

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE 33RD SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (1986-1987) OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD

AT 2.00 P.M.

ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH MARCH, 1987

IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (74)

Speaker (1)

*Cde. Sase Narain, O.R., S.C., J.P., M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

Members of the Government - People's National Congress (62)

Ministers in the Cabinet (10)

Prime Minister (1)

Cde. H. Green, M.P., Prime Minister

Other Vice-President and First Deputy Prime Minister (1)

Cde. Dr. M. Shahabuddeen, O.R., S.C., M.P., Vice-President,
First Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General

Other Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

Cde. R. Chandisingh, M.P., Vice-President, National Mobilisation,
and Deputy Prime Minister

Cde. Viola V. Burnham, O.R., M.P., Vice-President, Education and
Social Development, and Deputy Prime Minister

Other Deputy Prime Ministers (2)

Cde. W.A.L.H. Parris, C.C.H., M.P., Deputy Prime Minister,
Planning and Development

Cde. R.H.O. Corbin, M.P., Deputy Prime Minister, Public Utilities

Senior Ministers (4)

Cde. R.E. Jackson, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs (Absent - on leave)

*Cde. C.B. Greenidge, M.P., Minister of Finance

Cde. S. Prashad, M.P., Minister of Labour

Cde. W.S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P., Minister of Trade and Tourism

Other Ministers (15)

Senior Ministers (7)

Cde. J.R. Thomas, M.P., Minister of Regional Development

Cde. Dr. R.A. Van West-Charles, M.P., Minister of Medical Education,
Environment and Food Policy

Cde. Yvonne V. Harewood-Benn, M.P., Minister of Information and the
Public Service

*Cde. Dr. P.L. McKenzie, A.A., M.P., Senior Minister in the Ministry
of Agriculture

*Cde. D.M.A. Bernard, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Education

*Cde. J.R. Kranenburg, M.P., Minister of Communications and Works

*Cde. Dr. N.E. Blackman, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Health

*Non-elected Member

Ministers (5)

- Cde. Urmia E.H. Johnson, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of National Mobilisation
Cde. C.G. Sharma, A.A., J.P., M.P., Minister in the Office of the President (Absent - on leave)
Cde. D. Sawh, M.P., Minister of Forestry
*Cde. V.V. Parvatan, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
Cde. J.T. Kisscon, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Medical Education, Environment and Food Policy

Ministers of State (3)

- *Cde. D.A.N. Ainsworth, M.P., Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
Cde. Dr. Faith A. Harding, M.P., Minister of State in the Ministry of Planning and Development
Cde. Stella Odie-Ali, M.P., Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs

Parliamentary Secretary (1)

- *Cde. Jean M.G. Persico, A.A., M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Education

Government Chief Whip (1)

- Cde. Jennifer A. Ferreira, M.P., Government Chief Whip

Other Members (23)

- Cde. Agnes W. Bend-Kirton, M.P.
Cde. A.K. Habibulla, M.P.
Cde. E.H.A. Fowler, M.P.
Cde. Joyce Gill-Mingo, M.P.
Cde. M. Ally, M.P.
Cde. Elaine B. Davidson, M.P.
Cde. H. Doobay, M.P.
Cde. Joyce M. Munroe, J.P., M.P.
Cde. Edwina Melville, M.P. (Absent - on leave)
Cde. Anna Ally, M.P.
Cde. L.R. Arthur, M.P.
Cde. J.R.L. Bovell-Drakes, M.P.
Cde. N. Calistro, M.P.
Cde. F.M. Cumberbatch, M.P.
Cde. M.I. Deen, M.P.
Cde. Cyrilda A. DeJesus, M.P. (Absent - on leave)
Cde. Edith Deygo, M.P.
Cde. Clarice A. Edwards, M.P.
Cde. C.L. Geddes, M.P.
Cde. G. Marshall, M.P.
Cde. B. Persaud, J.P., M.P.
Cde. E.W. Trotman, M.P.
Cde. K. Sankar, M.S., M.P. (Absent - on leave)

*Non-elected Member

Members from the National Congress of Local Democratic Organs (2)

Cde. E. Mohamed, M.P. (Absent)
Cde. Rose I. Semple, M.P.

