want to know if the pumps from Surendra Engineering Corporation Limited are here and how effective it is in elevating the work of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA)? If this \$160 million that is being requested is for the payment of workers from the National Drainage and Irrigation or is it for contractors that are operating these equipment? What is the position with the minimum wage with the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority? I understand they did not receive any increase in salaries.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Alright Mr. Sharma, I think that goes a little outside. Let the Minister answer those that you asked about the pumps, *et cetera* first.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** I will try to see if I can follow all of the questions that were asked. One – the pumps that I am talking about are the pumps from Surendra Engineering Corporation Limited. Two – the equipment being used, for example, excavators, tractors, bulldozers, *et cetera* some are operated by persons employed by the Ministry of Agriculture through the NDIA or through the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs). Some were operated and maintained on contract that we tender out every year.

I believe those are the ones. Who operates the pumps from Surendra Engineering Corporation Limited - are those the questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** I would like to know if all the pumps are here and in operation or if we have to wait a period where it would have to be installed because some are fixed pumps. In relations to this particular expenditure of \$160 million, yes, the Minister did mention that they were contracting persons at two levels; persons that are staff of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority and there are persons who are contractors.

Who will this \$160 million be going to? Is it the bona fide employees of the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority or contracted employees? This was a question which the shadow Minister, Mr. Carl Greenidge referred to, in terms that he was saying, why is there additional money being requested? If it is because of additional equipment there is an integrated process in

the budget which integrates Capital and Current Estimates. If something is put in the Capital Estimates for the Budget for a vehicle, it is integrated with the Current aspect of the Budget. So the fuel has to be budgeted for that will be catered for.

In addition to the employment cost, if the employment cost which the Minister is referring to is in relations to permanent staff, well then it will not be included in the Budget, but if it is for contractors, the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority would have included it in the cost. I do not know if the Minister can shed some light on that.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** I think there is an attachment to the Financial Paper that explains the breakdown. Dr. Roopnarine's first question relates to the first \$52 million that were paid to the Water Users' Association (WUA), Community Development Councils (CDC), *et cetera*. There was the addition cost of operating the new equipment and so on.

The break down as to the Private Sector contracts to operate and maintain the equipment, I will also supply.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Will you supply the details for the total because that is what Mr. Sharma is asking about – the entire \$160 million? He is going a little further than Dr. Roopnarine.

**Mr. Sharma:** Finally, is the situation of the pumps from Surendra Engineer Corporation Limited.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Yes, that was the first thing he asked, whether they were all here, all working or what.

**Mr. Sharma:** And do we have to await the installation for operation?

**Dr. Ramsammy:** Two of the fixed site pumps have been installed; one at Rose Hall and one at Canje. For the other six pumps, we are building pump stations. One is being built at Canal No. 1; one is being built at Patentia; one will be the first dual irrigation and drainage pump at Pine Ground; an additional pump is being place Lusignan; one will be placed at Lima; and we have decided to place one at Three Friends in the Essequibo.

*Item 5 21–211 - Ministry of Agriculture – Ministry Administration - \$160,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Members, it is 4.15 p.m. so we should take the break, but before we take the break, I would like to say to the Members of the House that the Hon. Minister of Public Service passed to me some notes with her answers. That is the breakdown of the names for Mr. Sharma. Mr. Sharma acknowledges that he received it, also, an answer to the Hon. Member, Ms. Ferguson regarding a question she has asked. I would like to thank you.

Hon. Members we will now take the suspension for an hour. We will come back at 5.15 p.m.

*Assembly resumed.*

*Sitting suspended.*

*Sitting resumed.*

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Prior to the break we had completed item No. 5 of Financial Paper No. 4. We will now move to item no. 6, Agency Code 31-311 – Ministry of Public Works – Ministry Administration.

## **CURRENT ESTIMATE**

### **Item 6 31-311 – Ministry of Public works – Ministry Administration - \$121,897,657**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Could the Hon. Minister explain the purchase of bitumen by the Transport and Harbours Department for \$65,618,830?

**Minister of Public Works [Mr. Benn]:** The item listed as “Purchase of bitumen” in fact related to the refund of bitumen for which moneys had been received for by the Transport and Harbours Department, when it had the operations of the bitumen plant on the East Bank Demerara.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Are there any other questions?

**Mrs. Lawrence:** Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. Could the Hon. Minister indicate to this House, why items such as rates and taxes, which was, according to the distribution here, for a prior year; legal fees, audit fees and rates and taxes for Rosignol and New Amsterdam for 2011? Why are these now coming to the House as supplemental and were they not in the original budget? These



are foreseeable expenses, the Ministry must know it has to pay audit fees and rates and taxes, especially that the amounts here relate to a prior year.

**Mr. Benn:** The fact of the matter is that the Transport and Harbours Department is a subvention agency to the extent that much of its revenue does not take care of its expenses. It has been behind, as I have explained before in this Hon. House, in relations to the payment of certain fees and dues.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Are there any other questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** In relations to fuel, there is an amount here of \$17.8 million, could the Hon. Minister say if it is a particular vessel that is consuming fuel that was not catered for?

**Mr. Benn:** No, the subvention here for fuel relates to all of the vessels.

**Mr. Sharma:** I did not get that; other vessels?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** He said all of the vessels. That is what I heard him say.

**Mr. Sharma:** Would we expect increase in the consumption and was it based on the cost of fuel or just consumption? Basically, what want to know is, are the two new vessels consuming the amount of fuel that was budgeted for?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Well ask him that question. Hon. Minister, he is asking about the two new vessels, whether they are consuming more.

**Mr. Benn:** The fuel consumption on the new vessels is almost three times as much as the previous vessels operations because of the size and weight of the vessels and the fact that the passage they now undertake is much greater than say when they were on the Berbice transit. This amount relates at this point of time when an amount was being given as a subvention to balance on fuel.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mdm. Chairperson, could the Hon. Minister explain this sum of \$68 million on the purchase of bitumen and whether this money was paid directly to the Transport and Harbours Department?

**Mr. Benn:** As far as I can recall, this money was paid to the Transport and Harbours Department for remittance to the asphalt plant.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** The other one on legal fees: the entity that was paid these legal fees and why did it become an urgent matter?

**Mr. Benn:** Mdm. Chairperson and Hon. Member, this relates to a private firm for which they had not been paying moneys for quite a while.

*Item 6 31-311 – Ministry of Public works – Ministry Administration - \$121,897,657 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 7 41-415 - Ministry of Education – Education Delivery – Security Services \$19,243,222 and Cleaning and Extermination Services \$13,500,000**

**Ms. Ally:** Item 6281 – Security Services, according to the explanation on the attachment 7(a), I see some lump sums for three categories of schools to execute these services. I would like to have a breakdown of the schools for which this additional sum had to be provided for. The second part is what prompted the consideration for the additional cost?

