

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 14TH SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (2020) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 10.00 A.M.
ON WEDNESDAY, 23RD DECEMBER, 2020
IN THE DOME OF THE ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTRE,
LILIENDAAL, GREATER GEORGETOWN

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (71)

Speaker (1)

*Hon. Manzoor Nadir, M.P., Speaker of the National Assembly

MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT (38)

Peoples Progressive Party Civic (38)

Prime Minister (1)

Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark A. Phillips, M.S.S., M.P., Prime Minister

Vice-President (1)

Hon. Bharrat Jagdeo, M.P., Vice-President (Absent)

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

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

Senior Ministers (17)

Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni), Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance and Government Chief Whip

Hon. Hugh H. Todd, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica), Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation

*Hon. Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P., Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance

Hon. Bishop Juan A. Edghill, M.S., J.P., M.P., Minister of Public Works

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***Non-Elected Member**

2.

Hon. Dr. Frank C. S. Anthony, M.P., Minister of Health

Hon. Priya D. Manickchand, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara),
Minister of Education

*Hon. Brindley H.R. Benn, M.P., Minister of Home Affairs

Hon. Zulfikar Mustapha, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne), Minister of
Agriculture

Hon. Pauline R.A. Campbell-Sukhai, M.P., Minister of Amerindian Affairs (Virtual
Participation)

Hon. Joseph L.F. Hamilton, M.P., Minister of Labour

Hon. Vickram O. Bharrat, M.P., Minister of Natural Resources

*Hon. Oneidge Walrond, M.P., Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce

Hon. Nigel D. Dharamlall, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam), Minister of Local
Government and Regional Development

Hon. Collin D. Croal, M.P. (Region No. 1 – BarimaWaini), Minister of Housing and Water

Hon. Vindhya V. H. Persaud, M.S., M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica), Minister of
Human Services and Social Security

Hon. Charles S. Ramson, M.P., Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport

Hon. Sonia S. Parag, M.P., Minister of the Public Service

Junior Ministers (4)

Hon. Warren K.E. McCoy, M.P., Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister

Hon. Deodat Indar, M.P., Minister within the Ministry of Public Works

Hon. Anand Persaud, M.P., Minister within the Ministry of Local Government and Regional
Development (Absent)

Hon. Susan M. Rodrigues, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica), Minister within the
Ministry of Housing and Water

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***Non-Elected Member**

3.

Other Members (14)

Hon. Dharamkumar Seeraj, M.P.

Hon. Alister S. Charlie, M.P. (Region No. 9 – Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo)

Hon. Dr. Vishwa D.B. Mahadeo, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne)

Hon. Sanjeev J. Datadin, M.P.

Hon. Seepaul Narine, M.P.

Hon. Yvonne Pearson-Fredericks, M.P.

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

Hon. Dr. Jennifer R.A. Westford, M.P.

Hon. Faizal M. Jaffarally, M.P. (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice)

Hon. Dr. Tandika S. Smith, M.P. (Region No. 3 - Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)

Hon. Lee G.H. Williams, M.P.

*Hon. Sarah Browne, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

*Hon. Vikash Ramkissoon, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture

Hon. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P.

MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION (32)

(i) A Partnership For National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU/AFC) (31)

Hon. Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph F. Harmon, M.S.M., M.P., Leader of the Opposition (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Roysdale A. Forde, S.C., M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Raphael G.C. Trotman, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Dawn Hastings-Williams, M.P. (Region No. 7 – Cuyuni/Mazaruni) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Dr. Nicolette O. Henry, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Dr. Karen R.V. Cummings, M.P.

Hon. Tabitha J. Sarabo-Halley, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Christopher A. Jones, M.P., Opposition Chief Whip (Virtual Participation)

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***Non-Elected Member**

4.

Hon. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. David A. Patterson, M.P. (Absent)

Hon. Coretta A. McDonald, A.A., M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Catherine A. Hughes, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Amanza O.R. Walton-Desir, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Natasha Singh-Lewis, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Sherod A. Duncan, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Vincent P. Henry, M.P. (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Ronald Cox, M.P. (Region No. 1 – BarimaWaini) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Shurwayne F.K. Holder, M.P. (Region No. 2 – Pomeroon/Supenaam)(Virtual Participation)

Hon. Ganesh A. Mahipaul, M.P. (Region No. 3 – Essequibo Islands/West Demerara)(Virtual Participation)