Members from the Regional Democratic Councils (10)

Cde. Nellie R. Charles, M.P. (Region No. 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni) (Absent)
Cde. R. Bishop, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
Cde. Bhagmatee Latchminarayan, M.P. (Region No. 5 - Mahaica/
Berbice)
Cde. Y. Khan, M.P. (Region No. 2 - Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Cde. Enid E. Abrahams, M.S., J.P., M.P. (Region No. 3 -
Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)
Cde. I. Ally, M.P. (Region No. 6 - East Berbice/Corentyne)
Cde. B.L. Domingo, M.P. (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini)
Cde. S.I. McGarrell, M.P. (Region No. 8 - Potaro/Siparuni) (Absent)
Cde. M. Stephens, M.P. (Region No. 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper
Essequibo) (Absent)
Cde. Joycelyn Thom-Lindie, M.P. (Region No. 10 - Upper
Demerara/Berbice) (Absent)

Members of the Minority (11)

(i) People's Progressive Party (8)

Minority Leader (1)

Cde. Dr. C. Jagan, M.P., Minority Leader

Deputy Speaker (1)

Cde. R.D. Persaud, J.P., M.P., Deputy Speaker of the
National Assembly

Other Members (6)

Cde. Janet Jagan, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Collymore, M.P.
Cde. S.F. Mohamed, M.P., Minority Chief Whip
Cde. H. Nokta, M.P.
Cde. I. Basir, M.P.
Cde. C.C. Belgrave, M.P. (Absent)

(ii) United Force (2)

Mr. M.F. Singh, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. (Absent - on leave)
Mr. M.A. Abraham, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

(iii) Working People's Alliance (1)

Mr. E. Kwayana, M.P. (Absent - on leave)

OFFICERS

Cde. F.A. Narain, A.A., Clerk of the National Assembly
Cde. I. Hartman, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

The Clerk read Prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER(i) Leave

The Speaker announced that leave had been granted to -

- (a) Cdes. Jackson, Sharma, Sankar and Mr. M.F. Singh for that sitting;
- (b) Cde. De. Jesus for the period 27th February to 6th March, 1987;
- (c) Cde. Latchminarayan for one month from 15th March, 1987 and
- (d) Mr. Kwayana for the period 19th February to 10th March, 1987.

(ii) Congratulations to former Members of Parliament on National Awards

The Speaker said that in the recent announcement of National Awards made on the occasion of the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Republic two persons who were former Members of Parliament were granted National Awards.

- (i) Cde. Neville James Bissember, Attorney-at-Law who was a Member of Parliament from 5th October, 1961 to 6th June, 1973, was awarded the Cacique Crown of Honour for service of an exceptionally high quality and beyond the normal call of duty in the struggle for political independence and in the field of politics.
- (ii) Mr. Peter Stanislaus D'Aguiar, Chairman, Co-Managing Director, Banks DIH Limited, D'Aguiar's Industries and Holdings, who was a Member of Parliament from 5th October 1961 to 28th February, 1969, was awarded the Cacique Crown of Honour for service of an exceptionally high quality and beyond the normal call of duty in national life, especially in the field of industrial development and in pioneering workers and widespread share membership in the field of private enterprise.

The Speaker on his own behalf and on behalf of the Members of the Assembly, extended and had placed on records their congratulations and best wishes to those two persons.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS ETC.-

By the Minister of Regional Development, on behalf of the
Minister of Finance:

Reports (7) of the Auditor General on the
Accounts of the Mahaica-Mahalcony-Abary
Agricultural Development Authority for the
years 1979-1985.

(ST: 25/2/2/13)(Circulated)

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERSNos. 9 to 14

As Mr. Kwayana was absent on leave, the Questions at
Nos. 9 to 14 (Notice Papers Nos. 41 to 45 and 48) were deferred.

No. 15 - Rental of Belfield House

Cde. Janet Jagan asked the Prime Minister the following
question:

- QUESTION: (i) Is it true that the Government has rented
Belfield House, East Coast Demerara, from
the owner, Ms Viola Burnham, for the use of
Mr. L.F.S. Burnham up to the time of his
death in August, 1985?
- (ii) If so, will the Prime Minister **state** what
the rental was and for what period it was
paid?
- (iii) Will the Prime Minister state the total
sum of money expended on improving security
and other developments at Belfield House?

(Notice Paper No. 49 published 1986-05-30)

The Prime Minister gave the following reply:-

- ANSWER:- (i) No.
- (ii) Not relevant.
- (iii) It is not the practice to give information
related to security arrangements.

No. 16 Preservation of Body of Late President of Guyana

Cde. Janet Jagan asked the Minister of Finance the following
question:

- QUESTION: (i) Will the Minister say what is the cost to
send the body of the late President, Mr. L.F.S.
Burnham, to and from Moscow, and what will be
the total cost of the preservation process?
- (ii) What will be the cost of building the
Mausoleum and estimated annual maintenance
costs?