**Minister of Education [Ms. Manickchand]:** Thank you very much for the question Hon. Member. Mdm. Chairperson, perhaps it would be sensible, prudent and more explanatory for me to answer first the second question. These increased costs arose as a result of the 1<sup>st</sup> June, order that emanated from the Ministry of Labour, which sought to protect our workers by providing for a minimum wage across the country. As a result of that, as members would recall, the budget was read and estimates approved, prior to that order coming into effect. As a result of which to comply with what was now a legal provision for minimum wage, we were required to pay those very minimum figures as a result of which there were increases where that minimum wage was not yet being paid. That is really the entire answer for why we needed more money.

As to the precise listing of schools, I can provide that, but not right now.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Can you give us a time when you can provide it?

**Ms. Manickchand:** I would think that I can provide that before the end of the next week, that week starting today.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member Ms. Ally, is that okay with you?

**Ms. Ally:** Mdm. Chairperson, I want to thank the Minister, at least, for bringing those ordinary workers up to par with the minimum wage and Government's position.

On line item 6283 – Cleaning and Extermination Services, I note that the amount that is being asked for, according to the explanation 7 (b), it accounts for the schools in Georgetown. Minister might be obliged to say whether she intends to come back to ask for Cleaning and Extermination Services for the lower Pomeroun.

**Ms. Manickchand:** This provision here, as far as I understand it, but of course I would be happy to be corrected, we are obligated to answer questions based on what is provided here. I do know though that the Hon. Member has a genuine interest in the sector, so I would not be unhappy if your Honour ordered me to answer those questions to provide them with some semblance of an answer now. But this provision here that is being sought, relates to the schools in Georgetown. Mdm. Chairperson may be aware and I am sure the Hon. Member is or ought to be aware that education is by law divided, so there is Central Georgetown, which is dealt with by the Ministry of Education and then Education Districts, which are dealt with and governed by the Local Government system, which would mean the Regional Administration.

This particular provision is made in relation to schools in Georgetown that were affected by the climate change induced floods that we had, not the very last one, but the one before. The schools are actually listed in the Financial Paper that is before us.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you Hon. Minister. Ms. Ally perhaps you can ask the officers of the Local Government about the school in the Pomeroun. Are there any other questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes Mdm. Chairperson. Line item 6283 – Cleaning and Extermination Services, I must commend the Hon. Minister for taking care and ensuring that the schools are well kept so that whatever diseases or infections are out there, due to flood water, does not affect our young children. However, this amount of \$13.5 million, under the line item 6283, what does it relate to? Is it in relations to the purchasing of cleaning items, the paying of sweepers and cleaners? This particular line item, as I know it, usually goes for extermination of rats, cockroaches, *et cetera*. I

do not know what exactly was done with this money at the various schools. Can the Minister expand on that?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, do you have an expanded answer to give?

**Ms. Manickchand:** Mdm. Chairperson, when the place floods, there are different places that are affected differently. So we may actually have a school that because of the flood waters, they are infested with tadpoles, for example, and those need to be exterminated; because rats ran from nearby fields they are now in the schools, they need to be exterminated; or it may just be that the flood waters brought and had settled with it, muddy or nasty sewerage that needs to be sanitised; it may be that we needed to buy bleach or pine sol. That is really what this \$13 million was used for.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you Mdm. Chairperson. The answer that I am receiving is speculation. I need a direct answer. What really was the money used for? Was it to exterminate cockroaches and rats or buy detergents? Basically, who was paid?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Sharma, first of all, as the Minister said, they were for different schools and different situations may have existed. Some of them may have had tadpoles; some of them may have had rats running over; some may have silt, so one answer for the whole thing may not work. What would have applied to East Street Nursery School, for example, would not have applied to St. Rose High School. It would have been something different.

I did hear Minister say something about buying bleach and all of that. But you have a further concern; who the money was paid to. I heard that part of it. Minister can answer please.

**Ms. Manickchand:** I understand because I was asking my Permanent Secretary (PS) for that information. We will have to go through something called the PV, which may very well mean payment voucher – the Minister of Finance can say, to extract the information of who this money was paid too so that we can provide the Hon. Member and indeed this House and the Nation with those facts.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Is that okay for you Mr. Sharma?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, thank you. In relations to those being paid, if it is sweepers or cleaners, are the present sweepers or cleaners in the Ministry of Education being paid the minimum wage that was announced by the Minister of Labour?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** With respect here Mr. Sharma, that question is a good one, but it is not for this session.

**Mr. Sharma:** If sweepers and cleaners are being paid here...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Not necessarily, the Minister did not say that. When you get those names then you should be able to ask those questions. I did not hear the Minister say that it was paid to the sweepers and cleaners.

*Item 7 41-415 - Ministry of Education – Education Delivery – Security Services \$19,243,222 and Cleaning and Extermination Services \$13,500,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 8 51-512 - Ministry of Home Affairs - Guyana Police Force - Local Travel and Subsistence - \$60,000,000 and Other - \$15,029,000**

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** On attachment 8(a), a sum of \$5 million for the chartering of flights for pathologist for exhumation. How many flights- if we can be provided with the number of flights and the location? The figure of \$20 million - the chartering of flights for police ranks to conduct investigations in interior locations, which interior locations?

Number three, how many travelling - \$12,700,000...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** In other words you are asking for more details as to how many flights and where they went and that kind of thing.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Yes, but I am asking for like three different figures. Perhaps the Minister can answer two and I can...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister of Home Affairs, do you have answers?

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Rohee]:** Mdm. Chairperson, I do not have that information at this point in time, but the information can be made available.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Are you undertaking to get the details to the Member?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes, that information will be made available.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mrs. Garrido-Lowe is that okay because they are details that he would have to get from somewhere?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, can you give a time frame so that the Member can rest easily when she will get it?

**Mr. Rohee:** This information obviously has to be obtained from the Guyana Police Force because they were the ones who went to the interior, not the Ministry of Home Affairs. We will have to require of the...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** What do you expect the time frame to be that she can get the details?

**Mr. Rohee:** I can tell the police that they have to give it to me within two weeks time.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Two weeks?

**Mr. Rohee:** Yes.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Well initially he is saying in about two weeks.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you and if the Minister could kindly furnish the information for all the figures here.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Do you need details for all of this?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Also, for attachment (b), could the Minister kindly elaborate on the storage of skeletal remains and handling and the storage and removal of other dead bodies for the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** What is your question? Is it how many bodies or who the bodies were paid for?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** How many dead bodies, where are these bodies coming from, where were they all these years and where were they stored before?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I just want the Minister to get what details you are asking. Hon. Minister you heard the question. I am sure you do not have the details she is asking for now.

**Mr. Rohee:** Mdm. Chairperson, I am not a mortician, I am a politician.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, could those details be made available to the Hon. Member?

*[Interruption]* Let us have some order. Hon. Minister, could the details be made available?

**Mr. Rohee:** These bodies are the Lindo Creek victims' skeletal remains. Since those days the bodies are still at the funeral parlour, stored there over these years because these had to do with the results of the DNA tests we are awaiting from Jamaica. Not all could be disposed at this point so we have to keep all the skeletal remains until we clear the decks in respect to the DNA results coming from Jamaica.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** So items one, two, three and four all relate to the Lindo Creek victims.

