

National Assembly Debates

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SECOND SESSION (2002-2005) OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

73RD SITTING

2.15 PM

Thursday 24 November 2005

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 (38)

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

(ii) Non-elected Ministers (3)

(iii) The United Force (1)

The Hon. Samuel A.A. Hinds, M.P.

- Prime Minister and Minister of Public Works and Communications (Absent on leave performing the functions of President)

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 Home Affairs

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.

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) (Absent)

*The Hon. S. Rudolph Insanally, O.R., C.C.H., M.P.

- Minister in the Office of the President

- with responsibility for Foreign Affairs (AOL)*
- *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 Culture, Youth and Sport*
- 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. Harry Narine Nawbatt, M.P., - *Minister of Transport and Hydraulics (AOL)*
- The Hon. Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy - *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. - *(Absent)*
- 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 - Pomeroon/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 (Region No. 1 - Barima/Waini) (Absent)*
- Mrs Pauline R. Sukhai, M.P.
- Dr. Moti Lall, C.C.H., M.P.
- Mr Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P.
- Mr Neendkumar, M.P. - *(Region NO. 4 - Demerara/ Mahaica) (Absent)*
- 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.	- <i>Leader of the Opposition</i>
Mr. Winston S. Murray, C.C.H., M.P.	
Mrs Clarissa S. Richl, M.P.	- <i>Deputy Speaker of the N.A</i>
Mr. E. Lance Carberry, M.P.	- <i>Chief Whip</i>
Mr. Ivor Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.2-Pomeroon/Supenaam) (AOL)</i>
Mrs. Deborah J. Backer, M.P.	
Mr. Deryck M. A. Bernard, M.P.	- <i>(Absent)</i>
Mr. C. Stanley Ming, M.P.	
Mr. Vincent L. Alexander, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)</i>
Mr. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M. P.	- <i>(Absent)</i>
Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.	
Mrs. Yolda A. Lawrence, M.P.	
Dr Dagleish Joseph, M.D., M.P.	
Miss Amna Ally, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.5-Mahaica/Berbice)</i>
Miss Sandra M. Adams, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara /Berbice)</i>
Mr. Jerome Khan, M.P.	
Dr George A. Norton, M.P.	
Miss Myrna E. N. Peterkin, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (AOL)</i>
Mr. James K. McAllister, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.3-Essequibo Islands West Demerara)</i>
Dr Carl Max Hanoman, M.P.	
Miss Lurlene A. Nestor, M. P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)</i>
Mr Abdul Kadir, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.10-Upper Demerara/Berbice)</i>
Mr Ricky Khan, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.1-Barima/Waini)</i>
Mrs. Rajcoomarie Bancroft, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.8- Potaro/Siparuni)</i>
Mr Nasir Ally, J.P., M.P.	- <i>(Region No.6-East Berbice/Corentyne)</i>
Miss Judith David, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.7-Cuyuni/Mazaruni)</i>
Miss Genevieve Allen, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.4-Demerara/Mahaica) (Absent)</i>

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

Mrs Sheila V.A. Holder, M.P.	
Mrs Shirley J. Melville, M.P.	- <i>(Region No.9 Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)</i>

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

Mr Ravindra Dev, M.P.

OFFICERS

Mrs Lilawtie Coonjah, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

Mr Maurice B. Henry, Head of Committees Division

PRAYERS

The Deputy Clerk reads the Prayers

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS, ETC:

By the *Speaker (Chairman of the Committee of Selection)*:

Minutes of the Proceedings of the 15th Meeting of the Committee of Selection held on 3 November 2005.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

- (i) On the Level of Price Cut for ACP Sugar to the EU

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Foreign Trade and International Co-operation

Hon Clement J Rohee: Mr Speaker, the long awaited level of price cut for ACP Sugar exported to the European Union was announced a few hours ago.

According to reports emanating from Brussels, the price cut is thirty-six

percent. For Europe, the producer price for sugar will be reduced in four stages with accumulative reduction of four years - twenty percent, twenty-five percent, thirty percent and thirty-six percent. It is not clear whether this formula will be applicable in ACP countries in light of the commitment given to CARICOM Leaders by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to lengthen the transitional period. Further it is not clear, what is the nature of the concession to be offered to ACP sugar supplying states in light of the new dispensation.

