

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 70th SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION
(2006-2009) OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON THURSDAY, 8TH JANUARY, 2009
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (69)

Speaker (1)

The Hon. Hari N. Ramkarran, S.C., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (41)

(i) People's Progressive Party/Civic (40)

(ii) The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P., (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice), Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent – on leave)

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

The Hon. Shaik K.Z Baksh, M.P., Minister of Education

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of Health (Absent – on leave)

The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, M.P., (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo), Minister of Foreign Affairs

*The Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., Minister of Finance

The Hon. Robert M. Persaud, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of Agriculture

*Non-elected Minister

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2.

The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P., (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni),
Minister of Public Service

The Hon. Kellawan Lall, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

*The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and
Minister of Legal Affairs (Absent - on Leave)

The Hon. Dr. Frank C.S. Anthony, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. B. H. Robeson Benn, M.P., Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

**The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P., Minister of Labour

The Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice),
Minister of Human Services and Social Security

The Hon. Dr. Desrey Fox, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Education

The Hon. Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Health

The Hon. Jennifer I. Webster, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Finance

The Hon. Manniram Prashad, M.P., Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

*The Hon. Pauline Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs

The Hon. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water

Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.

Ms Gail Teixeira, M.P.

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P., Chief Whip

Ms Bibi S. Shadick, M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

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***Non-Elected Minister**

****Elected Member from the United Force**

3.

Mr. Albert A. Atkinson, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 8 – Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Mr. Bernard C. DeSantos, S.C., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Mohamed F. Khan, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Moses V. Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P.

Mr. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P.

Mr. Neendkumar, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

***Mr. Steve P. Ninvalle, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Mr. Parmanand P. Persaud, J.P., M.P., (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supernaam)

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Water (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Mr. Norman A. Whittaker, M.P., (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo, M.P.

Rev. Kwame Gilbert, M.P.

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***Non-elected Parliamentary Secretary

Members of the Opposition (27)

(i) Members of People's National Congress Reform-One Guyana (21)

Mr. Robert Corbin, M.P., Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Winston Murray, C.C.H., M.P.

Mrs. Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P., Chief Whip

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. Anthony Vieira, M.P.

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.

Dr. George A. Norton, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.

Mr. Keith Scott, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Ms Amna Ally, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Mr. Dave Danny, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Aubrey C. Norton, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Ernest Barnabas Elliot, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mrs. Judith David-Blair, M.P., (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Mervyn Williams, M.P., (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Island/West Demerara)

Ms Africo Selman, M.P. (Absent – on leave)

Dr. John Austin, M.P., (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Ms Jennifer Wade, M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

5.

Ms. Vanessa Kissoon, M.P., (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice)

Mr. Desmond Fernandes, M.P., (Region No. 1 – Barima/Waini)

(ii) **Alliance for Change (5)**

Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P.

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P.

Mrs. Latchmin Punalall, M.P., (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. David Patterson, M.P.

(iii) **Guyana Action Party/Rise Organize and Rebuild (1)**

Mr. Everall N. Franklin, M.P.

OFFICERS (2)

Mr. Sherlock E. Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Mrs. Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The sitting commenced at 2.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read Prayers.

OATH OF A NEW MEMBER

- (i) **Resignation of Mr. Harry Narine Nawbatt as a Minister and Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey as a Minister**
- (ii) **Election of Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo and Rev. Kwame Gilbert**

The Speaker informed the Assembly that Mr. Harry Narine Nawbatt, who was Minister of Housing and Water and Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, who was Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation had resigned as Members of the National Assembly with effect from 10th November, 2008 and 1st January, 2009, respectively, and that following his call upon the representative of the People's Progressive Party/Civic list of candidates, in which Mr. Harry Narine Nawbatt and Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey names were included; he was informed that the names of Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo and Rev. Kwame Gilbert had been extracted from the said list and that Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo and Rev. Kwame Gilbert were on the 8th January, 2009 declared to be elected Members of the National Assembly to fill the vacancies.

The Speaker stated that before Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo and Rev. Kwame Gilbert could take part in the proceedings of that sitting of the National Assembly, they would have, as required by Article 167 of the Constitution, to make and subscribe the oath of office.

As Dr. Mahadeo and Rev. Gilbert were present, the oath was administered to them by the Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**Appointment of Hon. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, Minister of Housing and Water**

The Speaker informed the Assembly that the Honourable Member of Parliament, Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali had been appointed Minister of Housing and Water with effect from 7th January, 2009.

The Speaker, on behalf of Members of the Assembly and himself, congratulated Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali on his appointment as a Minister and extended best wishes to Dr. Vishwa Deva Budhram Mahadeo and Rev. Kwame Gilbert on their election to the Assembly.

