



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF  
THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC  
OF GUYANA

# OFFICIAL REPORT

*PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION  
(2020-2025) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION  
OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR  
CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE, LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN*

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28<sup>TH</sup> Sitting

Thursday, 10<sup>TH</sup> June, 2021

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**PARLIAMENT OFFICE  
HANSARD DIVISION**

*Assembly convened at 2.18 p.m.*

*Prayers*

*[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have had, since our last sitting, a ruling by the courts regarding two persons who were sitting in the National Assembly. I refer to the words of the former Hon. Speaker, Dr. Scotland, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2016. He concluded that:

“The Hon. Members are not here but I believe that I owe it to Members of this House to understand their absence. Whatever views may exist in relation to decisions of the court at any time, the first obligation is to obey those decisions and then we proceed from there.”

As I mentioned, the persons are not here today.

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

The following Papers and Reports were laid:

1. Annual Reports of the Public Utilities Commission for the years 2018 and 2019.

*[Prime Minister]*

2. (i) Mortgage Finance Agreement between the Government of Guyana and the Bank of Baroda (Guyana) Inc.
- (ii) Loan Agreement No. 10/SFR-OR-GUY dated February 24, 2021 between the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for an amount of US\$112,432,000. The purpose of this Loan is to assist the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in financing the Linden to Mabura Hill Road Upgrade Project.

- (iii) Loan Agreement No. 22/SFR-GUY dated February 24, 2021 between the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Co-operative Republic of Guyana for an amount of US\$9,780,000. The purpose of this Loan is to assist the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in financing the Hospitality and Tourism Training Institute Project.
- (iv) Loan Contract No. 5180/BL-GY dated March 9, 2021 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for an amount of US\$30,400,000. The purpose of this Loan is to contribute to the financing and execution of the Support to Safety Nets for Vulnerable Populations Affected by Coronavirus in Guyana.
- (v) Financing Agreement Credit No. 6825-GY dated March 10, 2021 between the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and the International Development Association (IDA) in an amount equivalent to SDR9,500,000 for the purpose of: (i) providing additional financing for the Original Secondary Education Improvement Project dated October 10, 2014 (Credit No. 5473-GY); and (ii) amending the said Original Financing Agreement (Credit No. 5473GY).
- (vi) Public Debt Annual Report for 2020.
- (vii) Financial Paper No. 1 of 2021 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$1,906,775,000 for the period 2021-04-01 to 2021-06-08.
- (viii) Financial Paper No. 2 of 2021 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$21,360,385,051 for the period ending 2021-12-31.

*[Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance]*

*The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance named Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, as the date for the consideration of the financial papers.*

### 3. Annual Report of the Police Complaints Authority for the year 2019.

*[Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip]*

4. Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority for the years 2012 to 2016.

*[Minister of Public Works]*

5. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) (Amendment of Second Schedule) Order 2021 – No. 8 of 2021.

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

### **For Written Replies**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there are 15 questions on today's Order Paper. Questions number one to 12 are for written replies and questions number 13 to 15 are for oral replies. Questions number one, three, four and five are in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson, and are for the Hon. Minister of Housing and Water.

Question number two is in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Annette Ferguson, and is for the Hon. Minister of Human Services and Social Security. Questions number six, seven, eight, nine and 10 are in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul, and are for the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Regional Development.

Question number 11 is in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, and is for the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs. Question number 12 is in the name of the Hon. Member, Ms. Tabitha Sarabo-Halley, and is for the Hon. Minister of the Public Service.

The answers to all these questions have been received and, in accordance with our Standing Orders, have been circulated.

### **1. Contracted Employees in the Ministry of Housing and Water**

**Ms. Ferguson:**

1. Can the Honourable Minister provide the designation of each person employed on contract in the Ministry of Housing and Water from August 2, 2020?

2. Can the Honourable Minister provide the emoluments (salaries and other benefits) for each of the persons employed on contract from August 2, 2020?
3. Can the Honourable Minister advise if allowances for these employments were in Budget 2020 and, if so, under which Line Item are they being paid?

**Minister of Housing and Water [Mr. Croal]:**

Answers to questions one and two: The designation and emoluments (salaries and other benefits) for each of the persons employed on contract from August 2, 2020 are as follows:

| Ministry of Housing and Water |                     |         |                |                     |                         |                   |                   |           |               |        |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| Contracted Employment         |                     |         |                |                     |                         |                   |                   |           |               |        |
| Designation                   | Date of Appointment | Salary  | Duty Allowance | Telephone Allowance | Entertainment Allowance | Housing Allowance | Uniform Allowance | Gratuity  | Vac Allowance | NIS    |
| Permanent Secretary           | September 10, 2020  | 650,000 | 3,500          | -                   | 3,500                   | 3,500             | -                 | 1,755,000 | 650,000       | 23,520 |
| Personal Assistant            | November 8, 2020    | 350,000 | 20,000         | 10,000              | -                       | -                 | -                 | 945,000   | 350,000       | 23,520 |
| Personal Assistant            | October 8, 2020     | 350,000 | 20,000         | 10,000              | -                       | -                 | -                 | 945,000   | 350,000       | 23,520 |
| Public Relation Officer       | July 9, 2020        | 250,000 | 20,000         | 5,000               | -                       | -                 | -                 | 675,000   | 250,000       | 21,000 |
| Confidential Secretary        | December 8, 2020    | 160,000 | 15,000         | 5,000               | -                       | -                 | -                 | 432,000   | 160,000       | 13,440 |
| Confidential Secretary        | October 8, 2020     | 160,000 | 15,000         | 5,000               | -                       | -                 | -                 | 432,000   | 160,000       | 13,440 |
| Technical Assistant           | January 11, 2020    | 160,000 | 20,000         | 5,000               | -                       | -                 | -                 | 432,000   | 160,000       | 13,440 |
| Vehicle Driver                | April 12, 2020      | 70,000  | -              | -                   | -                       | -                 | -                 | 189,000   | 70,000        | 5,880  |
| Cleaner                       | January 28, 2021    | 70,000  | -              | -                   | -                       | -                 | -                 | 189,000   | 70,000        | 5,880  |

3. Allowances for these employments were not in Budget 2020.

## 2. COVID-19 Relief Disbursement

**Ms. Ferguson:** On Monday, December 28, 2020, the National Assembly approved an additional sum of \$2.5B, “provision for payment of the COVID-19 Relief for Household Initiative.”

1. Can the Honourable Minister state what percentage of the \$2.5B has been paid out to households in the Demerara-Mahaica Region between December 28, 2020 to December 31, 2020?
2. Can the Honourable Minister state the areas in Demerara-Mahaica still to be serviced with the COVID-19 disbursement?
3. Can the Honourable Minister provide a specimen of the “pre-assessment form” being used by the COVID-19 Relief teams for the disbursements of the \$25,000.00 per household?
4. Can the Honourable Minister provide a copy of the schedule for the COVID-19 disbursements in Central Georgetown, Demerara- Mahaica Region?

**Minister of Human Services and Social Security [Dr. Persaud]:**

1. A total of 10,000 cash grants were paid out in the Demerara-Mahaica Region during the period December 28th to December 30th, 2020. This amounted to \$250,000,000, representing 10 percent of the \$2.5B.
2. To date we have serviced all areas in the Demerara-Mahaica Region, with the completion date for phase one of the programme slated for Friday, 12th March.
3. See Attachment 1 the application form used for primary household recipients, and Attachment 2 the form used for the pink slip application.

**ATTACHMENT 1**

**GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA**

**COVID-19 RELIEF AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME \$25,000 PER HOUSEHOLD**

**GRANT**

**APPLICATION FORM**

**RECEIPT #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Administrative Region** \_\_\_\_\_

**NDC/ Municipality /Sub District** \_\_\_\_\_

Village\_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT FOR HOUSEHOLD**

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: **Male / Female**

**FORM OF IDENTIFICATION (NATIONAL ID/PASSPORT/DRIVERS LICENSE)**

ID INFORMATION \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RECEIVED THE SUM OF \$25,000 CASH GRANT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA**

**Declaration**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the information I have provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge, under penalty of law. If unable to sign, please put a mark in the presence of a witness.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If unable to sign) Witness to mark: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESS**

Please provide one other person (not a family member) in your community.

Name of Community Member \_\_\_\_\_ telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**AFFIDAVIT OF IDENTITY (IF APPLICABLE)**

**Region** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sub-Region/District** \_\_\_\_\_ **Village** \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the undersigned of Lot \_\_\_\_\_ hereby swear  
that I have known \_\_\_\_\_ of Lot \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years  
and I  
attest that he/she bears the name as he/she states without prejudice and is the head of the  
household.

\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE

ID No.

DATE

**ATTACHMENT 2**

**GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA**

**COVID-19 RELIEF AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME \$25,000 PER HOUSEHOLD GRANT**

**APPLICATION FORM**

**Administrative Region** \_\_\_\_\_

**NDC/ Municipality /Sub District** \_\_\_\_\_

**Village** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARTICULARS OF APPLICANT FOR HOUSEHOLD**

**FIRST NAME** \_\_\_\_\_ **LAST NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone#:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sex: Male / Female**

**FORM OF IDENTIFICATION (NATIONAL ID/PASSPORT/DRIVERS LICENSE)**

**ID INFORMATION** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age** \_\_\_\_\_



Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD: \_\_\_\_\_

REASON FOR OBJECTION / QUERY

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### **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the information I have provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge, under penalty of law. If unable to sign, please put a mark in the presence of a witness.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If unable to sign) Witness to mark: \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **WITNESS**

Please provide one other person (not a family member) in your community.

Name of Community Member \_\_\_\_\_ telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### **AFFIDAVIT OF IDENTITY (IF APPLICABLE)**

Region \_\_\_\_\_ Sub-Region/District \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ the undersigned of Lot \_\_\_\_\_ hereby swear that I have known \_\_\_\_\_ of Lot \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years and I attest that he/she bears the name as he/she states without prejudice and is the head of the household.

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SIGNATURE

ID No.

DATE

4. Schedules cannot be provided due to security reasons since it involves the transportation and disbursement of cash.

### **3. Allocations of House lots made Pre August 2, 2020**

**Ms. Ferguson:** Can the Honourable Minister provide information on the following?

1. Number of house lots for housing purposes in the following areas:
  - Prospect, Providence, Little Diamond and Great Diamond – East Bank Demerara;
  - Cummings Lodge, Mon Repos, Annandale, La Bonne Intention, Vigilance, Blandenhall and Strathspey – East Coast Demerara;
  - Experiment – Mahaica-Berbice; and
  - Hampshire, Williamsburg, Fort Ordinance, No.75 and No.79?
2. Is the Central Housing and Planning Authority refusing to accept payments from allottees who were allocated lands in areas listed above pre-August 2, 2020?
3. If so, when will allottees who were allocated lands pre-August 2, 2020, be allowed to make their payments?
4. Can the Honourable Minister provide the total number of persons who paid for their house lots in full up to the end of the year 2020 and are yet to receive their respective Certificate of Title?
5. Can the Honourable Minister provide the total number of persons who paid for their house lots in part up to the end of the year 2020 and are yet to receive their respective Agreement of Sale.
6. Can the Honourable Minister provide the total number of persons who paid for their house lots in full up to the end of the year 2020, and are yet to receive their respective Agreement of Sale?

7. After allottees are allocated their house lots and paid in-part, how long, in terms of days, months or years does it take the Central Housing and Planning Authority to give allottees their respective Agreement of Sale?
8. After allottees are allocated their house lots and paid in-full, how long, in terms of days, months or years does it take the Central Housing and Planning Authority to give allottees their respective Agreement of Sale?
9. After allottees receive their Agreement of Sale, how long in terms of days, months or years does it take the Central Housing and Planning Authority to give allottees their respective Certificate of Title?

**Mr. Croal:** (1) The table below shows the number of house lots for housing purposes:

| <b>Area</b>         | <b>No. of House Lots</b> |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Prospect            | 506                      |
| Providence          | 190                      |
| Great Diamond       | 1,044                    |
| Little Diamond      | 524                      |
| Cummings Lodge      | 1090                     |
| Mon Repos           | 203                      |
| Annandale           | 373                      |
| La Bonne Intention  | 445                      |
| Vigilance           | 416                      |
| Bladen Hall         | 120                      |
| Strathspey          | 316                      |
| Experiment          | 673                      |
| Mahaica-Berbice     | -                        |
| Hampshire           | 98                       |
| Williamsburg        | 147                      |
| Ordnance Fort lands | 341                      |
| No. 75              | 258                      |
| No. 79              | 36                       |

2. No, the CH&PA has/is accepting payments from allottees who were allocated lands in areas listed above pre-August 2, 2020. However, during transition there was a one month holding period.
3. Not applicable.
4. The total number of persons who paid for their house lots in full up to the end of the year 2020 is two hundred and thirty-nine (239) that were yet to receive their respective Certificate of Title.
5. The total number of persons who paid for their house lots in part up to the end of the year 2020 is three thousand, two hundred and sixty-three (3,263) that were yet to receive their respective Agreement of Sale.
6. The total number of persons who paid for their house lots in full up to the end of the year 2020 is two hundred and thirty-nine (239) that were yet to receive their respective Agreement of Sale.
7. After allottees are allocated their house lots and paid in-part, it takes the CH&PA approximately two (2) to three (3) weeks to give allottees their respective Agreement of Sale on the condition that the land is already owned by CH&PA.
8. After allottees are allocated their house lots and paid in-full, it takes the CH&PA approximately two (2) to three (3) weeks to give allottees their respective Agreement of Sale on the condition that the land is owned by CH&PA.
9. After allottees receive their Agreement of Sale, it takes approximately three (3) to six (6) months for the CH&PA to give allottees their respective Certificate of Title on the condition that the land is owned by CH&PA.

#### **4. Infrastructural Works**

##### **Ms. Ferguson:**

On Monday, December 28, 2020, the National Assembly approved an additional sum of \$2B, “Infrastructural Development and Buildings” for the infrastructural works in new areas.

1. Can the Honourable Minister state what percentage of the \$2B has been expended between December 28, 2020, to December 31, 2020?
2. Can the Honourable Minister provide a detailed list of where infrastructural development and building works are being done, the amount expended, and the percentage of works done for each activity as of January 14, 2021?
3. Can the Honourable Minister provide a list of the eighteen (18) areas where developmental works are taking place and the status of each?

**Mr. Croal:**

1. Sixty percent (60%) of the \$2B was expended between December 28, 2020, to December 31, 2020.
2. A detailed list of where infrastructural development and building works are being done, the amount expended, and the percentage of works done for each activity as of January 14, 2021, is attached in Appendix 1.
3. A list of the eighteen (18) areas where developmental works are taking place and the status of each is attached in Appendix 2.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **MINISTRY OF HOUSING & WATER**

#### **Infrastructure Development & Building Works**

**Status as at January 14, 2021**

| <b>No.</b> | <b>Areas</b>                        | <b>Region</b> | <b>Amount (\$)</b> | <b>Expenditure (\$)</b> | <b>Percentage Completion</b> |
|------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1          | Kokerite Hill, Mabaruma             | 1             | 6,595,410          | 6,595,410               | 100%                         |
| 2          | Kokerite Hill, Mabaruma             | 1             | 16,464,210         | 16,464,210              | 100%                         |
| 3          | Onderneeming, Phase 3               | 2             | 3,503,220          | 3,503,220               | 100%                         |
| 4          | Diamond Industrial and Lust-en-Rust | 3 & 4         | 12,538,000         | 12,538,000              | 100%                         |
| 5          | Diamond Industrial and Lust-en-Rust | 3 & 4         | 12,445,000         | 12,445,000              | 100%                         |
| 6          | Diamond Industrial and Lust-en-Rust | 3 & 4         | 11,870,000         | 11,870,000              | 100%                         |
| 7          | Diamond Industrial and Lust-en-Rust | 3 & 4         | 12,955,000         | 12,955,000              | 100%                         |
| 8          | Prospect E.B.D                      | 4             | 9,585,015          | 9,585,015               | 100%                         |
| 3          | Prospect E.B.D                      | 4             | 3,601,250          | 3,601,250               | 100%                         |

|    |                                       |   |                         |                         |      |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|------|
| 10 | Prospect E.B.D                        | 4 | 1,541,650               | 1,541,650               | 100% |
| 11 | Providence E.B.D                      | 4 | 30,077,707              | 30,077,707              | 100% |
| 12 | Providence E.B.D                      | 4 | 41,812,100              | 41,812,100              | 100% |
| 13 | Providence, Prospect E.B.D            | 4 | 36,857,277              | 36,857,277              | 100% |
| 14 | Providence, Prospect E.B.D            | 4 | 36,518,315              | 36,518,315              | 100% |
| 15 | Mon Repos, [CD                        | 4 | 18,416,266              | 18,416,266              | 100% |
| 16 | Mon Repos, [CD                        | 4 | 14,062,318              | 14,062,318              | 100% |
| 17 | Mon Repos, ECD                        | 4 | 19,270,900              | 19,270,900              | 100% |
| 18 | EE Eccles, EBD                        | 4 | 19,395,750              | 19,395,750              | 100% |
| 19 | EE Eccles, EBD                        | 4 | 18,925,115              | 18,925,115              | 100% |
| 20 | Providence & Prospect, E.B.D          | 4 | 7,375,027               | 7,375,027               | 100% |
| 21 | Prospect, Providence & Cummings Lodge | 4 | 10,256,000              | 10,256,000              | 100% |
| 22 | Providence, Parcel 115, EBD           | 4 | 6,778,800               | 6,778,800               | 100% |
| 23 | Providence, Parcel 115, EBD           | 4 | 14,089,950              | 14,089,950              | 100% |
| 24 | Cummings Lodge, [CD                   | 4 | 19,857,675              | 19,857,675              | 100% |
| 25 | Providence, EBD                       | 4 | 12,269,700              | 12,269,700              | 100% |
| 26 | Herstelling, EBD                      | 4 | 19,907,970              | 19,907,970              | 100% |
| 27 | Farm/Daimond, EBD                     | 4 | 19,756,773              | 19,756,773              | 100% |
| 28 | Mon Repos, ECD                        | 4 | 15,492,070              | 15,492,070              | 100% |
| 29 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,979,211              | 19,979,211              | 100% |
| 30 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,986,477              | 19,986,477              | 100% |
| 31 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,983,822              | 19,983,822              | 100% |
| 32 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,978,938              | 19,978,938              | 100% |
| 33 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,985,196              | 19,985,196              | 100% |
| 34 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,899,915              | 19,899,915              | 100% |
| 35 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,925,342              | 19,925,342              | 100% |
| 36 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,977,704              | 19,977,704              | 100% |
| 37 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,947,105              | 19,947,105              | 100% |
| 38 | Eccles to Little/ Great Diamond       | 4 | 19,947,105              | 19,947,105              | 100% |
| 39 | Prospect, E.B.D                       | 4 | 242,709,684             | 92,229,680              | 30%  |
| 40 | Providence, EBD                       | 4 | 128,890,088             | 48,978,233              | 30%  |
| 41 | Great Diamond, EBD                    | 4 | 187,030,652             | 71,071,648              | 30%  |
| 42 | Little Diamond, EBD                   | 4 | 204,343,892             | 77,650,679              | 30%  |
| 43 | Experiment, EBB                       | 5 | 99,176,595              | 37,687,106              | 30%  |
| 44 | Experiment, EBB                       | 5 | 85,075,179              | 32,328,568              |      |
| 45 | Experiment, EBB                       | 5 | 140,665,056             | 53,452,721              |      |
| 46 | No. 75 Village, WBB                   | 6 | 128,553,915             | 48,850,488              |      |
| 47 | No. 76 Village, WBB                   | 6 | 113,826,311             | 43,253,998              |      |
| 48 | Ordinance Fort Lands                  | 6 | 114,891,546             | 43,658,787              |      |
|    |                                       |   | <b>\$ 2,096,992,201</b> | <b>\$ 1,200,991,192</b> |      |

## APPENDIX 2

### MINISTRY OF HOUSING & WATER

## INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

| NO. | AREAS   | REGION | STATUS   |
|-----|---|--------|----------|
| 1   | Pln. Edinburg, Anna Catherina & Cornelia Ida, Lot 1 | 3      | On-going |
| 2   | Pln. Meten-Meer-zorg, Lot 1                         | 3      | On-going |
| 3   | Pln. Stewartville, Lot 1                            | 3      | On-going |
| 4   | Pln. Little Diamond, Lot 1                          | 4      | On-going |
| 5   | Pln. Great Diamond, Lot 1                           | 4      | On-going |
| 6   | Pln. Annandale, Lot 1                               | 4      | On-going |
| 7   | Pln. Mon Repos, Lot 1                               | 4      | On-going |
| 8   | Pln. Providence 115 Ph3, Lot 1                      | 4      | On-going |
| 9   | Pln. Cummings Lodge 1768, Lot 1                     | 4      | On-going |
| 10  | Pln. Cummings Lodge 1767, Lot 1                     | 4      | On-going |
| 11  | Pln. Prospect Ph3, Lot 1                            | 4      | On-going |
| 12  | Pln. La Bonne Intention, Lot 1                      | 4      | On-going |
| 13  | Pln. Vigilance, Bladen Hall, Strathespey, Lot 1     | 4      | On-going |
| 14  | Pln. Experiment, Lot 1                              | 5      | On-going |
| 15  | No. 75 Village, Lot 1                               | 6      | On-going |
| 16  | No. 79 Village, Lot 1                               | 6      | On-going |
| 17  | Ordnance Fort Lands Ph3, Lot 1                      | 6      | On-going |
| 18  | Williamsburg and Hampshire, Lot 1                   | 6      | On-going |

### 5. Feasibility Study for the New Road Linkage from Diamond to Eccles, East Bank Demerara

**Ms. Ferguson:** Can the Honourable Minister provide the following:

1. When was the project conceived?
2. Is there a Feasibility Study for the project? If so, kindly state the duration of the Feasibility Study?
3. What procurement method was used for procuring the services of a consultant or Consulting Firm? Kindly provide copies of the published advertisement.
4. What is the cost of the Feasibility Study and how was the study funded? Kindly provide copies of the completed report.
5. Was the funding catered for in the 2020 National Budget? If yes, kindly indicate the Line Item.

**Mr. Croal:**

1. The project was conceived when H.E. Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali was the Minister of Housing and Water.
2. No feasibility study for this project was done.
3. No procurement method was required. All the designs were done by the Projects Department of CHPA.
4. Not applicable.
5. Yes, the funding was catered for in the 2020 National Budget under line item 1903100 - Infrastructural Development and Buildings.

## **6. Programme 131 – Policy Development and Administration**

**Opposition Chief Whip (ag) [Mr. Mahipaul]:**

1. Can the Honourable Minister provide a list of the vacant positions that are currently existing within Programme 131 – Policy Development and Administration?



2. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 131 – Policy Development and Administration – Other Goods and Services Purchased, line item 6284 (other), there is an allocated sum of \$8M. Can the Honourable Minister please provide a breakdown for this sum?
3. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 131 – Policy Development and Administration – Other Operating Expenses, line item 6294 (other), there is an allocated sum of \$4.5M. Can the Honourable Minister please provide a breakdown for this sum?
4. For Programme 131 – Policy Development and Administration, a sum of \$2.8M is approved for training (including scholarships). Can the Honourable Minister say what training course will be offered and which category of staff will benefit from the training, including scholarship?
5. Can the Honourable Minister provide a list of the designations of all the employees in his Ministry whose salaries are currently being withheld?

**Minister of Local Government and Regional Development [Mr. Dharamlall]:**

1. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
2. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
3. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
4. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
5. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

**7. Programme 134 – Local Government Development**

**Mr. Mahipaul:**

1. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 134 – Local Government Development – Staffing Details, there is an increase from 28 to 33.

Can the Hon. Minister please provide the designations of the 33 employees in this programme, their salaries and other benefits?

2. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 134 – Local Government Development, Line item 6211 (Expenses Specific to the Agency), can the Hon. Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the approved \$285M and can the Hon. Minister specify the salaries, stipends, and all other financial benefits of the 10 Regional Chairpersons, 10 Regional Vice Chairpersons, 10 Regional Executive Officers, 10 Mayors, 10 Deputy Mayors, NDC Chairpersons and Overseers?
3. With an approved sum of \$19.7M under Programme 134 – Local Government Development for the year 2021 as shown in the Details of Current Expenditure for 2021, can the Hon. Minister provide a list of the roads, bridges, drainage, and irrigation works and other infrastructure to be maintained? Can the Hon. Minister specify the location of the roads, bridges, drainage, and irrigation works and other infrastructure, along with the specific cost attached to each project?
4. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 134 – Local Government Development, can the Hon. Minister provide a detailed breakdown of Line Item 6294 (other) which has an approved sum of \$534M?
5. From the details of the current expenditure 2021, Programme 134 – Local Government Development, Line Item 6312 has an approved sum of \$132.894M. Can the Hon. Minister provide a list of the Local Authorities that will receive a subvention from the Ministry and the amount of subvention associated to each Local Authority?

**Mr. Dharamlall:**

1. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
2. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
3. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

4. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
5. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

## **8. Haags Bosch Landfill Site**

**Mr. Mahipaul**

1. Can the Hon. Minister specify the type of work expected to be done along with the cost for each type of work at the Haags Bosch Landfill site?
2. Can the Hon. Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the operational cost of Haags Bosch Landfill site for 2021?
3. Can the Honourable Minister state what is the cost attached to the completion of Cell 2 at Haags Bosch Sanitary Landfill site?

**Mr. Dharamlall:**

1. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
2. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
3. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

## **9. Local Government Elections and Commission**

**Mr. Mahipaul:**

1. Can the Hon. Minister say what awareness programme will the Ministry be engaged in as it relates to educating our nation on Local Government Elections?
2. Can the Hon. Minister say when will the Local Government Commission be fully constituted and functioning and what intervention will he make concerning the current Secretary of the Commission directing and instructing Local Authorities in the absence of the Commission?
3. Can the Hon. Minister say what are the salaries and other benefits of members of the Local Government Commission, including the Secretary of the Commission?

4. Can the Hon. Minister say in which month is the Government anticipating the holding of Local Government Elections?

**Mr. Dharamlall:**

1. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
2. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
3. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.
4. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

**10. Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial (SLED) Projects**

**Mr. Mahipaul**

1. The Ministry spent \$105M from the 2020 Budget on Sustainable Livelihood and Entrepreneurial Projects (SLED). Can the Honourable Minister state the type of projects, where the projects are located, the cost of each project and what systems are in place to ensure the sustainability of the projects?
2. Can the Honourable Minister say how much money from the \$180M approved in Budget 2021, Capital Expenditure (Project Code 1904300 – Regional Economic Transformation) will be spent on Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) projects

**Mr. Dharamlall:**

1. Prior to August 2020, the Ministry of Social Protection was directly responsible for the SLED projects for which there is total lack of information. To this end, all directions point to mismanagement and corruption by political lackeys of the last Government.
2. Refer to the National Estimates passed at the 12th Sitting of the National Assembly.

**11. Corporate Communications Unit- Guyana Police Force**

**Ms. Chandan-Edmond**

1. Can the Honourable Minister state whether the recently established Corporate Communications Unit was created in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Guyana Police Force? If yes, can the Honourable Minister indicate which section was amended. If no, can the Honourable Minister state under which authority was the Unit established?
2. Can the Honourable Minister state whether the positions of the Director and Deputy Director were advertised and what criteria were used in selecting these individuals?
3. Can the Honourable Minister provide copies of the terms of the contracts for the appointments of the Director and Deputy Director of the Corporate Communications Unit? Also, can the Honourable Minister provide their duties and responsibilities and state if other allowances and benefits are afforded to the Director and Deputy Director, which are not included in their contracts?
4. Can the Honourable Minister state what additional costs, if any, are attached to the services render by the Director and Deputy Director for which the Government of Guyana and, by extension, taxpayers are responsible?
5. Can the Honourable Minister state whether the roles of these new employees overlap those of Police Officers who have been trained and assigned to perform these tasks?
6. Can the Honourable Minister indicate, other than the Director and Deputy Director, if they are other civilians attached to this Unit? If yes, what are their salaries, and allowances? Can the Honourable Minister also state if the positions were advertised and what criteria were used in selecting these individuals?
7. Can the Honourable Minister indicate, if any, how many Police Officers operate within this Unit?
8. Can the Honourable Minister state how many staff are assigned to this Unit?

**Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. Benn]:**

1. The Communications Unit was established as part of the Strategic Plan of the Guyana Police Force.
2. The designations of the persons employed within the Communications Unit of the Guyana Police Force are: Communications Coordinator and Public Relations Officer and not the positions stated in the question. These positions were not advertised.
3. The Communications Coordinator position attracts a salary on the GS:12 scale, while that of the Public Relations Officer salary at the GS:11 scale. The related allowances are standard for these positions.
4. The positions are not on the Force's authorised inventory, hence the expenses are 'additional cost'.
5. The roles of the new employees of the Communication Unit do not overlap those of the Police Officers who are attached to the Unit, however these enhance the work of the Unit. Important to note is that the personnel in question are qualified in their respective fields with relevant years of experience.
6. There are no other civilians attached to the Communications Unit.
7. Nine (9) Police Officers operate within the Unit.
8. Eleven (11) staffers are assigned to the Unit.

## **12. Guyana Online Academy of Learning (GOAL) Initiative**

### **Ms. Sarabo-Halley**

1. The Ministry of the Public Service has opened the application process for scholarships under its GOAL initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service state whether recipients under this programme will be contractually obligated to the Government of Guyana?
2. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service state whether beneficiaries of this programme will be required to join the Public Service upon completing their studies?

3. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service please state whether a formal needs assessment was completed to inform on the current and future skills needed for the Public Service and the country?
4. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service provide this National Assembly with any document that establishes the number and break down of Public Servants by skillset as well as the current needs of the Public Service in particular and Guyana in general by sector?
5. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service furnish this National Assembly with any document that clearly outlines how the programmes being offered for scholarships were decided on and by whom?
6. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service provide an outline of the process being used to ensure that there is equity and equality in the awarding of scholarships under the GOAL programme?
7. Can the Honourable Minister of the Public Service explain the process and office holders that will determine who the recipients of the GOAL scholarships will be?

**Minister of the Public Service [Ms. Parag]:**

1. Yes. The recipients of the 20,000 online scholarship programmes will be contractually obligated, based on their new skills, to provide community services before completing the program of study. The duration of the community service is related to the length of their studies as provided below:
  - (i) Six months of study -2 weeks of community service
  - (ii) One year of study -4 weeks of community service
  - (iii) Two years of study -6 weeks of community service
  - (iv) Three years of study -8 weeks of community service

The non-paying community service may be performed with registered private sector organizations, Neighbourhood Democratic Councils, National Government Agencies,

Non- Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations, and Approved Educational Institutions.

2. No. Since this is aimed at National Educational Development rather than training for the Public Sector solely; the beneficiaries are not required to join the Public Service upon completing their studies. They are however free to apply for jobs in both the Public and Private Sectors once vacancies exist. They will also be encouraged to become entrepreneurs, creating jobs based on their skill levels and to seek seed funding from the public domain.
3. This initiative is the first of its kind to be implemented in Guyana and it was birthed having recognized the challenges faced by several categories of Guyanese, particularly in the Hinterland and Rural communities in accessing tertiary and technical Education. The PPP/C in its manifesto promised "to raise the quality of education across all levels; and to prepare students for the job market, especially at the technical and tertiary level". In an effort to achieve these goals. It promised to undertake the following actions:
  - (i) Build, expand and improve educational facilities across Guyana.
  - (ii) Expand the use of ICT in Education.
  - (iii) Enhance opportunities in Technical Vocational Education.
  - (iv) Facilitate the establishment of an online university and promote e-learning for hinterland students.
  - (v) Update a manpower survey and undertake curricula reform accordingly.
  - (vi) Provide 20,000 online scholarships.

The aim of the 20,000 GOAL online Scholarships is to create educational and technical opportunities for the middle and lower class groups of the population to achieve self-development and will inevitably support manpower requirements of both the private and public sectors by the year 2025.

The objectives of this programme are:



- To provide training and educational opportunities to persons who lack access to tertiary education because of where they live and financial constraints.
- To develop a new cadre of work force who are better trained to enhance their current jobs.
- To provide training opportunities in new areas of studies that will support Guyana's future development.

Hence, there is no need for a formal need assessment study. The programmes are not designed to fill vacancies in the Public Service but to bring tertiary education to persons and communities who have been ignored or neglected or were otherwise restricted.

