

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 47TH SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND
SESSION (2002-2004) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 2.00 P.M.
ON THURSDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2005
IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (68)

Speaker (1)

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

Members of the Government (37)

(i) People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

(ii) Non-elected Ministers (2)

(iii) The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P., Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works
and Communications

The Hon. Reepu Daman Persaud, O.R., J.P., M.P., Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

The Hon. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation

The Hon. Harripersaud Nokta, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

The Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Hon. Dr. Henry B. Jeffrey, M.P., Minister of Education

The Hon. Saisnarine Kowlessar, M.P., Minister of Finance

The Hon. Shaik K.Z. Baksh, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water

The Hon. J. Ronald Gajraj, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

(Region No. 3 -Essequibo Islands/West Demerara) (Absent - on Leave)

The Hon. Rev. Dr. Ramnauth D.A. Bisnauth, M.P., Minister of Labour, Human Services and
Social Security

The Hon. Clinton C. Collymore, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and
Regional Development

The Hon. Satyadeow Sawh, M.P., Minister of Fisheries, Other Crops and Livestock
(Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

* The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P., Minister in the Office of the
President with responsibility for Foreign Affairs (Absent)

* The Hon. Doodnauth Singh, S.C., M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

The Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P., Minister of the Public Service

The Hon. C. Anthony Xavier, M.P., Minister of Transport and Hydraulics

The Hon. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and
Social Security (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

** The Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P., Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

The Hon. Carolyn Rodrigues, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Absent)

The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P., Minister of Health

Mr. S. Feroze Mohamed, M.P., Chief Whip

Mr. Cyril C.L. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.

Mr. Husman Alli, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Mr. Komal Chand, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, M.P.

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

Mrs. Shirley V. Edwards, J.P., M.P.

Mr. Odinga N. Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Heeralall Mohan, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomereroon/Supenaam)

Mr. Ramesh C. Rajkumar, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.D., M.P.

Mrs. Philomena Sahoye-Shury, C.C.H., J.P., M.P.,
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Water

Mrs. Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.

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

Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

*Non-Elected Minister

**Elected Member from The United Force

Members of the Opposition (30)**(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)**

Mr. Robert H.O. Corbin, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P. (Absent - on Leave)

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

Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P., Chief Whip (Absent - on Leave)

Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomereroon/Supenaam)

Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.

Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.

Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.

Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

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

Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.

Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.

Dr. Dalglish Joseph, M.D., M.P.

Miss Amna Ally, M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/Berbice)

Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice) (Absent - on Leave)

Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P. (Absent - on Leave)

Dr. George A. Norton, M.P.

Miss Myrna E.N. Peterkin, M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Dr. Carl Max Hanoman, M.P.

Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent - on leave)

Mr. Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper Demerara/Berbice)

Mr. Ricky Khan, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)

Mrs. Rajcoomarie Bancroft, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni)

Mr. Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)

Miss Judith David, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni)

Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)

(ii) **Guyana Action Party/Working People's Alliance (2)**

Mrs. Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.

Mrs. Shirley J. Melville, M.P. (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

(iii) **Rise, Organise and Rebuild Party (1)**

Mr. Ravindra Dev, M.P. (Absent)

OFFICERS

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

Ms. Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The Sitting commenced at 2.15p.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk read prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Leave:

The Speaker announced that leave had been granted to:

Mr. Robert Corbin,

Mr. E. Lance Carberry,

Miss Sandra Adams,

Mr. Jerome Khan

and

Miss Lurlene Nestor for that day's sitting

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION

UNPRECEDENTED FLOODING OF THE COASTAL AREAS

Assembly resumed the debate on the following motion:

WHEREAS Guyana has recently witnessed an unprecedented amount of rainfall during the month of January with rainfall during the period December 24 to January 16 measuring in excess of 30 inches, the record amount for any similar period in the history of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS large areas of the coast in Administrative Regions 3, 4 and 5 have been inundated with the East Coast being the most severely affected;

AND WHEREAS as a result there has been incalculable personal and commercial damages suffered by thousands of households with many members being confined to their homes;

AND WHEREAS many of these households have been unable to access food, potable water and have been exposed to public health hazards, a consequence of which has been evacuation of homes, hospitalisations and fatalities;

AND WHEREAS Guyana now faces the worst natural disaster in its history;

AND WHEREAS the Guyanese people have rallied to the victims of the disaster in their thousands offering help in many ways;

AND WHEREAS religious bodies, private sector entities and organisations, trade unions, businesses, individuals and many others in Guyana and outside of Guyana have contributed and are continuing to contribute resources of various kinds to the relief effort and have pledged additional resources;

AND WHEREAS Guyanese and non-Guyanese organisations and overseas residents from many countries have pledged and donated goods and materials and have raised funds and continue to do so;

AND WHEREAS many Governments and international organisations have allocated or sent resources and assistance in many forms;

AND WHEREAS assistance and offers of assistance are continually being pledged by all of the above;

AND WHEREAS the Government has committed itself in partnership with specialised international agencies, to a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the disaster on the socio-economic status of households, communities and national sectors devastated by the floods;

AND WHEREAS the Government intends to take action for the recovery and rehabilitation using the results of the assessment.