**Mr. Rohee:** They are all related to the Lindo Creek victims.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Just to verify if it has been only the Lindo Creek victims remains for all these years being stored and awaiting DNA results and not any other because I notice other bodies too. Thank you.

**Mr. Rohee:** It is the Lindo Creek victims' skeletal remains.

**Ms. Ally:** How do you know?

**Mr. Rohee:** That is my business to know. If I may answer the Hon. Member Mrs. Garrido-Lowe, it is exclusively the skeletal remains of the Lindo Creek victims.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** What about the variation of prices for the different years of storage, is it the same set of money for each year? *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Rohee:** I cannot say with any great specificity that the numbers are consistent, but this again is another area for which we can gather the information from the funeral parlour and provide the Hon. Member with.

5.44 p.m.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Do you undertake to find out?

**Mr. Rohee:** I do.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. The Minister is undertaking to give you some more details as to why there is a variation.

*Item 8 51-512 - Ministry of Home Affairs - Guyana Police Force - Local Travel and Subsistence - \$60,000,000 and Other - \$15,029,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 9 53-531 - Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$237,000,000**

**Mdm. Chairperson:** There are four line items here so perhaps you could ask them one at a time or if it is a general question...

**Mr. Felix:** Mdm. Chairperson, attachment 9 (a) accounts for eight vehicles – five pickups, one minibus, one motorbus and one car. In the space of one year \$36 million were expended. My question is: How old are these vehicles? Is it not time to retire them and purchase new ones? This one year can give them a significant replacement of new vehicles; \$36 million in one year.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** That is a fair question. Hon. Minister...? Who is answering for the Defence Force?

**Minister within the Ministry of Finance [Bishop Edghill]:** Thank you very much, Mdm. Chairperson. At the item Vehicle Spares and Service this additional expenditure that is being sought is as a result of acquisition of eight other vehicles that add to the already significant fleet of the Guyana Defence Force (GDF). As it relates to servicing, vehicles that were not repaired or serviced in the previous year was also serviced and repaired in 2013.

**Mr. Felix:** I am not satisfied with that answer. The Minister cannot tell me that vehicles acquired in one year, 2012, and serviced for that... First of all that is programmable; one can schedule that



and therefore it should not appear on a supplementary provision. Secondly, the question I asked was how old the vehicles are. That is the first part of the question. The second part was whether it would not, in the case of the older vehicles, be worth the while parting company with or retiring them and purchasing new ones. He has not dealt with those two questions.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mdm. Chairperson, if you will permit me to satisfy the Hon. Member with an explanation of why there is an additional provision of \$36 million that is being sought, I think the Hon. Member would appreciate that the Guyana Defence Force operates heavily in the interior. Because of bad roads in the rainy season the trails are inundated with water, making them almost impassable sometimes. When these vehicles come out sometimes one has to replace the whole bottom and the rest of it, including the bushing, ball joint, steering end, breaks, break system, the differentials and all of these things. Additionally we need to indicate that there were 11 major accidents that occurred involving the Guyana Defence Force vehicles in 2013 which cost for repairs a total of almost \$9 million – \$8,997,290. That explains the additional cost. As it relates to the ages of the vehicles, I am advised that they are mainly five years and above. Thank you very much.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, the question was asked too if it would not make sense to replace the older vehicles.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mdm. Chairperson, that is a matter that could be discussed but you would appreciate that that is a matter that would have to be discussed by the Force's high command.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. Mr. Felix, I think that those were all of your questions.

**Mr. Felix:** Those were the first questions. I do not think that I would press further because I do not see a willingness to be forthcoming on the issues.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Perhaps it is not unwillingness. Perhaps the Minister has not gotten... The other four items... Mr. Greenidge, do you have a question?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I have not heard an explanation from the Minister which justifies these requests being part of a contingency rather than the normal routine requests. What makes these fill the criteria set out in the law as regards contingencies?

**Bishop Edghill:** While you would appreciate that in the management of a vehicle fleet one could estimate as it relates to general and routine maintenance, I do not think that anybody in the Guyana Defence Force could have anticipated an accident or anybody in the Guyana Defence Force could have anticipated that in a particular trip a differential would have... or a clutch plate would have burned. It is in excess of what is general and routine maintenance.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Yes, Mr. Greenidge.

**Mr. Greenidge:** That is utter nonsense. In providing for maintenance...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Please, Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, never mind we are in Committee...  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Greenidge:** I cannot hear you, Mdm. Chairperson.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, never mind that we are in Committee; your language still has to be Parliamentary. Thank you, Sir.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I did not know that the word 'nonsense' is unparliamentarily.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** 'Utter' in front of it makes it unparliamentary.

**Mr. Greenidge:** 'Utter' is unparliamentary?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** When the two come together, yes. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Greenidge:** I see. Mdm. Chairperson, it seems that my colleagues have a preoccupation with my porsche.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Greenidge, you have the floor. Could you ask your question?

**Mr. Greenidge:** The point...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Do you have a question, Sir?

**Mr. Greenidge:** Yes. [*Interruption*]

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. Members, could we allow Mr. Greenidge to ask his question?

**Mr. Greenidge:** The Minister needs to explain which criteria these request conform to. Which criteria could be identified in the law? They have nothing to do, those criteria which are set out in the law, with whether an accident or not occurs. If one has a fleet of vehicles, especially if one is in Guyana, one has to anticipate accidents as part of the routine arrangement. They are part and parcel of it.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, I would prefer us not to anticipate accidents.

**Mr. Greenidge:** That may be a wish but...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Anyway, Hon. Minister, could you answer?

**Bishop Edghill:** Yes, Mdm. Chairperson. I would just indicate to the Hon. Member that it satisfies the law under the category of 'unforeseen'. I do not think that we have a specialist in the Guyana Defence Force who could foresee expenditures as it relates to accidents and because of the nature of the operations of the Guyana Defence Force, repairs and maintaining a proper fleet is considered urgent.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I hold my previous language on the matter – utter nonsense.

**Mr. Sharma:** Mdm. Chairperson, I beg to disagree with the Hon. Minister in his explanation and justification. Just to draw to your attention, I was looking at the sequence of expenditure...

*[Interruption]*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, Mr. Greenidge, Mr. Sharma is trying to be heard.

*[Interruption by Mr. Greenidge]* I was hearing you as well.

**Mr. Sharma:** The sequence of actual expenditure: 2011 - \$144.9 million; 2012 - \$135.4 million. These are actual expenditures. In 2013, with the additional purchase of vehicles, meaning that the Guyana Defence Force noted that they would have acquired additional vehicles, eight additional vehicles, budgeted at \$130 million... There is the problem here... This has gone further than unforeseen. They did not even see that when they purchased additional vehicles that they will need additional funds. Even in 2012 \$135 million was the actual expenditure. In 2013 the individual or the Ministry of Finance approved 130 million, causing the Guyana Defence Force

to come here today. I hope that this would not reoccur in the future. That explanation given by the Hon. Minister is just because that was his explanation of how he felt but there is evidence to show that it was poor planning.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Do you have a question, Mr. Sharma?