4. There is no document which establishes:
  - i. the number and break down of Public Servants by skillset,
  - ii. current needs of the Public Service and Guyana in general.
5. There is no document. However, the programmes offered under the 20,000 Online GOAL scholarship programme of the PPP/C Administration were chosen by the Minister of Education and Minister of Public Service after consultations with several Government Ministries, Agencies and the general public prior to the 2020 National and Regional Elections. Consequently, negotiations were held with five (5) highly accredited and recognized Universities around the world namely, Indira Ghandi Open University, Jain “Deemed to be” University, University of Applied Sciences, University of Southern Caribbean and University of the West Indies Open Campus.
6. The process of awarding scholarships under the GOAL initiative will be conducted in a manner consistent with fairness. Several critical factors will be considered based on the selected programme, namely: academic standing, financial capacity, regional balance, national human development priority and quality of motivational statement. All of these are based on data extracted from the applicant's application forms. Special

attention will be placed on regional balance so as to ensure citizens in the hinterland and rural communities are well served.

7. Recipients of the GOAL scholarship programme will be selected by a selection panel consisting of four (4) persons headed by the Director of the Guyana online Academy of Learning. The awardees will be selected based on the criteria stated in Response to Question 6 above.

### **For Oral Replies**

#### **13. Aurora Gold Mine/Zijin Mining**

##### **Mr. Figueira:**

(A) Can the Honourable Minister inform the House how many Guyanese and Foreigners are presently employed at the former Guyana Goldfield Operations at Aurora, that is now managed as AGM/ZIJIN?

**Minister of Labour [Mr. Hamilton]:** Mr. Speaker, just to inform the House, there are 58 expatriates and 860 Guyanese presently employed as of 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021.

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

(B) Can the Honourable Minister further inform the House whether they are sub-contractors employed by AGM/ZIJIN? If yes, please provide the names of those sub-contractors and the number of Guyanese they have employed?

**Mr. Hamilton:** The subcontractors are police, Orbit Garant Drilling Inc., Orica, Rubis, Machinery Corporation of Guyana Ltd. (MACORP), D. Navin, Cevons Waste Management, Gavin's Catering, Jaisingh, Waheeb Contracting, Y&N Trading, Sinohydro Corp. Limited, and Sookram and Sons. A total of 32 expatriates and 430 persons are employed by the contractor.

##### **Mr. Figueira:**

(C) Can the Honourable Minister also inform the House whether the Guyanese workers directly employed with AGM/ZIJIN are permanent or contracted for a period? Please provide the numbers for each category and state the length of contract in each instant.

**Mr. Hamilton:** There are 404 permanent employees, 26 temporary employees on a three-month period and 354 contracted employees with the contractors.

**Mr. Figueira:** Is the Minister in a position to advise this House whether the employers referred to in questions (B) and (C) are in compliance with the National Insurance Scheme Act?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Speaker, let me inform the House that that question is totally misdirected. The Ministry of Labour has nothing to do with the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).

*2.33 p.m.*

**Mr. Figueira:** A supplemental question, Sir. Guyanese workers are a responsibility, in most regard, of the Ministry of Labour. If Guyanese workers are being short-changed with regards to the benefits that could be derived from their contributions to the NIS, then it should be a matter of concern to the Ministry of Labour.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, the Standing Orders are quite pellucid. You could direct that question to the appropriate Minister after you submit it through the proper process. This is not the Minister responsible for the National Insurance Scheme.

**Mr. Figueira:**

(E) Can the Hon. Minister additionally inform the House, how many Guyanese employees covered in questions (B) and (C), if any, contracted the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) during the period 2020-2021 and were they negatively affected by the non-remittances of their NIS Contributions?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Again, Mr. Speaker, both questions are misdirected.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Hon. Minister inform this House if any of those workers at the said company contracted COVID-19?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Mr. Speaker, again I am saying that the question is totally misdirected. The Ministry of Labour has nothing to do with health situation in Guyana.

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Minister with responsibility for health provide the responses to the questions posed?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, there is a process.

**Mr. Figueira:** It is a supplemental question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The supplemental and supplementary question has to be to the Minister on the floor, to whom your question had been directed. I do not want to go through the process of putting a question on the Order Paper. I think you are now here long enough to understand that process.

**Mr. Figueira:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **14. Upgrading of Sports Grounds**

**Mr. Figueira:**

(A) Can the Honourable Minister inform the House which sports grounds, by name and region, will be upgraded in 2021?

**Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports [Mr. Ramson]:** I am very pleased to be able to receive the questions from the Hon. Member of the Opposition. I have with me the entire list for which we are planning to do the upgrades. I will go through the entire list so that the nation can see and, also, they can know at the appropriate time. I will lay a report over to the public of how partisan the allocation of resources for ground enhancement in the previous Administration was. For example, in Region 2, over \$30 million was spent on ground enhancements, on only two grounds. They were spent in Dartmouth – a People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) area and in Queenstown – a PNC/R area. There were no allocations for the people of Pomona, the people of Suddie, the people of Anna Regina and the people of Devonshire Castle. There were no allocations anywhere else except at those locations.

At the appropriate time, I knew at some point there would be questions along these lines. I have the entire record of how partisan the allocation of resources was by the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance for Change (APNU/AFC) where no money was allocated for areas that were supportive of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) and all of the resources were spent.

Meanwhile, even in areas that are unsupportive of the People's Progressive Party/Civic, I would like the nation to know that we are going to be spending not only money on their grounds, but equal amounts of moneys. Since you have asked and I know that you have included in there what

amounts are going to be spent, I am going to share it with the House so that you would know that we are for all Guyanese. Reliance - \$10 million; Queenstown - \$10 million; Affiance - \$10 million; Cornelia Ida (CI) - \$10 million; Tuschen - \$10 million; Meten-Meer-Zorg - \$10 million; Zeelugt - \$10 million; Zeeburg - \$10 million; Goed Fortuin - \$10 million; Success - \$10 million; Buxton - \$10 million; Enterprise - \$10 million; Better Hope - \$10 million. I am not finished as yet; I have to turn the page. Enmore - \$10 million; Bath Settlement - \$10 million; Blairmount - \$10 million; Bush Lot - \$10 million; Cotton Tree - \$10 million; Port Mourant - \$10 million; Line Path - \$10 million; Rose Hall/Canje - \$10 million. Just so that you know because I know that there was so much neglect for community centres and grounds by the last Administration, under the APNU/AFC, I have been able to make the recommendations to the Cabinet for the request of additional sums. A part of the Supplementary Budget that has been tabled by the Hon. Minister with Responsibility for Finance, we have just asked for an additional \$75 million for community grounds so that the Regions of 10, 7 and 1, the entire country, will be able to get the allocations for their grounds and community centres. This will continue for the duration of the People's Progressive Party/Civic's term, of this term, and for all the other terms to come. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Figueira:**

(B) Can the Hon. Minister inform this House what selection process was utilised to identify these grounds and what were the determinants used to determine the amount of moneys to be allocated to those said grounds, without the political speeches? Thank you.

**Mr. Ramson:** Thank you once again for the opportunity to share what the selection process looks like. The People's Progressive Party/Civic understands how important communities and community centre grounds are to this country. When we had the requests to come to locations by the representatives of the regions, by the representatives of the communities and the residents and the community centre representatives, those requests came in such an abundance that the Ministry engaged in an aggressive community ground assessment programme.

When we started to go there, that was how we were able to get the assessment of how bad the neglect was by the APNU/AFC. It was so bad that even the public facilities, the Gymnasium for example, right here in South Georgetown, which is an area that serves probably 100,000 people,

the bush was this high, bigger than me. Heaps of junk filled the yard. That is the condition and the care you were showing to the Guyanese people. Shame! It was a disgrace.

I went into the D' Edward area in Region 5 with the Hon. Member Jaffarally, the bush was this high. Let me tell you something, we went into Black Bush Polder to a place called Zambia, the APNU/AFC chose to spend money on a ground that was another stronghold for them. Twenty million dollars was allocated to that area and the ground was never used. Up to today, it is locked up because the project was not completed – substandard work. The people of the area never benefited. It was a national disgrace to see how communities were neglected by the APNU/AFC.

It was sad to see as well that all the time, the five years, the \$1.4 trillion that was spent by the APNU/AFC, and this was the state of condition that you left grounds in. When we went to the locations... I want the Hon. Member of the Opposition to know that it is because of this kind of neglect of the Guyanese people that is why they are in the Opposition. When we engage in this aggressive community ground assessment programme, it was with the consultation of the people who were there, their representatives, the Members of Parliament (MPs), the community centre executives, the residents, as well as the technical officers from the region that are connected to the Ministry and, also, the technical officers who are working and are employed at the Ministry. We did those assessments at the grounds ourselves.

The allocations – just because we want all of the communities to know that we are a Government of all people, it means that the sums allocated for those grounds have to be equivalent. At the appropriate time... [**Mr. Ramjattan:** What are the criteria?] Mr. Ramjattan, I want you to understand as well that the People's Progressive Party/Civic will get to every single ground in this country. The way that we chose these grounds, after the assessment of the neglect, was on the basis of the density of the people in the locations, the prominence of the facility, access to the facility – all of those things – and, also, how many different types of activities could be done at the grounds too. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has failed to inform this House about how he came up with the figure? For almost every ground mentioned \$10 million is being allocated. What mechanisms were put in place for him to decide that the ground needed \$10 million? How is it that

the grounds identically have \$10 million? This is tax-payers' money and we have a right to know how these determinants came about. How did the Minister come about these figures?

**Mr. Ramson:** I understand that it would be difficult for the Hon. Member of the Opposition, coming from the APNU/AFC, to understand that the allocation of sums was equal. Equality, fairness and equity are principles that the APNU/AFC would never be able to comprehend.

*2.48 p.m.*

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, I am baffled and bewildered that the Minister would tell this House that his Government is about equality when the people of Kwakwani is under eight and 10 feet of water and they are not getting the assistance as the people in Port Maurant.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, could you stick to the question please?

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has failed to inform this House. This is not about political chauvinism. We need the Minister to give an account of the taxpayers' money. Tell this House how did you determine that each identified ground that you listed there, with a big showboat, how is it that you came about to \$10 million? The grounds are not identical in every community. The sizes and soil textures are different. What is it that gave you the insight to determine that these grounds require \$10 million? Are you a magician?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

**Mr. Ramson:** I have answered the question, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question No.15 is in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. Jermaine Figueira. Hon. Member, you may ask your questions.

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, it is unjust that we are here, after more than 90 days, to ask questions for transparency and accountability. I have put a supplemental question to the Hon. Minister, and you are not allowing him to respond to this House and to this nation. There is \$10 million for each ground.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, if you have a problem with the decision of the Speaker, there is a set way for you to address that. The Hon. Minister said that he has answered the question.

**Mr. Figueira:** And I am saying...

**Mr. Speaker:** Apparently, you and I are in two different places. I do not think so. I have called on you to ask your question No.15.

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, am I not permitted supplemental questions? The Standing Orders provides for me to have two supplemental questions and I would have asked the Minister one.

**Mr. Speaker:** Your supplemental questions were more than one.

**Mr. Figueira:** Pardon me, Sir?

**Mr. Speaker:** Your supplemental questions, Sir, were more than one. The Minister said that he answered your question. If you want another supplemental question which is not a repeat, I will ask you to go ahead.

**Mr. Figueira:** One of the grounds that the Minister said \$10 million will be allocated for is in Goed Fortuin, could the Minister state if the ground is in the scheme or is it the 'road ground'? In the Hon. Minister identifying which area the ground is, could he provide us with how he determined that \$10 million will be allocated to that ground?

**Mr. Speaker:** Those are two supplemental questions, right? Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

**Mr. Ramson:** I did not hear the question entirely, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, could you repeat?

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has listed a number of grounds, one such ground is in Goed Fortuin. Could he indicate to this House where in this community, is it the scheme or the 'road ground', will this investment of \$10 million be put? Could he provide to the House, how he and his team at the Ministry came up with \$10 million for the ground enhancement at this identified ground? What mechanism was used?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. Are you speaking of Goed Fortuin?



**Mr. Ramson:** The first part of the question I will answer. The ground is in the scheme. The second part of the question, I will revert to my former response.

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

### **15. Construction of Mini Sports Stadiums**

**Mr. Figueira:** Could the Hon. Minister inform the House which areas in Regions 10, 6 and 2 will the mini sports stadiums be built in 2021, how were these sites selected, what are the cost per stadium and the proposed contract length for the building of these mini stadiums, given that a sum of over \$1 billion was identified in the *2021 Budget*, at reference 220, volume 1.

**Mr. Ramson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I was at pains to determine where this reference of 220, volume 1 is, with regards to the budget for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. So, I took the time to photocopy page 220 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2021, Volume 1*. I found that I am at liberty to share with this honourable House what is on page 220 of the Estimates of the Public Sector Volume I. It states here, Details of Expenditure, as the caption. There is Agency Details. On the next line there is, Agency: 32 and the name of Ministry, Ministry of Public Infrastructure.

This is page 220 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2021, Volume 1 – Ministry of Public Infrastructure*. The Hon. Member is referencing a page for a Ministry that no longer exists. So now, I have to take the time to figure out what he is trying to say. I now have to take the time to teach the Hon. Member how to read a budget and how to read the ‘budget book’. I do not mind really because, as one knows, I am the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports. So, I will direct his attention to pages 653 and 654 of the *Estimates of the Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2021, Volume 1*.

I now have to explain to him based on what he stated in the last sentence:

“Given that a sum of over \$1 billion was identified in the *2021 Budget*.”

Hon. Member, over \$1 billion was not identified in the budget for sports. You are supposed to be the Shadow Minister for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and you do not even know how

much money was allocated for the Ministry. Particularly, it is a question that he is writing. It is not that he has asked an oral question, extemporaneously. He did not ask a question extemporaneously. He sat down on his computer and took the time to write it. He did not even understand that over \$1 billion was not allocated and he wants to ask the Minister questions. The Hon. Member should first take the time to learn how to read the budget. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** How much (*inaudible*)?] I do not need to explain to you; I will explain to him. It was \$915 million that was allocated as part of the Capital Estimates for sports. The total budgetary allocation was \$1.5 billion. It is the largest budgetary allocation for sports in this country's history. Just to be clear, for the project allocation that he is referring to, which are the multi-sports facilities, the mini stadiums in Regions 6, 10 and 2 – if you go to the Project Details in the *Estimates of the Public Sector Current and Capital Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2021, Volume 3* – under Programme 444, Sports, it states for that specific project detail that \$200 million has been allocated.

As you should know, because it states so in the details, it is foreign funded. So, one has to be able to finalise the terms of the agreement before one gets to access the money. The Government of Guyana is in the final stages of fleshing out the details of the terms for the grant. There are some bits of information that I am able to share at this stage and some bits that I am unable to share. This is because it will cause prejudice on the stage of the negotiations at this point. All three of those locations were chosen as significant enhancements of existing facilities so that multi-purpose stadiums can be built.

**Mr. Figueira:** I could challenge the Minister to a battle of wits, but we all know that Mr. *Battilion* is ill-informed and ill-equipped. Mr. Speaker, supplemental question: The nation is aware that this is a foreign funded project by the Government of China and the question remains. In Regions 6, 10 and 2, where are these mini projects expected to be established, the question I asked the Hon. Minister is: Where in these regions will these mini stadiums be built? How were these sites in Regions 10, 6 and 2 identified? That is what we would like to know. If you are saying to this House that you are in a negotiation phase with the Government of China for the remainder of this allocation, then the Hon. Minister should be in a position to say to this House, this is what the mini stadiums in Regions 10, 6 and 2 will cost, based on the amount that is left. The Government of China has already committed. It has given more than \$200 million. So, obviously, the Ministry should have a futuristic plan of where it wants to put these stadiums and the costs. Please Hon.

Minister, inform the House where will these sites be and how did you determine that these are the most suitable locations for these mini stadiums to be placed.

*3.03 p.m.*

**Mr. Ramson:** The exact locations for all three mini stadiums have already been publicly identified. In fact, you would have heard none other than His Excellency the President make that announcement, even before the budget was presented to this House.

One is the community centre in Anna Regina; the second is the Mackenzie Sports Club Ground; and the third is the Albion community ground in Region 6. They were all identified in advance. Since you are asking about Regions 10, 6 and 2, I would like you to acknowledge that the A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) gave the Mackenzie Sports Club no money in the last five years. None! None! None! In fact, the lights that are still existing at the Mackenzie Sports Club, Ms. Gail Teixeira was the one who provided those lights when she was Minister. That is a fact.

Those locations were identified as the most prominent of the locations and there will be the significant enhancements where they will turn into that stadium. As you know as well, when you are asking about stadiums and tracks, *et cetera*, in Region 10, at some point, I would like you to ask me why the APNU/AFC project has been delayed and been behind time. Over two years and it has not been completed. I want you to also tell the public that it would have costed us an extra \$50 million because you wanted to turn the track into green and yellow.

I also want you to tell the public that there was no catering for stands for the public, the residents of Linden, to be able to go to the stadium and look at the track and field and the games.

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

Hon. Member Mr. Figueira, 40 minutes is the amount of time allocated for questions. We started at 2.25 p.m.; it is now 3.06 p.m., according to the clock that I am using. Go ahead, Hon. Member. You may ask the supplemental.

**Mr. Figueira:** It is so disappointing that the Minister would want to mislead this House. The Minister cannot accept the view that development happens on a phase-by-phase basis. You cannot just go to a community and make empty promises. It is this Coalition Administration that

recognised the importance of Region 10, which won significantly at the National School Championship – 16 consecutive victories. Your Administration failed to put a track in Region 10 even though we gave this nation the most national athletes. So, do not bring that nonsense to the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have infringed on two Standing Orders. One is imputing on the Minister. You said that he would want to mislead the House, and the second, you just did. Please ask the question and let us get the Minister to answer. Go ahead.

**Mr. Figueira:** The Minister has informed this House that the Mackenzie Sports Club Ground was identified as the location for this mini track. What form of consultation did the Minister and the Ministry take to the community of Linden? There are far more superior locations than the Mackenzie Sports Club Ground. Mr. Speaker, do you understand what I am saying? You cannot just come and impose on the people what you think is best for them. This is taxpayers' money that we are spending and taxpayers in Region 10 and in Linden must have a say in the decisions about where this facility goes. We are the bedrock of athletic prowess in this country. So, you cannot come with the dictatorial tendencies and say to us that this is where you are going to put it for us. You have to consult with the people of Region 10. This is totally unacceptable.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much. Hon. Member.

**Mr. Figueira:** My final question is: Could the Hon. Minister inform the House in what way building of mini stadiums in Regions 10 and 6, in particular, will complement or augment ongoing construction of semi stadiums with synthetic tracks in Regions 10 and 6, given the conceptual design of the latter?

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Hon. Minister, you have the floor.

**Mr. Ramson:** These are entirely different projects. There are two in Region 10. For example, one is on one side of the river and the other one is on the other side of the river. They are different, too, in their orientation for sports. One is for track and field and one is going to be for multipurpose sport facility. The projects themselves are not going to augment each other. They are two different projects.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Minister. Hon. Members, we have exhausted the time which was allocated for questions and I now ask the Clerk of the National Assembly to let us proceed.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Speaker... (*Inaudible*)

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Ms. Ferguson, you have the floor.

**Ms. Ferguson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand on a Point of Order, Standing Order 40 (a). Earlier...

**Mr. Speaker:** Before you could make the speech, tell me what is the Point of Order on which you are standing. Do not stand on the Order alone. What is the Point of Order that you are standing on?

**Ms. Ferguson:** I am providing elucidation, Cde. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, is this on Oral Questions to the Minister, Hon. Member?

**Ms. Ferguson:** You cannot teach me.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, is this on Oral Questions to the Minister? Are you following up on what Mr. Figueira said?

**Ms. Ferguson:** No, Sir. It is about what the Hon. Minister said.

**Mr. Speaker:** First of all, there is no Minister on the floor at this time. So, I do not know where the Standing Order is going to apply. We have exhausted Oral Questions and we are now at the point in the Order Paper, which states, "Statement by Ministers".

**Ms. Ferguson:** Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me, I am standing on a Point of Order, based on what my Colleague...Hon. Mr. Figueira would have asked the Hon. Member a question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have already said that we have exhausted the 40 minutes and I gave some leeway. We took an extra six minutes.

## **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS**

### **Update on Flooding Across Guyana**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Prime Minister, you may have the floor for Statement by Ministers.

**Prime Minister [Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips]:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I was not sleeping; I was dealing with another matter.

Today, I wish to provide an update to this House and its Hon. Members on the recent flooding across Guyana, and our Government's response to provide relief to persons in affected areas to date and going forward.

In the past several weeks, high tides and torrential rains have led to flooding in all regions across Guyana. The massive rainfall experienced in May alone was recorded as the second highest rainfall across the country in the last 40 years. Guyana's rainy season usually lasts until early June for Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, the northern parts of Regions 6,7,8 and 10, while it would continue until early August for Regions 9 and the southern parts of Region 6. Based on the latest seasonal reports, however, it is estimated that we will continue to experience above normal rainfalls during the period June to August, 2021. During this period, an increase in the number of wet days and approximately seven days of extreme wet spells can be expected. Flooding also remains a concern for our nation, at least for the period from June into mid-July.

All the rivers between the Amakura and the Corentyne have overtopped their banks, flooding all contiguous farmlands throughout the coast.

The situation in our hinterland is equally distressing. One could only recall the graphic photos about Kwakwani, Rupununi, *et cetera*. To date, food security is now threatened in all our hinterland communities, especially Regions 7, 8 and 9.

To date, these severe conditions have affected over 29,300 households in more than 300 communities across all administrative regions and have caused damage to homes; distress to and loss of livestock and domestic animals; and destruction of crops, farmlands and other forms of livelihood. Families have been forced to evacuate and seek sanctuary at shelters due to the damage caused to their homes.

Under the stewardship of President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, our Government was swift in our response to flood-affected areas. Cabinet Members and other Government officials conducted multi stakeholder outreaches to affected communities throughout our country to conduct a

firsthand assessment of the situation and lead and participate in the ongoing relief measures for people.

President Ali has also assured our nation of our Government's commitment to supporting affected families by finding ways to ensure that their livelihoods can be returned to them following the damage caused by this disaster.

In the wake of these devastating conditions, the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) has been exceedingly active in its shelter management, evacuation and relief distribution efforts across Guyana. To date, the CDC has distributed 19,935 food hampers and 17,529 cleaning hampers to affected persons as a form of emergency relief in all the affected communities of Guyana. As I speak, a total of 201 persons have been housed, to date, in shelters in many of the affected communities. Specific relief measures by the CDC include ongoing management of shelter operations at Kwakwani, Maple Town, Rockstone; supporting the establishment of additional shelters of Hururu, Karawab, Tabatinga and in other communities as they see fit; and continued on-ground and assessment in Upper Mazaruni in Region 7 and Region 8.

*3.18 p.m.*

I wish to report that we have been able to reach those affected communities, notwithstanding the challenges of the terrain in Region 7 and Region 8. The establishment of a bank account, in collaboration with the Guyana Bank for Trade and Industry (GBTI), to facilitate donations from members of the public towards the flood response is in place. Continued engagement with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and other regional and international stakeholders for support to our national flood response; continued public updates of the situation through regular press releases, interviews and alerts; provision of technical support to the regional emergency response system; and the acquisition of financial support and relief supplies from the private sector, citizens and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are ongoing. These response measures will remain in place as the Civil Defence Commission continues to receive reports of flooding across the country and continues the verification of the reports.

Cognisant that a holistic and robust approach is key to effectively tackling these harsh conditions and bringing urgent relief to our citizens, response measures have also been implemented by other

Governmental and non-governmental agencies, and we are happy for that. Municipalities, Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs) and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) all continue to conduct outreaches to respond to and assess the situation and provide updates to the Civil Defence Commission.

The Hydrometeorological Office continues to monitor the weather system and issue technical alerts and warnings.

The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) has been conducting drainage assessments and remedial works in key affected areas. Regional and civil engineers continue to monitor drainage systems, including sluices and pumps.

The Ministries of Agriculture and Health continue to conduct assessments in key affected areas.

The Private Sector Commission (PSC) has mobilised and has handed over food hampers and other forms of support to the Civil Defence Commission and to Regional Democratic Councils for distribution to the affected people in the communities.

Other Government and non-government organisations call on private sector entities continue to donate, both in cash and kind, to support response. To date, we have received over \$35 million in monetary donations towards flood relief. It is this type of unwavering support that showcases the true spirit of unity among our people when our country faces hardship, and for this, our Government and people are immensely grateful.

Just to illustrate the work that was done, on an emergency basis, over the last three weeks, in Region 2, more than 11 communities have been severely affected by the flooding. Interventions by the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority included the dredging of outfalls in Perth, Three Friends, Taymouth Manor and Devonshire Castle. Repairs were also made to Charity pumps, while a breach at Amazon was temporarily sealed by the Ministry of Public Works. The NDIA will install tubes and build a revetment in that area too.

In Region 3, an additional 13 communities were impacted, and interventions made by the NDIA involved the mechanical excavation and heightening of the embankment at the back of Free and Easy, West Bank Demerara (WBD); and the construction of five stop-offs and deployment of excavators to the communities of Tuschen Old Scheme, La Parfaite Harmonie, Belle West and



Parika. Works in these areas are ongoing. Further, in areas such as Patentia, Vive La Force and Vriesland, the water levels have shown signs of receding.

In Region 4, more than 55 households have been negatively impacted by the flooding, particularly those on East Coast Demerara (ECD), where six of the 56 pumps located on the coast are in need of urgent repairs. Excavators are working around the clock to repair breaches between No. 10 to Little Baibu.

Further, the NDIA will rehabilitate the dams at Deo Head to prevent overtopping of the Mahaica River into cattle pastures.

On the East Bank of Demerara (EBD), the East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) continues to discharge at Land of Canaan. The Kofi Sluice was also successfully tested for use in discharging from the Conservancy to ensure that all systems are operational in the event that it should be needed.

In Region 5, more than eight communities have been severely affected. A number of interventions were made by the NDIA, such as cleaning the Mahaicony Creek channel and deploying excavators on the banks of the Mahaicony Creek to reinforce flood embankment. Additionally, a number of pumps were deployed to assist with drainage efforts in the communities of Little Baibu, Big Baibu, Pandit Canal and Broek en Waterland. The Mahaica Mahaicony Abary/Agriculture Development Authority (MMA/ADA) will deploy machines to work fulltime in the Abary area. Additional machines will be rented to elevate lands in the Abary area. Machines will be sent to Mortice to heighten the embankment. We will rent pumps for areas in Baibu, which has machines to do emergency work.

In Region 6, more than 23 villages were impacted by the flooding, especially those residents who had minor flooding as a result of water flooding down from the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) cultivation area. The NDIA intervened by sealing the embankment and the culverts separating the GuySuCo cultivation area from residential areas. The NDIA has also installed pumps to drain flood waters from the Canje, Cane Field and Adelphi areas. Further, excavators were deployed to seal breaches along the Canje Creek area, New Forest, and other nearby villages. We have seen water receding to a safe level in the Crabwood Creek area and a significant drop in Chesney.

In Region 10, all outlets of the Demerara River are functional. Despite this, flooding has been experienced in the Kwakwani, Coomacka, Rockstone, Three Friends, Muritaro, and Malali areas due to the increased water level of the river. As part of intervention efforts, mechanical cleaning is ongoing in Region 10 and, up to yesterday, mechanical cleaning was taking place at Coomacka to bring some form of relief to the community that is suffering from the floods.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that, after taking Office on 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2020, we as a Government started with an emergency budget, an emergency budget where we embarked on a number of emergency and mitigatory and infrastructural projects throughout Guyana, especially in the coastal region. I submit that, had we not embarked on these projects, our people would have suffered more than they have suffered from the floods today.

For as long as these conditions remain on the land, the CDC, in collaboration with other agencies, will continue to ensure that timely assessments and responses are done, in keeping with the processes set out in our regional disaster risk management plan. The Government and the CDC will continue to engage the National Drainage and Irrigation Authority, the National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI), the Guyana Livestock Development Authority (GLDA), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Works and all other ministries, as a matter of fact, to address key emergency concerns in communities.

Other ongoing efforts will be the continued distribution of food and non-food items to affected residents, such as sanitation hampers and hygiene care packages, establishing and maintaining temporary shelters in other communities as the need arises, and conducting detailed damage assessments as required.

With these conditions expected to continue in the coming weeks, residents are asked to take necessary precautions to safeguard against additional flooding, strong winds, lightning, and mudslides in their communities.

As our country continues to face this national crisis, our Government expresses its unwavering commitment to the ongoing support and relief of our people, and we look forward to continued collaboration as we continue to take a multisectoral and interagency approach to bring resolution and relief to our citizens.

Only today, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon his Office by article 99 of the *Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana*, our President, Dr. Mohammed Irfaan Ali, signed a declaration, declaring a disaster in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. This is a level 2 disaster. What it simply means is that, while we have the national capacity to respond and are not yet overwhelmed, we are seeking some external assistance, as required, to bring relief to the people during this difficult time.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Frank Anthony, you have the floor.

### **Update on COVID-19 in Guyana**

**Minister of Health [Dr. Anthony]:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members, since the initial reports of a cluster of pneumonia cases of unidentified origin in China in December, 2019, the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), that causes COVID-19, has spread throughout the world, igniting one of the deadliest pandemics. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2021, 173,674,502 persons have been confirmed with COVID-19, including 3,744,408 deaths. These numbers continue to grow, as unvaccinated populations served as incubators to hatch new variants of concern. These, in turn, have unleashed new waves of new cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

In the Americas, there have been 68,779,760 confirmed cases with 1,805,681 deaths. The deaths in the Americas represent 48% of all deaths globally, making the Americas one of the deadliest places or one of the global hotspots.

In Guyana, since our first patient on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, we have recorded 18,088 confirmed cases, with 15,898 persons who have recovered to date. Currently, we have 1,770 active cases, of which 84 persons are in the hospitals. Unfortunately, we have lost 419 persons to this dreaded disease. I would like to express our sincerest condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones.

3.33 p.m.

Since the pandemic started in Guyana, our healthcare workers have been at the forefront of the fight. Initially, they were working with less-than-ideal conditions and putting themselves at risk for COVID- 19. Today, many of those nurses, doctors, Laboratory Technicians, radiology staff, and other health personnel continue to work beyond the call of duty to save patients' lives and livelihoods. In the hospitals and vaccination sites across the regions, they are working steadfastly for us to immunize the Guyanese population. These same healthcare workers are also, today, monitoring the flood situation for waterborne diseases and are taking proactive measures to prevent outbreaks.

I know that I speak for all Government Members of Parliament (MPs) and for the Government as a whole, and I am hopeful that, on this subject, I can speak for everyone in this House when I say to the doctors, nurses, Laboratory Technicians, the Pharmacists and other healthcare workers we want to thank them from the bottom of our hearts. You exemplify the best in all of us and inspire us with your selflessness.

Despite the diligence of our healthcare workers, we will not be able to exit the COVID-19 pandemic unless our population is properly immunized. The safest way of doing so is using vaccines. There is no doubt that vaccines work. Evidence of the power of vaccines can be seen in several countries that have effectively carried out mass vaccination programmes, countries such as Israel, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA), where there has been a sharp reduction in the cases of hospitalisation and deaths. These real-life population data is a testimony of the effectiveness of vaccination programmes.

Many countries have seen the results and would like to implement such a mass-scale vaccination programme in their territories. The challenge, however, is the unavailability of vaccines. There is a global vaccine scarcity, that is, the demand for vaccines has outstripped the supply. According to the WHO, as of yesterday, approximately 2.1 billion persons have been given vaccines, and of these, 458 million persons have now been fully vaccinated. This represents 5.9% of the global population.

In Guyana, as of yesterday, we have been able to give out 297,490 doses of vaccines. Of these, 81,729 persons are now fully vaccinated. This represents 10.6% of our total population or 16.8% of our adult population, bearing in mind that most vaccines in use are for adults only.

As we know, older persons and those with comorbidities are at a higher risk of the more severe forms of the COVID-19 disease. As of yesterday, 72.5% of persons 60 years and older have had at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. In terms of the elderly population, this represents one of the highest rates of first dose vaccine for elderly population anywhere in the world. We are hopeful that, soon, all these persons who have received their first dose vaccine would be able to come and get their second dose so that they will be fully vaccinated.