RESOLVED,

That the National Assembly:-

1. Expresses its deeply felt sadness and sympathy to the victims of the disaster;
2. Expresses its gratitude to the people and organisations in Guyana and out of Guyana for the assistance they have given and continue to give;
3. Expresses its thanks to those Governments and international organisations which have contributed to the relief effort;
4. Urges all Guyanese and friends of Guyana to continue their efforts on behalf of the victims;

5. Supports the efforts of the Government of Guyana, the Opposition and all other political organisations which have contributed to the relief efforts;
6. Urges the people of Guyana, including the victims of the flood, to continue their valiant and courageous struggle against this disaster.

(Notice Paper No. 176 (M71 Govt65) published on 2005-02-09)

(Moved by the Minister of Transport and Hydraulics on 2005-02-16)

A motion by Mrs. Deborah Backer and seconded by Mr. Raphael Trotman, for Mr. James McAllister to be granted a further extension of fifteen minutes to continue and conclude his speech, was put and negatived.

The following Members spoke to the motion:

The Minister of the Public Service

Mrs. Sheila Holder

Mr. Stanley Ming

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport was speaking to the motion when the time for the suspension of the sitting was reached.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 4.05 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 4.40 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport continued and concluded her speech.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Ms Amna Ally

Mrs. Shirley Melville

Dr. Carl Max Hanoman

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs moved the suspension of Standing Order No. 9(2) to allow the sitting to continue uninterrupted.

The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development continued and concluded his speech.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 6.55 p.m., the sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 7.30 p.m., the sitting was resumed.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Mrs. Volda Lawrence

The Minister of Health

Ms Genevieve Allen

The Prime Minister

Mr. Basil Williams

Mr. Donald Ramotar

Mr. Abdul Kadir

Mr. Odinga Lumumba

Mr. Ivor Allen

The Minister of Education

Mr. Vincent Alexander

The Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation

The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Presiding of Mr. Cyril Belgrave

While the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce was speaking to the motion, the Speaker withdrew from the Chamber and Mr. Cyril Belgrave took the Chair temporarily.

Return of Speaker

While the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce was speaking, the Speaker returned and resumed the Chair.

The Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce continued and concluded his speech.

Thereafter, the Minister of Transport and Hydraulics replied.

The following amendment proposed by Mrs. Sheila Holder and seconded by Mrs. Shirley Melville was put and negatived:

Include after Item 6 in the **Be It Resolve Clause** the following Item No. 7

Urges the Government in consultation with the political parties in the Parliamentary Opposition to appoint a Commission of Inquiry under the Commission of Inquiry Act, Cap. 19:03, to conduct a public inquiry into the likely causes of the recent unprecedented (abnormal) flooding of the coastal areas of Guyana and to make recommendations within three months of the establishment of the Commission.

The following amendment proposed by Mrs. Deborah Backer and seconded by Mr. Ivor Allen was put and negatived:

WHEREAS on the 16th day of November, 2004 Mr. Alan Munroe, Regional Chairman of Region 4 wrote the Honourable Harripersaud Nokta, Minister of Local Government and Regional Development a letter captioned 'FLOODING IN REGION #4 DURING THE UP-COMING RAINY SEASON':

AND WHEREAS the aforesaid letter dated the 16th November, 2004 drew the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development attention to the fact "that there will be massive flooding in Region # 4 during the up-coming season because of lack of funds to effect cleaning the drainage system":

AND WHEREAS the aforesaid letter dated the 16th November, 2004 was copied to the Honourable Samuel Hinds, M.P., Prime Minister; the Honourable Satyadeow Sawh, M.P., Minister of Agriculture; The Honourable Sasenarine Kowlessar M.P., Minister of Finance and Dr. Roger Luncheon, Head of the Presidential Secretaria;

AND WHEREAS the coastal area of Guyana has recently witnessed an unprecedented amount of rainfall during the month of January, 2005 with rainfall during the period December, 2004 to January 16th, 2005 measured in excess of 30 inches, the record amount for any similar period in the recorded history of Guyana;