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes. I just disagreed with his answer.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Yes. You have.

**Mr. Sharma:** My question is... One of the reasons here, given by the Hon. Minister indicates in his written explanation is the state of the trail. Now I could remember that the town council of Linden with a qualified individual requested that the road in the interior to be fixed – leading from Linden to Mahdia, Lethem – and they were identifying bridges and roads that need to be fixed. The Hon. Prime Minister said that we do not have funds. The question is... If Government could foresee the advantage of fixing the roads it could prevent this unwanted maintenance of vehicles so I would ask the Hon. Minister if this will be a consideration in the future.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Minister, you have been asked whether you will...

**Bishop Edghill:** I will defer that answer to the Minister with the portfolio to deal with roads but, just to say it, I think that we are all Guyanese and for some of us who have travelled into the interior know that one could just be finished with fixing a road but if there are heavy rains in some areas there are challenges but I will defer to the Hon. Minister.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. Yes, Mr. Sharma, let us get on with it.

**Mr. Sharma:** These are government's vehicles. Tax payers' money is being spent. The Hon. Minister and Ministers of this Government, whosever port folio it falls in... It will probably affect a number of portfolios here because they use the interior roads. Just imagine here...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Sharma, could we skip the commentary and get to the question?

**Mr. Sharma:** ...an individual having to go through this cost with their own money when Government could assist themselves and tax payers by fixing the roads.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you. I am not sure that there was a question there. It was a commentary. Is there any other question?

**Mr. Felix:** We have (b)...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** If you all would please stand up in time before I reach to that place... Thank you...

**Mr. Felix:** Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. At 9 (c), my question to the Hon. Minister is whether these \$50 million which was requested to maintain, fix and rotor/wing falls within the category of unforeseen and emergency because the situation here is that maintenance can be scheduled and therefore it should not be unforeseen or urgent.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Felix. Hon. Minister, the question is: Why could you not foresee that you would have had to do this?

**Bishop Edghill:** The legend clearly indicates that the \$50 million that is being sought had to do with the cost of maintaining the rotor/wing aircraft, which are several aircrafts that are within the Guyana Defence Force. This includes the Bell 412 helicopter. The maintenance cost ended up being more than what was anticipated and because of the nature of the activities and work of the Guyana Defence Force of which I believe all of the Hon. Members of this House would appreciate, it is something that one has to deal with in an urgent manner. Thank you.

**Mr. Felix:** I am not too satisfied with that answer because for years I have been involved in the preparation of budgets and we know that particularly with aircrafts and so on they have a certain life and one knows that this will be due for servicing or replacement at 'x' time and therefore I am saying that the issue here is not so much the money which is requested but the principle. It is that it should have come in the 2013 budget because it is something which is programmable. We do not want to be violating the spirit and the letter of the law by creating a situation where we would be unlawful or be tending towards unlawful conduct by imposing on these Parliament situations which ought not to come under these appropriations. That is our basic position.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Yes, Mr. Felix, but I would like to make a comment to something you said, just now...

**Mr. Felix:** Secondly...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I know a little bit about aviation because I live in a place where a school was carried on. Routine maintenance is according to what one estimates to be... An aircraft has to be maintained after 'so many' hours of flying. When it comes to the Defence Force, they may anticipate that they will fly 10,000 hours but because of something like what happened the other day, when they had to add in another 5,000, that could not have been anticipated. I am not saying that this is what happened but you are talking about routine maintenance and what I know about routine maintenance of aircrafts is that it has to do with how many hours they fly and after 'so many' hours one has to maintain it. For your cars there is a little thing that is put there that after 'so many' miles one has to do servicing and so on. That can be anticipated but when it comes to our Defence Force that is called upon in situations reminiscent of only last week and I do not know what else happened in 2013, they would involve more than we may have anticipated; I would think so.

**Mr. Felix:** Madam, I respect your views but just to make one point; I just do not feel that the GDF rotor wing was involved in last week's...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I do not know. I am just saying that situations like that...

**Mr. Felix:** Yes. I respect your view.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Felix:** 9 (d), my question is whether this money has been...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Just a minute. Are you rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Benn:** Just to say, on a Point of Order that the aircraft which crashed in the interior was discovered by a GDF rotor wing aircraft and it was spotted by a GDF Officer.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you for the information, Hon. Minister. [*Interruption*] I think that we have passed that point. Thank you for the information.

**Mr. Felix:** 9 (d), the money requested here, I am inquiring, was it paid directly to GDF or to private contractors?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, he is at shortfall procurement between 2012 and 2013, the attachment (d).

**Bishop Edghill:** I think as all Hon. Members would know, the Ministry of Finance would transfer money to the budget agency and it is the budget agency that will affect the expenditure. I do have with me a whole pile of what would be the expenditure that lends to the breakdown of what the army would have paid out to the various suppliers.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Felix, are you asking...?

**Mr. Felix:** No. My question is whether it is paid to the Guyana Defence Force or to private contractors.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** The Minister says that he has a breakdown. Are you asking that he shares that breakdown with you?

**Mr. Felix:** No. I am not interested in the breakdown; one answer, 'yes' or 'no'.

**Bishop Edghill:** I have given the answer that says that the Ministry of Finance would have transferred the money...

**Mr. Felix:** 'Would have'.

**Bishop Edghill:** ...to the Guyana Defence Force as is the rule and proper accounting practice.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. If the Minister of Finance did not do that he would have been acting illegally. Are there any other questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you. Line item 6265, Other Transport and Travelling: Again here is the history of the previous year's expenditure being more than the current year's request for the current budget. In this case, 6265, in 2011 the expenditure was \$301 million; 2012's expenditure \$335.2 million. What was requested for 2013? \$295 million. Here again, even if they had put the same amount they would only be requesting \$5 million today. Here there is poor budgeting, again, to be blamed. The question, as I would like to know, is: What is the fleet of aircraft, boats and maybe motor vehicles that are employed in the Guyana Defence Force that cause them to hire additional vehicles? What is the number of unserviceable vehicles?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member, Mr. Sharma, I have sat in this House a long time and I seem to remember that when questions asking how many vehicles and so on that these military people have you... Those questions are considered confidential to the Force but you have asked the question and I will ask the Minister whether he can answer it. Hon. Minister, can you answer his question?

**Bishop Edghill:** Mdm. Chairperson, as it relates to the specific details of numbers of vehicles and boats and so on I would decline to answer that but to indicate to the Hon. Member that under the line item that he asking the information, line item 6265, Other Transport, Travel and Postage, we have had to hire additional boats. The Hon. Member would be aware that there is a floating base out in the Pomeroun area and that base carries out a significant amount of operations which entail, apart from the resources available and owned by the Guyana Defence Force, other resources having to be hired from time to time...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Bishop Edghill:** ...depending on the operations that are being carried out at that particular time.