We still have much ground to cover. In the 40 to 59 age group, we are only at 41.2% of first dose vaccine, while for persons in the 18 to 39 age group, we are at 38%. We need to encourage more of our younger people to come out and get vaccinated, since the 18 to 39 age group represents a higher percentage of the confirmed cases, meaning that this group is more active and has contracted more of the infection. To date, we currently have, within this age group, about 9,760 persons who would have been confirmed with COVID-19.

There is a myth that is going around that younger persons do not need to take the vaccine because they will get a milder form of the disease. From what we are seeing in our hospitals and what we are seeing of severe cases, we have noticed a trend where younger people are coming into the hospital and some of them are even dying from COVID-19. So, we need to encourage our young people to make sure they come out and get their vaccines.

We have also seen regional disparities in vaccination. In some regions, people have eagerly come forward to be vaccinated. These regions include Region 6, which is currently at first dose vaccine at 51.9% of its adult population, and Region 1, which is currently at 51% of their its population. Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9 are all in the 40s in terms of first dose coverage of their adult population, while we have Regions 8 and 10, which are lagging behind – Region 8 at 28.3% and Region 10 at 13%. While we appreciate that, in each of these regions there are certain peculiarities, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure that people in all regions are fully immunized as quickly as possible.

Guyana is on the path of securing enough vaccines to cover our entire population in 2021. We have utilised several options to ensure an adequate supply of vaccines. This includes bilateral donations from countries such as Barbados, India, and China and also includes multilateral arrangements such as the COVID-19 Global Access (COVAX) Facility. We have also successfully concluded several purchase agreements with suppliers such as the African Union, the United Arab

Emirates (UAE) and the China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm) of China. We have already received 465,890 doses through these varied arrangements, and a similar number has already been secured, most of which are expected to arrive in Guyana during this month.

Unlike other countries where access to vaccines has been problematic, Guyana has secured adequate doses for the adult population. Our main challenge is vaccine hesitancy, which is often driven by careless and irresponsible talk. I urge every one of us to be a little more mindful and cautious about the potential harm we can unintentionally inflict when we unwittingly share misinformation about vaccines. Let us change vaccine hesitancy to vaccine enthusiasm by encouraging every eligible person to take the vaccine. To paraphrase Mr. Martin Carter, all are involved, and if we do not, we will all be consumed.

Getting people to take their vaccine is not a Government issue or an Opposition issue; this is a national issue. On a national issue where people's lives and livelihoods are at stake, we have to rise above the differences and make sure that we work in the people's interest by encouraging them to get vaccinated.

While I could not say in previous sittings of this House, I am glad that, today, most of us in this House, as far as I am aware, are on record of taking vaccines or of speaking directly to our people about taking vaccines. I have heard the President of our country, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister and many of the Ministers and Members of Parliament on this side of the House encouraging citizens to take their vaccines. More recently, I have heard the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Joseph Harmon, the Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, the Hon. Karen Cummings and other Members of Parliament on the Opposition benches also calling on people to take their vaccines. I would like to applaud and recognise their efforts, and to encourage them to continue to spread the word about vaccination.

I am happy to report that many of the faith-based organisations, private sector leaders, trade unionists, and other influential persons have also been adding their voices to encourage people to get vaccinated. Some have gone beyond advocacy by demonstrating conviction, by taking the vaccine, and making a statement about the vaccine; by encouraging and by sharing facts about vaccination; by working with the Ministry of Health to mobilise people for vaccination; and by doing on-site vaccination drives at their churches, their temples, their mosques and at their

worksites. Some workplaces have also been offering monetary incentives to get vaccinated, while others have given their staff time off to go and get vaccines. Whatever it is that works for your organisation or your constituents, we are happy to work with you to ensure that every adult in Guyana gets their vaccines.

We have made a lot of progress since the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) Government came to Office. I recall what we inherited. Virtually every medicine and every medical supply item was in short supply. Many of the more than 1,000 medicines in our national formulary were at nil or almost zero supply. This was compounded by the huge stock of expired items that cost the taxpayers billions of dollars. Between August of last year and May of this year, we have discarded about \$3 billion worth of expired medicines.

In the region, a private audit team discovered more than \$1.5 billion in expired medicines at regional bonds and we estimated that between 2017 and 2020, more than 10 billion of expired medicines and medical supplies have been discarded.

*3.48 p.m.*

Today, the situation has changed drastically, with enough essential drugs and medical supplies in every region. We expect that the continuation of the arrival of medicines and medical supplies, from recent procurements, will reduce the massive shortages of medicines and medical supplies that we inherited in August of 2020. We expect that, by the end of June, we would significantly stabilise the supply chain. While we should still have some items being short, we expect that we would reach a stable state where most of the medicines, which are required by our patients, will be accessible in the public health system.

I remain optimistic that we can return to normalcy and, eventually, bring an epidemiological end to COVID-19 by achieving herd immunity in Guyana. We already see a glimmer of hope on the horizon. It is pleasing to note that, for those who have been fully vaccinated – meaning they have received both doses of their vaccines – we have not had a single case of hospitalisation from those persons, nor have we seen a single death from those persons who have been fully vaccinated. This should serve as an incentive for everyone to come out and take their vaccines. As the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhnom, said:

“No one is safe until everyone is safe.

If we could paraphrase that a little in the context of vaccines, no one is safe until everyone is immunised. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

### **Honouring Dr. Walter Rodney**

**Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs [Mr. Nandlall]:** Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members of this House, the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 will mark the 41<sup>st</sup> Death Anniversary of Dr. Walter Rodney. His wife, Dr. Patricia Rodney, and children, Shaka Rodney, Kanini Rodney-Phillips and Asha T. Rodney-Esquire, have requested the assistance of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and the Government of Guyana to formally honour the life, legacy and contribution of Dr. Rodney to Guyana and to, finally, set the public record straight in relation to certain matters surrounding his tragic death.

Today, the privilege is mine to announce that His Excellency the President and the Government of Guyana have acceded to this request as part of the historic step in bringing a level of closure to the Rodney family with respect to the death of Dr. Walter Rodney.

This is a momentous occasion for many reasons, and it is also a personal privilege for me and, indeed, for all of us to be part of a process to right this tragic wrong and to begin the process of the rectification of the historic record. Walter Anthony Rodney was only 38 years old and a leader of the Working People’s Alliance (WPA) when he was killed in a bomb blast on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1980. As for the Forbes Burnham Peoples National Congress (PNC) Government, Rodney intended to blow up the Georgetown prisons, but the bomb was accidentally detonated. The Rodney family and Donald Rodney, Dr Walter Rodney’s brother, who was in the car with Walter at the time when the bomb exploded, have vehemently and consistently opposed this narrative for 41 long years. The news of Dr. Rodney’s tragic death sent shock tremors to the conscience of Guyanese; West Indians; Americans; Europeans; Africans; and, indeed, the world over.

To say that Dr. Rodney’s death and the ensuing events in relation thereto were a horrendous miscarriage of justice would be an appalling understatement. The self-evident truth is that when wrongs of such magnitude occur, they could never really be righted. The least that could be done in this instance is to attempt to grant the wishes of the loved ones of Dr. Rodney, and to work with



them in bringing these wishes to fruition as they attempt to forge their own closure in relation to this horrific tragedy.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2014, a commission of inquiry was appointed by President Donald Ramotar to inquire into and to report on the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. Rodney.  
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing Mr. Duncan shouting at me; can I invoke your protection, Sir?

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon Members, the shouting... could you please stop the shouting. I will start naming people. Hon. Members, I want to urge that, even though we may be fully vaccinated, we continue to wear our masks as examples.

**Mr. Duncan:** [*Inaudible*] do the right thing. We are accustomed to doing the right thing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Duncan, please.

**Mr. Nandlall:** On the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2014, a commission of inquiry was appointed by President Donald Ramotar to enquire into and to report on the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. Rodney. The report of that commission of inquiry was tabled in this House under the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU/AFC) Government in 2016. A motion was tabled in this House, shortly, thereafter, by the then Opposition Member of Parliament of the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), Hon. Gail Teixeira, calling upon the Government to implement the recommendations of that report. The motion was voted down by the then Government. This Government is hereby committed to moving another motion in this House, shortly, to seek the approval of that report by this House and a resolution that the recommendations contained, therein, be approved. An inquest was conducted eight years after Dr. Rodney's death and the findings were that Dr. Rodney died by misadventure.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, Mr. Mahipaul.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you, Sir. The Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) is still real, and the Hon. Member is still not putting on his mask even though you said that we should wear the mask.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you Hon, Member Mr. Mahipaul. I have two observations: The first one being order in the Assembly and, shortly, I would have to invoke the necessary Standing Orders against some people who are shouting.

Honourable Attorney General please, I would encourage us to wear our masks.

**Mr. Nandlall:** This Government hereby commits to moving another motion in this House, shortly, to seek the approval of that report by this House and a resolution that the recommendations contained therein be approved.

An inquest was conducted eight years after Dr. Rodney's death and the findings were that Dr. Rodney died by misadventure. This inquest was reviewed by the 2014 commission of inquiry and was found to be incredible, flawed and dubious. Steps will be taken to invalidate or set aside the perverse findings of that inquest.

Although this son of Guyana was best known and respected throughout the world for his academic accomplishments, scholarships and activism, his death certificate described him as unemployed, as he was denied a job at his country's only university after working at universities across the globe. This historical wrong would be corrected, and the death certificate would be amended to read 'Professor' instead of 'unemployed'. We have already begun and would continue our efforts to secure the records of the 2014 commission of inquiry. Those records would be digitised by our national archives, which was recently renamed the Walter Rodney National Archives in collaboration with the Walter Rodney foundation and the Atlanta University Center, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta Georgia. Copies of same would be housed at that institution as part of the Walter Rodney papers and special collections.

The Rodney grave site and memorial are currently being managed collaboratively between the Rodney family and the National Trust of Guyana. Today, I am proud to announce that they would be declared national monuments and fall under the administration of the National Trust of Guyana.

One of the greatest tragedies flowing from Dr. Rodney's death is the loss of his scholarship to the people of Guyana. His children's books that celebrate the cultural heritage of Guyanese; Kofi Baadu out of Africa and Lakshmi out of India, shall be placed on every national syllabus by the Ministry of Education and in the hands of primary and secondary school students across this land.

Additionally, his other major works, including a history of the Guyanese Working People, Guyanese Sugar Plantations in the late Nineteenth Century, and How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, shall be made available to the library of the University of Guyana. The Walter Rodney chair at the University of Guyana would be re-established.

It is common knowledge that Donald Rodney was in the car with Dr. Walter Rodney on that faithful evening and is also a victim of the tragedy. This included a perverse conviction by a magistrate court, the burden of which Donald Rodney carried for the past 41 years. Fortuitously, only recently the Court of Appeal of Guyana set aside that conviction. Every effort would be made to remove and expunge all public records that intimate any level of guilt or wrongdoing by Dr. Walter Rodney in relation to the tragedy on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1980.

For too long Dr. Walter Rodney's death has been the subject of an irreverent misdescription. It was not a misadventure; it was an assassination and a great stain on our Republic. The sadistic misrepresentation on Dr. Rodney's death certificate prevented his family from recovering not a blind cent from his insurance policy, the only financial provision he made for his family, his wife and three infant children. This desecration must end now. His death certificate would be amended to delete the word 'misadventure' as the cause of death and substitute, therefore, for the word 'assassination'.

In this regard, it is apposite that I refer to the findings of the commissioners in their report from the 2014 commission of inquiry. They stated that they had no hesitation in holding that Gregory Smith was responsible for Dr. Walter Rodney's death on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1980 and, in so doing, he was acting as an agent of the State, having aided and abetted so to do by individual holding positions of leadership in State agencies, and committed to carrying out the wishes of the PNC Administration.

One of the key findings was stark:

“Dr. Walter Rodney was a man of large and significant stature both in Guyana and beyond and at the time of his death. He could have only been killed in what we find to be a State organised assassination with the knowledge of Prime Minister Burnham in the Guyana of that period.”

4.03 p.m.

In all democratic societies, there are fundamental laws by which the civil rights of citizens are acknowledged, recognised and protected. Our Constitution, as it did in 1980, sets out these fundamental rights, freedom and protection. They include the right to life and provisions to secure the protection of the law. Dr. Rodney was denied these basic inalienable but fundamental human rights. Expectedly, Dr. Rodney's death has had a lifelong and lasting impact on the Rodney family, Donald Rodney and, indeed, on Guyana. As such, the Government of Guyana adopted these measures as simply the right thing to do. As Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on behalf of His Excellency President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and the Government of Guyana, I join with the people of Guyana in expressing sorrow to his widow, Dr. Patricia Rodney, and to their three children: Shaka Rodney; Kanini Rodney-Phillips, Medical Doctor; and Asha T. Rodney, Attorney-at-Law, and also to his brother, Donald Rodney.

I have spoken with them to convey the Government's position in this matter. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Applause*]

### **Commendations to the Speaker for Honouring Court Order**

**Leader of the Opposition [Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon]:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me commend you for the honourable step you have taken in ensuring that an order of court was respected. The two Members of Parliament did not take their seats today.

### **Request to Correct the Record of the House**

**Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon:** It is public knowledge and as reflected in the *Hansard* or the record of the 27<sup>th</sup> sitting of the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, six A Partnership for National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) Members of Parliament were suspended from the sitting for that day. Those Members of Parliament suspended were: Mr. Christopher Jones, Mr. Sherod Duncan, Mr. Jermaine Figueira, Mr. Vincent Jordan, Ms. Natasha Singh-Lewis and Ms. Amanza Walton-Desir

I refer to Standing Order 47 which sets out the order in the Assembly and in Committee. I, specifically, refer to Standing Order 47 (3)(a) which sets out the procedure to deal with the conduct of any Member.

The Standing Order states:

“...if the offence has been committed in the Assembly, the Speaker shall call upon a Minister to move ‘That Cde./the Hon. Member Mr./Ms.... be suspended from the service of the Assembly’. The Speaker shall put the question on such motion forthwith, no seconder being required and amendment, adjournment or debate being allowed”.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the procedure was not complied with on that day in question. No Minister moved any such motion for a Member to be suspended. It is my view that the suspensions were improper since there was no adherence to the Standing Order. I, therefore, request that the records be corrected. Thank you. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Speaker:** In response to what you have said, I want to quote that same Standing Order, but I will direct you to the Standing Order before the one you mentioned, which is Standing Order 47(2), and I read:

“The Speaker or the Chairperson shall order any Member whose conduct is grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately from the Assembly during the remainder of that day’s Sitting and may direct such steps to be taken as are required to enforce this order”.

Hon. Members, I would, once again, say that there is a particular procedure for someone to challenge a Ruling of the Speaker or to deal with the conduct of any Member. I would, once again, urge that we familiarise ourselves with all the Standing Orders and do not cherry-pick which one we want to use. Thank you very much.

**Lt. Col. (Ret’d) Harmon:** Mr. Speaker, I was seeking to have the record of the Assembly corrected. As you read, in fact, it states, basically, that only one Member, at a time, could be suspended. The others have to be by a motion of the Minister. That is just for correction.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

## **REQUESTS FOR LEAVE TO MOVE THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Flood Situation in Guyana**

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say that I am shocked. I am seeking permission to adjourn this House on a definite matter of urgent public importance which has to do with the flood situation that is currently on going in Guyana.

The unfortunate situation is that a number of persons are affected by this flooding, and I believe, strongly, that the negligence on the part of the Government has contributed to this devastation with which our people are faced. The APNU/AFC, during the period 2015 to 2020, had a Regional Disaster Risk Management Committee set up in all 10 regions. Their duty was primarily to prepare for these floods. Unfortunately, those Disaster Risk Management Committees are no longer in place. I want to, first of all, call on the Government to re-establish...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, the issue of raising a motion under this particular heading has to do with three matters – definite, urgent and of public importance. As a matter of courtesy, the Speaker would allow a brief statement to justify why the mover would want to move such a motion under this particular head. I would like for you to confine your comments to the issues of urgency, public importance and the definitiveness of the situation you are dealing with.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** With reference to Standing Order 12(2), I wish to seek your permission to request leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly to discuss a matter of definite urgent public importance – the present flood situation, which has been described by His Excellency President Irfaan Ali as the worst natural disaster in our nation's history. Peoples' livelihood has been disrupted, properties were damaged, livestock and other animals died, while many are displaced. There is widespread devastation across the regions of our country, which is caused by the current floods. In my humble opinion, there is need for the establishment of a national relief programme which is aimed at bringing assistance and comfort to all who have suffered as a result of this disaster, and to plan with the aim of mitigating the negative impacts of such floods in the future. There is a wide...

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Would you allow me to now make my decision, please?

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Yes.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, this is not the first time that we have arrived at this position, unfortunately. The issue of the motion that has been raised, as we said earlier and as the Hon. Member has said also, is definite, it must be urgent and of public importance. We have many references to judge by, including Rulings of Speakers.

In our Standing Orders, you will find such a Ruling in one of the appendices. I will read the references here. Firstly, there is no doubt that we have floods. The definitiveness of what has been described is on the ground.

The second point is that it is of public importance. The Hon. Prime Minister has mentioned the number of persons affected.

The issue here is ‘urgency’. In relation to the issue of urgency, the matter must be of recent occurrence and raised without delay. In this regard, *Erskine May’s Parliamentary Practice (17<sup>th</sup> Edition)* states on page 365:

“The fact that a grievance is continuing is not sufficient...”.

I also refer to *Parliamentary Procedure*: Dr. Subash C. Kashyap. It is stated at page 767 that the matter must have arisen:

“...suddenly in the manner of an emergency and should not have arisen over a series of weeks”.

My Ruling on this is that I cannot allow the motion. There is sufficient time to bring a substantive motion that is dealing with all of the resolves. There is sufficient time to bring a substantive motion to the House to deal, comprehensively, with what we are experiencing at this time. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Speaker, would you permit me to ask if you would not consider this situation as urgent on the basis that it poses a threat to the preservation of life? I am asking if you have considered that in your Ruling? The preservation of life, for me, is under threat and the APNU/AFC believes that also.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you very much, Hon. Member. Proceed, Mr. Clerk.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND FIRST READING

The following Bills were introduced and read the first time:

### **(1) Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 6/2021**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act”

*[Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]*

4.18 p.m.

### **(2) Civil Law of Guyana (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 7/2021**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Civil Law of Guyana Act.”

*[Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs]*

### **(3) Police (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 8/2021.**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Police Act.”

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

### **(4) Firearms (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 9/2021.**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Firearms Act.”

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

### **(5) Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 10/2021.**

A Bill intituled:



“An Act to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act.”

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

**(6) Evidence (Amendment) Bill – Bill No. 11/2021.**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Evidence Act.”

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

**(7) Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill – Bill No. 12/2021.**

A Bill intituled:

“An Act to amend the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act.”

*[Minister of Home Affairs]*

**PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS BUSINESS**

**MOTIONS**

**NATURAL GAS FLARING AT THE ESSO EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION GUYANA LIMITED**

WHEREAS Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited (EEPGL) was on June 1, 2017, granted an Environmental Permit, No. 20160705-EEDPF, to undertake Phase 1 of the Liza Development Project (Liza 1) which included, the use of a Floating Production, Storage, and Offloading (FPSO) vessel “to process, store and offload the recovered oil during production operations within the Stabroek Block”;

AND WHEREAS the Liza 1 Permit (Clause 1.10) enjoined the Permit Holder, EEPGL, to “Employ effective operational and maintenance systems on all aspects of the facility whose failure could impact the environment...”;

AND WHEREAS the Liza 1 Permit (Clause 3.6) expressly prohibits flaring and venting; with exceptions being made for “tank flashing emission, standing/working/breathing losses” and flaring related to the startup of the FPSO, emergencies or during periods of maintenance;

AND WHEREAS EEPGL has routinely been engaged in flaring in direct contravention of the terms of the Liza 1 Permit issued and acknowledged, and as a result, has caused, and is causing substantial damage to the environment and the credibility of the Liza 1 Development Project;

AND WHEREAS calculations based upon reported EEPGL’s production data shows that zero flaring, except for the small amount allowed for pilot flaring, may be achieved by reducing oil production by approximately 15,000 bopd;

AND WHEREAS according to Clause 13.1 in the Liza 1 and Liza 2 Permits, “The Environmental Protection Agency reserves the right to review and amend the conditions attached to this Permit”,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly expresses its dissatisfaction, that all reasonable measures have not been taken or are being taken to prevent the flaring of gas as currently exists, and which reported by EEPGL to be 16 million cubic feet, per day (mcf) at the designed maximum safe oil production limit of 120,000 barrels oil, per day (bopd).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government of Guyana:

1. To direct Esso Exploration and Production Guyana Limited to abide by the terms and conditions of the Liza 1 Permit issued on June 1, 2017;
2. To request that the Environmental Protection Agency takes all reasonable measures to ensure compliance including, EEPGL achieving zero flaring at the Liza 1 Project through reduction of oil production rates; and suspension of same Liza 1 Permit if zero flaring is

not met, until it is satisfied that all reasonable and lawful efforts are being made to ensure that there is no flaring of gas as has occurred over the past several weeks; and

3. To request that the Liza 1 and Liza 2 Permits be immediately amended by the EPA to become consistent with the updated conditions in the Payara Permit, relative to flaring.

[*Mr. Patterson*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have a first motion in the name of the Hon. Member, Mr. David Patterson. I am, at this moment, unable to proceed with the debate on this motion because, since this motion has been tabled and put on the Order Paper, an action has been filed in the High Court of the Supreme Court of Judicature. That action is bearing the number 2021-HC-AEM-CIV-FEA-742. Consistent with previous rulings regarding matters that are *sub judice*, I again refer to Standing Orders 26 (g) and 41 (2).

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Mr. Ramjattan, kindly go ahead.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** I could understand [*inaudible*] indicated, but what I want to bring to your attention is the development of the *sub judice* rule. As you know, we take our [*inaudible*] from [*inaudible*] and not the House of Commons. That rule, just for the sake of our purposes here, has been qualified to a certain extent. Whenever we have serious matters like this, such as flaring and so forth, and we bring the motion long before someone files an action, it is important then that discretion be used. I am going to get to that in a short moment. For the purposes of not causing the Parliament, which is the premiere institution of the land, to be hamstrung by these litigations that can come, there is also an important exception to this rule; a qualification. Assuming that we had brought a Private Members' Bill or even if a Minister had brought a Bill, that action that is filed cannot stop us based on this *sub judice* rule. Our legislative capacity could be hamstrung again. The whole point of this matter is that, we in this Parliament... The purpose behind it was to ensure that we did not influence or prejudice the adjudication that will happen inside of the court. That was the whole arrangement. What we have here is, obviously, not going to do that. [**Mr. Nandlall:** (*Inaudible*)] Well, I am urging that, indeed, [**Mr. Nandlall:** (*Inaudible*)]. Well, if you do not want to listen to me, that is all right, but the trouble is...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, please, I am listening to you.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** The House of Commons... and I have it here; I am going to give it to you. Page 43 of *Parliamentary Privilege – First Report* states:

“The present rule rightly tries to strike a balance between two sets of principles. On the one hand, the rights of parties in legal proceedings should not be prejudiced by discussion of their case in Parliament, and Parliament should not prevent the courts from exercising their functions. On the other hand, Parliament has a constitutional right to discuss any matters it pleases.”

In relation to this, that is why they say... In 2001, this ruling came out which indicated these kinds of collision courses that we have presently. One should make it clear that one has a discretion, and that the Speaker has that discretion. This is what the joint committee recommended.

The *sub judice* rule went on to state that:

“It is made explicit that the rule applies in Committee.”

That was a separate issue. The new provisions clarify what is meant by a case that is active. One may bring a case to deal with ExxonMobil Corporation, but it may not have anything to do with the core and crux of what we are dealing with here. [**Mr. Nandlall:** *(Inaudible)*]. Well, I do not even know about the case.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, please speak to me.

**Mr. Nandlall:** [*Inaudible*].

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Well, if it does, the provisions of civil proceedings are relaxed so that the pre-trial applications are treated as distinct proceedings. The relaxation of the rule now applies to any judicial review of a ministerial decision rather than being of reviews and grounds of misdirection or on bad faith.

Whatever it is, we had a ruling that was made by former Speaker Mr. Raphael Trotman on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2013. There was a case that was filed in connection with the limit of outstanding amounts under guarantees given under the Guarantee of Loans (Public Corporations and Companies) Act,

which was said to have offended Standing Order 26 (g). Mr. Trotman made an extremely important ruling and I hope that is considered when we determine this matter.

“Standing Orders must be read, interpreted and applied in a purposive manner. In my considered opinion it could never have been intended that the simple filing of a Writ or motion could prevent a debate on an issue in this House. Rather, it is my considered opinion that the purpose of the Standing Order No.26 (g) must be intended to ensure that the outcome of a matter is not prejudiced by the debate or Resolution adopted. Apart from guaranteeing fairness in trials and court proceedings, it also serves to recognize, and respect the hallowed doctrine of separation of powers...”

We have our powers here too. It must not be limited.

Nothing has been stated about the progress of the hearing of the appeal and this is where we try to make this distinction. I hope that was done because I am now learning that there was an action filed but we do not know what has happened to that case. Nothing has been stated about the progress of the hearing of that case and its likelihood of being concluded, *et cetera*. We could be subsumed by litigation and when private members now want to bring a motion, you have someone to fix up a *lil* litigation to stop it. Instead, we are here.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ramjattan:** That cannot be. I am urging that you reconsider in view of all the additional facts that you have which I do not have. I do not have the action number, what they are seeking and if it is in identical terms to what the mover of the motion is seeking here and so on. We should not just *willy-nilly* feel that you know...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, thank you very much. Let me assure you that the decision of the Chairman was not made *willy-nilly*. In fact, in this particular instance, the relief being sought in court is almost identical to the resolve clauses here. There is that issue which I had to consider.

The second issue I want to comment on is the issue you raised with respect to a Bill being brought to the House. Even in the last sitting of the National Assembly, we had to deal with that. I want to urge that, in light of all these developments with respect the *sub judice* rule, it is going to be good

work for the Standing Orders Committee as we review these Standing Orders. Thank you very much.

Again, I am being guided by our well learned Clerk and I am reading from *Erskine May: Parliamentary Practice (23<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*:

“The House has resolved that no matter awaiting or under adjudication by a court of law (including a coroner's court or a Fatal Accident Inquiry) – i.e. matters *sub judice* – should be brought before it.”

...by a motion.

The arguments are very good on all sides and, as I said before, the issue is going to be good work for the Standing Orders Committee. Thank you very much.

The Hon. Member, Mr. David Patterson, you can now move the other motion standing in your name.

**Mr. Patterson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

Let me start off by saying that I join with the Minister of Health in offering our support and congratulations to the frontline health workers who have been doing human services in the battle against this pandemic. Let me also say that I join with him in encouraging persons to become vaccinated.

4.33 p.m.

Let me take the opportunity to mention the vaccine hesitancy. You might be aware that part of the hesitancy is that the people do not trust you, Sir. People do not trust the Administration. I am being quite frank. This is a national issue and, maybe, if the Hon. Minister wants to tackle it, he should invite the Opposition to, at least, join the task force so that we could tackle this, holistically. You cannot on one hand say to us that we should help you, to go and take two photos and those things like that... *[Interruption]*

Sir, can I have some protection? On the other hand, you do not want to include the Opposition in any sort of task force or the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) issue. Together, I do think that we could tackle this problem and get by.

As a plea to you, Sir, the regions in which you said that there is a vaccine hesitancy... I know Region 8. While the People Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) was in Opposition, they went around saying that it was a hoax. We could work with you to convince them that it is no longer a hoax. Then, of course, in Region 10, we have a serious issue. They do not trust you. Hon. Minister of Health, we on this side are willing to work with you to help them.

Mr, Speaker, I have heard all the discussion that you have given on the flaring motion. What I did not hear you say, exclusively, is the fact that the flaring motion was tabled in this House on the 22nd February. The case to which you are referring, which makes my flaring motion sub judice, was filed on the 21st May. For four months this Parliament was prorogued, and we could not have had a sitting. Obviously, if the Government had seen it fit to have a sitting, in the intern of the four months, this motion would have been debated and determined quite a long time ago. So, the record must reflect that we waited on this, patiently. We waited four months for the Parliament to sit and then when it did sit, unfortunately...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, I do not know if you know something different from me. The four months by an average of 30 days is 120 days. So, if you want to refer to facts, please be a bit accurate. I would not allow you to go down that road. You said for four months this Parliament has not met. Then, there has been a ruling of the Speaker with respect to the Parliament. Thank you, Sir, go ahead.

**Mr. Patterson:** I am not questioning your ruling at all, Sir. I am just saying that if the Parliament had met between 2<sup>nd</sup> March and today, the motion would have been dispensed of.

## **LOCATION OF GUYANA SHORE BASE SERVICES**

WHEREAS successive Governments of Guyana have approved three Development Plans for ExxonMobil (Liza I, Liza II and Payara) and additionally, the company has announced its intention to apply for a 4<sup>th</sup> Development Plan (Yellowtail) before the end of 2021;

AND WHEREAS the Guyana Shore Base Inc., is located on the Demerara River, which is the busiest river in the country;

AND WHEREAS ExxonMobil has recently issued a Request for Information to identify contractors who can provide fully functional, fit for purpose shore base facilities, to support their needs of future projects, starting 2023,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly advises the Government to establish a Multi-Agency Taskforce to prepare a Land Use Policy, specifically for the location of the Oil and Gas Sector and present their Report to this Assembly, as early as possible, but within six (6) months;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government advises the Taskforce that it is the preference of this National Assembly for future onshore bases to be in the Counties of Berbice and Essequibo to ensure parity in development of the Oil and Gas Industry and the equal-able development across Guyana for the benefit of all Citizens;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government of Guyana advises ExxonMobil and all other Oil and Gas Operators that they should suspend their RFI until the Taskforce completes its Report on the Land Use Policy, which should be completed within six (6) months; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government of Guyana informs ExxonMobil and all other Oil and Gas Operators that all future shore bases shall be State-Owned but leased to private operators so as to ensure the maximum benefit for all Guyanese.

*[Mr. Patterson]*

**Mr. Patterson:** I rise to move a motion under my name for the locations of Guyana shore base services to serve the oil and gas sector. It is a simple motion seeking to ensure that we develop as



we give permission to such facilities and that we do so in an open and transparent manner, considering the need to protect our environment and the need for economic diversity as well as the applicable zoning and land use policies. The shore bases are required to provide services for offshore oil production. The bases can be called hubs. These are like a bus terminal or an air cargo terminal where goods, products and other services are assembled at these shore bases and transported by marine vessels to the Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel (FPSO) in the [inaudible] shore and the drillships offshore. When ExxonMobil Corporation commenced exploratory drilling in 2014, its drillships were being supplied from shore bases in Trinidad. On the discovery of oil in May 2015 and the decision by the Coalition Administration to support ExxonMobil Corporation's efforts in achieving early first oil, shore bases in Guyana became a high priority.

Our Administration, which I mean the Coalition Administration, was determined to have on shore bases in Guyana as soon as possible. Our rationale behind our decision was to support the offshore and oil and gas industry, since oil companies benefited through reduced cost; and imported and improved product times; meaningful local content participation in the offshore energy sector and developing local capacities and capabilities; diversification of the economy to help spread the direct and indirect economic benefits of the oil and gas sector; the provision of employment and helping to develop our human facts; and, finally, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and creation of other investment opportunities.

Based on these criteria and goals of the Coalition Administration, I will explain to you what the difference is with what was going on here with us. In mid-2015, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, it was then called, and the Ministry of Natural Resources commissioned a screening study of new on shore bases and ports. I have a copy of it here in my hand. I know that it is still in the Ministry. It was part of the package that was left in the Ministry for both Hon. Ministers. Unfortunately, it does not have many pictures, so I do not know if they read it. [**Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)] I have a copy, fortunately – The screening study of new on shore bases and ports. The report came out on the 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2016. It highlighted that there are no suitable bases in Guyana. The nearest bases, of course, were in Galeota and Chaguaramas, in Trinidad. They were 250 miles away from Liza 1 where the first discovery was made in 2015. The use of those shore bases was costing the people of Guyana and the Guyanese public over US\$1 million per day. Of

course, this cost did not affect ExxonMobil Corporation because its cost recovery... It is for the benefit of the people if we reduce the cost. Obviously, the reduction of the cost means a faster recovery period before we could start to see greater benefit from the oil production deal. There were no incentives by the oil producer, ExxonMobil Corporation, to move from the bases in Chaguaramas, in Trinidad. But, we as a Government, in 2016, decided that it was something that should be done.