Crossing of the Berbice River Bridge

The Speaker informed Members of Parliament that the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Management of the Berbice River Bridge Incorporated were currently making arrangements for the use of the Berbice River Bridge by Ministers and other Members of Parliament.

In the interim, Members were asked to pay the toll and submit their bills to the Parliament Office for reimbursement.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

By the Minister of Finance:

- (i) Financial Paper No. 5/2008 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totaling \$1,573,421,169 for the period 2008-10-23 to 2008-12-31.

(Circulated)

- (ii) Financial Paper No. 6/2008 – Supplementary Estimate (Capital) totaling \$2,484,483,876 for the period ended 2008-12-31.

(Circulated)

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. CORONER'S INQUEST

Member Asking: Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.

Minister Answering: Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Can the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs state the current number of Coroner's Inquest pending in Guyana?

(Notice Paper No. 295 (Q211 Opp 206) published on 2008-10-27)

Answer:

See answer at Appendix .

2. NUMBER OF PERSONS DETAINED FOR 72 HOURS OR MORE

Member Asking: Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P.

Minister Answering: Minister of Home Affairs

Could the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs provide this National Assembly with a list of the number of persons detained for the year 2007, at each Police Station listed below, for 72 hours or more, who were subsequently released without any charges being preferred against them:-

- (i) Sparendaam Police Station
- (ii) Beterverwagting Police Station
- (iii) Vigilance Police Station

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- (iv) Cove and John Police Station
- (v) Brickdam Police Station
- (vi) Providence Police Station

(Notice Paper No. 309 (Q225 Opp 220) published on 2008-11-05)

At the request of the Minister of Home Affairs, and with the approval of the Assembly, the answer to the above question was deferred.

3. **SUPPLY OF POTABLE WATER TO MONKEY MOUNTAIN**

Member Asking: Mr. David Patterson, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister responsible for Housing and Water

- (i) Can the Honourable Minister responsible for Housing and Water advise on the status of the contract awarded over three years ago, for the distribution of potable water in Monkey Mountain?
- (ii) When can the inhabitants of Monkey Mountain expect to have potable water in their taps as has been long promised by this administration?

Notice Paper No. 340 (Q254 Opp 241) published on 2008-12-03)

Answers:

- (i) The Monkey Mountain Water Supply Project in Region 8 is funded by Basic Needs Trust Fund. The contract commenced on March 30, 2006 with the expected completion date stated as September 27, 2006. To date, Basic Needs Trust Fund has indicated that only 75% of the works at Monkey Mountain has been complete.
- (ii) The only remaining works on the project are:
- Casting of the re-enforced concrete dam
 - Connecting of pipes to the dam

Officials from Basic Needs Trust Fund will meet with the Contractor in January, 2009 to decide on a course of action for the completion of the remaining works in order to facilitate the supply of potable water to inhabitants of Monkey Mountain.

For Oral Replies**4. BARBARA STOEN'S APPEAL**

At the request of Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, M.P., and with the approval of the Assembly, the following question was deferred:

*Would the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs inform this National Assembly on what grounds the Guyanese judiciary denied Barbara Stoen's appeal to gain custody of her child and remove the child from Jonestown?

(Notice Paper No. 332(Q247 PPP/C No. 12) published on 2008-11-28)

5. **IMPORTATION OF GOODS AND SUPPLIES BY THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE**

Mr. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P. asked the Minister of Finance the following question:

*Can the Minister say whether any permission was granted to the Rev. Jim Jones or any member of the People's Temple to import goods and supplies, including arms, ammunition and poisons directly to the Jonestown Settlement through the rivers of the North West Region without being scrutinized by Customs or Revenue Authorities?

Notice Paper No. 345 (Q259 PPP/C No. 13) published on 2008-12-11)

Thereafter the Minister of Finance replied.

6. **PRIVATISATION PROGRAMME PRIOR TO 1992**

Mr. Komal Chand, M.P. asked the Minister of Finance the following question:

*Would the Minister inform this National Assembly about the Privatisation Programme of the state sector prior to 1992, and specifically provide -

- (i) A summary of the privatised entities,
- (ii) The procedures for privatisation identifying whether audits, valuation and public tendering of those entities were required and done, and, if Cabinet approval was given?

Notice Paper No. 346 (Q260 PPP/C No. 14) published on 2008-12-11)

Thereafter the Minister of Finance replied.

Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., asked the Minister of Finance supplementary questions.

Thereafter, the Minister of Finance replied.

Mrs. Sheila Holder, M.P., asked the Minister of Finance a supplementary question.