**Mr. Sharma:** I thank the Hon. Minister for his explanation. We are here to add our voice, or support, for the various amounts that are being requested here, a contingency. The public out there, because of mishaps, maybe a large wave, maybe pirate attacks, whatever; how is this increase in request for money helps the citizens out there that are affected by piracy, affected by high tide hitting the boat over and so forth?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Would you like the Minister to answer that question?

**Mr. Sharma:** How is this or is this just training for the army officers?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Minister, he is asking whether this is helping with piracy or if it is training for army officers.

**Bishop Edghill:** I think the issues of operations of an outfit like the Guyana Defence Force and its operational efficiency and matters of that nature could be dealt with at another level of the parliamentary operations where there is a special Committee that will deal with issues of security



so I would strongly suggest that the issues of operational efficiency be examined at another level rather than at this particular stage.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you, Mdm. Chairperson. Line item 6282- Equipment Maintenance: I heard from the Hon. Minister Benn and also the Hon. Minister Edghill and what they basically said was they give credit to the Guyana Defence Force in assisting in that sort of operation.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I think that that was just in answer to the Hon. Member Felix saying...

**Mr. Sharma:** Yes, but under maintenance of equipment I could remember when the two helicopters were purchased. They were either purchased separately or they came with the helicopter, spotlight and infrared. Was the infrared equipment working? Apparently there could have been no search at night.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I appreciate that you have the right to ask those questions but you should not be asking them when we are considering this. You can ask those questions. They are valid questions but ask them as questions so that somebody will be able to answer; whether it was happening at that time or it is not working any more, that kind of thing. Okay?

**Mr. Sharma:** This is Equipment Maintenance and the particular part of the helicopter that I am speaking about is equipment that maybe is attached equipment purchased additionally but I would like to know if the infrared was working or if it had to be maintained with this amount of money here.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** You want to know whether the infrared thing was part of the equipment that had to be maintained.

**Mr. Sharma:** Correct.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, can you answer that?

**Bishop Edghill:** I would want to reiterate, with the greatest respect to Members of this honourable House and I think that the administration has been quite forthcoming in providing the details and the answers but we are dealing here with very sensitive matters of national security and I prefer to have those matters addressed at another level.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you very much. Mr. Sharma, do you have many more questions?

**Mr. Sharma:** One more.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Sharma:** This is the final line item... [*Interruption*]

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Can we please allow Mr. Sharma some time?

**Mr. Sharma:** This is the final line item, 6292, Dietary: This is the only line item that the Guyana Defence Force budgeted more than what they budgeted for the previous year and it deals with food and apparently they need \$100 million more for dietary, more food. I do not know what the operation was. I do not know if it was for an election or something to the effect. Could they say why \$100 million was needed for more food items?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Minister, can you answer why more food was necessary and why it is urgently needed?

**Ms. Teixeira:** Do you not want to feed people?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Please, let us just get the Minister to answer.

**Bishop Edghill:** This increase has to do with the nature of the operational demands that were placed upon the Guyana Defence Force at specific times to do specific things.

**Mr. Sharma:** I know the activities of the Guyana Defence Force... [*Interruption*]

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Members, please, we are degenerating into noise. We cannot hear the question or the answer. We cannot get on with the business of the House if we continue like this. Thank you. I would like to hear. I am listening to the question as well as the answer. Some of us get up and ask the same question that was asked already or that was already answered. If we listen we will not have that and we can get through this thing in a much more efficient way. Yes, Mr. Sharma, you were asking.

**Mr. Sharma:** I know it is a norm that certain questions in relation to the Guyana Defence Force is a 'no-no', top secret.

6.14 p.m.

However, are these operations top secrets? I do not know. I know that I would read the newspapers, from time to time, and I would see that the army is carrying out a joint operation, and the operation is listed. I do not know.

Could the Minister say what the new operations, which were not budgeted for in 2013, were?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I do not think that that is a fair question for the Minister. The Minister is pointing you to the committee that deals with the security aspect to get those details because operations of the Guyana Defence Force... It can have operations that are not pre-planned. It is responding to threats and all kinds of things which, as ordinary citizens, people do not know about and there are no uses in alarming them. Those questions can very well go to the committee that deals with security.

*Item 9 53-531 Guyana Defence Force – Defence Headquarters - \$237,000,000 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

## **CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

### **Item 1 07-071 Parliament Office – National Assembly - \$6, 657,480**

**Mr. Greenidge:** Could the Minister explain to us why this just was decided in the middle of the year that it will be done or at the end of the year?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I think we cried out for more washrooms. We did cry out before the budget. Anyway I will ask the Minister to answer.

**Mr. Hinds:** This item was not planned but it was known that it would have been good for us to improve the washroom facilities for ourselves and also for members of the media and the public. As far as I understand, it was savings from the roof, some \$4.47 million, that might have motivated persons to try to see if we can have got additional moneys and do the job. I can recall that the substantial Speaker did extend some appreciation to the Hon. Minister of Public Works for facilitating that request and for being, himself, there, from time to time, to ensure that the job was done well.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Did the Parliament Office request the rehabilitation of this facility prior to November 2013?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I do not know if the Prime Minister could answer that.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Well, I am asking.

**Mr. Hinds:** I certainly do not know but I would not be surprised if there was a request. Every year when we do budget, and in our own homes, we have long lists of things we would like to do and we have so much money, so we will have to do the best from it.

I am being advised, though, that the answer is no. No request was made at an earlier time.

*Item 1 07-071 Parliament Office – National Assembly - \$6,657,480 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** This completes the consideration of all the items on Supplementary Paper No. 4.

*Question*

“That this Committee of Supply approves of the proposals set in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2013 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) – Advances made from Contingencies Fund, totalling \$1,062,179,646 for the period 2013-11-06 to 2013-12-31.”

*put, and agreed to.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**Dr. Singh:** I note that we are back in Assembly and not in Committee and so I take it that I am required to report the outcome of the Committee’s proceedings on Financial Paper No. 4.

**Presiding Member:** Yes, you are.

**Dr. Singh:** Well in that case, Mdm. Presiding Officer, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 4 of 2013 – Schedule of

Supplementary Provision on the Current and Capital Estimates totally \$1,062,179,646, and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

## **CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL PAPER NO. 5 OF 2013**

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the proposal set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2013 – Schedule of Supplementary Estimates (Capital) totalling 412,780,808 for the period ended 2013-12-31.”[*Minister of Finance*]

**Presiding Officer:** The Assembly will now resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider Financial Paper No. 5 of 2013.

*Assembly in Committee of Supply*

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Presiding Officer 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.5 of 2013 Supplementary Estimate (Capital) totalling \$412, 780,808 for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013 and I now move the motion.

*Motion proposed*

## **CAPITAL ESTIMATES**

**Item 1 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$257,519,044**

**Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon:** Could the Hon. Minister of Agriculture indicate the nature of the emergency which caused the construction of a pump station at Patentia? Why does a pump station at Patentia cost \$49 million?