Despite us not having any suitable port, the Coalition Government commenced a four-stage approach to these challenges. We did phase 1, which is still here at the moment. We said that we would do whatever is necessary so that we could get the first oil by 2020 based on this report. The first oil was actually on the 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2019. What we did was to give permission to ExxonMobil Corporation to look, wherever possible, for open request for information (RFI) to find possible locations within Georgetown or the country so that we could have a shore base. Our idea in 2016 was that, even if we cannot supply 100% services, we wanted to ensure that whatever shore bases were in Guyana, we could have, at least, done a minimum of half of them which, obviously, will be *[inaudible]* to savings for our country.

Phase 2, which is post first oil, is what I would consider to be where we are at the moment. In phase 2, we wanted an expansion of these services. We wanted to ensure that it included the fabrication of the steel works and pipe works, workshop yards, specialist repair and maintenance workshops, rotating equipment, valves, laboratory testing, inspection, diving, rigging and training. Sir, we said that the next phase for on shore bases should be able to cater for that. We had a plan to ensure that, post 2020, we would work towards that.

We had phase 3. Phase 3 dealt with the heavy industry where we would have now been self-sufficient. Then, of course, phase 4, according to our study, would have been integration to Linden, Lethem, the Brazil Highway internet network, deep water port, *et cetera*.

For my Friends over there, we examined proposed locations throughout the country – Essequibo, Berbice and Demerara. We examined those. Before I even go on, I heard the Hon. Member *prattling* over there about Mahaicony. May I ask the Hon. Ministers of Public Works if they are willing to share with him some of the documents which were done by the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The leading engineering firm in the world from the

Netherlands recommended that the same area, which he is laughing about in the Mahaicony and East Coast area, to be used for shore bases and deepwater ports. It is online. It has a lot of pictures in it. He can look at it and see.

Sir, we checked Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice. We looked for the deepwater, the draft, existing facilities, sailing distance, land availability, flat land, worker friendly environment, road links to Georgetown and airports, utilises, environmental issues and, of course, lastly, the link to Guyana Brazil Highway. The number one ranked area in this, for my Friend, was Berbice. We will get to that. I would like you to bear that in mind because I heard the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramson, said that we only did things for our constituencies. Berbice is not our constituency, but that was the number one ranked area. I will tell you what our Government did in relation to that, shortly.

*4.48 p.m.*

Sir, the first request for information for onshore base was launched in Guyana in 2017. We have the report and we said that we would like to do it in Berbice. The recommendations were, after we check all the rankings, to do it in Berbice. Unfortunately, there was no facility in Berbice. It was launched nationally. There were no restrictions where... Only two local shippers were short listed. These were Muneshwers Limited and John Fernandes Limited.

In September of 2017, ExxonMobil Corporation awarded the contract to Guyana Shore Base Inc. (GYSBI) for the shore base, since it is the only facility capable of doing such a thing. [**An Hon. Member:** *(Inaudible)*] Muneshwers, and I am coming to that. This was awarded despite the obvious challenges of the location. Muneshwers Limited started out as a container terminal. Sir, could you ask him to stop rumbling there? Because it had the size, it was awarded the contract. Houston is now the hub for the oil and gas. It became so not by virtue of any studies or any future development plans, but simply because ExxonMobil Corporation awarded the contract to GYSBI in 2017. Generally, suppliers seek to be close to the shore base [*inaudible*] as I said, and that is the reason why the Houston area is the hub of oil and gas.

For the benefit of the Gentlemen here, these are the areas. For Houston, which is now the oil and gas hub, I just quoted two transports from Plantation Houston Sugar Estate 2017. I will tell you the lack of zoning On 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017, it states here:

“No shop, factory, manufacturer, trade, industry business or profession of any kind whatsoever shall be carried out at the said lot. No cattle, pigs, donkeys, horses, mules, sheep shall be kept on the settler. No stable, pigsty, cow pen...”

Those are the conditions under which the lands were sold, and permission was given for them to sell in Houston. In 2019, just two years ago, this said plot of land was for residential, commercial or retail uses, and it could not be used for industrial purposes. No factory, manufacturing industry or engineering facilities could have been constructed upon or operated in the said lot. If we go to Houston right now, that entire area, despite it not being zoned, an industry is being operated there. The only reason it became industrially operated is because GYSBI was awarded the contract. We acknowledge that we played a part in it because we supported the industry in *[inaudible]*.

What has happened in the interim since that had happened? In Houston area, they sealed up a canal so that they could get an extra space. They closed off a sluice at the head of Houston so that they could get additional space. There is uncontrolled expansion. In this time of flooding, could you imagine that, in that area, they have closed off a canal.

The fishing wharf – I should not call the name of the company – has closed down and sold out to the oil and gas industry because it is most profitable to them... endangering the livelihood of all our fisher folks, because that particular fishing wharf employed independent fishermen. Anybody that has a fishing boat could have fished and sell their product to **[An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]** Yes, that is correct.

Environmental hazards – The residents in the area who were unfortunate to move into Houston before it became an industrial site have carried the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Government to court over chemical spillage, chemical bonds and things like that. Obviously, Sir, we have traffic related issues. Everyone who lives on the East Bank of Demerara knows about the issue. There is a ‘turn in’ at Houston which causes major traffic.

Sir, I highlighted all of those issues to tell you what could happen if you allow shore bases or private entities to determine who and where they would like to hire and build for the *[inaudible]* The private entities are only interested in the ‘bottom line’. That would have been highlighted very aptly if the Natural Gas Flaring at the ESSO Exploration and Production Guyana Limited motion

would have been able to be debated. Unfortunately, it has not. I would raise the issues of climate change and I hope that you would not stymie or cut back when I come to that.

As I said, the Coalition Government supported the initial operation. However, we were committed to ensuring that future development would be done in a structured manner. To achieve this, we were moving to establish industrial zones in areas where future bases could be constructed, as opposed to allowing a free for all.

As I said, we had very little option in the location of the first on shore base. The then Minister of Natural Resources, the Hon. Minister Trotman, sought and received Cabinet's permission, in 2016, to proceed immediately with phase 2 development of an onshore base. The selected location was Crab Island, in Berbice. Cabinet gave its approval in May of 2017. Some strange things immediately happened because, in selecting Crab Island, we first contacted the... and I am glad the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is here because he would know. In selecting Crab Island, the first thing the Minister in the Ministry did was to contact the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC). The very first thing we said to them is that the Government has decided that Berbice's economic diversity, we would like to... state land, which is land owned by the state and which is unencumbered land, we would like to partner, zone it for industrial purposes and zone it for onshore base. We could help diversify the economy in Berbice. It is not, of course, the stronghold of the Coalition, but we said we will do that. Immediately, of course, the mistake I think we made was that Minister Trotman went to what was then called 'cane talks', in Berbice, and he announced that Cabinet had approved the working and developing of a shore base in Crab Island with the private sector in a public-private partnership. Strange things happened. Persons unknown; every *Jim Cock Bring Ram Goat*, as they would say, turned up with leases.

At the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission there is a master list of all the leases. Persons turned up saying that they had a lease for this and that part of Crab Island. It was discovered that, under the PPP/C, there were several agencies issuing leases. Under the PPP/C one did not have to... I am willing to be challenged here because I have copies. One could have gotten up and one could have walked to say... For example, I would say that if my good Friend Mr. Vikram Bharrat's office – the Minister of Natural Resources – says that it will [*inaudible*] a lease of Crab Island and he goes under the table and he pulls out a lease document and he signs it, one does not have to register it with the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission. One now had a valid lease. At least

eight persons turned up to say that they owned a part of Crab Island. There was no official stamp, there was no record, whatsoever, in the master registry of Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission.

They were state lands; they issued state lands. The Leader of the Opposition was there. Further, they proceeded to carry us to court or threatened with their lawyers. Some eminent senior counsels came to represent them and when we asked how the persons got the lease, they said that it did not matter since they had it. Immediately, the idea of Crab Island and Berbice was shut down.

That reminds me [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)]. I have heard the Hon. Member there shout that one could terminate a lease, Sir. It reminds me of one of the things that pains me up to now. One of the promises of this Coalition was to fix the road in Diamond and ensure that there was a fly over where they could leave to us. The first thing we did is that we went to the IDB. We obtained that... just to digress a bit because we are talking about buying back the lands. We went to IDB and we launched a bid because, on the maps and on everything, it was stated that we had a reserve in Diamond. We went out to tender and the day that were walking the contractors, doing site inspections, a man that turned up with the police with a transport for the reserve. Do you know what the Hon. Members there said? It was amazing, Sir. It was almost two acres of land right at the head. It is still there – \$1.5 million. Do you know what the Hon. Members over there said? We should buy it back. Do you know what is the cost to buy it back, Sir? It was over \$100 million. That, Sir, is what they are doing, enriching people. They are selling out the reserves and then saying that we must buy it back. That is a true story. You could check that. If everyone knows... time is moving.

This motion calls for an establishment of a task force to complete the work started by the Coalition. Rezone areas specifically for oil and gas so that the occurrence of what happened on the West Bank Demerara, where a private developer destroyed acres of source zone protection without permission... To mitigate it, the Hon. Minister said that they will put up a revetment and that they will do some protection. There is zero respect, Sir, for the [*inaudible*] and there is zero respect for the Sea Defence board. There are no plans. He said that he is going to do sheet piling; 20,000 of sheet piles. It has not even been approved by the Sea Defence Board. You should check the challenges and the approval process that GYSBI and John Fernandes Limited had to go through to erect because they have shore bases there. Not this Government.

5.03 p.m.

Sir, over on the West Bank, there has been no assessment of the impact the shore bases will have on our rivers. The Demerara River takes 90% of our commercial and containerised cargo. It has even been diminished because of a hare-brained idea by the PPP/C to put a submarine cable in the main anchorage point, which is from Vreed-en-Hoop to Kingston. It is short-sighted. Therefore, obviously, no boats can even be moored in that area. There are three mooring points on the Demerara River: one was there; one is just before the 'Boat House'; and the other is all the way in Craig. They took them away. Do you know why, Sir? They are too lazy to think of any other idea. Sir, you are now giving approval for a man or a company to build a shore base without going through any of the regulatory bodies. Your ideas and responses [*inaudible*] and that would save the people.

When it comes to the Sea and River Defence Board, it would be remiss of me to not make mention that, under our Administration, the Sea and River Defence Board always had space for a person from the Opposition. I have shown it publicly that I would have written to the Leader of the Opposition. We did not even ask who; we did not even ask where; if it was he/she; or we did not even put a qualification on it. We made it an automatic right for the Leader of the Opposition to place a member. This is because our Government recognised that the Opposition had Members and supporters who lived somewhere along the shore and they must have an avenue to express themselves. That does not happen now, Sir. Therefore, there is the Sea and River Defence Board.... There is no State board in this country that has representatives from the Opposition. It was a policy directed by the Coalition Government that every board must have a Member of the Opposition on it.

The motion also calls for the Government and for all of us in this National Assembly to state that we have a preference for future shore bases to be built in Berbice and Essequibo. Guyana has three main rivers. At the moment, all the oil and gas operations are now concentrated in Berbice. The distances away from the Floating Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) facilities or finds are almost equal for all three rivers. By stating we have a preference, that does not exclude Demerara. As I will go on to tell you, from the projections in the next five years of the number of vessels that we will have to [*inaudible*], all three counties can have an onshore base.

Zoning has been an issue for us in this country. I am not putting this on any single Administration. **[An. Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]**. He does not know what zoning means. Collectively, we have all failed in our attempt to zone. Everyone there would know that when there is a residential area, we turn a blind eye to the man who opens a shop and sells sweets and then the mechanic comes with his spray shop and wash bay because we say everyone has to live. Sir, but when it comes to oil and gas sector, hazardous materials, flaring and these industrial things, we have to be particularly concerned.

I come to what I am asking for, the Resolve Clauses. Clause 1 asks the Government to establish a multi-agency taskforce to prepare a land use policy, specifically for the oil and gas sector; Zoning – so that we could have a structured approach for future expansion. This work has already commenced under the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GL&SC), the Department of Energy and the Central Housing & Planning Authority (CH&PA). I know that former Minister Ferguson ... It is simply a matter of completing this process. When it is completed, the entire country will know where one can go. Or, if one wants to have exclusions or a particularly unique *[inaudible]*, one can apply for his/her area. If one's area is not zoned for that purpose, one can apply for it and have it done. There will be a clear idea of what is going on.

As I have said, in the second Resolve Clause, there is a preference for Berbice and Essequibo. It is not intended for the exclusion of Demerara. All three counties can benefit equally from the new oil and gas sector. There is more than enough to go around. If the ExxonMobil Corporation achieves what it projects with Liza Phases 1 and II, Payara and now Yellowtail, it is anticipated that, by 2025, we will need 12 wharf spaces to serve 40 platform supply vessels (PSV). These are the vessels that go in and out. Out there by 2025, there is supposed to be seven FPSOs, seven drill ships. I challenge you ... **[An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)]** You can bring it. Currently, Guyana Shore Base Incorporated (GYSBI) has two wharves. By the end of 2025, we will be looking at 10 to 12 wharves. For the youngster over there, who knows nothing. **[Mr. Ramson: (Inaudible)]** I have it here. I always walk with my back up information for those youngsters, those *Battilions*, who like to speak. **[Mr. Ramson: (Inaudible)]** It is here, you can come and collect it. There is more than enough to go around. This motion is calling on the Government to say that it has a preference for Berbice and Essequibo. Then, obviously, we could then do all the rest.



Sir, the third Resolve Clause simply seeks that we indicate to the ExxonMobil Corporation that it must suspend its Request For Information (RFI) and allow us the six months because of [inaudible] for us complete and report to them our zoning policies specific for oil and gas. Afterwards, they can continue.

There are four Resolve Clauses. The final Resolve Clause I think is the one that causes the most contention. I started off by saying that all industrial parks done in this country were built by the [inaudible] – in Coldingen and Eccles. They were sold or leased – by whatever mechanism in place – to private individuals. We were just seeking to say that, even if the Government does not develop, they designate the zone areas stating that Upper Berbice is the area where anyone can build offshore bases so that we are structured. That is what we are basically calling for.

These are non-contentious things, and I cannot see why the Government's side will not be able to support this. It is calling for a bit of order and for us to take the time to have a national development plan and rezone. There are talks about a second city and those things like that, but that cannot be done in isolation without a plan. It is calling for us to take timeout, have a plan and then move forward. Right now, Guyana is like the 'Wild West'.

You know Comrade *Battilion*, when it comes to the 'Wild West', you and your battalions and *battilions* are at the forefront of it. I hope, Sir... [**Mr. Ramson:** (Inaudible)] Folks, do not worry with that youngster. I would like to close by asking that the Members on the other side support this motion so that we can re-establish some order in our society. I thank you. [Applause]

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Member. Hon. Members, I think this is a good time for us to take the suspension.

*Sitting suspended at 5.14 p.m.*

*Sitting resumed at 6.32 p.m.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, Hon. Members. I now invite the Hon. Minister, Bishop Juan Edghill, to make his contribution.

**Minister of Public Works [Bishop Edghill]:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make my contribution on this motion that was presented to the House by the Hon. Mr. David Patterson,

who is absent at this time. I wish to respond to the parts of that presentation that were decipherable. I must admit that all was not clear. I wish to begin where he started. The Hon. Member started his presentation by referring to Minister Anthony's appeal for vaccination so that we could achieve herd immunity. He made a snide remark that the reason why there is hesitancy in the vaccination programme is because people do not trust the Government. May I remind the Hon. Member and all of the other Members of the Opposition that the reason why they are in Opposition is because people cannot trust them anymore. They lost a no confidence motion. They sought to abuse the collective intelligence of our country by manufacturing narratives. They went to the Elections with a slogan that said, "Decency, Integrity and Honesty" and they portrayed every characteristic contrary to that. They lost an election.

**Deputy Speaker [Mr. Shuman]:** Mr. Speaker, I stand on a Point of Order. I have never been party to any no confidence motion.

6.35 p.m.

**Bishop Edghill:** Mr. Speaker, without hesitation I apologise to the Hon. Member, Mr. Shuman. From those comments you are excluded, Sir.

I come straight to the actual motion of which the Hon. Member has not yet spoken to even though he proposed the motion. I suspect someone else wrote it and he was asked to ramble around it. Since someone else wrote it and I read it, I will speak to it. This motion, presumably, seeks to come to the House with some noble intentions to say: 'Look, the oil and gas sector in Guyana is a very important sector. We should have bipartisan collaboration in terms of its development; let us get a multi-agency taskforce working together; and let us ensure that when Guyana's development is done, it is done across the board in all the counties, *la la la la la*'.

Sir, on reading it, at face value, one might want to think that this is something that one may want to support. But, Sir, listening to what was said and knowing the character, track record and current *modus operandi* of the APNU/AFC, one had to take this with a *pinch of salt* and listen to the real story. It is not what is said, it is what was not said. Mr. Speaker, let me give you some issues that we may want to consider. When it comes to openness, transparency and accountability as it relates to the oil and gas sector, no one in the APNU/AFC could ever believe that they could lecture the Government on how we should manage these affairs in a transparent and an open manner. They

had it for five years and they were anything else but transparent. They came to this National Assembly, and it had to be forced out of them after the media headlines and the publication of letters to show that they had collected a signing bonus. They failed to tell the National Assembly and to disclose.

I heard the Hon. Member talking about Houston but the only Houston he should be speaking about is Houston, Texas. It cannot be Houston, Guyana where there is a shore base facility. This is because, Sir, if we go to that we must be able to stand and ask: Why is it that you could not acquire compulsory the lands that he is now speaking about in Berbice, but he was able to acquire lands compulsory at Houston? Is it because he had positioned the new Demerara Harbour Bridge to pass at a certain location to benefit a certain person? But for the crab island situation he had not all the deals in place as yet. Since we are talking about this, let me respond to another thing before I address some other matters.

Berbice as a deep-water harbour was not a development or an idea of the APNU/AFC/PNC/R. This was something that was developed under the People's Progressive Party/Civic. As a matter of fact, every time you talk about the Lethem/Linden road and the engagement with northern Brazil, one cannot complete that conversation without talking about a deep-water harbour. The pre-feasibility identified that the only way that road is feasible is because we will be able to trade with northern Brazil. That road is impacting for that part, but it needs to be accompanied by a deep-water harbour and for that deep-water harbour, Berbice was always the area that was identified by the People's Progressive Party/Civic. So, do not come here and lecture us.

Let me just say, Berbice had three things working for them, in terms of the deep-water harbour – bauxite. Let us examine bauxite. Oldendorff Carriers Guyana Inc. (OCGI) had a facility out in the Berbice river they were using for the transshipment of bauxite from Arima and Rose Hall to the bigger ships. Oldendorff Carriers Guyana Inc. has packed up and gone home because friends and supporters, aided and abetted by people aligned and closely associated with the PNC/R led APNU/AFC, blocked the Berbice River and prevented that activity from taking place.

Secondly, the Berbice River and the deep-water harbour in the Berbice River would have been supported by a booming forestry sector. It was bad forestry policies that practically shut down the

communities of Hururu, Kwakwani and other areas, where because of policy direction or misdirection in policy by the APNU/AFC it killed forestry and it could not have continued.

Thirdly, the Berbice deep-water harbour and port facility would have been important to support sugar and rice. We do not need to state again tonight what the APNU/AFC did to sugar by shutting those estates down. Now they want to come and tell us about moving deep-water harbour and shore base development to the Berbice area as if they are sincere. Sir, this is what we have here again tonight, another case of sanctimonious gangsterism. That is what we are having here again with this motion.

The ExxonMobil Corporation is one of the operators in Guyana in terms of our oil and gas sector. I would like to inform the mover of this motion and all Members of this National Assembly that Guyana's economic development, in all three counties – Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo – is not linked to merely oil and gas. The PPP/C's vision and policy direction and our interventions and initiative, our economic advancement of Guyana is not a one sector approach. We continue to pursue, in a great way, agriculture. We continue to pursue and support in a great way mining, bauxite, gold and diamond. We continue to pursue fisheries and other crops while we support rice and sugar. We had given clear policy direction to ensure that we, in a sustainable manner, continue our forestry sector and, at the same time, ensuring that there is sustainability in our forest.

We have envisioned and advanced of strategy to ensure that Guyana is able to train to trade in climate services. We have advanced information and communications technology (ICT). There was a time in Guyana when there was no sector that was known as information and communications technology. We advanced that sector by creating the initiatives, making our people computer literate by introducing the One Laptop Per Family (OLPF) programme. We put in the Fibre Optic Backbone Cable from Crabwood Creek to Charity. We worked to bring the cable to improve bandwidth and, at the same time, encourage call centres into Guyana where thousands of young people work in information and communications technology.

In our holistic developmental approach, tourism and our brand of eco- tourism were encouraged by ensuring that we have the facilities for eco lodges in our hinterland, to ensure the building of hotels in our centre, to ensure that we have a modernised airport which is still to be completed after being mishandled by the APNU/AFC. We worked with the private sector and created the

financing and architecture for the development of Ogle, which is now an international hotel. We brought into being this very convention centre that we are meeting in. We built the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Headquarters and the Marriott Hotel Guyana to be able to bring major CARICOM and other international conferences to Guyana. We were not just talking about 'oil and oil and oil'. Guyana's development is a holistic development, Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo, all 10 regions. So whether it is climate services, whether it is agriculture, whether it is forestry, whether it is mining, whether it is ICT, whether it is agro-processing, whether it is manufacturing, we are creating the environment to ensure that economic boom... [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, you may have the floor.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand on Standing Order 41(1). The Hon. Member is not speaking to the motion that is before him and I crave your indulgence to guide the Hon. Member that the motion before the House has to do with the locations of shore bases.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Mr. Mahipaul, thanks for your observation, except, I will allow the Hon. Minister to continue. I do not uphold that as a Point of Order.

**Bishop Edghill:** This approach about ensuring that there are shore base facilities in Berbice or in Essequibo, as if to say that if there are no shore bases there Guyana will not develop, it is a fallacy. This is because when one checks our track record, we have done everything that was humanly possible, even with the Opposition's boycott, interference and stymieing of major development. We would have had the Amelia Falls Hydropower Project today had it not been stymied in the Tenth Parliament. We would have been having electricity for industrialisation and capturing at about eight to 10 cents a kilowatt hour had it not been for irresponsible politicking, for narrow political purposes which led them nowhere.

We have come back to Government, and may I put on the record that oil was found under the People's Progressive Party/Civic. As a matter of fact, may I remind that it was President Janet Jagan who was criticised by the then PNC for making all the concessions to the ExxonMobil Corporation for them to be able to promote drilling and exploration that cause them to be here, and we have oil. They took over an economy that was booming.

6.50 p.m.

We had 10 years of uninterrupted economic growth leading to 2014. When they took Office, oil and gas, had it been carefully managed, would have been a sector that would have catapulted our development and taken us into the next level. But what we had over the last five years was lack of policy direction, lack of being transparent with the people of Guyana, improper negotiations, and incompetence in getting the best for Guyana. That is what we inherited. Do you know something, Mr. Speaker? When we came to Office, and I heard the Minister... Somehow, he puts a motion, a debate is here, and he is absent. When we came to Office, one of the things we found was that there was a number of local entities – notice the word, ‘local entities’. They had applications for no objections and permits for waterfront development and shore based development that were not being processed. May I remind you that, while we were in Opposition, we exposed the giveaway of lands in specific places, whether it was Dallawalla in the Upper Demerara River; whether it was West Demerara where the notable Saratu Phillips and the Hopkinsons got lands; whether it was Crab Island or whether it was Bohemia. We spoke and we were suspicious that a lot of these lands that were being given away in deals that were not clear. By the way, the record will show that, even after 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020, when the APNU/AFC lost Government and were holding on to power, they were still busy transferring lands to friends and cronies. What a shame.

What is the real situation? The real situation is that Mr. Patterson referred to studies that were done, but the only thing those studies helped Mr. Patterson and his group with was where to give lands so that they could have an advantage to benefit with the flipping of lands. Now that there is a new Government in place and it looks like the policy direction is not going to favour certain people who have parcels of lands at certain specific places, they are now coming to the National Assembly with a water-washed motion and with crocodile tears. Let the National Assembly operate in a bipartisan way and let us sit down together in a multi-agency task force so that you would be able to position developmental projects to suit your friends and cronies. But the PPP/C has been elected to govern and govern we will. When we govern, we will govern in the interest and for the benefit of all the people.

The ExxonMobil Corporation has indicated... [**Ms. Ferguson:** Speak the truth.] It is the truth I am speaking that is why you are sitting there. If Ms. Ferguson wants me to speak the truth, I can read an audit report for her. But I will spare her tonight.

Now that we are in Government and the ExxonMobil Corporation has had numerous finds, the Hon. Minister has just announced to the public, I think it is the 20<sup>th</sup> find. We anticipate that there will have to be a lot more FPSO units. A few years ago, we used to have maybe 40 ships making a call at Port Georgetown. The last record I have from the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) is more than 700 a month. The traffic is busy, things are happening, and more will be happening.

As a Government, let me make it very clear that the jobs that should go to Guyanese will not be given away to people in Trinidad and Tobago and in Houston Texas, United States of America (USA). We will develop the capacity in Guyana and provide the environment for locals to participate. So whether those developments are at West Demerara, whether they are at Parika, whether they are at the Pomeroon River Mouth, whether they are in Berbice, Mahaica, or on the East Coast, or on the East Bank, wherever our people are able to operate, based upon standards and in keeping with the specifications that have been designed and established by the oil company, they will be able to get the permits for development so that we could have Guyana booming for the benefit of all the people of Guyana – all three counties.

We want to emphasise that this multi-agency approach that... The mover of this motion, or I should say the writer of this motion must have researched the PPP/C's manifesto, because the PPP/C's manifesto reads the following:

“Central to the achievement of better management of our natural resources is the issue of better land management and access to land. We will:

- Establish a formal inter-agency mechanism for the purpose of coordination among the forestry, mining, agriculture, settlements and infrastructure sectors. This mechanism will serve to address multiple land use conflicts – on ICT - foster fair, transparent and equitable land allocation decisions, and address inter-sectoral issues regarding the implementation of land use policy”.

Mr. Patterson is seeking to get some attention [**Mr. Hamilton:** The pathological liar] ...

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Member. Hon. Minister Mr. Hamilton... Go ahead, Hon. Minister.

**Bishop Edghill:** Yes, Sir. We did not need the Opposition to come to the National Assembly to tell us about this. While we were yet planning Guyana's future, while sitting in this august House as an alternative government, we said, 'This is our approach, and we will continue to pursue it in that regard'. There is no other government, whether PNC/R or APNU/AFC, that could match any track record of multi-sectoral approach and consultation with people.

With the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), countrywide consultation. With the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), nationwide consultations. Local content, nationwide consultations. As it relates to important matters of crime, national disasters, ask the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip, Cde. Gail Teixeira, how many stakeholder forums have been held at the highest office, the Office of the President, where the Opposition was invited to take part. In their last five years, they had no such track record. Please do not come here and lecture us on something that you are insincere about.

I will close in the interest of time and because we have a long night by saying two things. I want to show the National Assembly Guyana's economic development, its multisectoral approach, and, particularly, that oil and gas are in good hands. It is being managed and its development will be in such a way for the development of all Guyanese.

Secondly, we will continue to report to this National Assembly in an open and a transparent manner. We have pledged to the people of Guyana that we are going to make it unlawful for anyone to collect oil money and not declare it. We intend to ensure that we hold the highest standards of accountability. Our hands are always outstretched to any serious, meaningful, developmental partner who wants to sit at the table, recognising us as a legitimate Government; we will sit with them and engage.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you, this is not a motion that is worth any support from a government that is serious about Guyana's development because it is basically filled with insincerity, grandstanding, seeking attention, hoping to grab headlines, but not to do anything serious. Guyana's development will not be stymied by people who are uncooperative. We are serious about moving Guyana forward. Thank you very much. [*Applause*]

**Ms. Sarabo-Halley:** Mr. Speaker, I rise of course to support my Colleague in the motion under consideration relating to the location of Guyana's shore base services.



Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder when we are here in this supposedly august House whether or not we believe that the louder we shout and the more mistreats we tell, that it actually gets us anywhere. At the outset, I take this opportunity to express my solidarity with our Guyanese brothers and sisters whose lives and livelihoods have been devastated by the ongoing floods. As the flood waters continue to rise, Guyanese from all walks of life, irrespective of their ethnicity, creed or political persuasion, are being adversely impacted. In other words, human beings are being affected, which is why it is disgusting that, daily, we receive hundreds of reports of persons who have been severely affected, being bypassed by the Administration in their real efforts. As one Minister of the Regime declared, when requesting that his emissary single out their supporters for relief, *he ain't name Noah*. Well, he was right, because even Noah hearkened unto the words of the lord and did the right thing. Instead of a humanitarian response to the crisis, we see a stiff-necked, high-handed, discriminatory approach. If the worst natural disaster in Guyana's history does not necessitate a transparent, bipartisan approach to helping Guyanese rebuild their lives, then what does? I am disappointed to see that the President installed a team like this. I am disappointed that he has squandered this golden opportunity to convince Guyanese that his vision of *One Guyana* is not only mere talk and hype. It would do the Administration well to remember the admonition that a man can do what he wants, but not for as long as he wants. The reality is that the flood is affecting all Guyanese.

7.05 p.m.

The flooding has further increased the price of food items in the markets. Persons have resorted to selling decaying animals that have died due to the flood. We run the risk of major health issues for those directly affected by the floodwaters and those who buy food due to that. In spite of their complete control of the media, the reality is that most Guyanese are completely fed up with the PPP/C after 11 months. We have seen 11 months of incompetence, mismanagement, corruption, and discrimination.

May I further go on to, one: commend the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs for his glowing reviews of Dr. Rodney. But the question must be asked: Why now? The PPP/C's revisionism does not and cannot erase history. If my understanding of history is accurate, it is this same PPP/C that was preparing to form a left alliance with the late Linden Forbes Sampson (LFS) Burnham in 1985. Am I right? Everyone who was part of the Working People's Alliance (WPA)

of Dr. Rodney would attest that the PPP/C had, to the disgust of his Comrades, paraded Dr. Rodney's name to the abuse of African Guyanese. If he was alive today, I am confident that he would have been speaking about your excesses and atrocities. It is indeed a pity that he who is in such a good place to practice the *Rodneyites* principles is a central figure in the abuse of African Guyanese and Mr. Courtney Crum-Ewing's name comes to mind. So, the recent reparations by the PPP/C does not alter their torturous avoidance of Dr. Rodney's killing in a timely manner between 1992 to 2021.

While it must be noted that it was Chancellor Cummings who ruled that Dr. Rodney's charges should be set aside and not the Attorney General's, I must again say thank you for your high praise and response to Dr. Patricia Rodney's request for the record to be altered. Indeed, his books belong in schools. This should have been done long ago so that Guyanese children would be better off by it. Might I add that Dr. Rodney's book: *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* should be compulsory reading for Parliamentarians. As one would hope that all this signals a new respect and understanding of the role of African Guyanese and the role that they have played in the building of this beautiful country.

The Hon. Frank Anthony in his speech just now on the Coronavirus disease (COVID- 19) sought to quote Martin Carter:

“...all are involved, all are consumed.”

The Hon. Member then went on to say that the COVID-19 pandemic is a national issue. In quotes:

“...we must rise above the differences and... work in the people's interest by encouraging them to...”

All are lovely words but here are the facts. It was the PPP/C that called the COVID-19 virus a hoax; it was the PPP/C who refused to join the National COVID-19 Task Force when we were in Office and invited them to do so; it was the PPP/C who told this nation that they have a plan; it was the PPP/C who refused to invite us to join their COVID-19 Task Force when they illegally took Office; and it was the PPP/C's incompetence and mismanagement that has us here with over 400 deaths and 18,000 positive cases. It is only fitting that they recognise it is due to their failures to properly educate and keep the Guyanese populace safe that they now come requesting our

assistance. Let it be known that we are doing what we need to inform our constituents about the dangers of the COVID-19 virus and the need for them to be vaccinated. But, if they are truly serious about us working together, then the least they can do is invite us to be a part of the COVID-19 Task Force so that we can be better placed and informed to speak to the Guyanese public. Actions speak louder than words, Hon. Minister of Health.

