

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2004) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE CONVENTION CENTER OCEAN VIEW INTERNATIONAL HOTEL LILIENDAAL

45TH SITTING

2.00 PM

Tuesday 15 February 2005

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 - People's Progressive Party/Civic (34)

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 (AOL)

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
- *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. Belgrave, C.C.H., J.P., M.P. - (Region No. 4 - Demerara/Mahaica)
- Mr. Donald R. Ramotar, M.P.
- Mr Husman Alli, 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 - Pomeroun/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)

Members of the Opposition (30)

(i) People's National Congress/Reform (27)

Mr. Robert H. O. Corbin, M. P.	
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	- (AOL)
Mrs Clarissa S. Riehl, M.P.	- Deputy Speaker of the N.A
Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- Chief Whip (AOL)
Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P.	- (Region No. 2-Pomeroon/Supenaam)
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M.A. Bernard, M.P.	- (AOL)
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	- (Absent)
Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- (Region No. 4-Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)
Mr. Raphael G. C. Trotman, M.P.	
Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.	
Mrs. Volda A. Lawrence, M.P.	- (AOL)
Dr Dalgleish 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)(AOL)
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	- (AOL)
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- (Region No. 4-Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)
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) (AOL)
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/Corntyne)
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 Party (2)

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- (Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P. (AOL)	
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OFFICERS

Mr Sherlock E Isaacs, Clerk of the National Assembly

Ms Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

PRAYERS

The Clerk reads the **Prayer**

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members, as you aware, this is a Special Sitting of the National Assembly, so we do not have our normal Agenda. However, the Sitting will be inevitably and unavoidably delayed because of the extensive discussions between His Excellency, President Lula Da Silva, and His Excellency, President Jagdeo. I, therefore, will have to suspend the sitting, and we will resume upon the arrival of President Lula Da Silvia of Brazil.

14:36H - THE SITTING IS SUSPENDED

15:25H - THE SITTING IS RESUMED

ARRIVAL OF THE PRESIDENTS OF GUYANA AND BRAZIL

Honourable Members, please be seated.

WELCOME BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members, Your Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo, Your Excellency President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva, distinguished Members of the Brazilian delegation, Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps, Honourable Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Members of the National Assembly of Guyana, I

am honoured to extend a warm welcome to Your Excellency, President Lula Da Silva and to Members of your delegation. This National Assembly represents the united voice of the people of Guyana for economic and social development and we know that your Excellency supports these objectives for both Guyana and Brazil.

Brazil's recent initiatives to advance the cause of developing countries for a more equitable system for international trade and to spare a greater voice in international spheres of adding new and important financial and social dynamics to international discourse for developing countries and the agenda of the South.

Your Excellency's leadership in forging unity in many countries, including Guyana, in the G-20 Group to negotiate fair terms of trade has had, and will continue to have, significant positive influences in our country's promotion of the goals of economic and social development and the elimination of poverty. We admire and support the focus which your Excellency and the Government of Brazil have placed on the eradication of hunger and poverty, not only for your own people, but for the world as a whole. These goals are fully shared by the National Assembly of Guyana.

We note with interest Brazil's efforts to spearhead a movement to create a South American community of nations. I understand that the main objective of this community is to accelerate integration of the countries and peoples of the continent of Guyana is a part. I heard Your Excellency say, at the function at City Hall this morning that there will be no distinction between rich or poor, large or small countries or cities. It is my hope that within this mechanism, there will be space for an increased and sustained exchange among the Parliaments of our Region. Brazil has already been active in promoting such exchange, particularly in relation to trade issues.

Your Excellency, the close and continually-expanding ties which unite Guyana and Brazil, which your visit will further encourage, have been demonstrated by Brazil's immediate response to the emergency

needs which resulted from the recent flooding in Guyana.

I express my gratitude on behalf of the National Assembly to the Government and the people of Brazil for your prompt and generous response to Guyana's worst disaster in modern times, which devastated the livelihood and environment of a large section of our population.

I am especially pleased and honoured to welcome your Excellency to this first sitting of the National Assembly in our Parliament Chamber since the refurbishment and restoration of our ceiling, which is more than 150 years old, which was accomplished by Guyanese craftspersons. The architecture of our historical buildings is of great beauty and I noted the beauty of the City Hall building being described to your Excellency at the function this morning.