**Dr. Ramsammy:** The sum represents inflow. This is part of the Agriculture Diversification Programme (ADP) Project. The projects under ADP include the pump station which had started... The pump station is part of a bigger project at Patentia that includes a canal, a head regulator, a sluice and the pump station itself. This was supposed to be completed by March of 2014. Three of the four components were completed earlier than the deadline date. This represents part of the payment for the project.

In addition, there has been training as part of the ADP project that was concluded before the 2014 deadline at National Agriculture Research Institute (NAR), Guyana Livestock Development Agency (GLDA) and other. As part of that, legislations and regulations have been drafted and I am hoping that some of those will make it to the House very shortly.

These are some of the nature of the expenditure.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I believe I understood what the Minister said but part of his explanation does not seem to address the question as to why this appears at the end of the year. Is it that the loan is not a new loan? He would have known that these inflows would have been due either in 2013 or 2014. Why are they here as a contingency.

**Dr. Ramsammy:** It is because they were regional contracts. The contracts called for it to be completed in March or April 2014 but some of the activities within the project were completed before the deadline dates. That is what I said.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Does it say that anywhere in the documentation, Mdm. Chairperson?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I do not see that here but it is an explanation that the Minister gave.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Okay. If the explanation of the Minister is accurate then I think it is quite commendable, but I also believe that it should have reflected in the documentation. This is part of the problem and I would not have needed to stand and ask.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hopefully we can do better next time. Thank you Mr. Greenidge.

*Item 1 21-212 Ministry of Agriculture – Crops and Livestock Support Services - \$257,519,044 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 2 45-451 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water - \$97,666,194**

**Ms. Kissoon:** For the core homes project, has any of the moneys been spent on the core homes programme in Linden, and if yes how much?

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Ali]:** This request for additional inflows covers various activities under the low income project, two programmes funded by the IDB. In relation to the construction of core homes, the areas covered under this request include Ankerville, Ordnance Fort Lands and Recht door Zee.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Is it not Linden?

**Mr. Ali:** No.

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** With regard to the hinterland pilot component to the tune of \$13,232,600, could the Hon. Minister say how many houses were constructed in each community and the individual amount of money spent on each community?

**Mr. Ali:** The hinterland pilot includes the supply of materials and labour for the construction of houses in pilot areas, including Annai, Apoteri, Massara, Whitewater, Manawarin, Orinuku and Orinduik.

I would undertake to give a full description of all works, in terms of number, and individual financing for each area to the Hon. Member and to the House.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mrs. Garrido-Lowe, is that acceptable?

**Mrs. Garrido-Lowe:** Thank you Mdm. Chairperson.

**Mr. Sharma:** In relation to construction of core homes, it is a very good initiative and for the funding agency to say to the administration that it sees the need for core homes. A lot of homes in Guyana should be core homes because a lot of people are very poor in this country.

I would like the Minister to say what the contribution is that the individual have to make towards the core home. What is the cost of a core home to the Ministry?

**Mr. Ali:** When the core home concept was first conceptualised in the development of this project there was a grant subsidy system, which was worked out, and the basic criteria was the ownership of a low income piece of land. The subsidy was set at that time to \$1 million, but given the changes in pricing for different areas the subsidy level, in different areas, would have increased based on tenders that came in when it was publicly advertised. For each area there will be a different figure based on the tendered amount and I can give the Hon. Member and the House the full detail of each of the areas.

*Item 2 45-451 Ministry of Housing and Water – Housing and Water - \$97, 666,194 agreed to and ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Item 3 52-521 Ministry of Legal Affairs – Main Office - \$57,595,570**

**Mr. B. Williams:** Could the Hon. Attorney General clarify whether the voice amplification system is a microphone in which he is talking about?

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** It includes much more than a microphone. A microphone obviously is part of a big apparatus. It is similar to what we are using here in the Parliament Office. It is a recording device...

**Mr. B. Williams:** But you do not say that here.

**Mr. Nandlall:** ... that will produce a written record at the end of the process.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Therefore, this is a misdescription. This does not say anything about a recording. It talks about a microphone which I have seen in regional courts from time immemorial and which you now wish to introduce. Could I ask now why it is confined to these courts and why not, for example, the criminal assizes courts where they are very important?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I explained to my friend, in a letter, that this is a pilot phase of a project. The three courts, which have been identified, have been so identified because they are all air-conditioned or at least at the time. When we had decided to launch this programme they were the only courts with that type of facility. There is obviously the intention. Once we are able to successfully confront and overcome the teething problem, which we anticipate we will encounter, we will move to use the facilities in the criminal trials as well.



**Mr. B. Williams:** I do not accept that...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member Mr. B. Williams, I would appreciate if you let me recognise you before you begin to speak. Go ahead Hon. Member.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I am sorry. I am sure I am not deflecting. Could the Hon. Attorney General say what is the amount allotted for this system in the \$24 million?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Included in that \$24 million are moneys for the system itself, furniture...

**Mr. B. Williams:** I am asking about the amount.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I do not have that figure here but I think it is about \$18 or \$19 million. The remainder is for furniture. I am being told that it is \$20 million for the equipment and the remaining is for the furniture because this equipment has to be installed in the courts that they are intended for.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Could we, therefore, say that the proper description is the voice and recording systems, not only voice amplification but recording, the recording of evidence? Is that correct Attorney General?

**Mr. Nandlall:** The system is to record evidence.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Yes Hon. Member Mr. Williams, I see your point and you are talking language. The name could have been different.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Could the Hon. Attorney General explain these civil and criminal committees that are entitled for a drawdown on this \$5 million? Who and what are they?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Can the Hon. Member repeat the question, "Who and what are they?"

**Mdm. Chairperson:** He is asking what civil and criminal committees are entitled to a drawdown. Those are his exact words.

**Mr. Nandlall:** If the question is properly phrased I can answer it.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Williams, can you rephrase your question?

**Mr. B. Williams:** I thought he did not hear it. I did not know you wanted me to rephrase it.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I heard what he said.

**Mr. B. Williams:** Could the Hon. Attorney General explain what are these civil and criminal committees that are supposed to draw down on the nearly \$6 million?

**Mr. Nandlall:** Under the Modernisation of the Justice Administration Programme there is an oversight component to it. This oversight component manifests itself in the establishment of a committee that will oversight the criminal jurisdiction of the judiciary as well as the civil jurisdiction of the judiciary. It is working outside of the executive ambit and it is a part of the self-regulatory nature of the judiciary itself. These are committees that come under the administration of the Chancellor. They are housed at the Court of Appeal and this money is to provide furniture and other facilities which are necessary to bring to this committee into operation.

**Mr. B. Williams:** A follow-up, Mdm. Chairperson. With the establishment of a law revision department, where would that department be established and who would it come under?

**Mr. Nandlall:** After we would have completed a revision of the laws of Guyana from 1973 to 2010 it was felt that we should not wait another 35 to 40 years before we launch another exercise of that type and, therefore, we decided to establish a unit that will continue the law revision work, so as laws are passed in the Parliament the revision exercise continues to take place at the same time and throughout the year.