Mr Speaker the decision of the EU to proceed with such a hefty price cut is outrageous and unconscionable and so to add insult to injury the EU beet sugar producers will now receive compensation covering 64.2 percent inclusive of an additional 2.2 billion Euros to cover the loss incurred by the price cut. In contrast a meagre 40 million euros have been offered to ACP sugar producers as compensation.

Guyana along with other CARICOM sugar producing countries will now have to gird their loins for another round of the battle. ACP countries have stated that they are prepared to accept a price cut of nineteen percent. The EU has now declared the price cut of 36 percent. This therefore creates a framework for negotiations between the ACP and the EU on the level of price cut for ACP countries.

Further the battle with respect to the level of compensation needed to offset the impact price cut on the economies of the ACP countries remains unresolved. ACP countries have called on the EU to provide up front adequate financial resources, on a secured and automatic basis, that is 100 million Euros for 2006 and 500 million Euros yearly thereafter to allow them to adjust to the reform process.

The regions sugar industry has been taking steps to adjust to these challenges. The modernization plant for GUYSUCO is a case in point.

In addition, studies show that the Sugar Industry in Guyana is one of the few industries of the ACP sugar supplying States that will manage to survive the price cut. Guyana's action plan to address adjustment cost

and compensation needs will soon be finalized for submission to the European Commission. A trade based solution by way of securing greater market access to the EU and other markets or countries who can deliver profitably at new prices and to offset the price loss is a course of action among others that we are likely to pursue. This is in keeping with our vision of the future of the sugar industry in Guyana.

(ii) Upcoming Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation in Hong Kong

Mr Speaker, I now wish to make another statement on the upcoming Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization in Hong Kong.

Mr Speaker, Trade Ministers of the World Trade Organization will be meeting in Hong Kong for the 6th WTO Ministerial Conference on 13 - 18 December 2005, to assess the state of play in the current Doha Development Trade Negotiations and renew relevant mandates for the conclusion of the negotiations by the end of 2006.

On 9 September 2005, I issued a statement to the media warning that the Doha Development Round was tethering on the brink of collapse. In that statement, I said, Hong Kong should aim for limited success and the level of expectations scaled down if that limited success is to be achieved.

Subsequently, in conversations with the Minister of Trade, Industry and Technology from Hong Kong, who visited with us in early November, the view was expressed that in light of much anticipated turbulence in the run up to Hong Kong, an early harvest of re-calibrated expectations should be agreed in order to ensure success at the Ministerial meeting. At the same time, we should do out utmost to maintain the deadline for completing the round in 2006.

Mr Speaker, the expectations of the Hong Kong meeting had to be reduced considerably due to the fact that the industrialized countries and the G20 Brazil and India included cannot reach agreement on the full

modalities for market access for agriculture and industrial goods and the phasing out of export subsidies and domestic support by an agreed date. In this regard the key areas of contention in the current negotiations are:

1. Agreeing to a tariff reduction formula with special and differential provisions for agriculture products; and
2. Settling a tariff reduction formula with special and differential provisions for industrial goods.

Without an agreement on these two areas, the Doha Development Round cannot go forward. At the same time, apart from mainstreaming the Sand D Provisions and ensuring that the interest of small economies are entrenched topic by topic in the current negotiations, the much debated question of long standing preferences and preference erosion are yet to be resolved.

Mr Speaker regrettably and much to the dissatisfaction of the ACP countries of which Guyana is an integral part, these issues have been relegated to the back burner. For Guyana and CARICOM as a whole, the development dimension of the Doha Round is vitally important, but continues to be neglected in the negotiating agenda.

At a preparatory meeting of the Caribbean Trade Ministers held last week in Barbados, which included Cuba and the Dominican Republic, we agreed that the legitimate interest of the small vulnerable economies of the Caribbean must be adequately reflected in the negotiating agenda in order for the region to join any consensus at Hong Kong. In other words the region must not be worst off at the end of the round than when it commenced.