(Notice Paper No. 50 published 1986-05-30)

The Prime Minister gave the following reply:-

- ANSWER: (i) The Government and people of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic have been gracious enough to inform the Government of the Co-operatives Republic of Guyana that there will be no charges for transportation and preservation of the Body of the Late President Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.
- (ii) In so far as the cost of the Mausoleum is concerned the present cost is \$2,457,248.77. There is no estimate at this point of time for the annual maintenance but this is expected to be very minimal.

No. 17 - Good Shepherd Primary School and Headteacher's House, Barima River

Cde. Nokta asked the Vice-President, Education and Social Development, and Deputy Prime Minister the following question:

- QUESTION: (i) Is the Minister aware that the Good Shepherd Primary School, Barima River, North West District, is in bad shape with practically no walls, and that the compound is flooded every high tide with about two feet of water?
- (ii) Further, is the Minister aware that the Headteacher's house for the said school has no kitchen and that a room in the school is used for that purpose?
- (iii) Will the Minister say how soon the school and Headteacher's house will be repaired and the compound protected from flooding?

(Notice Paper No. 51 published 1986-05-30)

The Vice-President, Education and Social Development, gave the following reply:-

- ANSWER:- (i) Is it true that the Good Shepherd Primary School is in need of repairs and the compound is subject to flooding. Having been aware of this service last year, the Region which has responsibility for building and maintenance listed this school as one of those to be rehabilitated in 1987. Work is to be started shortly.

Flooding arises from the fact that the embankment around the school compound needs to be elevated to keep out the high tide. This work is earmarked for the first quarter of 1987. Residents of the community have indicated their desire to contribute to this venture through self-help efforts.

The Regional Education Officer has been requested to monitor the progress of these works.

(ii) It is also true that when the house which accommodated the former headmaster deteriorated, a section of the school was used for the preparation of meals. Another headmaster has since been assigned to the school. He lives in his own house in the community.

(iii) Question three (iii) has been answered by responses to the first two questions.

Cde. Nokta asked a Supplementary Question.

No. 18 - Repairs to T & HD Stelling at Wakenaam

Cde. Nokta asked the Minister of Communications and Works the following question:

QUESTION: (i) Will the Minister say how long ago work on repairs to the Transport and Harbours Department Stelling at Wakenaam commenced, and how soon will the work be completed?

(ii) Will the Minister also say how much money was voted for the job, how much has been spent and whether it will be completed within the voted provision?

(Notice Paper No. 52 published 1986-05-30)

The Minister of Communications and Works gave the following reply:

ANSWER: (i) The rehabilitation of Wakenaam Stelling commenced in September, 1985 and is now estimated to be completed around the 15th April, 1987 according to the latest projections given by the contractors.

(ii) The original estimate for the works to be executed at Wakenaam was \$981,440, but due to the recent wage increases and the escalation in price for materials the estimate was subsequently amended to \$1.2 million. To date \$1.1 million has been expended and all indications are that the works would be completed within the amount provided for.

No. 19 - Leak on M.V. Lukanani

Cde. Nokta asked the Minister of Communications and Works the following question:

QUESTION: (i) Is the Minister ~~unaware that~~ the Transport and Harbours Department Ferry Boat, M.V. Lukanani, which plies the Parika-Leguan service, sprang a leak on April 15, 1986, in mid-stream with an estimated 250 passengers on board, creating a situation of near panic?

- (ii) Is he aware that, because the vessel has no pump the water being shipped had to be baled out by a bucket brigade?
- (iii) Will the Minister say -
- (a) how many life jackets were available at the time, and
- (b) whether or not regular inspections are made to ensure the vessel's sea-worthiness?
(Notice Paper No. 53 published 1986-05-30)

The Minister of Communications and Works gave the following reply:-

ANSWER: I was so notified by the General Manager - Transport & Harbours Department. However, I would like it to be known that they were 120 passengers on board the vessel and not 250 as Cde. Nokta claims. Further the situation was under control because the bilge pumps which is a normal piece of equipment on board any vessel was able to take care of the amount of water the vessel was taking in. This vessel was afterwards beached at Leguan in order to find out the situation of leak. In order to dry out the section to effect repairs, it was necessary to bail out this section. I am unaware of any bucket brigade being formed to bail the vessel in order to effectively take care of the water while the vessel was underway.