The revision committee is housed in the Attorney General's Office. A specialist staff, who has been trained in the area of law revision in various parts of the Caribbean, has already been recruited and that person will commence work as soon as we make available the laws of Guyana which is expected to be done shortly.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Hon. Member Mr. Williams, we have been asking for law revisions continuously.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I am not complaining. I am happy. We have been asking for it, on this side of the House.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** We are all very happy.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I remember my sister, the Hon. Member Mrs. Backer.

Could I now ask the Hon. Attorney General, the rehabilitation works to two addition court rooms, driveway and corridor, to which court rooms is he referring to here?

**Mr. Nandlall:** This is part of the Georgetown Magistrates' Court complex. The original design of the building did not result in 10 magistrate courts. Two would have still been housed in an edifice popularly known as Jainarine Singh's building at which the Government is paying \$1 million per month. Having regard to that constant cost, we decided to do extensions and variations to the contract, extending the edifice that was recently completed at Avenue of the Republic to add to it two separate units which are going to be used to house two separate magistrate courts.

We also had to build the ancillary, driveway, washroom facilities, magistrate court's office and other.

**Mr. B. Williams:** As we are on the Georgetown Magistrates' Court, I am sure why it was never named in the first place, could I enquire from the Hon. Attorney General what was the initial estimated cost to do those works and what was the final cost?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I do not have that information here. That is not part of this document but I can provide that to the Member at an appropriate time.

**Mr. B. Williams:** I would be very grateful if you can produce that within a week's time. That would be very good.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I have no difficulty.

**Mr. Greenidge:** The Attorney General explained, at some length, some of the background to this project and what I would like to know is why this project appears here for us to consider as part of our supplementary schedule.

**Mr. Nandlall:** I will defer to the Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Singh:** I am sure my colleague would note that all three of the items contained in this Financial Paper are, in fact, in relation to what is described as specific funding commonly called foreign financing as distinct from locally funded initiatives. Essentially, in the case of all three of the items, the sums sought represent disbursements in excess of the amount approved at the time of the budget. In other words, they represent an accelerated implementation of the project as a result of which more activities may have been completed or advanced beyond the stage that was anticipated at the time of the budget, resulting in disbursements at a level, somewhat, above the amount approved in the original budget.

This House has, since time immemorial, been considering Financial Papers of this nature to bring into the central Government accounting system what is called the additional inflows. These are essentially foreign-funded projects, in this case, as the Attorney General said earlier, this relates to the modernisation of the justice programme. The one, which the Minister of Housing addressed, was the Low Income Housing Programme and the Minister of Agriculture, it was the Agricultural Export and Diversification Programme.

They are all foreign-funded projects that would have been executed at a pace in excess of what was anticipated at the start of the year and at the end of the year additional disbursements, having been made, the approval is now sought.

**Mr. Greenidge:** I thank the Minister for his explanation and wish to draw to both his attention and yours, Mdm. Chairperson, that there was no way that we could have expected to know about the accelerated implementation of this particular project. For the prior too, we were given those answers when we asked. That is one of the reasons why I keep saying that the documentation should be properly prepared. Thank you.

*6.44 p.m.*

**Dr. Singh:** As it relates recording of additional inflows from specific financing...

**Mr. Greenidge:** It is not with the specific nature; that is well accepted.

**Dr. Singh:** This is a well established practice. Once specific funding is sought it has particular meaning that is known and understood in this House, and least of all from a predecessor of mine would I expected a question like this but he is perfectly entitled to ask any question.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Mdm. Chairperson, I do not care what the Minister expects. What I am saying is...

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Mr. Greenidge, I do not want a cross argument between a former Minister and a present one. Sir, I took your point from the beginning and when you said that they had moved to the letter of the law and probably not the spirit, I said that it was a positive step and hopefully the next time you can get a bit more. Please, let us not keep raising it every time.

**Mr. Greenidge:** Thank you for helping, Mdm. Chairperson. I want it to be clear.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** We do want to be able to ask questions and have them answered in the House. We do not want to just pass the thing.

**Mr. Greenidge:** If I might be allowed to explain, I was not asking whether it is specific funding, whether specific funding means foreign funding, or anything such as that. It is clear on the paper. I am asking why it is a supplementary request, we have been given that answer. I thank the Minister for it.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Mdm. Chairperson, I will ask a follow-up from the Attorney General's answer about these civil and criminal committees and the expenditures on them, that when the committees are established, what are the composition of these committees and why is it if they are housed in the Court of Appeal that they required additional sums and furniture?

**Mr. Nandlall:** As I indicated earlier, these are committees that fall under the administration and supervision of the judiciary, the Chancellor. The Chancellor determines...I do not know the criteria. I do not have the criteria, right now, but I know that persons who have been appointed to this committee are largely laypersons, persons who are unconnected to the judicial system to give the kind of pair oversight to the system which the project had recommended. There is an additional facility constructed at the Court of Appeal which houses these meetings, whenever they are held, and the furniture is for that specific area which has been designated to accommodate the sittings of this committee. There is also a small secretariat or a secretarial unit also set up there to administer the affairs of the unit on a day to day basis.

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** Follow-up, please, Mdm. Chairperson. Could the Hon. Attorney General indicate whether it is correct that some of the members of these committees are actually

persons who are working within the judiciary, for example, Registrars of Judges who are now committed or required to report on the functions of the judges with whom they work?

**Mr. Nandlall:** I cannot so indicate and that is not the intention of the policy which inspired the establishment of this committee.

**Mr. Sharma:** The Hon. Minister, I think, is tired. However, the voice amplification system, a recorder the Minister alluded to, I think will give us a print out, so the question is: How would this system apply to persons who may be speaking such as I am speaking or as in "*Dem Boy Seh*" article? How would it produce those documentations? These are equipment we are speaking about, would there be personnel to deal with them? There are equipment, where are the personnel to monitor this capture?

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Before I ask the Minister to answer, Mr. Sharma, sometimes when you get up to ask a question you are moving outside of what the money was being voted for. It has not asked for people to be paid here. I understand the Minister to be saying the \$20 million is to procure and install all the equipment in the three courts for the trial. Voice amplification, I would imagine, would amplify the voice of the judge, of the lawyers and of the witnesses and things such as that. When you are talking about staff and people those would not come under this expenditure, those would have to come under current expenditure. Your question, while it is a good one, it really is not for this item.

**Mr. Sharma:** It is a good initiative and this is a project, so when will it trickle down to the courts and it is if the Minister has a plan in place. Should this not be realistic, would it just be put aside or shelved? There must be a policy. I do not want us to spend \$24 million and it does not work and it is a white elephant.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** Again, Mr. Sharma, let us be positive and let us make sure it works so that we can have the same thing in all the other courts.

**Mr. Sharma:** In relation to a purchase of a hardware for a database Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) Chamber, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, where is the police prosecutor in this scenario?

**Mr. Nandlall:** It is a very strange question to answer: “where is the police prosecutor?” The thing speaks about the procurement of hardware for the DPP Chamber. I could answer the Member to tell him that there are two resident police prosecutors in the DPP Chambers, but this has nothing to do with this question. The hardware has been procured for the libraries, both at the DPP’s office and at the Attorney General’s office as well as for the staff, the personnel working at these two offices including the lawyers.

