

Official Report

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST SESSION (2012) OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA HELD IN THE PARLIAMENT CHAMBER, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, BRICKDAM, GEORGETOWN

1ST Sitting

Thursday, 12TH January, 2012

Assembly convened at 2.11 p.m.

PROCLAMATION SUMMONING THE SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

The Clerk: Hon. Members, it is now time for the first session of the Tenth Parliament to begin in accordance with the Proclamation which was made by the President and which, for the record, I shall now read:

“Proclamation

GUYANA

No. 1 of 2012

Seal No. 1 of 2012

By the President of the Republic of Guyana.

D. R. Ramotar,

President

WHEREAS by Proclamation dated 27th day of September, 2011, issued under article 70 (2) of the Constitution, the Ninth Parliament of Guyana was dissolved on 27th day of September, 2011;

AND WHEREAS, it is provided by article 69 (1) of the Constitution that each session of Parliament shall be held at the place within Guyana and shall begin at the time, that the President shall appoint by proclamation;

NOW, THEREFORE, in pursuance of article 69 (1) of the Constitution, I do hereby appoint the Parliament Chamber, Public Buildings, Georgetown, Guyana as the place where a session of the Tenth Parliament shall be held and 2 o'clock in the afternoon on 12th January, 2012, as the time when such session shall begin.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Republic of Guyana, at the Office of the President, Georgetown, Guyana this 9th day of January, Two

Thousand and Twelve in the Forty Second year of
the Republic.

By the President's Command

Dr. R. Luncheon

Head of the Presidential Secretariat"

ROLL CALL OF NAMES

The Clerk: I will now call, in order, as declared by the Elections Commission, the names of those persons who have, to date, become Members of the National Assembly following the General and Regional Elections on the 28th November, 2011. Will Members kindly answer as their names are called?

Alliance For Change (7)

Veersammy Ramayya

Eula Marcello

Khemraj Ramjattan

Catherine Hughes

Moses Nagamootoo

Valerie Garrido-Lowe

Trevor Williams

A Partnership for National Unity (26)

Richard Allen

John Adams

Volda A. Lawrence

Africo Selman

Jaipaul Sharma

Basil Williams

Jennifer J. Wade

Dawn Hastings

Vanessa N. Kissoon

Renis I. A. Morian

Sydney Allicock

Amna Ally

Joan Baveghems

James A. Bond

Ronald A. Bulkhan

Annette N. Ferguson

David A. Granger

Carl B. Greenidge

Joseph F. Harmon

Christopher A. Jones

George Norton

Rupert Roopnarine

Keith Scott

Desmond Trotman

Winston Felix

Deborah J. Backer

Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (33)

Norman A. Whittaker

Alli Baksh

Cornel Damon

Komal Chand

Bibi S. Shadick

Indranie Chandarpal

Mohabir Nandlall

Neendkumar

Priya D. Manickchand

Faizal M. Jafarally

Robert M. Persaud
Jennifer R. A. Westford
Carolyn A. F. Rodrigues-Birkett
Irfaan M. Ali
Frank C. S. Anthony
Brindley H. R. Benn
Juan A. Edghill
Kwame A. Gilbert
Samuel A. Hinds
Odinga Lumumba
Vishwa D. B Mahadeo
Manzoor Nadir
Ganga Persaud
Vindhya V. H. Persaud
Leslie S. Ramsammy
Bheri S. Ramsaran
Clement J. Rohee
Dharamkumar Seeraj
Ashni K. Singh
Pauline R. A. Sukhai
Gail Teixeira
Jennifer I. M. Webster

Non-elected Member (1)

Nanda K. Gopaul

[As their names were called, the Members answered]

The Clerk: Hon. Members, your first duty is, in accordance with article 56 (1) of the Constitution and Standing Order No. 2 of the National Assembly, to elect a person to be the Speaker of the National Assembly, and I accordingly invite nominations.

Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs [Mr. S. Hinds]: Mr. Clerk, I rise to nominate Mr. Hari Ramkarran to be Speaker of this Tenth Parliament of Guyana.