CARICOM has repeatedly reaffirmed its support for the WTO talks, but there are grave misgivings on how these talks are being conducted. The Region has made it clear that it is not prepared to compromise on the preservation of long standing preferences for bananas and sugar for example, and more generally special and differential treatment in which no substantive progress have been made since the 5th meeting in Cancun.

Substantive progress must be made on agreements specific, special and differential proposals if Hong Kong is to be successful albeit in a limited way.

Mr Speaker, long standing preferences constitute a vital concern for the ACP as a whole and Guyana has supported the group's position not to join in any consensus decision on agriculture unless the erosion of preferences is effectively addressed through concrete and meaningful measures to mitigate the impact of reform on the preference receiving countries. Failure to do so will impose a disproportionate share of the cost of reform on some of the poorest and more vulnerable members of the World Trade Organization.

Mr Speaker, our agenda for the Hong Kong meeting will include the following bottom line or Category I issues:

1. Special and differential treatment for small, vulnerable and commodity dependant economies;
2. A special safeguard mechanism;
3. A special sensitive product category;
4. Maintenance of long standing preferences; and
5. Aid-for-trade packages to compensate for preference erosion

Unless these vital issues are made operational in specific clauses, we cannot subscribe to any declaration, re-calibration of the level of ambition or statement of good intention emanating from Hong Kong.

Mr Speaker, in pursuant of these objectives, we are committed to joining forces with like-minded countries and groups within the WTO's membership such as the Group of 33, the G 90 and the G 20. Practical

Thursday, 24 November 2005

and strategic alliances will be struck with these groups bearing in mind our short, medium and long-term goals.

Mr Speaker, Guyana is going to Hong Kong as an integral member of a Caribbean team including Cuba and the Dominican Republic. We will also be part of the wider ACP and G90 groupings. In this way, we will work to influence the outcome of Hong Kong and to ensure that the development dimension of the Doha Round remains in focus and irrevocably entrenched in any future mandate. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Presentation and First reading

LOCAL AUTHORITY ELECTION AMMENDMENT - Bill No.19 of 2005

By the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

PUBLIC BUSINESS

BILLS - Second Readings

ITEM 1 - HIGH COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2005 - Bill No. 17/2005 published on 09-11-05

Thursday, 24 November 2005

A Bill intituled, an Act to amend the High Court Act.

The Speaker: The Honourable Attorney General

Hon Doodnauth Singh: May it please you, Mr Speaker, by letter dated 23 November 2005, written by Mr Carberry, Member of Parliament on behalf of the PNC/R, a request was made that the Bill High Court (Amendment) Bill 2005 - No. 17/2005 be deferred on the basis of representations that had been made by the leader of the opposition to the President. Mr Speaker, as a result, I wish to request that the Second reading of this Bill be deferred.

[The Second Reading is deferred]

**ITEM 2 – COMPETITION AND FAIR TRADING BILL 2005
- Bill No. 18/2005 published on 09-11-05**

A Bill intituled, an Act to promote, maintain and encourage competition and to prohibit the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition and the abuse of dominant positions in trade; to promote the welfare and interest of consumers, to establish a Competition Commission and for connected matters.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce,

Thursday, 24 November 2005

Hon Manzoor Nadir: Mr Speaker, based on some request, I too beg that this Bill be deferred to the next sitting.

[The Second Reading is deferred]

The Speaker: That brings us to the end of our business for today.

Honorable Members, before you get restless and desire to move off, we have scheduled a meeting of the Committee of Selection with three items for 16:00h. That is the time we normally suspend. Do I get a sense that we would continue with that meeting now? I would like to announce therefore that members of the Committee of Selection are invited to the meeting scheduled for the suspension. That meeting will take place now, so before you leave if you can attend to my chambers where we would conduct that meeting.

Honourable Members, I regret, I do not believe the refreshments are here as yet.

Honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

Hon Reepu Daman Persaud: Mr Speaker, I wish to move that the National Assembly stands adjourned to Wednesday, 30 November 2005 at 14:00h

Thursday, 24 November 2005

The Speaker: Before I rise, the National Assembly is adjourned on the date referred to and I wish to correct myself, refreshments are here:

Adjourned accordingly at 14:30h