**Mdm. Chairperson:** I would like to say to Mr. Sharma that I understand his concerns and he is asking for them but when we are considering Financial Papers there are certain issues that are very relevant into the questions here. There are other places he can ask that. In fact, there are questions that he can ask and get answers, and that kind of thing. Let us please save them for that time. If you have any other questions as to these amounts of money please ask it if not I would like to put the question.

*Agency 3 52-521 – Ministry of Legal Affairs – Main Office - \$57,595,570 agreed to and ordered to stand as part of the Schedule.*

**Mdm. Chairperson:** This completes consideration of all the items.

*Question*

“That this Committee of Supply approves the proposals set out in Financial Papers No. 5 of 2013 – Schedule of Supplementary Provision on the Capital Estimates totaling \$412,780,808 for the period ended 2013-12-31.”

*put, and agreed to.*

*Assembly resumed.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I beg to report that the Committee of Supply has approved of the proposals set out in Financial Paper No. 5 of 2013 and I now move that the Assembly doth agree with the Committee in the said Resolution.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Motion carried.*

**Mr. Hinds:** Mdm. Presiding Member, with your leave, I move that Standing Orders Nos. 13 (n) and 54 be suspended to enable the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2013) Bill 2014 – Bill No. 2 of 2014 to be introduced at this stage.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Standing Order suspended.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Presiding Member, in accordance to article 171, paragraph (2) of the Constitution, I signify that Cabinet has recommended the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2013) Bill 2014 – Bill No. 2 of 2014 for consideration by the National Assembly. I now present the Bill to the Assembly and ask that it be read the first time.

### **INTRODUCTION OF BILL AND FIRST READING**

The following Bill was introduced and read for the first time:

### **SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2013) BILL 2014 – BILL NO 2 OF 2014**

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read for the first time.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2013) Bill 2014 – Bill No. 2 of 2014 be read a second time.

### **PUBLIC BUSINESS**

### **GOVERNMENT’S BUSINESS**



## **BILL – SECOND AND THIRD READINGS**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (NO. 2 FOR 2013) BILL 2014 – BILL NO. 2 OF 2014**

A Bill intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the issue from the Consolidated Fund of the sums necessary to meet the expenditure (not otherwise lawfully charged on the Consolidated Fund) of Guyana for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013, estimates whereof have been approved by the National Assembly, and for the appropriation of those sums for the specified purposes, in conformity with the Constitution.” *[Minister of Finance]*

*Question put, and agreed to*

*Bill read a second time.*

**Dr. Singh:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2 for 2013) Bill 2014 – Bill No. 2 of 2014 be read the third time and be passed as printed.

*Question put, and agreed to.*

*Bill read for the third time and passed as printed.*

## **BILLS – SECOND READINGS**

### **LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ELECTIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2014 – Bill No. 3/2014**

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to amend the Local Authorities (Elections) Act to provide for the postponement of elections of councillors of local democratic organs.” *[Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development]*

**Mr. Whittaker:** I move that the second reading Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Bill 2014 – Bill No. 3/2014 be deferred to a later sitting of the National Assembly.

*Bill deferred.*

## **RECORDING OF COURT PROCEEDINGS BILL 2014 – Bill No. 1/2014**

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to provide for the recording of Court Proceedings and for matters incidental thereto.” *[Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]*

**Mr. Nandlall:** I rise to ask your leave to defer the second reading of the Recording of Court Proceedings Bill 2014 – Bill No. 1/2014.

*Bill deferred.*

## **GUYANA CRICKET ADMINISTRATION BILL 2012 – Bill No. 31/2012**

A BILL intituled:

“AN ACT to make provisions for the incorporation of autonomous national cricket administrative organizations in Guyana and to provide for other matters connected therewith.” *[Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport]*

**Dr. Anthony:** Mdm. Presiding Member, I beg to defer the Bill.

*Bill deferred.*

## **COMMITTEES BUSINESS**

### **MOTION**

#### **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION**

WHEREAS Article 212A of the Constitution provides for the establishment of an Ethnic Relations Commission;

AND WHEREAS in accordance with Article 212 B (1) of the Constitution, the Ethnic Relations Commission shall consist of –

- (a) *“not less than five nor more than fifteen members, nominated by entities, by a consensual mechanism determined by the National Assembly, including entities, representative of religious bodies, the labour movement, the private business sector,*

*youth and women, after the entities are determined by the votes not less than two-thirds of all elected members of the National Assembly;*

*(b) a member who shall be a nominee, without the right to vote, chosen by and from each of the following commissions to be established under this Constitution, Indigenous Peoples' Commission, Women and Gender Equality Commission, Commission for the Rights of the Child and Human Rights Commission."*

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Appointments (COA) examined the list of entities to nominate members to the Ethnic Relations Commission in accordance with article 212 B (1)(a) of the Constitution, and Resolution No. 62 of 2000 with regard to the number of members on the said Commission;

AND WHEREAS the Parliamentary Committee on Appointments recommends that the number of members on the Ethnic Relations Commission be increased to ten (10) and the categories or groups include the representatives of the Christian, Hindu, and Muslim bodies, the labour movement, the private business sector, youth and women and a new category "Cultural/ Ethnic" with one nominee each from the three (3) largest ethnic groups: Indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese and Indigenous/Amerindian.

“BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the increase in the number of members on the Ethnic Relations Commission from seven (7) to ten (10) as proposed by the Committee on Appointments;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves of the inclusion of a new category “**Cultural/Ethnic**” with the right to have three (3) members, one representative each of the three largest ethnic groups;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the list of entities on the attached First Schedule in accordance with Article 212 (B)(1)(a);

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves that the number of nominees for each group of entities be as follows:-

<b>Groups of Entities</b>	<b>Number of Members</b>
Christian Religion	One Member
Hindu Religion	One Member
Muslim Religion	One Member
Labour Movement	One Member
Private Sector Organisations	One Member
Youth Organisations	One Member
Women Organisations	One Member
<b>Cultural/Ethnic Organisations</b>	
- Indo-Guyanese	One Member
- Afro-Guyanese	One Member
- Indigenous/Amerindian	One Member

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly approves the consensual mechanism for the nomination of the members by the entities as set out in the Second Schedule attached.” [Dr. Norton]

**Dr. Norton:** I rise to beg that this motion be deferred.

*Motion deferred.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Presiding Member:** Hon. Members, That seems to conclude our business for the day.

**Mr. Hinds:** I am pleased to say that there has been some agreement between the Whips on the date of the next sitting. The Government had desired that the next sitting would have been in two weeks but the Opposition has had some concerns about their Members being here, present, and so we reach agreement to meet on Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014 to allow the Government business to proceed due to, and to meet, certain urgent deadlines.

**Mdm. Presiding Member:** Hon. Members, the House stands adjourned until Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

*Adjourned accordingly at 7.01 p.m.*