At the time of the incident there were 122 life jackets, 9 life buoys and 6 life rafts on board.

Annual hull & Machinery surveys are carried out by the Transport & Harbours Department when vessels are in dry dock. Presently the vessel is in dry dock and is expected to be returned to service on the 24th March, 1987.

No. 20 - Rental of Building for Guyana Committee for Solidarity and Peace

The Minority Leader asked the Prime Minister the following question:

QUESTION: Will the Prime Minister say whether the rental of the building situate at 274A Peter Rose Street, Queenstown, Georgetown, for use by the Guyana Committee for Solidarity and Peace is being met from Public Funds and, if so, from what Head and Sub-head in the Estimates?

(Notice Paper No. 54 published 1986-05-30)

The Prime Minister gave the following reply:-

ANSWER: The rental for the building referred to is not being met from Public Funds. The other questions therefore **are irrelevant.**

No. 21 - Importation of Cloth

The Minority Leader asked the Minister of Trade and Tourism the following question:

- QUESTION: (i) Will the Minister say whether or not it is true that Ms Cheryl Lopes was given a licence to import 50,000 yards of cloth (ends) at approximately US\$1.00 per yard and that the cloth was sold to Guyana Stores at G\$56.00 in December, 1985?
- (ii) Will the Minister say whether any foreign currency was released for this transaction?
- (iii) If so, what was the actual amount of foreign currency involved?

(Notice Paper No. 55 published 1986-05-31)

The Minister of Trade and Tourism gave the following reply:-

ANSWER: (i) The records of the Ministry of Trade and Tourism do not show that any import licence for cloth was ever given to Cheryl Lopes to import as alleged in the question or even at all.

- (ii) and (iii) As a result parts (ii) and (iii) of the question are not relevant.

No. 22 - Tabling of Trade Agreements

The Minority Leader asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Planning and Development, the following question:

QUESTION: When will the Minister table in the National Assembly the three Trade Agreements signed recently in Caracas, Venezuela, with -

- (i) the Venezuelan oil company MARAVEN S.A. for the supply of petroleum products,
- (ii) the Interamericana De Alumina (INTERALUMINA) under which Guyana will supply directly to Venezuela substantial quantities of metallurgical grade bauxite during 1986 and 1987, and
- (iii) the Venezuelan Investment Fund (VIF) and the Bank of Guyana - a deposit agreement designed to facilitate (a) and (b) above?

(Notice Paper No. 56 published 1986-05-30)

The Deputy Prime Minister, Planning and Development gave the following reply:-

ANSWER: The Deputy Prime Minister, Planning and Development does not intend to table in the National Assembly any of the three Agreements mentioned.

As explained previously in the Assembly, the Trade Agreements are not Contracts between two Governments. They comprise straightforward commercial business arrangements between commercial companies. As is normal in such situations those agreements contain a wealth of detail of business information normally considered proprietary by commercial business. Commercial companies correctly prefer to preserve the privacy of their cost and revenue structures in the context of the fiercely competitive milieu in which they thrive to exist and prosper.

As a matter of principle it would be unethical to disclose proprietary information about a company either public sector or private sector and especially about a foreign company such as MARAVEN, even in the circumstance where the Government has performed the function of facilitating the conclusion of standard business transactions.

The Minority Leader asked a supplementary question.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

The Prime Minister made a statement on the problem of Thallium Sulphate contamination and advised that Government has imposed a ban on the importation of Thallium Sulphate and with the co-operation of international and other Agencies it is taking all necessary steps to identify and eliminate sources of contamination. He said that all available evidence indicates that this problem is not of epidemic proportions and there is no need for undue alarm.

In his presentation the Prime Minister informed the Assembly that more medical specialists are expected in Guyana to help in solving the problem.

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

Thallium Sulphate Contamination

Cde. Janet Jagan sought leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly for the purpose of discussing a matter which dealt with Thallium Sulphate contamination. With the leave of the Assembly the Speaker allowed the claim.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT - DEFINITE MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Thallium Sulphate Contamination

Cde. Janet Jagan moved the adjournment of the Assembly and spoke on the question of Thallium Sulphate contamination.

Cde. Reepu Daman Persaud seconded the motion.

The Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture, Cde Reepu Daman Persaud and the Minister in the Ministry of Health, spoke on the matter.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.47 p.m. on a motion by the Minister of Regional Development, the Assembly was adjourned to a date to be fixed.

S. NARAIN
Speaker

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Georgetown.

1987-03-18.