Having said that, I wish to say that this motion is purely about ensuring that our natural resources are exploited in a transparent, responsible, and sustainable manner with minimum impact on the environment as possible. Our concern is about preventing harm to our people which will most certainly result from a degraded environment. It is not about gunning for anyone; it is about insisting that the constitutional right of every Guyanese to an environment that is not harmful to his or her health or wellbeing is respected. It is about holding the Government accountable for the constitutional duty imposed upon it by article 149 (J) of *the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana*. That is the duty of the State.

It is my humble view that this motion seeks to bring to the attention of those on the other side and the Guyanese public, the need to pay consideration to some very pertinent issues relating to oil and gas. The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson did an excellent job highlighting the major issues surrounding locations of shore bases in Guyana. As I stand in support of this motion, I would like to take us back in time with the hope that highlighting these errors would cause the Members on the other side to remember their lapse in judgement so that they do not repeat the same mistakes.

In 1993 – this was the year after they gained power and quite reflective of their governing style, they then chose to open the Le Repentir Landfill Site or what we may know as the ‘dumpsite’ in the middle of our capital city and minutes away from a population of over 3,000 persons and minutes away from schools and playgrounds. Was any proper assessment done to determine whether this was the best location given the surrounding environment? Was any assessment done to determine the likely health issues of having a dumpsite so close to the city? Was an assessment done on the likely expansion of the city and how the opening of a dumpsite there would impact that expansion? It was obvious that no proper analysis or feasibility study was done. Thus, when the fire started and the gases began to escape causing major discomfort to the communities around the dumpsite, only then was it recognised that something needed to be done. Maybe there was no care or consideration because of who would have been affected.

Some would say in hindsight it is 20/20. I would proffer that any Government that wants to be seen as interested in the welfare of its citizens and has a modicum of respect for the capital city or even just have a proper development plan that focused on zoning, would tell you that a dumpsite at that location may not be the best of ideas. The end result was that many of us had to suffer through it.

Imagine even after the dumpsite reached its capacity, it was still being used as a dumpsite because sufficient attention was never placed on it to ensure that another landfill site was adequately prepared to accommodate the city's waste, further affecting the lives of those who lived nearby.

The point of this is that those on the other side have a bad history when it comes to making the best decisions for the environment. It is my hope that they would spend some time listening and taking the valid advice from us on this side of the House who have a sincere interest in the environment and welfare of the people of this country.

Part of the motion speaks to zoning and the importance of it on this matter. If we look at what has transpired over the last 23 years, we will see that there was no clear direction, no development plan, and no land use quality that dictated how things should happen in this city and in this country. When we speak about shore bases, we are coming from that same space. We are coming from recognition and realisation that this Government, illegal as it may, has no interest and no consideration and takes no care in these issues. What we see now is a concrete facility, illegal as it is, that had to be closed and the Minister was chased out of it because there was no sense of zoning. What should happen, where it should happen and why it should happen – these things are basic. At least, I believe they should be basic for any Government that wants to develop the country. The reality is, the PPP/C Administration's clear guidance is on who has ownership of the lands closest to the Demerara River and on how is it that they could put moneys in their own pockets, and their friend's pockets, not caring for the people who live around and who would be affected by those things.

The Gods are speaking to us here in Guyana – the floods, the health crisis, the hunger that has pervaded the society and the high cost of living. We are abandoning the environment and bowing down to big oil and our business friends who want a quick dollar at any cost. Where is the Champion of the Earth? Oh, how we have lost our way.

Now we have, as I said before, illegal concrete factories, mangroves being cut down and now the proposed establishment of a source storage and calibration building facility at Houston, Georgetown. I think about all the flooding in the gold mining areas, the mercury being washed into rivers and on land, which gets into the environment and food chain from fish and farming, all the fertilisers and pesticides from coastal farming areas all washed into the rivers, canals and the effects on the environment. These people want to put chemical treatment plants, hazardous waste and radioactive waste in Guyana's coastal below sea level environment which is always flooding.

The onus is on those on the other side of the House. They spent over US\$110 million to get into power. They pawned, borrowed and made deals. Now, they are there and are putting the lives of all of us at risk. The question is why? As in all environmental matters worldwide, we must follow the money. Who own all of these lands? Who are getting the sweet deals? Whose pockets are these moneys going into. Our demands must be of the State, which according to article 149 (J) has a constitutional meaning and a legal and moral duty to protect the environment for the benefit of present and future generations. The Government must not and should not be allowed to sacrifice the health and welfare of the people of Guyana and the environment at the altar of economics.

Every Guyanese looks forward to participating in the patrimony of this nation and all companies, whether local or overseas can be meaningful partners in this endeavour. But again, I reiterate that this cannot be at the expense of the health and wellbeing of the Guyanese public. The United Nations (UN) through the Regional Observatory on Planning for Development stated:

“The primary objective of the National Land Use Plan (NLUP) is to provide a strategic framework to guide land development in Guyana. As such the NLUP is built upon a number of national policies and strategies that have a direct relevance for land use and land management. A main objective of the NLUP is to enable financial resources to be targeted at optimal land uses at the regional level. To this regard, the NLUP has been compiled from a policy of active promotion of multiple land use.”

A taskforce is thus necessary. I am of the firm belief that too many persons or personal interest are affecting the decisions being made. The decisions being made are not being made in the best interest of the health and wellbeing of our citizens. The decisions that are being made as it relates to the shore bases whether it be in the Demerara, the Essequibo or in Berbice are not being made

in the best interest of the Guyanese people but the best interest of a few. It must be taken out of the hands of the few and put into the hands of the Guyanese population, and a decision has to be made in the best interest of all Guyana.

As I stand here in support of the motion, I say that I prefer that the shore base motion be passed and accepted by this National Assembly. Thank you. [*Applause.*]

*7.20 p.m.*

**Minister within the Ministry of Public Works [Mr. Indar]:** Sherod Duncan, if you talk one more time about my house, you might cross it, and I might have to go and pray to rebuke it, so please do not talk about my house in the National Assembly.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you can refer to other Members as Honourable.

**Mr. Indar:** The Hon. Member. I rise to discuss the motion that was brought to the House by the Hon. Member, Mr. David Patterson. I listened as he was presenting his case for this motion, and he mentioned a couple of things. I took notes on the points that he mentioned, not because they made sense, but because it was the opposite. I am going to go through some of them and give my presentation.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, chose to leave...After he put forward a motion, he left the House because the response that he is going to get, he would not like it; but I am happy that these things are recorded.

The first thing Mr. Patterson spoke about was the environment. Since when does the Hon. Member care for the environment in any way, shape or form? Could he say what he had put in place, at a policy level, to protect the environment? I am yet to see that.

The other thing he spoke about was economic diversification. I do not know if he does not understand what economic diversification is, but to speak about economic diversification when the last Government... Oh, Mr. Patterson is at the top there; he came back. Good. You cannot speak about economic diversification when your Government was shutting down sectors in the economy as it went along. That is the record of your Government while you were in Office.

Economic diversification with respect to oil and gas, what the APNU/AFC Government was doing when it was in Office was shutting down sugar, shutting down rice, closing concessions and taxing miners. Does that sound like economic diversification? In fact, it is the opposite. It was shutting down the economy and only depending on the oil and gas sector. When you talk about economic diversification, you much check your own record and your own doings.

The other point he spoke about was shore base development, and he talked about Berbice and Essequibo, and how Demerara does not have enough places and so on. When we came into Office, there was a long list, from the top here to the bottom there, of persons who had applied for shore bases and could not even have gotten a meeting with the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson. There was a long list of permits for people who wanted to build shore bases, wherever they chose as an investor, and they could not have gotten it.

When we came into Government, Minister Edghill and I were asked to take a look at it. Within a short period of time, we dealt with all of the agencies where these things were hooked up and stagnated, and we approved about 16 of them. That is the why there are shore bases now expanding and moving laterally. The current shore base that he spoke about, the Guyana Shore Base Incorporated (GYSBI), had 15 permits stuck in different agencies. We had to go and look at each one of them, dredge them up from where they were, to give persons permits so that they could do building out.

Now, under this Government, they are building out and expanding their pier, pier three and pier four. You cannot talk about expansion of shore bases when right in the Demerara area there were people with applications for development of fabrication yards that have gone nowhere. For two years, there were Guyanese people who partnered with foreign oil and gas gear one contractors and wanted permits to build fabrication space. They waited for two years and could not receive their permits, and we are talking about vibrancy in developing shore bases. Vibrancy is the word I heard him use. He used the word vibrancy; that is the opposite of vibrancy.

Let us look at the other thing the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, spoke about. He talked about local capacity and capability; these are fancy terms but let us talk about them. I came from the private sector as the President of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and I had to fight on every carton box in every corner of the street for local content, and I never got it from

the previous Government that is sitting across there. When you were in Government, there was nothing for five long years. So, you cannot talk about capacity development and capability development when you sat there and allowed the oil and gas sector to move from zero in five years without doing a single thing to help the sector.

You have not done anything to the petroleum legislation that was there since the 80s. You brought a 29-page Petroleum Commission Bill to National Assembly that gives one Minister powers, like an Idi Amin set up. It was the worst piece of legislation and that is your record; check the records and you would see it. Everything, every permit and every development plan, had to go to that one Minister for approval. That is not development; that is antidevelopment; and that is your record. If you want, I could send a copy of that legislation that you put forward to the last Parliament for every one of the new Members who do not know that came. That is not development.

You talked about training...

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, you are talking to me, and you are accusing me of all these things.

**Mr. Indar:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, talked about training. Where is the training school for oil and gas people? If you could point to the school, then I would not make the point, but there is none. Where are the certification bodies that you are talking about for oil and gas? Where are they? Show me. If you could show me, then I would not make the point, but there are none.

These points were raised by Mr. Patterson about Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and other investments. The only thing that happened under the APNU/AFC Government was oil and gas investment. There was no other Foreign Direct Investment in the five years that they were in Office. If you think I am telling this Parliament something that is not the truth, show me the evidence that there is someone else who came here and had a sizeable investment in this country. There was none.

He spoke about a screening study, and it had pictures in it of areas of ports. I do not need to see pictures to understand Guyana. I walked this country. My feet and my Colleague's feet...we walked every inch of this country. We know where the places are; we know where the lands are. What screening did you have? Every single area in which a port facility is supposed to go or could



go is looked at and evaluated. Investors coming into the country look at varying things. They look at proximity to operation; they look at distance to operation because it impacts cost. Hon. Member, you would not understand these things because you do not know anything about logistics and cost. As a businessman, when you go into operation, you check your distance from where you operate to where your base is, and the movement is what drives cost. Every single person who comes into this country looking for shore base, you cannot dictate where they should go. It is the investor that is bearing the risk and they dictate where they want to go. They would say where is more suitable for them. To say that you are screening and that you are finding shore bases but, for whom?

The other thing is that he spoke about shore bases in Trinidad, Chaguaramas. Indeed, Chaguaramas and Galeota are the places where most of the operations happen, apart from Guyana. He is correct with Chaguaramas, but he forgot to mention Galeota. If you knew the fact that shore bases were needed, Hon. Member Mr. Patterson, why did you hold up all the permits? When we went into Government there was a moratorium. A moratorium means there was a cessation, a stoppage, on issuing permits. If you knew that we needed shore bases so much, why did you stop it and had only one perspective shore base operator in Essequibo and all of the opportunities and all of the partners going to them? Is that how you manage?

Recently, His Excellency was at a signing of an opening of a yard. I think Minister Ashni Singh was there, among other Ministers. That is because when we came into Government, we issued those permits and the yard could have been a reality last week. That is the kind of development that we push. We do not come here and speak fancy words and expect people to hear and believe. People have eyes. The citizens of this country have eyes and ears; they saw what you did, and they heard what you did. You cannot mislead them anymore.

I continue. He spoke about sea defence and the approval process, and what he called an EISA, which is an Environmental Impact and Social Assessment. Sea defence is a body that is set up because of a law. The body has persons from every part of this coastal region and agency on it. It is an institution...the Sea Defence Board issues permits. I am saying to you that the permits in question, which the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, spoke about, were given. So, do not come to this Parliament and say that they did not have a permit. The permit was issued with criteria on how to construct.

The other issue that the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, spoke about was leases and you talked about it being 'wild'. It was your Government that gave away the river to a member, a friend, a camaraderie of the APNU/AFC. The river was given away and if you want, I could send a copy of the lease to you all. I could send a copy of the lease to every single Member of the Opposition.

I now turn to the Hon. Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, who just spoke before me. She spoke about the PPP/C having mismanagement and corruption. That is a trait of the APNU/AFC. You are speaking about your own party. You spoke about us being an installed Government. Some 144 countries stated that we were elected through a free and fair election. Who are you all to say that we were installed? Where is the basis for that?

Lastly, the Hon Member, Ms. Sarabo-Halley, talked about assessment and feasibility studies, and how we have not done any studies. You all should have done a feasibility study before you sent out all the sugar workers.

You spoke about us having no strategy. Well, let me tell you that the PPP/C has multiple strategies. Let me just go through them for you. We have the National Development Strategy. We have the National Competitiveness Strategy. Sherod Duncan, you should read those. You might learn a thing or two. We have a Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS), which is a widely circulated strategy. We have a National Housing Strategy. We have an infrastructural strategy. We have a land use policy. We have a health strategy. We have an education strategy. Listen to me. This Government does not guess and operate. We do not have a dart board operation. We sit down, we formulate plans and we implement them.

There was a study done and the name of the study is the *History of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry in Southern Louisiana*. This study speaks about the cumulative and the transitory effects of development in a young oil and gas economy. It speaks about displacement and how you manage it. You cannot build a shore base as a fly over. How are you going to build a shore base as a fly over?

7.35 p.m.

A shore base, ladies and gentlemen, if some of you all have never gone, is a place where boats have to come to a port. You have to develop the port. How do you develop the port? [**An. Hon.**

**Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Listen. Cumulative and transitory effects of development have winners and losers.

You all talked about local content. The reason local content and businesses in Guyana are not benefitting is because, during the Hon. Member's, Mr. Patterson's, time in Government – he just said it – it was coming out of Chaguaramas and Galeota. All the logistics, the brokerage, everything was done in Trinidad. What were Guyanese getting? That is why it has to be built here.

This motion speaks about participation and a task force. The last time they had studies done, the last time they had assessments done, Members of the previous Government took that information and gave it to their friends and Colleagues. Persons bought land and all of those things. Once they knew where a shore base or where development was going, they bought lands and the most high-priced assets, and they took it. Participating in a task force, I think that is good riddance.

I have never seen the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan; the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Joseph Harmon; and their Colleague, Hon. Member Mahipaul, in a speed boat. The last time I saw them they were somewhere in the river in a speed boat. I am very happy that you all, at least, took the trip. I would have been happier if you all had taken that trip when you were in Government to visit the people in Wales. There are 1,753 of them that you all fired.

You should have taken the same kind of approach, but you did not do that because the people of Wales had to take you all to court to get their severance pay. You all are talking about diversification, talk about that. You are talking about jobs, talk about that. They had to take you all to court.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, we, as a Government, plan to expand development across the country. The speed with which it is done is based on two things – the vibrancy of how we push it and the appetite of an investor to go further out. Persons may go further out, or they may choose to work in an area where other supplies and suppliers are easily accessible. That is something we have no control over – an investor's appetite to go anywhere – but we know what Government can do. The Government is considering Berbice and Essequibo. We did not need the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, to bring a motion to tell us that. That is the common thing. There are three rivers moving offshore and those are the three rivers on which we have to operate.

I am very happy that I have had the chance to put my little two cents into this motion. I rest my case. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Figueira:** Twenty-fourth August, 2016, *Guyana Chronicle*:

“Director of Sport hands over flood lamps for MSC ground”

It would have been remiss of me because when I said that the Minister was misleading the House, my statement was premised on facts and evidence that the Minister was pathologically mendacious.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, are we going back there again? Could you kindly withdraw that? We made a decision. I made a decision. Could you contribute to this motion now please?

**Mr. Figueira:** Mr. Speaker, one hearing the Hon. Minister Indar and not paying attention would have been inclined to believe that he knew what he was talking about. To come into the House and say that when you went into the Ministry you found a list of applications from people who applied for shore base and that their applications were not answered speaks to the fact of the need for a national development policy. Applying for a shore base does not speak to a systematic approach. I am happy to educate you, my Comrade. I join my Colleagues in this debate on this motion which seeks to address the structural policy deficiency in the oil and gas sector in our country.

However, from the onset, I want to state that the APNU/AFC supports the development of this sector. What we would like is to see its potential harnessed in a holistic way and driven by a coherent set of policies. The evidence of the last few months of wanton removal of mangroves, aided by the complementary comments of the sitting Minister, who stated that development has to continue regardless, speaks volume. Such arrogance does not augur well for national development. What good is this development if it affects the very people it was intended to service?

It is that same Minister who is now in search of reasons flooding persists, and ventures to blame Pump Attendants. Once you miss the boat, it is time to start swimming, Hon. Minister. Segmented development will often lead to disgruntlement, as was evident recently in the press by numerous residents making their views known, be it on the East Bank or the West Bank. They are concerned about the negative impact experienced by certain aspects of the development complementary to the oil and gas sector.

Another important variable is the Government's quest to entrench ethnic capitalism by moving to dispossess one group of Guyanese, poised to benefit from the oil and gas sector, of property. The PPP/C is just reacting to developments in the society and it is devoid of a cogent policy. Hence, everyday some other person from this particular group is sanctioned to make way for PPP/C supporters.

The Government's industrial policy, if it had existed, should have empowered Cevon's Waste Management or Puran Brothers Inc. to establish one or two waste treatment facilities rather than have Trinidad get all of the business. This would have benefitted Guyana and the Guyanese economy, but the Government is busy trying to get Cevon's land to give a PPP/C supporter in the shore base business. This need not be done. That is why there is need for proper planning and policy in this area.

The lack of policy coherence in the sector is complemented by the PPP/C dismantling one of the little institutional knowledge developed over the past five years, thus placing the country at a disadvantage, especially to the big players in the sector. Now, the Government is busy looking to see which group of Guyanese own lands that can benefit from shore base, rather than moving into the direction of legislating more robust rules and policies for the sector.

The Government, in its quest to appease its co-conspirators in the 2020 national elections, terminated the service of Dr. Vincent Adams from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Today, the PPP/C pays rapt attention to Dr. Adams' penned articles in the press. Make no mistake, the PPP/C care not how much Guyana has lost and is losing in the oil sector. Correspondingly, the players in the in the oil and gas sector, knowing that there is no qualified and experienced brain at the EPA, have seized the opportunity not to take the agency seriously because it is void of clout. This is complemented by the fact that people at the bargaining table on behalf of Guyana have little or no practical or professional experience in the oil and gas sector. Guyana's disposition was engineered by the PPP/C when it wantonly dismissed a large number of qualified persons after 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2020.

Proper policy and the policing of the oil and gas sector matter because there are no industrial zones demarcated specially for shore base across the three counties. We see a mad rush to convert land holdings in residential districts into a hub of activities for related services to the discomfort of the

immediate inhabitants. Such a situation has consequences for housing, transportation and the environment. If the obsession of this Government is for the base to be close to Georgetown, why did they not merge the Guyana National Industrial Corporation (GNIC) and the Demerara Shipping Company Limited, alter the road to expand the port to have greater synergy in the use of the space and make it available for shore base? This would have positively affected aspects of transportation disruption the city now faces.

The installed Government needs to give leadership by popularising prudent policy directions for this sector. One must ask why all the activities seem concentrated in Demerara when the proximity of the oil wells is well within reasonable vicinity to serve both Berbice and Essequibo bases. While I concede that available human resource is a constraint, one of the most important variables is lack of policy direction. The country has not planned for this and the PPP/C is forever in a reaction mode.

Targeted industrial policies that are coherent would inform any sane government in developing countries that three or four shore bases in a 30 to 50-mile radius will lead to a transportation nightmare, given the state of our country's infrastructure platform. The East Bank is testimony to that of which I speak.

Secondly, the PPP/C is not a Government known for equally empowering all strata of the society. Hence, a dedicated effort must be made, through policy, to share the wealth from the oil and gas sector across all of Guyana. Today, the ordinary man can count the benefits of the PPP/C Government since August, 2020, given his/her earnings and the steep rise in cost of living, Covid-19 deaths and the floods that keep following the PPP/C around. Thus, it is important that mechanisms be in place that guarantee every Guyanese some benefit from the oil and gas sector and not just the business community and friends of Cabinet.

*7.50 p.m.*

I say this knowing that, in August 2020, beef was sold at \$400 per pound, but in April, 2021, it is being sold at \$800 to \$1,000 per pound – the great macroeconomic policy of the PPP/C for the poor, with no increase in wages and salaries.

Again, I ask, where is the national development plan to cater for the development that will come with this new sector, such as better infrastructure and roads? For example, let us look at the road from Linden to Lethem. Are we just going to focus on building a road or are we going to consider how we will maximise the usage of its corridor? Where will we set up that must have free zones? Where will we set up storage facilities, all of which I believe should be in and around Linden? Where will we establish tow stations and cater for gas station truck stops? Have we thought about how we will deal with the insurance compatibility? For example, in Brazil, drivers use the right hand of the road and we, in Guyana, drive the left hand. What treaties do we have to deal with insurance and all of these associated types of trade agreements? When these trucks come with people, money and their cargo, do we allow them to just pass through the township of Linden? What are some of the enablers that will be provided to the people to cater for those who have come and there is need for them to sleep? There will be a need for more hotels, more motels, guest houses and more houses. There will be a need for entertainment, restaurants, supermarkets, parks, *et cetera*, to ensure that some of the moneys the people come with stay and build the local economy.

Additionally, will the transporting of these cargoes use the Linden Highway or the Demerara River or will both options be used or considered? Will we repair the Omai Gold Mine Limited (OGML) port and expand it or should we expand the bauxite port so that bigger vessels can come and take these products down the Demerara River to be put on larger ships? Why are these ports not even being considered for the establishment of shore bases? We definitely have the space for expansion greater than what presently obtains.

Is there a plan to dredge and desilt the river? I ask this specifically because in the 1970s and 1980s, ships coming up the Demerara River to collect bauxite had the capacity to collect 30-35 tons of bauxite. Now, the vessels coming, in 2021, have the capacity for less than 20,000 tons. There is a much greater need for the rivers to be dredged and to be desilted. Since this is not done, there is an inverse effect on our economy. Let us say, for example, that our rice is \$5 a ton. When a 20-ton vessel comes to collect our rice, our rice suddenly becomes expensive rice on the world market. By virtue of our own actions, we cannot bring out the quantities to keep the prices down. If we were able to bring a 30-40-ton vessel, our product would become more competitive because we will be able to take out larger volumes at a lower price. This is why the river needs to be dredged

and why there is need for more shore bases to be placed in the Berbice or Essequibo regions with serious consideration for deep water harbour.

What is the Government's developmental plan that will really enable the playing field for locals to benefit from this industry? Yes, there is talk about the local content policy, which the Hon. Member Indar just mentioned, and Guyanese companies should benefit, and rightfully so. When an oil company puts out its report and says 90% of the companies that it does business with are Guyanese, it must be taken into context. Registering a company in Guyana essentially makes it a Guyanese company. Given our capacity shortages in skillset facilities and much needed resources to service these industries, the oil companies are not going to wait on us to catch up, despite all the noise being made by locals. These foreign companies, having seen our weaknesses and the opportunities that exist, come in, partner with a local, give them 2 or 5% ownership of the company, and now they say that they are giving our locals business, when, in reality, they are not.

The Government's local content policy has to be taken very seriously, so it needs to address this reality. That is the only way it can address this reality, that our local businesses – that Guyanese – can really benefit from the patrimony of our country. How is it that we are enabling locals to have and experience real benefit in this sector? That is a fundamental question the Government has failed to answer. Some sadly feel that local content is the ability of a man to buy a beer. Our local content must look at every aspect of our society. For example, Mr. Speaker, when you prepare your budget, even for your own office and you have to buy water, beverage or bread, you know that Banks D'Aguiar's Industries and Holdings (DIH) Limited and Bakewell Bakery make these items. In our local content policy, it must be ingrained, it must be written very pellucidly that you have to buy local once it is available right here, once it is manufactured right here and once local businesses are making these products. That must be the true reflection of what our local content policy must contain. That is the only way we will be able to benefit from this local content policy that the Government is talking about. You only buy things overseas that you do not manufacture as yet.

Take, for example, American citizens working for their Government in remote parts of the world where American Airline planes go once a month. Those citizens, those workers, will have to wait for that plane to come before they leave that location. If they choose to leave without waiting for the American Airline plane, they have to pay their own way. That is local content. In some



countries, the local content policy states that locals must, and I repeat, must have controlling share of the company. Be it 51, 52 or 53% ownership, local born Guyanese must have the controlling share. That is how you build a local economy. That is how you build local businesses; it is by making decisive national decisions to benefit your people. I dare say that this local content policy does not speak in that language.

For example, in the Nigerian oil and gas sector, the pipes the oil companies used were threaded in the United Kingdom (UK). The Nigerian Government then imposed a tariff that made it exorbitant to thread those pipes in the UK. By doing so, local Nigerians— and in some regard, in partnership with foreigners— were able to set up facilities in Nigeria and the pipes were threaded there, creating real benefit for the people of that country and creating real opportunities for the people of that country. Therefore, the Government has to do certain things. I am happy that the Minister of Finance is here because he will have to craft the architecture to ensure that these benefits are derived by Guyanese people. Certain things have to be done so that we can have a certain effect. I say to this House, this is what is not being done for our people and for our country. We really have to look at this sector in a holistic way and drill down all the possible things that can be done and how we can get it done right here. It should be about empowering our people and giving them employment opportunities in the land of their birth.

The local content policy is not only about foreigners spending money and creating jobs here and there. This policy ought to be very specific in certain aspects. It has to be about jump starting the local private sector and the manufacturing sector in Guyana. That is what this local content policy must be about. That should be its primary focus – to jumpstart our local private sector to ensure that the downstream of what this oil and gas potential offers starts a lot of cottage industries and manufacturing companies from which our Guyanese brethren and *sistren* will be able to benefit.

Government needs to set up timelines— give ourselves timelines and objectives of when we want to achieve these things. Let us invest in certain facilities. If the local private sector cannot do it, the Government must do it. Invest in these facilities. If the Government does not want to invest in the facilities, give the incentives – more concessions to our local private sector, even to foreigners who are in partnership, real beneficial partnership, with Guyanese businessmen and businesswomen. If need be, let us raise tariffs on the importation of skills and labour, so as to force companies to invest in those skills and labour right here, just like what happened in Linden with

the bauxite company where it established the Linden Technical Institute and trained locals so that they could serve the bauxite company. I am saying, and as you are aware, Guyana does not have the skillset for this budding new industry that has the potential to transform Guyana to rival any country in the world. We do not have the skillset but we have the human resources right here, but you need to give them the opportunities. You need to make decisive decisions as leaders for the benefit of your people and, most importantly, for the benefit of this country.

Additionally, when these companies come with personnel with certain skills, say to them that, in five years, we will have locals understudying you. When our people, in those five years, have acquired the requisite skills, knowledge and know-how, we say to those companies, you can no longer import these skills because Guyanese are well equipped and capable of serving these industries.

I say to us, this content policy must be looked at with a different lens. It must be looked at with the Guyanese lens and not the PPP lens; the Guyanese lens. It must incorporate the views of every Guyanese on this side of the House, on that side of the House, locally and in the diaspora.

*8.05 p.m.*

That is the only way we will truly achieve developmental apex in this country. We have to, and not use the tyranny of numbers when it comes to voting to dispel good ideas that could develop our country as a collective. We have to be smarter as Guyanese. We have to be mature as politicians and we have to be mature as leaders if we really want Guyana to achieve its developmental apex. We have to end this clannish approach to politics because we would not move to the next level where the world and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will see us as the true leaders, as we ought to be.

So, we have an innate responsibility, as leaders and as Guyanese, to do what is best. This local content policy provides the best opportunity, here and now, for us to start, take a leap and make a giant step in a direction where all of Guyana could benefit as a collective. This policy has to be rudimentary and systematic, all aimed at our people's benefit.

Sir, the question is: why can we not start to store fuel right here or put systems in place now, so that when production gets high, we have storage facilities right here in Guyana? I put it to you that

Linden has enough space to store some of this fuel. Let us pray that the cost of living goes down, and when it does, our farmers will have the option of storing their produce in facilities and, if need be, put it into facilities and store it so when the prices go up, they could make better profits. That is what happens in other parts of the Caribbean. It happens with our neighbour right next door, in Trinidad. Why can we not do it? We have the real potential, not talk shop potential. We have the most arable lands in the entire Caribbean make up. We must capitalise on becoming the food basket of CARICOM. If we are to become the food basket of CARICOM, let us start establishing storage facilities, so that our local farmers could benefit, tremendously, from the prospects of what could be obtained in agriculture.

We have invested in sugar, and I understand the politics behind it, but let us look beyond sugar because sugar in Guyana is dead. You may not want to accept it, publicly, but I know indoors you do. Let us invest in scotch bonnet pepper, for example. It is one of the largest revenue earners in Jamaica. Let us invest in soursop. It is the third largest revenue earners in Grenada. Those are lands that could fit in a community in this country. I say to us, let us capitalise on those prospects that Guyana has.

What are we doing with the by-products of the oil and gas industry? Are we going to give them to our people, at a fraction of the cost, as incentives to set up cottage industries, such as fertiliser plants, to complement the agriculture sector? Besides the electricity generation potential in the oil and gas sector, there is also a potential for the generation and storage of heat because the by-product from the production of electricity is heat. What do we do with this? Do we continually dump it into the oceans, changing the habitat of the sea and affecting another industry, the fishing industry? Do we allow the heat just to escape into the sky, which potentially causes acid rain? Why do we not harness this heat and put it through pipelines and in the national pipe networks and let the customers of Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI), whomever wants, pay for hot and cold water? These are potential cottage industries from which we could benefit from as spinoffs from this oil and gas sector.

There is much need, and I cannot stress it more, for our national developmental plan.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time is up.

**Mr. Figueira:** (*Inaudible*).

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have a way of arguing with the Speaker who, I think, is very meticulous. I raised this at the two minutes warning.

*[Mr. Speaker displayed his time piece.]*

**Mr. Figueira:** *(Inaudible)*.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time is up. Hon. Prime Minister, you have the floor.

## **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO. 11**

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That Standing Order No. 11 be suspended to enable this sitting of the National Assembly to continue with its business beyond 8.00 p.m.”

*[Prime Minister]*

**Mr. Speaker:** The Hon. Prime Minister moved a motion that we suspend Standing Orders No. 11 so that we could go beyond 8 o'clock. We had moved the resolution earlier on that, during the Coronavirus disease pandemic, the timings will finish at 8.00 p.m. I did not want to interrupt the Hon. Member to ask for the suspension. Thank you very much, Hon. Prime Minister.

*Standing Order suspended.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member Dr. Cummings, you may make your presentation.

**Dr. Cummings:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I commence by offering sincere condolences to the 417 persons who have succumbed to the Coronavirus disease, including a 17-year-old, as well as a journalist, among others. Of course, I take this opportunity to encourage those who have not been vaccinated to get vaccinated, including the anti-vaxxers.

I also want to sympathise with those who have been displaced by the recent floods throughout the length and breadth of Guyana, especially those in the more vulnerable communities who have been affected by water-related diseases. It is my wish that... what should I say? I do not want to say illegitimate regime. I do not want to say installed Government. I do not want to say self-serving autocrats. I would just say my good Friends over there.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, I would prefer you say my good, Hon. Friends over there.

**Dr. Cummings:** It is my wish that, in addition to sharing hampers and dry goods, efforts be made to identify preventative strategies appropriate to address the various types of water-related mechanisms, be it water borne, water washed, water based or water-related insect vectors.

I join with my Colleague to speak to the motion on the location of Guyana shore bases, specifically the Demerara location.

As the A Partnership For National Unity/Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) began its reign in May, 2015, there was the ushering in of a new dispensation – optimism and the discovery of oil by the oil company and giant, ExxonMobil Corporation. Hence, Guyana became an oil producing nation on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, a mere five years after the APNU/AFC's tenure in Office and approximately eight months after discovery. Although ExxonMobil Corporation had awarded a contract to Guyana Shore Base Incorporated (GYSBI) for the shore base to be located on the Demerara River, the busiest river in the country, the APNU/AFC Coalition Government had committed to establishing industrial areas for the construction of future bases so as to streamline and bring equity of wealth and resources among the people in the three counties of Guyana, namely Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo.