Minister of Home Affairs [Mr. C. Rohee]: Mr. Chairman, I wish to second that nomination.

The Clerk: Hon. Members, Mr. Hari N. Ramkarran has been nominated by Mr. Samuel Hinds. The nomination has been seconded by Mr. Clement James Rohee. Are there any further nominations?

Ms. A. Ally: Mr. Clerk, I would like, on behalf of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), to nominate Mrs. Backer to be Speaker of the National Assembly.

Mrs. V. Lawrence: Mr. Clerk, I rise to second the nomination of Mrs. Deborah Backer to be Speaker of the National Assembly.

The Clerk: Hon. Members, Mrs. Deborah Backer has been nominated by Ms. Amna Ally. The nomination has been seconded by Mrs. Volda Lawrence. Are there any further nominations?

Mr. K. Ramjattan: Mr. Clerk, yes. I wish to, on behalf of the Alliance For Change, nominate Mr. Raphael Trotman.

Mr. M. Nagamootoo: Mr. Clerk, I wish to second that nomination.

The Clerk: Hon. Members, Mr. Raphael Trotman was nominated by Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan. The nomination has been seconded by Mr. Moses Nagamootoo. Are there any further nominations?

There being no further nominations, I will now propose the question that Mr. Hari Narayan Ramkarran be elected Speaker of the National Assembly. Those in favour say aye and....
[Interruption by Ms. Ally] Madam, I am commanded by the President and the Standing Orders to conduct the proceedings for election of a Speaker. I will be happy if I am allowed to do my work - please. Those against say no. You may now call a division.

Ms. Ally: I ask that there be a division.

Division

Ayes (32)

Mr. Jafarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persuad

Dr. Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj

Mr. Neendkumar

Mr. Lumumba

Ms. Shadick

Mr. Chand

Mrs. Chandarpal

Mr. Nadir

Ms. Teixeira

Bishop Edghill

Mr. Whittaker

Mr. Baksh

Mrs. Sukhai

Ms. Webster

Ms. Manickhand

Mr. G. Persuad

Mr. Benn

Dr. Anthony

Mr. Ali

Dr. Ramsaran

Dr. Westford

Mr. R. Persaud

Dr. Singh

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett

Mr. Nandlall

Dr. Ramsammy

Mr. Rohee

Mr. Hinds

Noes (33)

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello
Dr. Ramayya
Mrs. Garrida-Lowe
Mrs. Huges
Mr. Nagamootoo
Mr. Ramjattan
Ms. Ferguson
Mr. Morrian
Mr. Allen
Mr. Jones
Mr. Adams
Ms. Baveghems
Mr. Sharma
Mr. Bulkan
Mr. Bond
Ms. Kisson
Mr. D. Trotman
Ms. Selman
Mr. Allicock
Ms. Wade
Mr. Felix
Ms. Hastings
Mr. Scott
Mr. Harman
Mr. Greenidge
Mrs. Backer
Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Ret. Brigadier Granger

Proposal not carried

The Clerk: I will now conduct the election for Mrs. Backer.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Clerk, I rise to withdraw the nomination for Mrs. Deborah Backer as Speaker of the National Assembly.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Clerk, I rise to second the withdrawal of the nomination of Mrs. Deborah Backer as Speaker of the National Assembly.

Nomination withdrawn

The Clerk: Thank you. Hon. Members, I will now proceed with the election for Mr. Raphael Trotman. Those in favour say aye and those against say no.