All I wish to say to you, Your Excellency, is that our building is at least fifty years older than the City Hall building. I now invite your Excellency to address this special sitting of the National Assembly.

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL

His Excellency Mr Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva: Your Excellencies President Jagdeo and Prime Minister Hinds; my dear wife Marisa; Your Excellency Minister of Parliamentary Affairs; ladies and gentleman; Members of the National Assembly; ladies and gentleman who are Ministers of State of Guyana and Brazil, Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the National Assembly, Mr Speaker and my dear friends.

It is a great honour to participate in this special session of the National Assembly of Guyana. This House embodies democratic values that are fundamental for all societies. Democracy is essential to assure the wellbeing, social justice, sustainable development, and respect for the human rights of the people. It becomes stronger and produces consensus when it comes together with democratic measures in the economic and the social terms as well. With political will we can express these values as actions in fighting hunger and poverty. We are pleased to

see that Guyana is fully engaged in this struggle, which is also a priority of my Government.

Yet democratic values must also be affirmed on the international scale. United in the defence of that objective, our countries are fully engaged in the defence of multilateralism. We defend a broad ranging reform of the United Nations, particularly of its Security Council. The composition in the working methods of the Security Council must assure greater legitimacy, and representatively, to its decisions. The United Nations need to reflect the growing importance of developing countries in the world.

That is why I once again express my thanks to the Government of Guyana for its support of Brazil's candidacy to a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Mr President, South American countries are today searching for their integration. The unity of our peoples in economic and trades spheres, in political, social, scientific and cultural arenas, will change our region. That unity will give us another place in the world. Integration allows us to exploit the complementary resources of our economies, generating greater self-confidence in our destiny. It is a powerful instrument to defend our positions in international fora.

For Brazil, the road to integration means strengthening relations between MERCOSUR and all the countries of South America, fully recognizing the specific situation of Guyana, and also of Suriname in the CARICOM. The decision taken by South American Heads of State in Cusco, to create the South American Community of Nations is of historic importance. It is contributing to building a future of peace and prosperity in our continent. That community will promote the convergence and political co-ordination amongst the member countries. It will intensify the coming together among MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of Nations, Chile, with a full Membership of Guyana and Suriname. The Community will also seek to integrate the infrastructure involving transportation, energy and communication amongst our countries.

Yet this year, Brazil will be hosting the first meeting of Heads of State of the South American Community of Nations. We hold great expectations regarding the collective decisions that we will be taking together to make this Community an instrument for the sovereign development of our countries. We are counting on the active participation of Guyana for the success of these efforts, which will be focused at the beginning, on the institutional structure of this Community. Mr Speaker, the relations between Brazil and Guyana have been historically characterized by cordiality and by understanding.

It was my pleasure to receive a visit by President Jagdeo to Brasilia in July 2003. My Minister of Foreign Relations was here in Georgetown in June last year at the time of the first meeting of the bilateral mechanism for political consultations. Following this visit that I am making, I hope that contacts at all levels will be even more frequent and intense.

Mr Speaker, I want to once again express, to the Government and people of Guyana, the solidarity from my country in response to the floods that have affected many regions of your country. In response to this situation, we hope to design cooperation programmes and technical cooperation in areas such as solid waste management, and the control over disease and the proliferation of mosquitoes.

Guyana is, at the same time, a Caribbean and a South American country. It shares with Brazil, and another six countries, the immense wealth of the Amazon region. We acknowledge the enthusiasm with which this country has supported the approximation between Brazil and its MERCOSUR partners with CARICOM. A free trade agreement between MERCOSUR and CARICOM will stimulate the exchange of goods and services between our two regions. It will also create new opportunities for business and for co-operation projects, beyond the sphere of trade. We need to take into consideration the asymmetries which exist between our economies, in a spirit of generosity and flexibility that should rule over bilateral and inter-regional negotiations on trade. We should conclude as soon as possible a working programme to materialize those negotiations.

The entry into force last year of the partial-scope agreement has opened new possibilities for increasing the flow of goods and services between our two countries and that is why I have come accompanied with a business mission from Brazil, to identify new opportunities for trade, particularly the expansion of exports from Guyana to Northern Brazil. We are studying the implementation of a special customs regime to expedite exchanges in our border region.