The APNU/AFC Coalition believes that Guyana must develop opportunities for which the petroleum resources will provide for economic prosperity, and thus overcome the challenge of ensuring that the natural resource wealth leads to sustained economic growth and development. The APNU/AFC posits that development must not only mean an increase in material wealth, in physical capital, infrastructure and foreign assets, but an increase in human capital and an improvement in the welfare of the citizens of Guyana so that they could enjoy 'the good life'.

The APNU/AFC continues to strive to close the gap between the hinterland and the coastland. It was the APNU/AFC's leader, Cde. David Arthur Granger, who stated that the creation of the increased fiscal space by the commencement of petroleum production will allow the latitude to ratchet up the pace of implementation of these transformative changes in our communities, towns and, of course, the nation.

What is the current situation? The area of choice – Houston – has since been a hub of activities and an increase in traffic, while environmental concerns remain. The oil company, ExxonMobil Corporation, has indicated that plans are afoot to have at least five floating production storage and offloading (FPSOs) in operation by 2025, and that is in addition to multiple drill ships and support vessels. The Demerara River, at its lower extremity or close to its estuary, is overtaken by a plethora of maritime and other related activities daily, which already places the area as a high traffic zone. According to Mr. Michael Kennish:

“Estuaries exhibit a wide array of human impacts that can compromise their ecological integrity, because of rapid population growth and uncontrolled development in many coastal regions worldwide.”

Therefore, remedial actions would be necessary to improve the viability and health of these valuable coastal systems following any long-term environmental problems that could plague the estuaries in the long-term.

According to Mr. Kennish, it is important to carry out:

“Detailed examination of the effects of pollution inputs, the loss and alteration of estuarine habitat, and the role of other anthropogenic stress indicates that water quality and water quality in estuaries, particularly urbanized systems, is often compromised by the overloading of nutrients and organic matter, the influx of pathogens, and the accumulation of chemical contaminants.”

In addition, owing to the proximity of the estuary of the Demerara River, there could also be degradation of biotic communities as the result of the destruction of fringing wetlands and loss and alteration of estuarine habitats. Thus, habitat destruction can contribute to the decline of biodiversity. As I mentioned before, chemical contaminants, notably synthetic organic compounds, will remain a serious problem, especially in heavily industrialised areas. However, these thoughts, should I say, pale in significance, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army stated:

“...on the western bank of the Demerara River, areas are already being identified for the creation of shore base facilities and the Wales Development Authority; all of which will complement the multi-billion -dollar gas to energy project. Furthermore, the Head of State

noted that the new four-lane highway to be constructed from Schoonard to Parika will create more industrial developments with spin-off projects in manufacturing and agro-processing expected.”

*8.20 p.m.*

According to Dr. Irfaan Ali, there is a new wave of investment, thereby stimulating growth and creating jobs for thousands of Guyanese.

This situation could result in multiple river use conflicts and demands. Among the stakeholders we are talking about here are ship operators, small river crafts, terminal operators, fisheries, tourists, sea and river defence, even Guyana Power and Light with its submarine cables, which already pose a challenge to river navigation, among others.

It is a well-known fact that the port area is already congested. Therefore, any additional activity, especially the establishment of a shore base facility, will exacerbate the situation. It is important to note that the Demerara River still offers the best possible option for the establishment of a deep-water port to facilitate marine trade and international shipping.

Our nation’s ports and harbours are crucial components of our shipping system and a lynch pin of our economy. Being the only English-speaking country in South America and our working to be the breadbasket of the Caribbean could allow Guyana to blossom into a formidable trading partner to other parts of the world.

Like the United States’ Army, the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) could explore dredge material to enhance wildlife habitats by creating nestling islands for waterfowl and create, preserve and restore wetlands.

Fisheries have also been improved by mounding dredge materials to establish fish refuge habitats. These projects are particularly important because of the crucial role wetlands play in our environment, as they serve as rest stops for migratory birds, help prevent flooding and control erosion. I am wondering if it is wise to mention same, as there seems to be a paradigm shift in the way we approach mangroves. I will leave it at that. Hence, the deep-water port is pivotal and remains one of the most efficient means of freight transportation and for the transport of goods by water. The extensive use of water-borne shipping helps to keep the cost of durable, bulk and

consumer goods affordable for businesses and consumers. Therefore, the nation's ports and harbours are a crucial component of our shipping system and, as I mentioned before, could be the lynch pin of our economy.

Any attempt at establishing a shore base facility must include consultation with stakeholders. There must be widespread stakeholder consultations and intersectoral collaboration and consultation. So, it is all stakeholders. Government, private sector, civil society and citizens alike need to be constructively engaged to achieve and not neglect, of course, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 14, when we look at life below water.

It is an open secret that Guyana is a blessed country with a very wide coastline. Therefore, there is no need to crowd out the Demerara area for oil and gas operations and administrations. The Essequibo and Berbice counties must be part of the consideration and potential shore base locations to allow for 21<sup>st</sup> Century development.

Mr. Speaker, you will agree with the APNU/AFC Coalition that a development of this nature will require a proper feasibility study and environmental impact assessment. We talk about environmental impact assessment. At the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there was a lack of capacity at this agency. It has been alleged that no one takes this agency seriously.

In January, ExxonMobil Corporation, once again, sent out advertisements for another shore base and a wild stampede has occurred. What exists now? Anyone who has access to land by river is cutting and clearing wildly, seeking to get into the action. It is still to be seen the name of the agency or corporation that is monitoring this burst of activity. As I mentioned before, several communities have been challenging EPA, ExxonMobil Corporation and the Government because of the unwanted and unapproved construction of industrial businesses in their neighbours...concrete plant in South. There must be some transparency as to the way environmental assessments are done and approvals granted.

Mr. Indar, Hon. Member – has he left? – explained that the Government has issued over a dozen permits for the Guyana Shore Base Inc. to conduct its constructive activities, and those permits have been put to good use. He boasted that there is expansion and that we would see this Guyana Shore Base Inc. building two additional berths to moor vessels coming from the open ocean. He



said it is going to be completed in October and that the berths were constructed with full local content being realised, whatever that means. He stated:

“Next door at GYSBI is a US\$16 million project, of which I’ve clarified from the developers that most of (the works went) to local contractors, sand providers, transportation people. Local people are getting that.”

Who are these people? Are they the cronies? Are they friends? Is it being equitably distributed? These words like marginality comes into your...under the participation results from preventative the factors such as poverty and discrimination, ethnicity. These words, we try not to use them loosely, but they are words that must be placed there.

It is obvious that the Government has no plan, at this stage, as it relates to shore base activities in Guyana, including possible locations in the near distant future. If there is a plan, where is the plan? The APNU/AFC Coalition is positing that there is a lack of a national development plan and unless a holistic plan is developed and approved, the selected players will continue to operate *willy-nilly*. There seems to be a lack of zoning regulations, as was pointed out earlier. Businesses could construct commercial and industrial operations in traditional residential areas.

It is the APNU/AFC’s belief or, rather, we want to suggest that, when considering the economics, instead of pumping millions into the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo), the Government should be directing ExxonMobil Corporation and these companies to build the next base in Berbice and Essequibo so that everyone or every county benefits. There is a need for the development of a national maritime plan, a master plan, that will inform development in the port environment and areas that are in relatively close proximity to the port, as in this case. The present dilemma with the user conflicts was occasioned because the maritime sector was always on the back burner, while in other countries, it is catalytic for development. So, we need to watch that.

It is interesting to note that the General Manger of Guyana Shore Base Inc. has acknowledged that the shore base facility is now faced with a situation that is impossible to grasp all the necessary skills for the environment, as efforts are made to expand its shore base capabilities outside of Georgetown. He stated:

“There is quite a lot of mixing of various services and products [being] supplied to the oil industry, mixing with residential zoning... We don’t have that differential zoning between an industrial sector and a residential sector.”

There is a lot of work to be done. We do not want to do something and then plan after. Let us plan first and then work our plan.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to let you know that the APNU/AFC Coalition is saying that a task force is needed for such important activities. An inclusionary task force will allow for strategic thinking and formulate strategic areas for dealing, comprehensively, with shore base activities.

The clause states:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Government of Guyana informs ExxonMobil and all other Oil and Gas Operators that all future shore bases shall be State-Owned but leased to private operators...”

By the way, there is a difference between State-owned and State-controlled. We are looking here at transparency. If there is transparency, the citizens of Guyana could benefit because transparency could reduce avenues for corruption. Transparency could shed light on public expenditures, made on behalf of the State, of State-owned enterprises. It also enables citizens to scrutinise this information and there are benefits for State-owned enterprises. Transparency could improve access to capital. It could promote public-private partnerships and facilitate ease of doing business. There is reporting on revenues and a quasi-fiscal expenditure, and it could enhance State-owned enterprises’ status as national champions and help build trust among the Guyanese people. Transparency could enhance State-owned enterprises’ efficiency so as to increase the Government’s share of dividends and increase revenues. Transparency could help to clarify the rules governing financial relationships between State-owned enterprises and the Government. Data on State-owned enterprises, revenues, as I mentioned before, and quasi-fiscal expenditures support decision making in the energy transition. We could see this in common examples as in Nigeria and Afghanistan where they have monthly and yearly audits.

As I conclude, the APNU/AFC Coalition is proffering that, while the development of a shore base facility will aid in the promotion of national economic development, it should not be hastily

pursued. All possible options should be explored, and the best ideas adopted and implemented. That the Government owns the lands but could lease or sell it out for operations to the private sector, this is like what is done worldwide and what has been done before. All industrial parks, established under all Governments, were State land sold to private companies. However, this route ensures some amount of transparency, as I alluded to earlier, since the Parliament and the National Assembly could have some oversight. Currently, there is no oversight on the sale and disposal of lands. We hope that they will improve in that area.

Looking at this motion, we have already spoken about the task force; we have spoken about so many things. I join with my other Colleagues to support this motion. Thank you very much.  
[Applause]

**Mr. Ramjattan:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate that I was taken somewhat by surprise by both the Hon. Bishop Edghill and Mr. Indar, Hon. Member, in the way they assailed this very important motion coming from a person who knows the issues surrounding shore bases more than most.

We must appreciate that this aspect of the matter that is so new and novel to all of us in Guyana – shore bases, that is a facility that is going to help the oil sector, the FPSOs in a variety of matters, in a variety of methods and with services provisioning, which would ensure that Guyanese are employed.

*8.35 p.m.*

It will ensure also that Guyanese, by the virtue of that employment, enhance their reputations to be better mariners, boat captains, shippers and so many things in this vast sphere. To go and say that we must establish a multi-party agency to prepare a land use policy for where these shore bases should be. That kind of attack ... This is an important motion, Mr. Speaker. It is very important. Knowing that so many people have started a scramble – like in the olden days of going to the west for gold – along mangrove banks of the Demerara River, which has, by nature, a protective attribute about it, requires a land use policy in relation to shore bases. So, it is important that the adhococracy that is almost permanent in these matters now be replaced with planned authority.

We know the privateering interest of the capitalist class, the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). I used to learn that at Acaba College. We know that their prime motive will always be what is called profits and more profits. We also know that could only be restrained and constrained by the State. They can be shackled sometimes to the extent that the freedom of capitalist enterprise is not there and that is a bad thing. They could be unruly horses whereby they could damage the entire bank and create clusters that could be environmentally hazardous, to the extent that their private entrepreneurship is something dastardly.

*[Mr. Speaker left Chair.]*

*[Mr. Seeraj, Presiding Member, assumed the Chair.]*

That is what this motion is all about – to walk that narrow corridor. Development and growth is indeed a narrow corridor. There is a famous book that was written by the authors of *Why Nations Fail*, Acemoglu and Robinson. There is a most recent one that talks about this narrow corridor. It states if we do not get in between the privateering and profiteering interest of the capitalist, as against the state, ensuring the larger society benefits from their enterprise, walking that narrow corridor could mean reversing into a road to ruins. That is fundamental. It is fundamental to the extent that this authority of a task force that will be made up of people like... If Mr. McCoy wants to be there, he could be or he cannot be there, but we could have experts who could understand it.

I want to also state something that one of the most famous of our politicians and one who tutored me in these things – and tutored you, too, Mr. Seeraj – Dr. Jagan used to talk about, the non-discrimination of development.

I recall that when we did this Constitution, new as it is, we ensured that article 34 was placed there. It is the duty of the State to enhance the cohesiveness of the society by eliminating discriminatory distinctions between town and country. What this motion has is but a concrete approach towards getting there. That is what it has. This aspect of it has to do with not only delivering the services from the Demerara end. We know that you sometimes cannot go and say that you are taking away people's choices but if you do not have planning that goes along... The other word for planning is regulation. We must have regulation.

What this motion seeks to do is to ask for regulations in relation to shore bases. It will always be a good thing if the experts here in the multi-agency task force can do such a land use policy, especially if they do so and report to this National Assembly, as the first Resolved Clause states, as early as within six months – or we could extend that – for purposes of our analysis there from of that report, so that we would be in a better position to learn where we are going to do this.

I say so also with this distinction, very important, between town development as against country development because Guyana is a big country. When we did this motion, we wanted to know how much more miles it would take if one were to go Essequibo or Berbice as against coming straight to Demerara. Do you know what is the difference? It is 10 miles. As a matter of fact, Berbice might be shorter in distance than Demerara. It will ensure that there is more development works of a different order that the Berbicians can see. Do you only want them to plant rice and cut cane? Do you not want them to understand something different, such as marine life, how to clean radioactive materials in the pipes and whatever is in there, and get an enhanced education to do that kind of thing? Let some Essequibians find a place to put this, assuming that the Task Force could find it, so that those Essequibians who worked so hard in their areas can have their next generation, their children, coming up to say to their dads they would like to go into that industry, and that they want training in relation to that.

Of course, the nuclear effect of that kind of economy is the setting up vocational schools across there for the purpose of ensuring that our children of tomorrow will not be cane cutters and rice farmers only. That is the benefit of this motion.

It is important that we do not do this thing of wanting, like the Hon. Member, Mr. Anand Persaud, our children to cut cane only. They do not want to cut it anymore. Go and ask all the managers all over the place. When you are not with an imagination and any innovation in thinking, you are going to be stuck. That is why you are going to remain like a dinosaur. I do not want Guyana to be a Jurassic Park with only dinosaurs like certain Hon. Members here. We want to move on. It is so fundamental that this motion be supported.

There is what is called, in the politics of a modern world, the tragedy of our commons. Our commons mean our lands, people, culture or whatever. There is a certain tragedy when we think only of wanting to do that which we did a 100 years ago. That is not what caused London to

develop into London or New York to develop into New York. [Ms. Ferguson: Singapore.] ...and Singapore to develop into Singapore. It is because of a tragedy of our commons, especially of the thinking of certain people. That creates tragedy. Their interest alone matters as against the larger interest of all. I want to quote from another book by Mr. Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. I think he won a Pulitzer Prize for this. This is what he states:

“Consider a situation in which many consumers are harvesting a communally owned resource, such as fishermen catching fish in an area of ocean, or herders grazing their sheep on a communal pasture. If everybody over-harvests the resource, it will become depleted by overfishing or overgrazing and thus decline or even disappear, and all of the consumers will suffer. It would therefore be in the common interests of all consumers to exercise restraint and not overharvest. But as long as there is no effective regulation of how much resource each consumer can harvest, then each consumer would be correct to reason ...”

This, that is the Jurassic Park dinosaurs that we are talking about.

“...If I don't catch that fish or let my sheep graze that grass, some other fisherman or herder will anyway, so it makes no sense for me to refrain from overfishing or overharvesting.”

That is what operates because it is human nature.

“The correct rational behavior...”

is that we must then regulate. That is what is being sought here. For those people who do not want to regulate, he then goes on to state why they do not want to.

“Chief among the forces affecting [the non-regulators who are committing] political folly is lust for power, named by Tacitus as ‘the most flagrant of all passions.’”

This is a fantastic piece of writing. He goes on to state ... [Mr. Nandlall: What does the book state about rigged elections?] It states that you should not have rigged elections too and everybody who is in Guyana, must vote in Guyana. They must not be in the United States of America and vote in America. That is on page 504. [Ms. Ferguson: *Inaudible*] do not share out Identification Cards (ID) (*inaudible*) Do not share ID cards.] Do not share ID cards. You and your ID cards. By

the way, these are my books. I bought them. I did not get a President to give me them. [Mr. McCoy: Do you not see that your hair is falling out?] Yes, it is catching up Mr. Bharrat Jadgeo's, I think.

A more familiar economist, probably known by Dr. Ashni Singh, would be Joseph Stiglitz. He is the winner of a Nobel Prize. He wrote this very famous one called, *People, Power and Profits*. [Mr. Nandlall: He did not talk about rigged elections.] He talked about rigged elections too. He talked about it to ensure that it is genuinely [inaudible]. He deals with, "Regulation and Writing the Rules of the Game," as the motion is asking for. This is at page 143:

"There are many areas where it is best to leave production to the private sector. That doesn't, however, mean the private sector should be able to do whatever it wants. It needs to be regulated. We have to understand why and when we need regulation, how best to manage the regulatory process, and why it is that in many areas, the problem today is not overregulation, but underregulation."

He goes on to state once we have:

"... an interdependent society, there has to be regulation."

It is very important, as I have indicated here. [An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)] It is just because he cannot, you know. That is the trouble.

8.50 p.m.

Mr. Stiglitz goes on to talk about what it is about the regulatory process... and I am going to read a little extended passage here because it, indeed, applies almost square on. When us lawyers do cases in court and when we find a case that applies almost square on, we love to 'chill out' in it. And, when I saw this passage, I literally chilled out.

"Designing a good, efficient regulatory system is difficult, but we've done a remarkably good job of combining expertise with checks and balances. We want to avoid politicization of the regulatory process as far as possible..."

It is important that these become accountable agencies which intern implement that which the lawmakers have impartially tried to get.

“We’ve even created regulations to ensure that regulations are made and enforced fairly and efficiently.”

Then he goes on to talk about:

“Commentators can suggest improvements and alterations... Then the agency proposing the regulation has to respond to the comments, eventually issuing a final version. And those who do not like the regulations can challenge these in court...”

That is basically what we are talking about here. I would like to take my advice from a person of this stature, an Economist, rather than one who would want the entire adhocracy to dominate there in the mangroves of West Bank.

These are important matters which we have to address and we have to address them as early as possible because of the fact that we do not have time. Time is always against us. It is clear that, if we did not do that, we are going to have inequality. This thing called inequality is a humongous problem today. It is best that the State comes in, not the Leviathan State, but an Entrepreneurial State that can help build, as is mentioned in the other resolve clause, and that can help to do these shore bases and give it out to operators who can deal with ExxonMobil Corporation. It is always far more useful because, when the State does that, one is going to have lots more of the regulations and environmental issues, and many other construction issues – safety of the environment in relation to mangroves and all of that. The State is always better in relation to that than private profiteers. Because you might not be in a position, today, for Guyanese to have the capacity to find the financing for purposes of getting down to these shore bases, it is always a good thing that the Entrepreneurial State gets that job done.

Yes, you may have some of them saying that Mr. Ramjattan was the ideolog who has now turn a socialist, and that he is now looking to ask the State to do that. It is not socialism. The Entrepreneurial State is like the nationalist State. One wants them to look after the interest of Guyanese. It is so important that this be understood as being the backbone and the crux and core of this motion, rather than giving the impression as if we want to score points. It is because we are aware that there is a lot of opaqueness about what is going on with shore bases now. We do not even know the players and when we know the players like we know TriStar Incorporated... he has



violated all the laws. That is what we now know. If it is something, that company or its proprietors ought to have been indicted under the Forestry Amendment Act of 2010.

Did you not hear what the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, talked about? He said that these things happened shortly after. Do you know what caused all of this? It is because we signed on, in 2015 or 2016, to that oil exploitation production agreement. That has caused all of this.

A lot of them did not want us to do that but, when one signs on to that, a whole lot of other new problems, new dilemmas and new challenges will occur. What we are asking for and what we are now saying, in view of all these challenges which are arriving, is that this is what must be done. Experts and natural resource agencies must come in.

I want to correct something, which is propaganda, and that is that we hid some signature bonus deal. I am aware that, two weeks after we signed the agreement, it was registered in the Deeds and Commercial Registries Authority. It was there for the entire world to see. It is there and they are now saying that we hid it. A lot of the deals with shore bases we know nothing about. We would hope that these deals could go into some registry so that we could, for the sake of our next generation, see them.

We had done something in the Environmental Protection Act to ensure that the next generation can know by virtue of doing public hearings. Do you know what is now the fallacy and the charade of public hearings going on with the EPA? They go to the people at East Bank, they shout them down and then they walked away. That is not transparency. It is very important for all of us to find that narrow corridor in which transparency, justice and the rightfulness about decision making... and not the folly of it all as we are seeing now. Environmental standards being put together and, also, a huge place because Guyana has a lot of land... Whether it is taking another five miles or another 10 miles to Berbice, it does not matter. It will not matter because ExxonMobil Corporation will still be serviced. It is an extra five miles with the boat carrying whatever oil pipes and whatever other things. At least, we will have developments in Essequibo, and we will have developments in Berbice. We must not allow the crabs that caused the Crab Island deal, by virtue of fake leases and all of that, to despoil development. That is why all of these things are so important; all of these.

I want to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that no right-thinking person is going to state that this is a bad motion. We are giving our support to the Government in relation to ensuring that this 'thing'

is done properly. It is important that we all support it for the equitable development across Guyana. For the benefit of all Guyanese, we must ensure that we set up this task force, we get our experts and that we do that which is the right thing for our country.

Those persons over there who do not like zoning would love to see the chaos and the anarchy from which we suffer these days. We were there for a five-year period and we inherited a lot of these things. They are giving the impression as if, in 2015, the traffic congestion on East Bank of Demerara was not there. They are giving the impression as if a number of these challenges were not there and – once we went in there and signed up the agreement and created what is called growth rates that will be more than 25% and all of that – as if we did nothing at all. But that is not right. What is right is regulation. What is right is zoning. What is right is some experts, now, ensuring that we have equitable development for all of Guyana. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

**Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance [Dr. Singh]:** I rise to make my contribution to this debate on this motion moved by the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson, on the subject of the location of Guyana shore base services.

I listened with great and keen interest to the contributions made by our Colleagues on that side of the House. As speaker after speaker, on that side of the House, stood and regaled us with almost evangelical zeal of the virtues of this motion and the importance of what they described as – just to borrow the words of the last speaker – the importance of regulations, zoning, *et cetera*, one might, perhaps, be forgiven for thinking that there was some measure of seriousness and sincerity in the arguments that were offered by our Colleagues on that side of the House had they, perhaps, spent the last 10, 15 or 20 years in Opposition. One will scarcely believe that a party which believes so fervently in regulations, zoning, in a multi-agency task force to prepare our land use policy, and in all of these measures that are proposed... One could scarcely imagine that these arguments were being offered by a party that spent the last five years in Government.

Sir, it causes one to wonder if the APNU+AFC believes, as they appear now in their current incarnation, that a land use policy is so important. One has to ask oneself what they were doing for the last five years.

Sir, Mr. Ramjattan spoke about the fact that we do not have time and that we need to move with haste to set up this multi-agency task force and prepare this land use policy. Sir, they just spent five years in Government and left nothing to show for it except green painted buildings, green painted fences, green napkins and green letterheads. Sir, look around, that was what was important for them. Green frivolity. Frivolity! They spent five years engaged in an excursion of frivolity in Government and have left absolutely no policy of any significance, no new project, no legacy of which to speak, except a legacy of disrepair and disgrace.

9.05 p.m.

And they come now to this House and stand up and dare to lecture this House and this country on how important a land use policy is. The very Minister who was responsible for this sector cannot demonstrate a single effort to implement any of the things and cannot point to a single step that he has taken during his term in Office. While he was in Office, his priority was on getting birthday gifts, bangles and bracelets. That was his priority. Now that he has stepped out of Office, he is suddenly concerned about the land use policy. Where were you for five years? To give you an example of the kind of historical revisionism that the APNU/AFC would like to subject this country to, I will cite only one example. In fact, I will cite one for the time being. I might, as I go along, cite a few more. I will use, merely, the point made by the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, about the signing bonus. Sir, I wish to quote from the *Kaieteur News* of 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017. The headline reads:

“No signing bonus with ExxonMobil – Finance Minister”

And there is a picture of the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Winston Jordan. I will quote from this article. Mr. Jordan stated that such a claim, and he was referring to the claim that there was a signing bonus, is a figment of the imagination.

Mr. Jordan stated that such a claim is a figment of the imagination and that there is, and I will quote:

“and that there is ‘no agreement for any bonus’”.

This was on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017. While, Sir [**An Hon. Member: (Inaudible)**] No, Sir. There is a very important chronological point that needs to be made. Because, while Mr. Jordan made the

point, on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017, that the claim is a figment of the imagination and that there is no agreement for any bonus, on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2016, his Ministry had written to the central bank to open a bank account designated ‘Signing Bonus Granted By ExxonMobil.’ What is further is that, when questioned on this matter, he is on camera as saying he does not know, he could not tell us and that he was not part of any negotiations, so he could not say how they arrived at \$18 million. He said that he could not say who negotiated the ‘thing’ and that, to be quite honest, he did not know. This is the *pièce de résistance*. He said that, in fact, he thought that it was a gift. And that, Sir, is not a figment of my imagination and that is not a figment of anybody’s imagination in Guyana. That is captured on video for posterity.

This business about historical revisionism, trying to rewrite history and trying to deceive the people of Guyana will not work, as it did not work on every other occasion in the past. The people of Guyana are well aware of the facts. I cite this only as one example, but there are many others. The fact of the matter is that, on literally every question of public policy... Let us take the one that is at hand, the land use policy. I have searched the APNU/AFC manifesto. I have two successive manifestos. Since they are such champions of land use policy, I have searched their 2015 manifesto. As a matter of fact, I seem to recall that, in 2015, they very reluctantly and belatedly released a manifesto, if I remember correctly. I have searched the APNU/AFC manifesto of 2015 and I have searched the APNU/AFC manifesto of 2020. Now, I readily confess that my eyesight is not as sharp as it used to be when I was younger, but I searched copiously, and I was unable to find, in both of the last two successive manifestos of the APNU/AFC, a single reference to land use policy. I was unable to find a single reference to land use policy. But now, as soon as they are in Opposition, as soon as the people of Guyana rightfully and justifiably consign them to the ranks of the Opposition, they suddenly embrace the virtues of a land use policy.

Let me contrast our People’s Progressive Party/Civic’s manifesto for 2020. I will read for you very quickly because I believe a speaker before me already referenced it. I believe Hon. Minister Edghill already referenced it. We stated very clearly that we will:

“● Establish a formal inter-agency mechanism for the purpose of coordination among the forestry, mining, agriculture, settlements and infrastructure sectors... and address inter-sectoral issues regarding the implementation of land use policy.

- Implement a National Land Use Policy with a regional dimension and which harmonizes residential and commercial interests.”

This is a direct quotation from the People’s Progressive Party/ Civic’s manifesto for 2020. [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Yes. In fact, we are delivering all of our manifesto promises. Did you deliver the \$9,000 per bag of paddy? Did you deliver the 20% or 40% increase that you promised sugar workers? [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] We actually delivered what we promised. You promised to cut taxes, but instead you put value added tax (VAT) on electricity, VAT on water, VAT on education, VAT on health, VAT on heavy equipment and VAT on everything. Then you say that you cut taxes. You added 200 new taxes when you had promised to cut taxes. Now, you dare to come here and speak about delivering promises, Sir. Let me make it crystal clear that, whereas for five years the APNU/AFC engaged in nothing but a land grab for their cronies, now, suddenly, they have woken up to the virtues of a land use policy. Where is the [**Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] We can speak about the *Riggersville* that was being established and all of the land that was given away after the no confidence motion and, indeed, after 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020 when they had already lost Government.

Let me go further. If one were to really examine this motion, one would see, first of all, clear evidence that the APNU/AFC is seeking now to advocate actions that they made no effort to take while they were in Government. But, I will go further and I will point out that the motion, in its very formulation, points to the gross ineptitude and incompetence that characterised the APNU/AFC while in Government. It points to the ineptitude and incompetence that characterised their time in Government, and I will point out just a few examples that are reflected in the formulation of this motion.

First of all, the first be it resolved clause makes reference or calls, rather, for a national taskforce to prepare a land use policy. It would appear that the author of this motion is of the view that a national land use policy would somehow dictate which areas are to be used for what, whether it is the Berbice River or the Demerara River, or wherever, should be used for shore base and where should not be used for shore base. That reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of what a land use policy really will do. A land use policy will not dictate what area should be used for what. A land use policy will, instead, outline the broad principles that will govern the management and use of land; objectives for land use, including issues such as economic growth and efficient uses of

land; issues related to multiple purposes of land use; issues on addressing how land conflicts can be addressed and avoided; and what types of land use should be promoted. It has nothing to do with whether to use Berbice River or the Demerara River for land. The mere conceptualizing of this motion that, somehow, a land use policy will dictate where to put shore base and where not to put shore base, reflects a fundamental lack of understanding of what land use policy aims to do, first of all.

9.20 p.m.

Secondly, the mere fact that the motion refers to a land use policy specifically... We hear the Hon. Member, Mr. Ramjattan, speaking of a land use policy for shore base. Those are his words, not mine. That is reflective of the thinking because this is what the motion states. The motion speaks of a land use policy, specifically, for the location of the oil and gas sector. Sir, by very definition, a land use policy cannot focus on a particular sector. There are alternative and competing uses for land; there are complimentary uses for land; there are support services to feed the oil and gas sector; there are issues related to transport infrastructure to connect to the logistic services that are required; and there are issues related to commercial and residential use of land. Are you going to carve out a land use policy? You are going to carve out a land use policy only to dictate where you are going to put the shore base without any consideration of what you are going to do with transport infrastructure, with connectivity, with industrial and commercial use of land, with energy supply, and with urbanisation and population location. The Opposition wants to do a land use policy for shore base. Nothing could better illustrate the incompetence and ineptitude of the APNU/AFC.

I submit that, in addition to the grandstanding... Do you know that in the Caribbean, there is a word I believe, and I hope I am using it correctly, called *pampazetting*? You sat in Government for five years of which, for two years, you were squatting illegally. You did nothing except paint fence green, paint buildings green, print a letterhead green... [**Mr. Nandlall:** Christmas party, \$50 million] Christmas party for \$50 million. That is all you did for five years in Government, Sir. Now, when the people of Guyana have consigned you to where they belong, you come here *pampazetting*. [**Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)] Ah! If you want to see more evidence of *pampazetting*, Sir, this is what the motion states. The motion states:

“...it is the preference of this National Assembly for future onshore bases to be in the Counties of Berbice and Essequibo to ensure parity in development of the Oil and Gas Industry...”

I also see something about equal-able. I do not know if I am reading the correct version. [Mr. Ramjattan: Equitable.] It is perhaps ‘equitable’. I am misreading it or, maybe, it was misprinted.

“...the equitable...”

I suspect that was intended to be.

“... the equitable development across Guyana for the benefit of all citizens.”

Berbice and Essequibo... This morning I had the privilege of participating in an event hosted by the United Nations (UN) – the International Labour Organisation (ILO). They were launching a report that the ILO had commissioned on the socio impact of the decision to close several estates during 2016 and 2017. That report, as I said this morning and I will say this evening for the purposes of entering it in the records of this National Assembly, documented the callous and unconscionable manner in which those estates were closed and, worse yet, speaking about... [Mr. Nandlall: Ramjattan said *alyuh* people] Oh yes, that is what was said. What was said? *Alyuh* people. It was said that it is *alyuh* people. Do you know what? All of the people of Guyana are the PPP/C’s people. [Mr. Ramjattan: (Inaudible) Skeldon] Yes, and I can repeat what the people of Skeldon said to me about the trauma they faced when the Skeldon Estate was closed; tens of thousands of families. This is not the People’s Progressive Party/Civic who said it although we had said it, but this is an ILO commissioned report that documents the socio-economic havoc and trauma that was inflicted upon tens of thousands of Guyanese people. This was not just the workers, but their dependants and families and; not just their dependants and families, but the owners of small businesses who were dependent on the sugar workers and their families to go to their small businesses when they collected their pay on Fridays. It was also the villages and the entire communities which were dependent on the sugar economy.