Division

Ayes (33)

Mr. T. Williams

Ms. Marcello

Dr. Ramayya

Mrs. Garrida-Lowe

Mrs. Hughes

Mr. Nagamootoo

Mr. Ramjattan

Ms. Ferguson

Mr. Morrian

Mr. Allen

Mr. Jones

Mr. Adams

Ms. Baveghems

Mr. Sharma

Mr. Bulkan

Mr. Bond

Ms. Kisson

Mr. D. Trotman

Ms. Selman

Mr. Allicock

Ms. Wade

Mr. Felix

Ms. Hastings

Mr. Scott

Mr. Harman

Mr. Greenidge

Mrs. Backer

Dr. Norton

Mrs. Lawrence

Mr. B. Williams

Ms. Ally

Dr. Roopnarine

Ret. Brigadier Granger

Noes (32)

Mr. Jafarally

Mr. Damon

Dr. Persuad

Dr. Rev. Gilbert

Dr. Mahadeo

Mr. Seeraj
Mr. Neendkumar
Mr. Lumumba
Ms. Shadick
Mr. Chand
Mrs. Chandarpal
Mr. Nadir
Ms. Teixeira
Bishop Edghill
Mr. Whittaker
Mr. Baksh
Mrs. Sukhai
Ms. Webster
Ms. Manickchand
Mr. G. Persuad
Mr. Benn
Dr. Anthony
Mr. Ali
Dr. Ramsaran
Dr. Westford
Mr. R. Persaud
Dr. Singh
Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Mr. Nandlall
Dr. Ramsammy
Mr. Rohee
Mr. Hinds

Proposal carried

[Applause]

The Clerk: I, therefore, declare Mr. Raphael Trotman Speaker of the National Assembly. Will the proposer and seconder kindly escort Mr. Trotman to take the Oath and then to the Chair?

[Mr. Ramjattan and Mr. Nagamootoo escorted Mr. Trotman to take the Oath and the Chair]

Hon. Members, my task has come to an end. Mr. Speaker would take over the proceedings.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members. My first task is to preside over the election of the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. I, accordingly, invite nominations.

Ms. Ally: Mr. Speaker, I rise to nominate Mrs. Deborah Backer to be the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Mrs. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second that nomination.

Mr. Speaker: Mrs. Deborah J. Backer has been nominated by Ms. Amna Ally and the nomination has been seconded by Mrs. Volda Lawrence. Are there any other nominations? There being no further nominations, I, therefore, declare that Mrs. Deborah J. Backer is duly elected as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

[Applause]

Hon. Members, the Oath will now be administered to Members of the House by the Clerk of the National Assembly. Hon. Members, in order to save time, it is my intention, of course, with your indulgence, to move away from the normal practice of having the Clerk of the National Assembly moving from one Member to the other to administer the Oath. If I am given your consent, the Clerk will call your names and as your name is called, you will stand, hold the religious book in your hand – that is if you do use one – read your Oath form then sit and sign the form. As you are signing, the Member beside you will stand and read his or her Oath form. Do I have agreement on that?

Members: Yes

Mr. Speaker: Thank you very much.

[Mr. Speaker in aside with Clerk]

2.31p.m.

The Oath of office was administered to and made and subscribed by the following Members:

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

Mrs. Deborah Backer, M.P., Deputy Speaker

Mr. Samuel A. Hinds, M.P., Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs

Mr. Clement J. Rohee, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy, M.P., Minister of Agriculture

Mr. Mohabir A. Nandlall, M.P., Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs

Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., Minister of Finance

Mr. Robert M. Persaud, M.P., Minister of Natural Resources and Environment

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

Dr. Bheri S. Ramsaran, M.P., Minister of Health

Mr. Mohamed I. Ali, M.P., Minister of Housing and Water

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

Mr. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P., Minister of Public Works

Mr. Ganga Persaud, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Security

Ms. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P., Minister of Education

Mrs. Jennifer I.M. Webster, M.P., Minister of Human Services and Social Security

Mrs. Pauline R.A. Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul, M.P., Minister of Labour

Mr. Alli Baksh, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture

Mr. Norman A. Whittaker, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

Mr. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.P., Minister in the Ministry of Finance

Ms. Gail Teixeira, M.P., Chief Whip

Mr. Manzoor Nadir, M.P.

Mrs. Indranie Chandrapal, M.P.

Mr. Komal Chand, M.P.

Ms. Bibi S. Shadick, M.P.

Mr. Odinga Lumumba, M.P.

Mr. Neendkumar, J.P., M.P.