Mr Speaker, Members of the Assembly, one of the main issues on our bilateral agenda is the highway connection between the capital of Paramaribo and Georgetown. That connection will make a significant contribution to increasing exchanges between our two countries. My Government wishes to reinstate the construction of the international bridge over the Takutu River. We are also preparing measures to accelerate the implementation of the mechanisms created by the agreement on international passenger and cargo highway transportation between Guyana and Brazil. Thus, that agreement is still awaiting formal approval by our congress.

Mr Speaker, our countries are both involved in intense and complex negotiations at the World Trade Organization. Brazil has been fighting for the benefits of trade to reach all people. We established the G20, because we believe that the unity of the developing countries will be a key to the success of the Doha Round.

We want to put an end to abusive practices that distort international trade, and that hurt, above all developing countries. We understand that the needs of our countries are not identical. For that reason we are stimulating productive dialogue between the members of the G20, and of the G90, where Guyana plays a leading role. We acknowledge Guyana's initiative to stimulate and understanding between these two groups. It is essential that we do not allow the development hereto mentioned to be diluted in agreements that are predominantly in the interest of rich countries. These were the reasons that lead the Brazilian Government to launch the candidacy of Ambassador Luis Felipe Seixas Correa to the post of Director-General at the WTO.

I must also deal with an issue that has provoked misunderstanding interpretations, and that has a direct impact on the interests of Brazil, and of the CARICOM. I want to assure you all that Brazil understands and respects the interests of Caribbean economies. The interests of the countries in CARICOM have always had the support of Brazil at the World Trade Organisation.

In the conflict that we raised against the subsidies granted by the European Union, which are illegal under international trade norms, Brazil never questioned the trade preferences granted by the European Union to Caribbean Countries. Brazil never requested the elimination of that preferential regime. We energetically reject any suggestion that Brazil's action at the WTO was aimed at causing any harm to Caribbean exports of sugar to the European market. That misunderstanding has been stimulated by those who refuse to respect the rules of the international trade system. That is why that misunderstanding must be overcome.

Brazil is willing to organise a broad scheme of cooperation with CARICOM countries, particularly with Guyana and this would cover programmes of technical training in the sugar and alcohol production sectors. We are also committing to giving support in the modernisation and diversification of agricultural production in Guyana. The public and the private sectors in Brazil can, and should participate in these efforts with a constructive spirit and in solidarity. We are also in favour of initiatives that would increase trade flows through programmes of joint promotion and with the coordinated participation in the third round of negotiations of the general global preference systems amongst countries in development.

Mr Speaker, cooperation between Brazil and Guyana has advanced, with taking solid steps, since the visit by the President Jagdeo to Brasilia. We have already carried out several initiatives and we are also very encouraged by prospects for carrying out new projects and cooperation. We hope to create a bi-national commission to study and to propose projects, in the area of health for our border region. We have

decided to establish an executive programme for cooperation in the area of education. The human side to our relations is also a priority. We are coming to a bilateral agreement to regularise the migratory situation of Brazilians in Guyana and of Guyanese in Brazil. We want to document those citizens who are in irregular situations in order to improve their social and economic conditions for their workers and for their families.

Mr Speaker, Members of the Assembly, in conclusion, I wish to thank you for this valuable opportunity to speak to the representatives of the Guyanese people. I leave you my best wishes for happiness and reaffirm the commitment by the Brazilian Government to work for the future of our relations and for the well being of our peoples.

And before I conclude, I would like to also say to the Speaker and to the Members of this Assembly that we are trying to overcome all the bureaucratic obstacles that have led the General Accounting Office of Brazil to suspend back in 2001, the construction of that bridge. Our commitment here is to fulfil all the requirements established by the General Accounting Office of Brazil so that as soon as possible, I will be able to meet, once again, with President Jagdeo at the border between Brazil and Guyana, for us to be able to inaugurate a new era in our relationship, guaranteeing the freedom of movements amongst our peoples, guaranteeing the freedom of movement of our products and above all, guaranteeing the possibility of improving our citizens' rights. May God bless Guyana? Thank you very much. *[Applause]*

THANKS BY THE SPEAKER

Honourable Members, Your Excellency President Lula Da Silva. On behalf of the Members of the National Assembly, I would like to thank Your Excellency, both for your gracious presence here and your profound and wide-ranging remarks about Brazil, its role in the world, its role in CARICOM and its role in relation of Guyana.

It is very difficult for anyone to select any specific issue raised by you for special comment, so full of life and content was your speech. I