In fact, I quoted this morning from a paragraph of the report which spoke about the fact that sugar was inseparable from the socio-economic fabric of communities. The report stated that Rose Hall was not just a sugar estate but an entire town whose economy was built around sugar. The report

spoke about Skeldon and Corriverton, and the fact that Skeldon was not just a sugar estate. Skeldon was contiguous to the Corriverton, a large population centre, whose economy was dependent on sugar.

The report documented the fact that, a commission of inquiry (COI), initiated by the APNU/AFC, examined the sugar industry and did not... stopped short, which was the language the report used, of recommending the closure of any sugar estate. But, notwithstanding that its own commission of inquiry stopped short of recommending closure of any sugar industry, that APNU/AFC Government still proceeded to close the sugar industry, inflicting hardship on tens of thousands of people [**Mr. Croal:** Havoc] wreaking havoc in their lives and destroying the village and rural agricultural economy. [**Mr. Hamilton:** And *pampazette*] Oh yes. Through you Mr. Speaker, if I may say to the Hon. Members on that side of the House, do not come now and *cry crocodile tears* about Berbice and Essequibo and *pampazette* when you spent five years in Government and cannot point to a single thing that you did to bring development to Berbice and Essequibo. Do not come now and *pampazette*.

This motion is nothing but rank political opportunism. It has multiple motives, one of which is yet another flimsy attempt to delude and deceive the people of Guyana. It has one other significant intention. The explicit design of the APNU/AFC for several years has been to frustrate development in Guyana. They by their own actions deliberately stopped, frustrated and derailed the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. Had they not done so... And I will say this: The Amaila Falls Hydropower Project was being developed by some of the largest and most credible international investors in the world. [**An Hon. Member (Government):** That is shown.] That is correct. They stepped in and, by their deliberate actions, frustrated the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. Do you know why, Sir? It is because their design is to deny the people of Guyana any development whatsoever. They rather deny the people of Guyana development for cheap political purposes. That is what this motion is all about. It is to deny and delay the massive developments that are going to unfold in Guyana as a result of the restoration of democracy despite their fervent efforts. This motion has the objective of seeking to delay and frustrate development in Guyana and, for that reason, it should be roundly and wholeheartedly rejected. I thank you very much Sir. [*Applause*]



**Mr. Sears:** It would be remiss of me not to mention how elated I am to be back in this honourable House after 98 days. It is, undoubtedly, one of Guyana's longest and unofficial parliamentary breaks.

During this break, we have experienced turmoil, we have experienced a lack of proper monitoring of budgetary allocations and the continuous unceremonious firing of public servants. In my hometown of Linden, the installed Government sent home the first-year students at the Charles Rosa School of Nursing. I go even further to say that, within those 98 days, they cut the salaries of some of our frontline workers – the nurses – because they were exercising their constitutional right to protest. Also, they have sent home some core workers and, most recently, dismissed some of the Guyana Water Incorporated's (GWI) employees, one of them being my Colleague. Within these 98 days, we have seen dangerous inflations across the country such as high cost of living. No longer can a 'small man' afford to build a home because the promise of 'no VAT on construction materials' is a farce. We have seen the increase in crime within those 98 days. We have also seen the lack of proper planning when it comes to natural disasters; more so what we are faced with right now in relation to the flood. We have seen the spiralling out-of-control contractions, hospitalisations and deaths of Guyanese as a result of the COVID-19. We are in a terrible place. Such seeming prorogation of Parliament should not be encouraged, especially when Guyanese lives are being affected. Having laid that off my chest, I bid you, my side of the House, and the other side, greetings.

This motion, which is brought to the fore in the name of the Hon. Member, David Patterson, focuses on key aspects of shore base locations in Guyana in response to the projected development in the oil and gas sector. I say this is farsighted. Kudos to you, Hon. Member.

While some of my positions may seem cross threading with those presenters or my Colleagues who have presented before, referring to it again is for emphasis.

To give a quick background, in September 2017, the ExxonMobil Corporation awarded a contract to the Guyana Shore Base Incorporated, and this was to serve their interest, since it was the only facility. This award was given despite obvious challenges, one being environmental concerns.

*9.35 p.m.*

The Houston area is now the hub for oil and gas. This became so not by a virtue of any studies or future developmental plans but, simply, by ExxonMobil Corporation awarding a contract to the said shore base company. Generally, the suppliers seek to operationalise what it was.

This is the current situation. In January, ExxonMobil Corporation announced that it needed another shore base. It just so happened that everyone who had a piece of land ran *helter skelter* and started cutting down things. This is unacceptable. In relation to what occurred on the West Coast of Demerara, laws were broken, there was no care for the environment, and there could be possible erosion or flooding. Like my Colleague, the Hon. Mr. Ramjattan, mentioned earlier, mangroves in Guyana are considered to be protective species under the Forestry Act of 2010, No. 20 of 2010, which makes them illegal to destroy. The PPP/C has already stated that this wanton act, an act of wilful misconduct, will continue, most likely among their friends, their families and their cronies. This is similar to what happened with Tristar Incorporated. This broke the hearts of many who had volunteered their time, efforts and energy in planting mangroves; all for riches and wealth, with no consideration.

Mangroves stabilises the environment. It fights against erosion. It protects against flooding. It sustains fisheries. It ensures the improvement in the quality of costal water. Most importantly, just a few years ago, the world's mangroves measured up to 24 million metric tons of carbon. This really helps our environment. Might I remind this House that the World Wild Fund for Nature Guyana (WWF) in early May, 2021, stated that a full social and environmental impact assessment must be done when it comes to the oil and gas sector. We the Opposition endorse this.

I want to ask the other side of the house: Where is the environmental and social impact assessment as it relates to this project with Tristar Incorporated? We want to see it; we the Opposition, on behalf of Guyana, want to see the impact assessment. Unfortunately, we would have to wait a very long time because there is none. I say to the honourable Members of this House that the time to act is now. Unless we have a clear-cut plan on how we can secure our future and our children's future, we would be heading down a treacherous path. It is disappointing to hear utterance of ignorance from the Hon. Member, Bishop Edghill, who, according to Stabroek News, on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2021, stated that:

“Mangroves removal necessary for development”

I ask the other side: Is this how we want to leave our legacy? Is this how we want this honourable House to be remembered? I also want to tell the other side that we must not wait in vain for progress when it comes to environmental action. I heard the previous speaker say that the APNU/AFC did not do anything within the last five years that we served. I will prove your different in a few minutes.

Several communities have been challenging Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ExxonMobil Corporation and the Government because of the unwanted and unapproved construction of industrial businesses in their neighbourhoods. Most recently, one being a concrete plant in South Ruimveldt.

It is clear that our country is moving fast; and there is nothing wrong with moving, but in order to move fast and develop, we must emphasise on having a structured plan, which this motion addresses. Guyana must be a model for other oil producing nations. We must be able to stand proud and say, yes, we have done it the right way. Our model must be the one to follow.

I must register my concern and dreadful disappointment in the recent performance of the Environmental Protection Agency. Since the sacking of EPA Executive Director, Dr. Vincent Adams, why has the EPA gone silent? No one takes the EPA serious anymore. A slap on the risk is not enough. We want penalties, fines, charges and imprisonment. That is what we want and that is what Guyana needs at this point in time.

In August 2021, the Coalition handed over an EPA that had overwhelmingly regained its high morale of the EPA staff, the respect and trust from the public, stakeholders and customers, and was on its way to achieving its vision of becoming the model agency of the nation, where all wanted to work as is evidenced in what I am going to state right now.

During our time, Hon. Member Dr. Ashni Singh, the APNU/AFC worked on improving the standard of delivery from the Environmental Protection Agency. We recruited Guyanese leadership and technical expertise of international repute, which went a far way in building a high performing organisation (HPO) of international standards. We instilled, like never before, a culture of customer focus, discipline, process, oriented competence, employee performance standards and accountability, confidence, and empowerment. We also, significantly, raised the morale,

enthusiasm, and discipline of our workforce. We also went as far as having a process for systematic responses to complaints, enquiries and permit applications. Some of those were sitting around for years without action. We also set aside a 24-hour hotline service and we opened our business hours by extending it to the lunch period. We brought over 5000 expired permits into compliance, some of which were expired for over 15 years, which happened under the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C). We also collected approximately \$143 million used for vehicle enhancement which allowed us to do a lot of field monitoring and enforcement.

We made Guyana the 9th Member of International Offshore Petroleum Environmental Regulators (IOPER), the EPA membership in the Society of petroleum engineers, and the Air & Waste Management Association (AWMA).

I could go on and on about what we did. We invested, heavily, in staff development through the revision of the study leave policy. We [inaudible] details in Texas and in Trinidad, and exposure to international conferences and management in professional organisations. That is what the APNU/AFC did, and I could go on further.

Upon the change in Administration in 2015, a forensic audit was immediately conducted to determine the staffing needs and competence required by the EPA to determine the need for 262 employees. We hired 20 skilled staff, including eight new engineers, which was previously zero, and scientists in an agency which has to be grounded in strong science and engineering. We believe in delivery and enforcement. The APNU/AFC did that.

Moving on, we opened two new offices and we were going to secure an additional two after COVID-19 period would have passed. These plans were to ensure that every region is serviced the way that it should and that every environmental issue is dealt with in a manner that is not only professional, but that which follows the laws of Guyana.

We know that persons had an issue when it came to understanding the role of the EPA. We went on a sensitisation campaign through the newspaper, using television and using radios and by having meetings in the various regions with the municipalities and the Regional Democratic Councils (RDC's) and other stakeholders. The APNU/AFC did that, Hon. Ashni Singh.

We developed regulations, standards and guides, which never existed before, for all types of industries, to allow for the systematic, objective, consistent and defensible decision making. We did about 17 such guidelines. There are many other things that we did.

Mr. Speaker, I must say to you this evening that the stage we are at with the EPA seems as if it is being used as a political tool, similarly to what has happened with the constitutional agencies, where the EPA has given no objections to the 'boys'. This is a corrupt practice. The EPA needs to fulfil its mandate and begin to forcefully address these environmental concerns. If you lack the capacity, work the channel and come to this honourable House. We the opposition would support the development and enhancement of the performance of the EPA. The EPA is the guardian of this earth, of our country and our environment. It is not the guardian of democracy. It should maintain its independence.

This motion in extract highlights a few facts that must not be ignored. One of it being our country's shore base. We only have one and it falls between two residential areas – Ruimveldt and McDoom. The increase in activities is causing not only air pollution, but we also have noise pollution and, if possible, we could also get chemical pollution and some other things that might follow. We have to treat this here with care because we are dealing with people's lives, we are dealing with the environment, and we are dealing with the health of everyone. The public must be informed about these projects – and that is what the motion talks about and about any impact that it would have on natural habitat as well as on people in the environment, like I mentioned.

An environmental disaster is potentially in the making. Oil pollutants could affect fishing for hundreds of miles. We have to be careful with this. I might even go further to say that, with the generation naturally occurring radioactive material (NORM) and with these onshore bases, there are several things that happen aside from equipment and chemicals. If security and proper monitoring are not paid attention to, these same chemicals and other waste materials, once in the wrong hands, could make, what we call, dirty bombs. We do not want to go down that line because we want our country to be safe.

We should learn from other people's mistakes and even our own. With the onshore base that we have there, that is a lesson learnt and we must do things differently. Hence, we are proposing as

the Opposition, that every county – Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice – get an onshore base. I use an example now from one of the ports in Louisiana named Port Fourchon.

With coastal wetland losses of 25 to 30 square miles per year, the long-term social, environmental and economic consequences of coastal erosion deprive not only Louisiana but also the entire Gulf of Mexico region, and the nation as a whole, of vitally important fish, wildlife, and other wetland-related economic and environmental benefits. What it did was to consult with the residents there. They consulted with the EPA and other stakeholders before they proceeded. After they had constructed that port, they thought long-term as to how to maintain the natural habitat of the wildlife. This could only be done if we have an established task force, which is what this motion is asking for. We are not playing politics when it comes to this. It is something that is needed for the benefit of all Guyanese.

In conclusion, this motion calls for the establishment of a task force to complete works started by the Coalition. Do not just see it as works started by the Coalition or that you are completing the legacy of the Coalition; see it as doing the right thing, the other side of the House. It would guard the drafting of policies, enforcement and sustainable or suitable locations, with minimal environmental impacts.

I lay to this honourable house a few things for consideration. Without a doubt Guyana needs multiple shore bases as its petroleum industry expands. We would agree with this. These bases must be built within environmental standards. Bases should enhance and partner with ecosystems where they are located and not disturb or destroy them. We need to, urgently, develop standards and regulations, so that the industry does not develop at an uncontrollable pace, as we see what is happening right now.

The current shore base at Houston was developed for the Liza phase 1 project only. Now, we have 20 discoveries coming from ExxonMobil Corporation and, likely, more would come before the end of this year. Within this regard, we must build capacity because our capacity right now is very limited. On the point of good management and corruption, the suggestion is that, in addition to laws and regulations for shore bases, there should be statutory boards set up to regulate same.

*9.50 p.m.*

Finally, these boards should comprise of relevant stakeholders such as; the petroleum companies, Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC), EPA and even regulators such as the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA). Let me make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that I in my actions and based on my presentation, truly support the Hon. Member Mr. Patterson's motion on the location of Guyana shore base services. While reminding this honourable House that we did not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we merely borrowed it from our children and, again, the decisions that we make now will affect generations to come. I encourage the other side of the House to do the right thing and support this motion. *[Applause]*

**Minister of Natural Resources [Mr. Bharrat]:** I sat and listened to a number of speakers on the Opposition benches referring to 100 days and 120 days, but we must be reminded that it was the very Opposition that kept this country waiting for 150 days while they were trying to rig the elections and while they were trying to snatch democratic rights away from our Guyanese people.

In this very building, we spent 33 days. A few days ago, was the anniversary for that. We spent 33 days recounting the votes to show that the People's Progressive Party/Civic won the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2020 Elections by over 15,000 votes. Today, we are hearing about 100 days and 120 days.

As a country we are in a bad state. We are in a bad state when there is an Opposition that plays politics with the lives of people, that plays politics with investments and plays politics with the development of our country. We have an Opposition that is playing politics with a global pandemic when people are losing their lives, rather than to get on board and urge people to take the Covid-19 vaccine that our Government is providing. We are one of the few countries in the world that is providing vaccines for its entire adult population – a small country like Guyana. When we have an Opposition that is playing politics with the lives of people during a global pandemic, we are in a bad state. When we have a national disaster, when peoples' homes are flooded and peoples' mining camps are washing away, we have politicians coming to this House and grandstanding about flooding and about people passing homes with hampers. They should get on board. This is a national disaster. This is not affecting one section of our population or one region in our country, it is affecting the entire country. They need to get on board rather than to come to this National Assembly to gain cheap political points out of a global pandemic and a national disaster in our country. That is why I said we are in a sad state when we have an Opposition that will go to this depth to gain cheap political points.

Permit me to respond to the motion filed by the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2021, Notice Paper No. 68, titled: *Location of Guyana Shore Base Services*. Let me say from the onset that the People's Progressive Party/Civic Government is willing and is opened to working with any serious-minded political party or stakeholder to develop the oil and gas sector. I say that because it is in our manifesto. We campaigned on that. We are serious about working with every stakeholder to develop our oil and gas sector so that every Guyanese can benefit. That is what we intend to do, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot have an Opposition that is using this forum to grandstand or to *pampazette* as the Hon. Minister mentioned, and to gain cheap political points. This is serious business. This is not about coming to the House and *pampazetting* to gain cheap political points. This is national development that we are talking about. This is peoples' lives that we are talking about. The Opposition needs to be serious about it and let us come to the table and discuss how we will move the oil and gas sector forward.

It is no secret, and we have to as a Government, as a people and as a country balance development with the preservation of our environment. I have listened to so many of the speakers on the Opposition benches and they sound confused, Mr. Speaker. This is because one speaker would stand and talk gloriously about protecting the environment and about how our mangroves are so important to us and that we should not cut down the mangroves. Then another speaker would stand and say we need shore base companies in Berbice and Essequibo. We need to make up our minds about what we really want. The point is, as a country we need to balance it. We must strike a balance between development and protecting our environment. That is important and that is what we have to do.

The Hon. Members on the Opposition benches who spoke are obviously confused about what really this motion is about and what they really want. I have listened to the Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, who spoke at length about local content policy. He spoke like a czar on local content policy. What the Hon. Member did not know, he should have asked about it. The APNU/AFC Government had a draft local content policy that was launched in January, 2020. Maybe he is not aware of that. The Hon. Member should have acquainted himself with what is in that local content policy that was done by his Government because everything he spoke about is not in their local content policy. The policy is available for anyone to peruse and to read for themselves. The Hon.



Member obviously was not advised that his Government had a local content policy. Just a quick perusal of the local content policy launched in January, 2020 by the APNU/AFC Government and these are just a few things that are stated that policy:

“As such the implementation of the policy depends on the willingness and good faith of all relevant parties”.

It is not written with implementation in mind. It is just a policy on paper.

Further, it states that:

“The policy does not give quantitative ratio or percentages of required employment of Local persons and/or the use of Guyanese suppliers”.

There are no targets, no measures and no timeframes. So, when the Hon. Member spoke so glowingly about local content policy, most of what he mentioned I agree with, unfortunately, it was never in the APNU/AFC draft. It is now being placed in the People’s Progressive Party/Civic’s or the Government of Guyana’s draft. That is what we are doing right now – a local content policy that will benefit Guyanese and Guyanese businesses. That is what we want, to ensure that the oil and gas sector benefits every Guyanese.

The 2020 policy provides that the local content plans of foreign companies be protected by confidentiality provisions, thus local content plans and reports must remain confidential to the operator and the Ministry. The effect of this is that it will not provide a full and fair opportunity for citizens to make an informed analysis or conclusion of how local content is being achieved. This is what is in the APNU/AFC local content policy of January, 2020. This is what we will correct in our local content policy to ensure that Guyanese and Guyanese businesses benefit from this new oil and gas sector.

I have been in this National Assembly since October, 2016 and there was never a sitting during that period of time while the APNU/AFC was in Government that I have not heard of the proverbial first oil. Every day or at every Sitting we were regaled, and we were told about first oil. The way first oil was put over was as if we would have started walking through streets of gold. I think that there were many in the APNU/AFC who were pushing or trying to campaign that money would be given to every Guyanese when oil starts to flow.

While all this *pomp and celebration* was going on for first oil, we saw people breaking coconuts, we saw the cutting of ribbons and we saw many secret meetings at the Guyana Marriot Hotel and the Pegasus Hotel Guyana. What was really done by the APNU/AFC to prepare us for first oil? That is the fundamental question I think we need to ask ourselves here today? What was done by the APNU/AFC to prepare Guyana for first oil? We have seen many countries around the world, Namibia is a very good example to show where that country has already prepared administratively for production. Yet, they are still in the exploration stage. We were quite the opposite. We had a Government that was celebrating first oil but was never preparing us administratively to deal with first oil. That is what, as a Government today, we are saddled with – to ensure that we prepare ourselves and to ensure that the benefits from the oil and gas sector benefit every Guyanese. That is the bottom line. That is the mantra for us, to ensure that every Guyanese benefit from this sector.

We do not have to look far as to what was done by the APNU/AFC with regards to the mismanagement of this sector. The Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) which was signed in June, 2016, was probably one of the worse agreement in the history of this world. Among all oil countries in this world, that was probably one of the worst oil-deal ever. Their Minister that signed the agreement said he was advised to sign the contract. One time he was advised by the GGMC, one time he was instructed to sign and one time he signed when the place was dark.

That is what we have to deal with today. We have to ensure that we create ways and find ways in which Guyanese can benefit from a lopsided contract. The Hon. Minister Dr. Singh spoke about the signing bonus. He has an article to show that in 2017, almost one year after, former Minister Jordan was still denying that we received a signing bonus. If my memory serves me right, maybe my Chief Whip could assist me, there was even a question in the National Assembly sometime in 2017, to the Hon. Minister Jordan. He denied that once again. It was almost one and a half year after that this country was actually told that we received US\$18 million as a signing bonus. When other countries were receiving US\$700 million, US\$1 billion and US\$2 billion, we received an US\$18 million signing bonus.

We were further told that a signing bonus is in a special bank account somewhere and it will be used to fight the big war with Venezuela, the big dispute with Venezuela, this controversy. That the money is there and will be used for that. We heard that it was a gift. They thought it was a gift.

When we say that the APNU/AFC was *pampazetting* but did not prepare us for first oil, these were some of the mismanagements of the oil and gas sector under the APNU/AFC.

*10.05 p.m.*

The Hon. Member Ramjattan spoke about regulatory bodies and the regulation. The very APNU/AFC brought the Petroleum Commission of Guyana Bill to this National Assembly in 2017. It was sent to a Special Select Committee and to this day, it has never seen the light. It has never seen the light because the APNU/AFC was too busy trying to stay in Government illegally after the no confidence motion and after the elections.

Our Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Act was drafted in 1986. We had a Government that was preparing for first oil, signed a PSA, but never did anything to update our legislation so that we can manage the sector. We know that we had flaring. The Hon. Member was so enthused for his motion to be debated in the National Assembly, but what the Hon. Member needs to tell the National Assembly is that the APNU/AFC left that problem with us. We inherited that problem, and we are fixing it.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Sears, just mentioned the EPA. He mentioned that the EPA needs to be stronger, that the EPA needs to introduce fines and penalties. Maybe the Hon. Member is not aware that we are instituting a fee right now for flaring. Maybe the Hon. Member is not aware of that, but we are instituting a fee for flaring of US\$30 per tonne right now. As it is now, based on the application of 36 days from ExxonMobil Corporation, Guyana stands to make almost US\$1.3 million as a fee for flaring.

There was further mismanagement of the sector. When we took over, three lifts were completed. Our demurrage fee for those three lifts, as it is today, is over US\$500,000. The demurrage fee for three lifts was over US\$500,000 under the APNU/AFC. We have had three lifts and our demurrage fee is approximately \$100,000. It is there in the Budget that, last year, in 2020, we had a savings on demurrage of over \$100 million. That is because we have been managing the sector in a better manner. We have been managing the sector in a more effective way so that we save.

Coming back to local content and training. Training is important and was mentioned by almost everyone who spoke, that yes, we have a deficit in Guyana because oil and gas is new to us. What

was done from 2016 when the PSA was signed or when the APNU/AFC took Office and we had already found oil? What was done from then to 2020, in terms of training? Nothing. Yet, we talk so glowingly about local content. Yet, we say that local people must own oil and gas companies. Yet, we say that our people must work on these shore base facilities and the offshore FPSOs, but we have done no capacity building. We have not done that.

In the few short months that we have been in Government, we already have the Global Opportunities for Long-term Development (GOLD) programme where we are offering 20,000 online scholarships to Guyanese in every part of this country, be it on the Corentyne Coast, in the Rupununi, in Kwakwani or in the Northwest District. Wherever you are from, you have an opportunity to gain one of those scholarships that is offered by our Government. His Excellency, President Irfaan Ali would have mentioned it recently, that we will develop an oil and gas institute so that our people can train right here in Guyana. We would no longer have to send one or two persons to England or to Canada at the cost of \$100 million, like what happened under the APNU/AFC Government. We will train more locally so that we can truly satisfy the local content, to create possibilities and opportunities for our people to be employed in the oil and gas sector.

If I may move to the Natural Resources Fund (NRF) or the Sovereign Wealth Fund. The Natural Resource Fund Bill was brought to this National Assembly in May, 2019. Note that May, 2019 was after the no confidence motion. May, 2019 was after the 90 days that, constitutionally, elections were supposed to be held. So, it was brought by an illegal Government to this National Assembly and passed without the Opposition being present. We did not attend because the Government was illegal at that point in time. We would have committed ourselves to fixing that Natural Resource Fund Bill or the Act now, to ensure that there is proper accountability and transparency; to ensure that we account for every dollar that is in the Natural Resource Fund and how it will be spent to develop our country and to develop the lives of every Guyanese.

There has been much talk about the environment and the cutting down of mangroves. As I mentioned, we have to balance development with protecting our environment. If we look at the track record of the APNU/AFC, in terms of protecting the environment and what their strategy to reduce or to minimise carbon emissions was, what did we have? We had the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS). What was the Green State Development Strategy? Green paint, building a green wall around Office of the President, and repainting red zinc to green zinc at

Number 53 Village. Waste of taxpayers' money. That was their Green State Development Strategy. That was their strategy to reduce carbon emissions in this country. Yet, they come to this National Assembly and speak about the cutting down of mangroves. The very mangroves that were planted by the PPP/Civic Government. If we ask the APNU/AFC, how many mangroves they planted from 2015 to 2020? Not a single one.

How many reclamation projects did you have from 2015 to 2020? Not a single one. How many reforestation projects have you had from 2015 to 2020? Not one. Yet, you come to this National Assembly and lecture us about how we need to protect the environment and how we need to reduce our emissions.

Yes, we agree that we need to reduce our emissions, we need to maintain our carbon sink status. As a Government, we have already started to address that in a practical manner. This is not talk and *gaff*. One man said that the APNU/AFC is all talk and no action. Every day we are seeing that manifesting itself, talk and no action. We have already started to address the emission level and to ensure that we remain as a carbon sink through our LCDS programme. LCDS and not Green State Development Strategy. We already have a project that will start very soon to reclaim and to reforest 600 acres of land in Region 10. The gas-to-shore project will reduce our emissions because we will not be using the heavy fuel that we are using presently at the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) at Kingston. The gas-to-shore project will significantly reduce our emissions. Our energy mixes will reduce our emissions. When we come to the National Assembly to talk about a few mangroves and we grandstand about how we love our environment so much, we are telling you about a gas-to-shore project; we are telling you about solar farms; we are telling you about hydro projects; we are telling you about the reforestation of 6000 acres of land. That is what we are telling you. We are showing you that we have tangible projects that we will have to offset the carbon emissions. The gas-to-shore project is a single project that will transform the landscape of this country. It is a project that will ensure that every Guyanese benefit – every Guyanese. The Opposition needs to get on board and support a project such as that because every single Guyanese will benefit, and it will transform the landscape of our country.

We already know that the cost of energy generation of our country is too high. As a matter of fact, in this hemisphere it is probably the highest. We have a project that will reduce that by almost 50%. You in Opposition knew that. You knew that because the Hon. Member David Patterson was

part of the team that initiated the studies, in 2017, I think. Yet, we do not come to the National Assembly and lie. We do not come to the National Assembly and lie about signing bonus. We come to the National Assembly and we are factual. I saw the study, so I will not come to you and lie. The point is that the APNU/AFC recognise that the gas-to-shore project is the way to go. That is how we need to move our country forward. The unfortunate thing is that study was done in 2017 and this is 2021. Nothing was done. Nothing further was done.

In 10 months, we have moved that project already. We have already selected the site; we have already started the geotechnical/geophysical studies. So, we have actually moved. This is not talk and no action, like you. We have already started in a tangible way to move on the project and to ensure that it is realised in the shortest possible time, so that every Guyanese can benefit from the reduction in power generation. What will also happen is that our manufacturing and industrial sectors will boom because we will have cheap power at that point in time, added with our hydro project and our other energy mixes. That is the direction in which we are taking our country with regard to the oil and gas sector.

I know that my time is going. The motion also speaks to development in Berbice and Essequibo. Our Government has no objection, we have no policy, we have nothing against development in any part of this country. If the APNU/AFC comes and says that we support a shore base in Linden, we support a shore base in Linden too. We support one in Berbice, we support one in Demerara, we support one in Essequibo. Apparently, we will have to rebuild these mangroves. We will have to do that.

At one point in time, listening to the Opposition, I was wondering if the motion is saying that we need to move the shore base from Houston. I was kind of confused listening to the Hon. Members on the Opposition benches speaking about the shore base company at Houston causing congestion in traffic and all sorts of issues related to it. The sad reality is that the very Hon. Member, when he was Minister, gave permission for the development at Houston. It was the very Hon. Member who did that. So, to come to the honourable House and to talk about the negative effects of a shore base company at Houston is two-faced.

*10.20 p.m.*

I just want to say in closing that, as a Government, we support development in every region and county in this country. We are serious about that. That is why we reopened the sugar estates in Berbice. That is why we have been taking developments to all regions and counties throughout our country. We call on the Opposition to get on board. Get on board, otherwise you will miss the ship because Guyana is going places. The next five to 10 years will be the most exciting period in the history of our country. Get on board and let us develop our country together. Thank you.  
[Applause]

**Mr. Jordan:** Mr. Speaker, permit me to sympathise with the hundreds of Guyanese across the nation who are suffering at this time from the massive floods. Their homes, cash crops, cattle and such are being destroyed. Also, permit me to sympathise with those families that would have lost their loved ones to COVID-19, for which the number is now standing at somewhere over 400. Lots of families are suffering.

The Hon. Member before me spoke about grandstanding and playing politics with a national disaster. The flood in this country is being poorly managed by this Administration. It is this Administration that is playing politics with the lives and livelihood of Guyanese when they failed to manage the floods across this nation, choosing areas and villages to go and to give care packages and cleaning agents. It is the Members of this Government who failed to ensure that pumps are installed at the requisite places. It is the Members of this Government who failed to ensure that channels and canals are cleaned so that the people would not suffer from the floodwaters that they are suffering from right now.

I assumed my position in standing to support the motion moved by my Colleague, the Hon. David Patterson. In supporting this motion, I must categorically state that it was conceived and structured with the best plan and structure for the oil and gas sector of this nation and the economic spin-off that Guyanese must be beneficiaries of. It is one which clearly points out the necessary prerequisites for this sector, contracts and one this Government must embrace in ensuring the development of the country economically and having proper oversight of the expansion of the oil and gas sector.

This motion, in its various Whereas, Be It Resolve and Further Be It Resolve clauses, outlines clear objectives that must be considered before the construction and further location of any shore

base services that is to be established. In setting up an infrastructure of such significance and importance, one which has long term effects and consequences, along with benefits, there must be necessary consideration and studies done so as to set reachable requirements which would definitely look at a project in a holistic manner. As such, consideration must be given for challenges such as traffic, environmental concerns, locations in terms of accessibility and makeup, whether they are residential or commercial zones.

The ExxonMobil Corporation has recently issued a Request For Information (RFI), in the *Stabroek Newspaper* dated the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2021 it states:

“The scope of this Request for Information (RFI) is to identify Contractors who can provide a fully functional, fit for purpose shore base located in Guyana to support the needs of future Guyana projects starting in 2023. This includes the following: documented proof of lease/land ownership, berthage capacity and capability to support a range of vessels, dedicated area for storage and staging of materials and equipment, dedicated area for fabrication, dedicated office and warehouse space, dedicated material/cargo handling & equipment, personnel, plans, and procedures required to support and operate the shore base service.”

The RFI document states.

“Also highlighted was that contractors must show a plan for local content here, and that the contractors shall be responsible for implementing a number of local content requirements, along with any local content requirements issued by a Guyanese governmental authority.”

The RFI continues to state that:

“... companies have to declare to ExxonMobil how many years they have been in business, what types of business, if they operate via an owned affiliate/legal entity, if they are registered to work here, if they have the ability to obtain necessary permits, and if they were or are linked to any litigation.”

This RFI will give ExxonMobil Corporation the sole right and responsibility to choose who gets contracts in this sector and where they wish to develop and select a site for shore base services.



While we on this side of the House support private sector development, we are also of the view that any future development must be planned and structured so as to benefit all the people in every region. Sir, when all the rights and the will of the Government is taken away, how can they plan and strategically distribute services to boost the economical capacity and capability of this nation?

Further, it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that, in the setting up of shore bases or deep-water harbours, all of Guyana must benefit. To this front, I strongly demand that Region 5 - Mahaica/Berbice must be a beneficiary of our nation's treasured natural resource and wealth, that is, our oil and gas. My region has all the advantages and requirements for an onshore base. It has direct access to the ocean. Region 5 has miles of shoreline that is directly adjacent to the ocean. It is close to the oil field which will maximise sailing time. Region 5 shoreline is approximately 120 miles from the Liza 1, which, of course, means shorter sailing time, thus less cost. It has flood topography for laydown areas, warehousing and buildings. Region 5 is blessed with thousands of acres of suitable lands. It has the availability of large areas of lands for future expansion, road and air links. It also has the availability of utilities such as power, water and telecommunications. Most importantly, it has good access to skilled workers. Region 5 is blessed with hardworking and decent people who deserve their fair share of the oil and gas revenue.

Region 5 is known to be the largest rice producing region in this nation producing approximately 454,476 metric tonnes of paddy, which is equivalent to 295,409 metric tonnes of rice which were produced in 2019. In 2020, a total of 517,338 metric tonnes of paddy were produced with 336,270 tonnes of rice.