Mr. Dhanamkumar Seeraj, M.P.
Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P.
Rev. Dr. Kwame A. Gilbert, M.P.
Dr. Vindhya V.H. Persaud, M.P.
Mr. Cornel Damon, M.P.
Mr. Faizal M. Jafarally, M.P.
Ret. Brigadier David A. Granger, M.S.S., M.P.
Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, M.P.
Ms. Amna Ally, M.P.
Mr. Basil Williams, M.P.
Mrs. Volda Lawrence, M.P.
Dr. George Norton, M.P.
Mr. Carl B. Greenidge, M.P.
Mr. Joseph F. Harmon, M.S.M., M.P.
Mr. Keith Scott, M.P.
Ms. Dawn Hastings, M.P.
Mr. Winston Felix, D.S.M., M.P.
Ms. Jennifer J. Wade, M.P.
Mr. Sydney C. Allicock, M.S., M.P.
Ms. Africo Selman, M.P.
Mr. Desmond Hugh Trotman, M.P.
Ms. Vanessa N. Kissoon, M.P.
Mr. James A. Bond, M.P.
Mr. Ronald A. Bulkan, M.P.
Mr. Jaipaul Sharma, M.P.
Ms. Joan M. Baveghems, M.P.
Mr. John Adams, M.P.

Mr. Christopher A. Jones, M.P.
Mr. Richard V. Allen, M.P.
Mr. Renis I.A. Morian, M.P.
Ms. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P.
Mr. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.
Mr. Moses V. Nagamootoo, J.P., M.P.
Mrs. Catherine Hughes, M.P.
Mrs. Valerie Garrido-Lowe, M.P.
Dr. Veersammy Ramayya, M.P.
Ms. June Eula Marcello, M.P.
Mr. Trevor Williams, M.P.

3.01 p.m.

PRAYER

The Clerk read the following prayer:

“Almighty God, we, who are here gathered together, do most humbly beseech Thee to guide us in all our consultations, so that we may together build a land where knowledge is free, where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, and where words come from the depth of truth.

Grant us, O God, Thine aid and guidance, so that we may deal justly with the several causes that come before us, laying aside all private interests, prejudices and personal preferences, so that the result of our counsels may be to the glory of Thy Blessed Name, the maintenance of true religion, the preservation of justice, the safety, honour and happiness of the President and the peace and prosperity of Guyana.

Grant us, O God, the vision so to lead, that all the people of this fair land may enter into that state of brotherhood and unity, where the mind led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action.”

Mr. Speaker: Please be seated. Members, I would like to offer a few brief remarks. Firstly, for myself I wish to thank God, the people and of course my colleagues, family, friends and all of those who offered words of support and advice over the last few weeks, in particular. I will say that I thank all of you for the confidence that you have reposed in me; it will not be displaced. I promise to serve everyone as faithfully as I can and according to the oath that I took.

I want to congratulate every Member, particularly those who are here for the first time. I believe that we have the distinction of having a member whose father Reepu Daman Persaud's daughter is here. We give recognition to her.

We welcome everyone and I trust that in the days ahead the Clerk will arrange a briefing for those new members. I believe that given the hurried manner in which we were called it could not have been done. I expect that we will work cooperatively, diligently, maturely and of course, set aside our partisan ways; I know it is easier said than done. I look forward to seeing a vibrant Tenth Parliament. I would like to recognise that there were four names offered for selection as Speaker, Mr. Ralph Ramkarran— it is no secret that I have the highest admiration for you and the manner in which you conducted the affairs of this Assembly for the last two sessions of Parliament. I dare say that I would be looking to you and remembering your precedence, and I trust that I can turn to you from time to time for guidance.

To my esteemed colleague Mr. Moses Nagamootoo, I have to say that without your selfless act and your graciousness I would not be here, so I give recognition to that. To Mrs. Deborah Backer, my long time friend and colleague, I say congratulations to being elected as Deputy Speaker. I look forward to working with you and I believe that together we can and will share the responsibility of the affairs of the House. To the Governing side, the Prime Minister and all the other Members, I expect that we can, as I said, arrive at a consensus that could set aside the ranker of the campaign and that all of us should be happy to be at work and to have been called from our rest. With those remarks I would like to invite Leaders of the various political parties, if they so desire, to make any short remarks that they feel inclined to make. Thank you.