Thereafter the Minister of Finance replied.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS-

Situation in the Middle East

The Minister of Foreign Affairs made the following statement on the situation in the Middle East:

“The Government of Guyana has followed the recent unfolding of events on the Gaza Strip with grave concern. We are deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and suffering by innocent people on both sides as a result of the escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and intensification of violence over the past month. In the wake of the Israeli offensive, innocent Palestinians have borne a disproportionate share of loss of life, limb and of property. The Government of Guyana deplors the escalation of violence and calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities of all sides.

The Government of Guyana expresses its concerns at the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground, and the lack of access to humanitarian assistance for those in need, especially women and children. We call for urgent steps to ease the plight of the affected populations and to provide necessary relief in keeping with the provisions of international law, including international humanitarian law.

The Government of Guyana also underlines the necessity for durable peace and stability in the region and expresses its support for the efforts of the United Nations and other parties to bring a solution to the situation. Guyana calls on the United Nations Security Council to take necessary action in keeping with its Charter mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security towards an immediate cessation of hostilities and an early return to the negotiating table.

PUBLIC BUSINESS -

At 3.20 p.m., Members of the Opposition Parties withdrew from the Chamber.

(i) GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS – Second Readings

ITEM 1 - TRADE UNION RECOGNITION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2008 – Bill No. 25/2008 published on 2008-12-18

The Minister of Labour moved the second reading of the following Bill:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Trade Union Recognition Act 1997.

(Read a first time on 2008-12-22)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 4.24 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 5.35 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mr. Norman Whittaker

Mr. Komal Chand

Mr. Odinga Lumumba

Thereafter, the Minister of Labour replied.

The Bill was then read a second time.

Assembly resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 12 were passed as printed.

Assembly resumed

On a motion by the Minister of Labour, the Trade Union Recognition (Amendment) Bill 2008 was read a third time and passed as printed.

ITEM 2 - THE CHILDCARE AND PROTECTION AGENCY BILL 2008 – Bill NO. 26/2008 published on 2008-12-18

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security moved the second reading of the following Bill:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to provide for the establishment of a Childcare and Protection Agency the duties of which are to implement the policy and decisions in relation to the laws governing children.

(Read a first time on 2008-12-22)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Mrs. Volda Lawrence

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Mrs. Sheila Holder

Ms Bibi Shadick

Mrs. Latchmin Punalall

Mrs. Deborah Backer

Thereafter, the Minister of Human Services and Social Security replied.

The Bill was then read a second time.

The Assembly resolved itself into Committee to consider the Bill clause by clause.

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 6 were passed as printed.

Clause 7

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security moved the following amendments which were put and carried:

Section 7 Insert the following as subsection (3):

“(3) The Director may sue on behalf of the Agency and may represent the Agency if the Agency is sued.”

Clauses 8 and 9 were passed as printed.

Clause 10

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security moved the following amendments which were put and carried:

Section 10 Insert the following as subsection (6):

“(6) Any person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months;”

Clauses 11 and 12 were passed as printed.

Assembly resumed

On a motion by the Minister of Human Services and Social Security, the Childcare and Protection Agency Bill 2008 was read a third time and passed as amended.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 9.12 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 9.33 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

(ii) **PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

MOTION

ITEM 3 - LIVE AND UNEDITED BROADCAST OF THE SITTINGS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Aubrey Norton, M.P., moved the following motion:

WHEREAS the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana enshrines the protection of Freedom of Expression in Article 146 (1) and guarantees the Guyanese citizen the "freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference";

AND WHEREAS the people of Guyana are entitled to hear and/or see the presentations and representations made on their behalf in the National Assembly and be able to assess the contributions of all and make their own judgment;

AND WHEREAS the National Communication Network (NCN) is owned by the People of Guyana and has the widest coverage and is in a position to broadcast live and uninterrupted the proceedings of the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Opposition Members of Parliament are entitled to have their views heard in an unedited way by the people of Guyana;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly agrees that the sittings of the National Assembly be broadcast live and unedited to the people of Guyana by the National Communication Network and that the cost of the broadcast be borne by the State;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls on the Government to allocate a broadcast frequency for a parliamentary channel as happens in most democratic countries;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly calls on the Government to begin the live and unedited broadcast of the sittings of the National Assembly no later than one month after the adoption of this Motion.

(Notice Paper No. 320 (M82 Opp23) published on 2008-11-27)

ADJOURNMENT

At 10.10 p.m., on a motion by the Minister of Home Affairs, the Assembly was adjourned to 2.00 p.m., on Thursday, 15th January, 2009.



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HON. HARI N. RAMKARRAN, S.C., M.P.

Speaker of the National Assembly

**PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.**

8th January, 2009.