However, with the growth in the population, extremely high cost of living, especially, now on beef, oil and recently soap and soap products in Region 5, and the nation at large, the unwarranted dismissal of public servants in the Mahaica/ Berbice Region, I daresay rice cannot do it alone. We need much more economic development in our region so as to secure the livelihood of our people and guarantee better liveable wages or income for our young men and women, while ensuring job creation throughout the region. When one examines, quite carefully, the makeup and sustenance of the people of Region 5, one would understand that agriculture and small commercial businesses are the forms of employment and the main source of income for the people.

Sir, the Guyana Sugar Corporation (GuySuCo) Blairmount Estate employs approximately 2,300 persons within the region. This has an average all time high on the employment rate of 21%. Acknowledging the fact that GuySuCo is failing, continuously running at a loss and there is the possibility of further downsizing in the future, the Government must be cognizant of the fact that they need to make provision for the region. One such way of the best advice is to build the shore base facility in the region which will help to cushion any short-term effect or collapse of GuySuCo in that region, and it will also assist with employment. In this regard, it will also help, immediately, to lower the unemployment rate within the region. It will definitely provide the necessary avenues for the introduction and expansion of local content, while bringing other investors into the region. The economic spin-off here, again, will in return enrich the nation.

If one is to consider the location of the Mahaica/Berbice Region away from the Liza oil field, the ExxonMobil Corporation offshore operations, one would recognise that the distance from the deep sea to the shore in essence is actually the same as that if we are to construct shore bases in Essequibo or Demerara, which is within the range of 100 to 135 miles offshore with Berbice being 130 miles. This argued the point that distance in the location and setting up of a shore base in Region 5 is not a tangible excuse. The case and point here is that the Government must be able to craft proper legislation and take the responsibility to direct these companies where to build the shore bases across the country. In this way, it will demonstrate a proper developmental plan for all regions of Guyana.

This motion gives the green light and sets the path for Government to take such an action in the immediate future. This will serve our country much better rather than having Tom, John and Harry's company coming, springing up and building shore bases at any location of their choice, not taking into effect the environmental damage and possible risk they will put the country's communities, unlike the case of clearing mangroves on the West Bank of Demerara for industrial purposes.

These contracts which are embedded in secrecy and handed to friends and cronies of the Government of the day must be brought to a halt. The fact that the deals are marred with corruption says that they must be thoroughly investigated to get what is best for all Guyanese.

In conclusion, the Government has failed miserably in all areas of governance, especially in employment and job creation. Sir, it was the PPP/C Government that promised in its 2020 campaign manifesto to provide 50,000 jobs, but to date, they have not provided one. Instead, they have taken away jobs from over 2,000 Guyanese public servants across this country and in semi-autonomous agencies. It is against this backdrop that I advise the Hon. Members on the opposite side of the House to carefully consider this motion and weigh the direct benefit that will filter down to the people after the successful passage of this motion and the implementation of its objectives.

*10.35 p.m.*

I firmly support this motion and can boast of its benefits to all Guyanese. Once passed, we can see a strict and well managed environment and proper oversight and function of the Environmental Protection Agency. We could see the eradication of corruption, cronyism and nepotism, which are the best practices of the Government of the day. Also, it will ensure proper zoning and location of the sites, economic boost to all three counties of the country and, most definitely, job creation and recognition of our local content and market. I therefore commend this motion for passage. I thank you. *[Applause]*

**Mr. Patterson (replying):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone on both sides of the House for contributing to this debate. It is a lot to process. I understand that I have forty-five minutes and I could use them uninterrupted.

A lot was said from the Members on the other side I would like to take the opportunity to respond. In no particular order I will respond, but out of deference to the Minister of Natural Resources, I will start with him as the last speaker.

First and foremost, I started off by saying that we should not be playing politics with the pandemic. His commentary there is most political of all the statements concerning the pandemic. This side of the House has been supportive. Every Member who got up and spoke encouraged our country to get vaccinated. The reason why people are not being vaccinated is because of the ambiguous message that is being sent, the mistrust. I said that – the mistrust. If you do not change your rhetoric, we will not be safe. I do hope that the other side reconsiders their position of how we could fight this pandemic.

The Minister said the PSA is one of the worse agreements in the world; it is the worst agreement we have had. If it is so bad, why do you not change it? We on this side of the House have said over and over again that, if it is a bad deal, we support you to change it. It is an act of lunacy for you to say that it is the worst deal and you are still committed to it. The ball is in your court. If you want to fix it, fix it and show us.

One of the most telling statements from the Minister of Natural Resources is that the PPP/C planted the mangrove so, therefore, they have the right to cut them down. That is the Minister who is responsible for the stewardship of mangroves in our natural resources. Because you planted the mangroves that is the whole reason, the background, we have this motion. With that sort of mentality, one can see where we will go. Because you planted it, you must cut it down.

Then he made a sweeping statement. I would excuse him for newness, that he has not been properly briefed or anything as such. He made a sweeping statement that we did no land reformation project. That is not true, Sir. We did one in Mahdia and we did one in Olive Creek. You can check your records. You have to, when you come to the National Assembly, speak the truth and speak the truth always. Then he went on to talk about Houston. The genesis of this motion is the ill effects of unplanned development. That is the purpose of the motion. That we have no more [inaudible]. Member of Parliament (MP) Ramjattan explained to you what happens; MP. Sarabo-Halley explained to you what happens. The dumpsite in the middle of the city is a prime example. That explains why there must be planned development.

The most interesting part and I was so glad that he made mention of it, and you allowed him to make mention of it, so obviously you will allow me to respond. We are unaware that he has adjusted the permit to bring in a fine of US\$30 per tonne for the next set of flaring. You allowed him to say that. He made a lot of *hobo* and *bobo la* that we will be getting \$1.2 million [inaudible].

Here is the real truth about it. With their fabricated \$40 billion cubic feet allowance, they have allowed the company a free passage to flare before they start applying the fine. First and foremost, the US\$30 per tonne is the lowest in the industry. The average in the industry is US\$65-US\$85 per tonne. He is coming shouting and [inaudible] that we are getting \$1.2 million, but here is what we have lost with the \$4 billion cubic feet which you have allowed, Sir. The real value of the \$4 billion that they have been allowed to flare without any fine is US\$30 million. They have lost

US\$30 million. You could challenge me. I am on the floor. You could challenge me and see where I got that figure from.

On top of that, they have included in the revised permit the same thing, that the company has 60 days to flare before any fine is put. Here, at the current rate of flaring, it will be approximately 100,000 barrels, I am using that. Here is what that 60 days period is – US\$15 million. The revised permit of which this Gentleman is boasting about will cost the Guyanese public US\$45 million. You can challenge me whenever you want, wherever you want. If he wants, I can actually explain to him about how we got it, but I do not want to use my time.

The Government is coming for a \$10 billion supplementary for the damage done by the flood. We on this side of the House support any efforts that will bring relief to our people. However, it is unacceptable for the Government to be drawing these funds from the Consolidated Fund, while, at the same time, providing companies with free passes. These moneys that have been given away could have been put to better use. Better use like paying our public servants an increase in salary. In the interim, we have called for an increase of 10%. We have heard stories of \$45 million that is what the revised permit is allowing the companies to flare without penalty. We heard of Robin Hood who stole from the rich to give to the poor. Now, what we have here is the PPP/C, they are stealing from the poor to give the rich – reverse Robin Hood.

Then there is the Minister within the Office of the Presidency with Responsibility for Finance, the Hon. Ashni Singh. He got up and it was the most amazing presentation by a senior Minister. I will start off... He asked why did the APNU/AFC do a land use policy and a zone policy; why did we not start anything? It is amazing that he does not know that we did. We did. They stopped it. That is why there is a motion. We did it. The Committee...was the Guyana Lands & Surveys (GLSC) Commission, all the Regional Democratic Councils (RDCs), Central Housing & Planning Authority (CH&PA), Ministry of Natural Resources, Department of Energy, EPA and Ministry of Public Infrastructure. We started it. It was almost completed. They stopped it.

The most galling of his presentation, he had the audacity – I hope that is not unparliamentary – to come and say that there were no new projects left by the APNU/AFC. That is what he said. I am sure you were in the Chair, Sir. He presented both... Well the Hon. Member did not present *Budget 2020*, he presented *Budget 2021*. I would ask him: Whose projects are these? I will name them.

The Linden to Mabura road which is coming for a supplementary. That is our project. The 47 megawatts generator which they said, when they came, would serve no benefit to the Guyanese public. They are absolutely desperate to get it finished because there is blackout all over the place. They cannot manage it. That was our project. The solar farms that you are doing in 2021 in Madhia, Leguan, Bartica and Lethem, those were our projects. You could bring anybody. It is indisputable. The hydro projects in Kumu and Mocomoco, those were our projects. Are there no new projects, Sir?

Three times under that Administration they tried to get the Kato hydropower project off the ground and failed abysmally. We, this APNU/AFC Government, got it off the ground and it is going to be commissioned this year. We have solo farms in Annai and other Indigenous communities. This side of the House initiated them. How dare you come and tell us that we had no new projects? The much touted gas-to-shore project, that was our project. They have done nothing new; they have just dusted off. They cannot come to the public and tell them what additional studies, they are now doing geo-technical studies and those things. They took every single document that was left there, sat down and said that: oh, this is our project.

The Minister of Natural Resources is boasting about the energy transition. All of that is the discovery of this side of the House. How do they have the audacity to say that? The Lethem Airport is in this year's Budget. They carried a whole entourage of persons to open the runway. That was our project. The bridge over in Kurupukari that was our project. The upgrade to the Parika Stelling is in the Budget; that was our project. How could you dare come here and say that there is no new project? They are just sitting here and *pigiwinging* but you cannot fool the people because the records are there.

The Hon. Minister spoke about the Amalia Falls and he blamed this side of the House for the failure of the Amalia Falls. I want to put it on record that the Amalia Falls, as conceived by that side of the House, was a Ponzi Scheme. It was a retirement fund for certain Members over on that side. That is why they are bitter. Some persons have now said that they will farm.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am hearing 'thief' and who is stealing, please.

**Mr. Patterson:** Persons have gotten up and said that they were going into retirement. They could not retire. Why? The Ponzi Scheme was not there. The IDB said there was never any project. What

they said they will do was to try to help the Government of Guyana to make a project. What help did they give? They carried their staff to the Chinese investors begging them to reduce their interest and other financing rates to make the project feasible.

*10.50 p.m.*

Forget the hydrology and those things like that, I am talking [*inaudible*]... If the Hon. Minister thought that it was such a good project, why does he not bring a motion here and let us lay it bare for the country to see. No longer is there any question of the propriety of the information to say that one cannot disclose the facts. All the facts are there. If the Hon. Minister thinks it is such a great project let him bring a motion and let us debate it. Let us lay bare the Ponzi Scheme that they had, Sir.

Not being able to retire on the Ponzi Scheme of the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project (AFHP), they have switched to the gas-to shore project. It was a project that was supposed to cost this country no more than US\$600 million is now US\$1.225 billion. Every single aspect of that project – the consultants who came – is overinflated. It is overinflated and it is all for the boys. The consultancies went to a Member of the Government's side. They can challenge me if they want to. No one would want to do that. They cannot come to this House and try to deceive it about what we have accomplished. Sir, this motion that we brought here came in good faith. We came and said let us work together and develop a land use policy. The Hon. Minister obviously needs to go back to school and learn about land use policies and those things like that. I would not waste my time, Sir. [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] I know that you would not because you know that you are trying to mislead the House. But I would not waste my time going over there.

I go back to the beginning, where it all started. The Minister of Public Works got up and obviously regaled this National Assembly about a deep-water harbour that came under the PPP/C. I say yes, that is the idea that it came under the PPP/C. In January, 2019, there was a study commissioned and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank. It was done by Maritime & Transport Business Solutions (MTBS). The final report was prepared in January, 2019. It took into consideration everything the PPP/C had done – Asher and Woodbury in 1998. They even had a study done by the Government of India in 2010. Do you know what was the outcome of the deep-water harbour in Berbice? The first thing, it stated that it was impossible. It stated that if you were

going to do anything there, you would have to build a new bridge. They have not spoken about that. The existing floating bridge has a maximum weight capacity of 30 gross tonnage (GT). This is not the actual weight capacity. So, it is absolutely an act of lunacy to put a deep-water port over in Berbice and you cannot even cross the bridge because of whatever land is there. Sir, the people said that unless you are going to build a new bridge, it is an absolutely impossible idea. Of course, the Hon. Member could come, regale the people and seek to reinvent facts because that is what he does. You could go on the IDB's website. There is the MTBS out of Holland, Netherlands.

The Hon. Member, the Minister of Public Works, made a statement that the studies we did were only to identify where to give out lands. That is absolute hogwash. Here is what we inherited – the East Coast/East Bank bypasses for US\$50 million. It has gone back right there. Where was it passing through? The biggest land grabs and distributions ever in the history of this country, occurred between 2011 and 2015. The entire East Bank Demerara was given away. We went to court and tried to get it back, but we were unsuccessful. I think the Hon. Attorney General (AG) represented them, so he knows exactly what it is. We tried to get it back. Do you know where that bypass route passed? It passes smack in the middle of the lands that they gave away. The Hon. Member has the gall to come and tell us that our studies were to give away land. They gave away land and are now implementing it. That was all. They reduced the road, and it has just gone back to serve the people to whom they gave the lands between 2011 and 2015.

Our study opened up virgin lands to benefit and reconnect, not only what they are doing now, which is connecting Eccles. We have connected South, Agricola, Eccles and Mocha Arcadia. Why would you want to bypass Mocha Arcadia? What have the people in Mocha Arcadia done to you, other than not vote for you. They have done nothing. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** It is because they do not look like them.] Yes. Why would you bypass all these persons and then say to the people of Guyana that you are all for them, that you are there to develop all of Guyana and that the PPP/C represents all of Guyana? You are bypassing people wilfully.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, you have laid a lot of things at my footsteps. So, please be careful with the views. I will give you back the minute.

**Mr. Patterson:** My apologies, Sir. *A slip of the tongue is no fault of the mind*, Sir. [**An. Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] That is all right, he has changed. He is now our honourable impartial



Speaker. The oil and gas sector is in good hands, that is what the Hon. Member said. I cannot agree more. Do you know what hands they have? They have sticky fingers. They like to say that. They are now dipping their hands in the trough. They had a lot of time to practise finger dipping. They are now going, dipping their hands and extracting at will.

The Hon. Member, Mr. Indar made one of the most laughable statements. He asked what we have done to protect the environment. There is always an alternate universe when one comes to speak in this National Assembly. Let me start off by saying that all the Members over on that side got up and spoke glowingly about our transition from Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) to clean fuel oil. The Hon. Minister of Natural Resources and all of them – shore to base – that Sir is us, from the start to the finish. We were even able to convince the Kingdom of Norway, one of the greenest of the green nations. When they saw our energy transition plan, the Hon. Minister of the Kingdom of Norway said they had an epiphany. I am saying this for the *Hansard*. For the money that was set aside – I would like for the Hon. Minister to bring the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project here – the US\$80 million that was placed in the IDB's account for the Amaila Falls Hydropower Project. The Kingdom of Norway said it was not a good thing. Ours was far superior to anything that the PPP/C ever did. The Kingdom of Norway told us to take that US\$80 million and contribute it to build three 10 megawatts solar plant to augment our transition.

He asked what we have done for the environment. We revised the Sea Defences Act and the National Energy Policy which they are now working with. They have not changed it. He is asking what we have done for the environment. We had the Green State Development Strategy, yet, the Hon. Member could get up here and ask what we have done for the environment.

The Hon. Member spoke about a moratorium on shore base. That is exactly why we have this motion here. Every Tom, Dick and Harry was throwing up a shore base. [**An. Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] No, he did not have the brains. People were building over our canals. There was even one person who built in the channel where the main navigation is on the way up the Demerara River. A wharf was built on the channel. It was a Wild West. As a responsible Government, we said, hold on this is not the Wild West, as Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan said. It is not a gold rush. Let us sit, decide and make a confirmed and consorted decision so that the country can benefit. Sir, contrast that to what is being done now. You can clear mangroves whenever and however you want. You can do whatever you want, and the Government will say, you do it and we will fix it,

as opposed to what we were attempting to do, which was to fix it and then let them build. It is the field of dreams – build it and they will come. That is what the PPP/C is all about.

As I said before, the Hon. Member Mr. Indar made one of the strangest comments which was that the Government had no control over where investors go. That is his direct quote. I wrote it down: ‘Government has no control where investors go’. That is the reason why we brought this motion. If a Government abdicates its duty for the people and for the development of the people for international or private investors, we will have chaos. That is exactly what we have here. Anyone that is a friend of the Government’s side, can go and do what they want and how they want to, and the rest of the country has to pay the price.

The EPA, which we were working diligently to strengthen and professionalise, is a poor shadow. I do not even know what the EPA does. Right now, Ministers are picking up the phone and asking, ‘what about the permits for X, Y and Z’? How many did he said they had? It was 15 or 20 permits. They are picking up the phone and asking the EPA, ‘when they are approving’. There are no Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or nothing at all. They approved two quarries and said that there was no need for an Environmental Impact Assessment. For the first time in living history, there will be blasting. We know that blasting means bombs, *boom*. Dynamites and all these things are disturbing the ecology and the EPA gets up and says that we do not need an EIA. That is what we are dealing with now.

The Hon. Member Dr. Cummings spoke about a national maritime plan and the Minister of Public Works spoke about .... He is glowing; he was happy. When they came in, there were only 40 ships on the Demerara River. There are now 700 ships. Let me tell this National Assembly what we left there. We recognised the authority of the maritime authority and all of our shipping acts were made and written for containerised cargo.

*11.05 p.m.*

At no time did we envisage the oil and gas sector. So, we sought international assistance to restructure the Maritime Administration Department (MARAD) to make it more in sync, to make it more adaptable and make it better so that it could regulate the oil and gas (*inaudible*). That has gone out of the window. They do not need that. They did not increase the staff. They have not done anything like that.

Where the building is supposed to be, MARAD owns a piece of land. Sir, hear how the PPP/C operates. They built the Guyana Marriott Hotel and blocked out the Lighthouse. They did not even think about it. They blocked out the Lighthouse. It was only when ships started (*inaudible*) they realised that they needed the Lighthouse. So, they put the poor staff on top of the Guyana Marriott Hotel in a little *coo-coo*. That is exactly what it is. We said that you have to build a modern office for MARAD. There were 700 ships a day. There was a tender, we started, and they cancelled it. Of course, one of the prime drivers behind where MARAD is that they must be able to see the coastline. They must be able to see what is going on.

We had a building, which was given over to the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown. They stopped the process; they said no – friends and family, again – it is too valuable a piece of land, because it is on the shore, and it should be used for “oil and gas activities” [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] It does not matter. We are on the internet. It does not matter if they cut us off.

There has been no improvement. There is no plan to improve the maritime sector. We paid for an international consultant and a local consultant to revise and review all our maritime Acts, every single thing. It was massive volumes. I will confess that I usually read everything, but I have not read it all. It was so voluminous. There is book stand in the Hon. Minister’s (*inaudible*). There are too many words; no pictures but too many words.

I come back to why we must have this (*Inaudible*). Why is the PPP/C so mortally afraid of supporting a motion which calls for preference, not sole and singular, but preference for areas which are their constituencies? What is wrong with the people in Berbice? Should they be sugar cane harvesters all their lives? A little-known fact is the majority of our qualified seafarers come from New Amsterdam. I, too, was surprised. They come from New Amsterdam and the Berbice River area. I cannot tell you the genesis of that. They have a captive technical pool there. What is wrong with giving preference to the people in Berbice? [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] Sir, listen to me. I do not know. It may or may not be in my lifetime if sugar ever comes back in Guyana. There is a real and present development project that can be done in Berbice and there is a real and present development project that can be done in Bartica. What is wrong about going on the Essequibo, Region 7 and those places? Why are you afraid to embrace the recommendation? I would have thought the Government would have brought an amendment to the motion which said that within five years, they will do X, Y and Z. But no, they did not do that. They rejected the

people of Berbice out of hand. They rejected the people of Essequibo out of hand. They will go – the cameraman is gone; I saw them running outside – and tell all sorts of fabrications about what occurred here today. They will put their own spin on it but, fortunately, thank you for the World Wide Web (WWW).

What is wrong with a multi stakeholder taskforce? The multi stakeholder taskforce is not only Opposition. There could be the developers as well. There were like four or five different oil and gas groupings. They could be in it. Every single relevant stakeholder could be in it, and we can all sit down and give our thoughts, give our ideas, give our vision and then we can come up with a comprehensive plan. But no, they have all the ideas themselves and they are fearful that if they include the Opposition, we will outshine them, which we normally do. We will show up their inadequacies. So, what they do is exclude all of us.

Sir, I am timing it as well. What is it to tell international agencies – they are billion-dollar companies – hold on, give Guyana six months so that we could at least start righting this ship, put some balance in it so that we can actually come out with a concerted, unified position, a unified position as Government, Opposition, private sector, and every single person? But no, not them. What is it to tell these private developers that they cannot close and fill canals and that they cannot fill in waterways? Why can we not tell them that? [**An Hon. Member:** (*Inaudible*)] *Batty-lion*, please. That is what is happening now. They are filling in canals. It is decimated.

I do not know when last the Minister of Agriculture went down to Meadow Bank, down to the fisheries' place there. Every fisherman is complaining about the diminished catch; every one of them. Why? I do not know but we can get that. Sir, they have been crowded out.

*Sleight of hand:* Two new trawler licences were given away. The industry is on its knees and when the industry objected, hear what they did. I will tell everyone here. The APNU/AFC had a fuel agreement with them, whereby the Guyana Association of Trawler Owners and Seafood Processors (GATOSP) benefitted from duty free fuel. We had to buy the fuel, the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) marked it, but they paid no tax on it. When they objected and said the two new trawler licences which were given away would cripple them, do you know what they did? They withheld the fuel agreement to shut them up, further putting their knee on the necks of the fisherfolks.

That is the type of the Government that we have. Brute force. And they come here and *pigiwing*, as they would say, that is not unparliamentary, about loving all of the country. My Colleagues spoke about Linden. Is Linden not part of Guyana? Is Region 10 not part of Guyana? Is Region 5 not part of Guyana as well? Why are we bypassing them? Why are we not bringing them to the table? Even if you are not going to do it, say to them, this is our plan. You may not be first up, but you are second or third. These are the things we would want to do. Train your people in X, Y and Z so that they could benefit. Why do they find that egregious?

I am glad that the Prime Minister (PM) is paying apt attention. I told him that I am going to speak for as much as you allow me to speak. Sir, when I spoke first, he said that he was falling asleep, but I saw him looking straight into my eyes. Why are you not falling asleep now? It is because *the truth shall set you free*. There is a saying that I really like. *Fancy gallop don't win race*. PM, you know about that. So, all of that *fancy galloping* and *pigiwinging* you all are doing there, the people are seeing. *Your slip is showing*. [**An. Hon. Member:** *Inaudible*]. I never said...If your slip is showing, it is showing. Make sure it has no holes in it.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up, I ask the Hon. Members over on that side to reconsider support for this motion. It asks for four simple resolve clauses. One is to establish a multi stakeholder taskforce. Even if they want to exclude the Opposition, establish the taskforce and invite everyone else. We will do what we are doing here now and talk whenever and wherever we have the opportunity. Do not spite the people because of the Opposition. That is exactly what they are doing. Because of the Opposition... do not do that.

We ask for a land use policy. I would not even go into the lunacy that the Hon. Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance spoke about land use policy and those things like that. Just to say that he is incorrect; absolutely incorrect. [**Mr. Mahipaul:** He is far from the truth.] It is not the first time.

We ask that preference be given to our outlying regions. As a government, we had a policy to connect the hinterland with the coast. All the developments are concentrated on a very small skid of land. Our natural resources, except oil – even oil – is off that skid of land. We cannot bring our indigenous communities up to the required standard of living unless we pay special attention to them. How will they benefit from the oil and gas sector? That is the policy that we are looking for.

Finally, we are asking that they say to our international partners, who we welcome with open arms... We welcome them with opened arms, but they must obey our rules. They cannot come and flare what they want, when they want and how they want. We have rules and we have regulations. They cannot come, as the Hon. Member said, and open taxi services and take it from our people. The Hon. Member, Mr. Figueira, made a very passionate plea for local content. All of these things have to be addressed.

With that closing, I would like to reiterate that anything... There is a Hon. Gentleman shouting about the asphalt plant. The most modern asphalt plant in the Caribbean was bought, placed, and installed by the APNU/AFC Government. They bought an old smoky, an environmental hazard. They never had the vision to even modernise. Of course, they will try to diminish our achievement and that is all right. That is politics. You cannot fool the people. They know what they see, and they know what is there. Sir, I could tell you.... you do not have to raise your timekeeper, Sir. I am looking, and I have five minutes left.

Sir, in closing, as the Hon. Member mentioned about the asphalt plant, let me tell you that, while they were in charge, the former Prime Minister, the former Ministers and all of them said to this country that they could not have had a roundabout. I want them to remember that. Do you know why? It is Guyanese drivers are too undisciplined and stupid to have a roundabout. That is what they said. They will kill one another. I only gave that as an example, Sir, to tell you about the great capacity and adaptability that Guyanese have. As long as you give them the chance and the opportunity, they will adapt, and they will adapt for the better. That is what we are asking for. Give all Guyanese a real opportunity.

If that is not done, this perpetual war that we have here called elections and politics, *et cetera*, will bring us down every five years.... and the next five years in 2025 when they are out.

*11.20 p.m.*

If every government comes in and every five years, we scrap all of the plans and all of the good things that the previous administration would have done, we would be standing still. That is exactly what the PPP/C is doing. They would like to give the impression that nothing was done, but I just told the Hon. Member all of the projects. He will come on Monday to defend a supplementary budget, where there is money in it for projects that we instigated. He will come and give some sort

of fanciful excuse on all social media, saying that they had thought of it when they were in the bathroom. Apparently, whatever they thought when they were in the bathroom, we peeped them and stole those plans. That is how it always is.

The motion is not about the Opposition; it is not about the Government; it is about the people of Guyana and the future of Guyana. If we would like to be the Dubai of the Caribbean, these are the sort of initial steps that we have to take. Sir, I thank you very much.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Mr. Speaker, I stand on Standing Order 39 (2) to make clarifications to a few inaccuracies that were mentioned by the Hon. Member, Mr. Patterson.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, Standing Order 39 (2) states:

“A Minister may conclude a debate on any motion which is critical of the Government or reflects adversely on...”

Hon. Minister, I will give you 10 minutes to make your point.

**Mr. Bharrat:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, let me deal with the issue of the quarry. It was being insinuated by the Hon. Member that quarry licences were granted to at least two operators without any permits from the EPA. This is not true; and I want to put that on record. I challenge the Hon. Member to give ...

**Mr. Patterson:** Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, language. What is the Point of Order, Hon. Member?

**Mr. Patterson:** It is Standing Order 44 (2). I said that quarry licences were granted without an EIA.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member, before you could talk, I want to know the Point of Order.

**Mr. Patterson:** It is Standing Order 40 (a), Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** If you are going to seek elucidation, I have to ask the Hon. Member to give way. If he does not want to give way...

**Mr. Patterson:** Sir, but you heard what I said, though. Under 40 (a), I said quarry licences without the need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Minister, go ahead.

**Mr. Bharrat:** The Environmental Management Plan (EMP) was issued, and I think the Hon. Member knows that. It is a phased development, so the Environmental Impact and Social Assessment (ESIA) will be done, subsequently, as the phased development is happening. It is strange of the Hon. Member, who was once the Minister of Public Infrastructure, to speak or to criticize this development since when they were in Government, as Minister, we were importing over 200,000 tonnes of aggregates every single year when we had the resources right here in Guyana. But the APNU/AFC Government decided that it was not going to issue any licence because no friend, no family or no crony had applied for any such licence. I just want to clarify that.

The Hon. Member spoke about the Guyana Marriott Hotel Georgetown, but the Marriott in Guyana is one of the most booked Marriott in the world as we speak right now. The very Member, when he was Minister, enjoyed the Marriott. The Cabinet sectoral committee on oil and gas was meeting at the Marriott almost every single day to decide how we develop the oil and gas sector in Guyana. Those meetings took place at the Marriott. Further to that, in 2016, there was a private invitation sent to a number of companies to build shore base companies in Guyana. Those presentations were done at the Marriott, again – at the very Marriott that the speaker spoke about.

Further to that, the Hon. Member mentioned the glorious APNU/AFC energy mix plan that the Kingdom of Norway welcomed. What the Hon. Member did not say was that the Kingdom of Norway withheld the moneys that we are now trying to access so that it could benefit Guyana.

Further to that, the Hon. Member mentioned the Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL Inc.) and electricity, but the Hon. Member did not say that the GPL did not have a board for two years and that the Hon. Member as Minister was acting, usurping the authority of the board.

Further, the Hon. Member spoke about the 14 billion cubic that is acceptable. But what he did not say was that was the ESIA submitted to the Liza Field for development under their government, and it was accepted by them. The environmental permit that was issued was for 20 years, which is



illegal. Thanks to the Vice President and the Attorney General, we changed that to five years. The environmental permit was 20 years to mirror the production licence, and that by itself is illegal. There was no provision for fines and there was no provision for fees for flaring. If you look at one of the motions and you heard the Hon. Member speak, he is asking us to bring the Liza permit up to date with the Payara permit. The Payara permit was done by the PPP/C Government one month after taking Office; One month after taking Office.

The APNU/AFC was talk and no action – studies. The Hon. Member is claiming that the gas to shore project was started by the APNU/AFC. How is it that a study is the beginning or starting of a project? We are doing that now. To come to the National Assembly and take credit for projects that we are doing and to try to gain cheap political points will not get you anywhere. I just wanted to correct and put on record the inaccuracies that were mentioned in the presentation by the Hon. Member. Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the motion having been proposed and debated, I will now put the question. Those in favour say aye.

**Members of the Opposition:** Aye.

**Mr. Speaker:** Those against say, no.

**Members of the Government:** No.

**Mr. Speaker:** The noes have it.

**Mr. Mahipaul:** Division.

**Mr. Speaker:** We are going to ring the bell and we are also taking note of those persons who are on virtually. I would just like to put on alert our technicians so that we can see the persons who are on virtually and hear their votes.

We are giving five minutes. The Minister concluded at 11.27 p.m., so at 11.32 p.m., we are going to start taking the Division. You can always bring a motion challenging that decision, Mr. Mahipaul.

*Assembly Divided: Ayes 31, Noes 33, Abstained 1, as follows:*

**Ayes**

Mr. Sears

Mr. Figueira

Mr. Sinclair

Mr. Jaiprashad

Mr. Jordan

Mr. Ramsaroop

Ms. Philadelphia

Ms. Flue-Bess

Mr. Mahipaul

Mr. Holder

Mr. Cox

Mr. Henry

Ms. Fernandes

Mr. Duncan

Ms. Singh-Lewis

Ms. Walton-Desir

Mr. Rajkumar

Ms. Hughes

Ms. McDonald

Mr. Patterson

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Jones

Ms. Chandan-Edmond

Ms. Sarabo-Halley

Dr. Cummings

Dr. Henry

Ms. Hastings-Williams

Mr. Trotman

Mr. Forde

Mr. Ramjattan

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon

**Noes**

Ms. Veerasammy

Mr. Williams

Dr. Smith

Mr. Jaffarally

*11.35 p.m.*

Dr. Westford

Dr. Ramsaran

Ms. Pearson-Fredericks

Mr. Narine

Mr. Datadin

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Charlie

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. McCoy

Mr. A. Persaud

Mr. Indar

Ms. Rodrigues

Ms. Parag

Mr. Ramson

Dr. Persaud

Mr. Croal

Mr. Dharamlall

Mr. Bharrat

Mr. Hamilton

Ms. Sukhai

Mr. Mustapha

Ms. Manickchand

Dr. Anthony

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Todd

Ms. Teixeira

Mr. Nandlall

Mr. Jagdeo

Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips

**Abstained**

Mr. Shuman

*Motion negatived.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

BE IT RESOLVED:

“That the Assembly do now adjourn to Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 at 2.00 p.m.”

*[Prime Minister]*

**Brigadier (Ret'd) Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of the Assembly to Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June at 2.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Assembly now stands adjourned to Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2021 at 2.00 p.m.

*Adjourned accordingly at 11.39 p.m.*