AND WHEREAS as a result of the failure of Central Government to heed the advise of the Regional Chairman of Region #4; the unstable state of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam, the neglect by the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Georgetown of the drainage and irrigation of Georgetown and the unprecedented amount of rainfall between 24th December, 2004 to 16th January, 2005 the City of Georgetown and the East Coast of Demerara were inundated with flood waters;

AND WHEREAS as a result of the poor condition of the Boeraserie Water Conservancy; the poor conditions of several kokers and the unprecedented rainfall during the period 24th December, 2004 to 16th January, 2005 the West Bank of Demerara and parts of the West Coast of Demerara were inundated with flood water;

AND WHEREAS to prevent the rice lands on the Essequibo Coast from being flooded, the Government took the decision to discharge the excess water from the Tapakuma Conservancy into the Pameroun River via the Arapiaco River and the Dredge Creek Canal thereby flooding farmlands throughout the Pomeroun damaging thousands of permanent and short term corps;

AND WHEREAS to prevent the collapse of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam, the Government took the decision to pump water into the Mahaica Creek, Mahaica, Mahaicony and the Cane Grove thereby flooding hundreds of houses along the Mahaica Creek, destroying in excess of 5,000 acres of rice together with acres of cash and permanent crops;

AND WHEREAS as a result there has been incalculable personal and commercial damages suffered by thousands of households with many persons confined to their homes;

AND WHEREAS many of these households have been unable to access food, potable water and have been exposed to public health hazards, a consequence of which has been evacuation of homes, hospitalizations and facilities;

AND WHEREAS Guyana now faces the worst disaster in its history;

AND WHEREAS the Guyanese people have rallied to the victims of the disaster in their thousands offering help in many ways;

AND WHEREAS religious bodies, private sector entities and organisations, opposition parties, trade unions, businesses, individuals and many others in Guyana and outside of Guyana have contributed and are continuing to contribute resources of various kinds to the relief and have pledged additional resources;

AND WHEREAS Guyanese and non-Guyanese organisations and overseas residents from many countries have pledged and donated goods and materials and have raised funds and continue to do so;

AND WHEREAS many Governments and international organisations have allocated or sent resources and assistance in many forms;

AND WHEREAS assistance and offers of assistance are continually being pledged by all of the above;

13.

AND WHEREAS the Government has committed itself in partnership with specialized international agencies to a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the disaster on the socio-economic status of households, communities and national sectors devastated by the floods;

AND WHEREAS the Government intends to take action to ensure that all citizens affected by the flood and effects of the flood receive compensation and are meaningfully rehabilitated.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly:-

1. Expresses its deeply felt sadness and sympathy to the victims of the disaster;
2. Expresses its gratitude to the people and organisations in Guyana and out of Guyana for the assistance they have given and continue to give;
3. Expresses its thanks to those Governments and International Organisations which have contributed to the relief effort;
4. Urges all Guyanese and friends of Guyana to continue their efforts on behalf of the victims;
5. Request the Government to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the causes of the flooding, such Commission to present its report to the National Assembly by the 31st day of March, 2005;

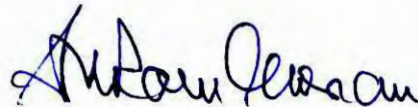
6. Requests the Government to lay before the National Assembly by the 31st day of March, 2005 a detailed time bound plan as to their short term, medium term and long term plans to preserve the integrity of the East Demerara Water Conservancy Dam;
7. Request the Government to lay before the National Assembly by the 31st day of March, 2005 a detailed time bound plan as to their short, medium and long term plans to compensate and rehabilitate all persons affected by the floods;
8. Request the Government to lay before this Parliament by the 31st day of March, 2005 a detailed time bound plan which will ensure that the farmers of the Mahaica Creek and adjacent areas are not flooded annually;
9. Request Government to lay before this National Assembly by the 30th day of June, 2005 a detailed Disaster Preparedness Plan;
10. Support the efforts of the Government of Guyana, the Opposition and all other political organisations, which have contributed, to the relief efforts;
11. Urge the people of Guyana, including the victims of the flood, to continue their valiant and courageous struggle against this disaster.

NB: The underline italics represents the proposed amendments to the PPP/C Motion

The motion was then put and carried.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.29a.m., on a motion by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, the sitting was adjourned to 2.00 p.m., on Monday, 21st February, 2005.



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

Speaker of the National Assembly

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,

Public Buildings,

Georgetown.

17th February, 2005.