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, the Government still holds to its view that for practical considerations and the getting along with the business of the Assembly and the Government and of the people of Guyana that the convention by which the Speaker nominated by the minority Government would be acceded, was not followed on this occasion. However, I take this opportunity to extend to you our congratulations with our hope, that as you said, that the oath that you have taken to be fair and even handed will be very evident, and let us get on with the business for the people of Guyana in this Tenth Parliament.

Mr. D. Granger: Mr. Speaker, and Hon. Members of this House, I would like to congratulate you first of all on your election. This as you know is the 180th Anniversary of the completion of this building. It is also a historic occasion, because the Tenth Parliament will be like no other. It must be like no other, and we look to you to manage this noble House in a way that will promote democracy, that will prevent abuse, that will protect the people's interest and that will provide a good life for all Guyanese. Those responsibilities are burdensome, but my colleagues in APNU are committed to giving you the support to make the aspirations of our people a reality.

Mr. Ramjattan: Mr. Speaker, as you would know, this is a moment that I really desired after the elections in a context where indeed we have had tremendous partisanship flowing from the campaign period. You know also that what has resulted is a brand new dispensation, and that new dispensation requires all of us, after that gruelling campaign, to ease out of that partisanship and to ensure that Guyana progresses. The progress of Guyana depends largely on what we will be doing here in a tripartite consensual arrangement in almost everything, Motions, Bills, Notices or whatever they may be. I want you to know that indeed the seven members of the Alliance for Change will ensure that you get all the support to make that happen.

I want to concur also with the remark that indeed without a Mr. Moses Nagamootoo this might not have happened, and also add that without the support of the APNU we could not have had a new Speaker. I am not being critical of any other person here, but I want to also thank them for ensuring that this day happened. Be ensured of our support, Mr. Speaker, you will get that from the Alliance For Change and I am certain from all of the other Members. Congratulations once again.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you Hon. Members. I thank you for your encouraging words of support and I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead. Before I move on I would just wish to say that just prior to our convening we lost several members of the House and we should remember their work and their labour. To the Clerk and the staff of the National Assembly, I look forward to meeting each of you individually in a different capacity this time, and getting to know you and understand your needs and be able to respond to them.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I wish to inform you of the names of the persons who were appointed by the President to become Ministers and Members of the Cabinet.

- Mr. Samuel Archibald Anthony Hinds – Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs
- Mr. Clement J. Rohee – Minister of Home Affairs
- Dr. Ashni Kumar Singh – Minister of Finance
- Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford – Minister of Public Service
- Mrs. Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett – Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Dr. Leslie S. Ramsammy – Minister of Agriculture
- Mr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali – Minister of Housing and Water
- Mr. Mohabir Anil Nandlall – Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs
- Mr. Norman Whittaker – Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
- Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul – Minister of Labour
- Mr. Bridley H.R. Benn – Minister of Public Works
- Dr. Frank Christopher Stanislaus Anthony – Minister of Culture Youth and Sports
- Mr. Ganga Persaud – Minister of Local Government and Regional Development
- Mrs. Jennifer I.M. Webster – Minister of Human Services and Social Security
- Mr. Robert M. Persaud – Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
- Dr. Bheri S. Ramsarran – Minister of Health
- Ms. Priya D. Manickchand – Minister of Education
- Mr. Bishop Juan A. Edghill – Minister within the Ministry of Finance
- Mr. Alli Baksh – Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture
- Mrs. Pauline R.A. Sukhai – Minister of Amerindian Affairs

Hon. Members, this completes our business for today.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Hinds: Thank you very much. I move that the House be adjourned until Friday, February the 10th for the President's Address.

Mr. Speaker: The Assembly now stands adjourned to Friday February the 10th at which time we will receive the President's Address. Thank you very much.

Adjourned accordingly at 4.23 p.m.