Hon. Nima N. Flue-Bess, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Maureen A. Philadelphia, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Deonarine Ramsaroop, M.P. (Region No. 4 – Demerara/Mahaica) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Vinceroy H. Jordan, M.P., (Region No. 5 – Mahaica/Berbice) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Dineshwar N. Jaiprashad, M.P. (Region No. 6 – East Berbice/Corentyne) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Richard E. Sinclair, M.P. (Region No. 8 –Potaro/Siparuni) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Jermaine A. Figueira, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice) (Virtual Participation)

Hon. Devin L. Sears, M.P. (Region No. 10 – Upper Demerara/Upper Berbice) (Virtual Participation)

A New and United Guyana, Liberty and Justice Party and The New Movement (ANUG, LJP & TNM) (1)

Hon. Lenox R. O'Dell Shuman, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (Virtual Participation)

Officers (2)

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

Ms. Hermina Gilgerous, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The Sitting commenced at 10.56 a.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk led in Prayers.

Virtual Participation

The Speaker informed Honourable Members, that several Members of Parliament indicated to him that they will be participating virtually for today's Sitting.

OATH OF A NEW MEMBER

Dr. Ashni K. Singh

“Honourable Members, by way of an Instrument dated November, 2020, I have been informed that Dr. Ashni K. Singh was appointed as a Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance.

Before Dr. Singh can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, he will have to make and subscribe the oath of Office before the Assembly, as required by article 167 of the Constitution”.

As Dr. Ashni K. Singh was present, the oath was administered to him by the Clerk.

Ms. Oneidge Walrond

“Honourable Members, by way of an Instrument dated the 1st day of December, 2020, I have been informed that Ms. Oneidge Walrond was appointed as the Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce.

6.

Before Ms. Walrond can take part in the proceedings of the Assembly, she will have to make and subscribe the oath of Office before the Assembly, as required by article 167 of the Constitution”.

As Ms. Oneidge Walrond was present, the oath was administered to her by the Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

The Speaker made the following announcement:

(1) Welcome to New Members

The Speaker, on behalf of the Assembly and himself, welcomed and congratulated Dr. Ashni K. Singh and Ms. Oneidge Walrond on their becoming Members of the National Assembly.

(2) Conduct of the Speaker

The Speaker informed Members that research done under former Speaker Dr. Barton Scotland, O.R., C.C.H., showed that the Speaker cannot be criticised except by way of a substantive motion. He stated that the Canadian House of Commons Procedure and Practice, 2nd Edition, pages 313-314 states, “...reflections of the character or actions of the Speaker, for example, an allegation of bias, could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and can be punished accordingly”.

The Speaker also stated that in 1981, a Minister’s complained that remarks directed to Speaker Sauve by the Leader of the Opposition constituted an attack on the former’s authority and impartiality. The following day, the Minister tabled a motion in the House calling for the matter to be referred to the Standing Committee of Privileges and Elections. However, the Leader of the Opposition withdrew his remarks and the matter was not taken further.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS-

(1) By the Speaker of the National Assembly:

Report of the Auditor General to the National Assembly on the Public Accounts of Guyana and on the Accounts of Ministries, Departments and Regions for the fiscal year ended 31st December, 2019.

(Circulated)

(2) By the Prime Minister:

(i) Annual Report of the National Communications Network for the year 2017.

(Circulated)

(ii) Annual Report of the National Data Management Authority for the year 2017.

(Circulated)

(3) By the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

Civil Procedures (Amendment) Rules 2020 – No. 1 of 2020.

(Circulated)

(4) By the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance:

(i) **Sales Contract No. 37000150** dated January 1, 2015 between PDVSA Petroleo S.A. and the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) for the purpose of supplying the Cooperative Republic of Guyana with crude oil, refined Petroleum Products and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) up to 5,200 barrels per day, on a monthly basis.

(Circulated)

(ii) Public Debt Annual Report for the year 2018.

(Circulated)

(iii) Annual Report of the National Insurance Scheme for the year 2019.

(Circulated)

8.

- (iv) Annual Report of the Guyana Oil Company Limited for the year 2019.
(Circulated)
- (v) Framework and Agency Agreements No. 08/06/2020\H dated June 8, 2020 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) for an amount of US\$14,630,000.00 for the purpose of financing the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA) Power Small Hydro Project.
(Circulated)
- (vi) Loan Contract No. GY-O0006 dated December 3,2020 between the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) for an amount of US\$22,000,000.00 for the purpose of strengthening the country's immediate public health response to the COVID-19 emergency.
(Circulated)
- (vii) Financial Paper No. 2/2019 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$4,150,242,391 for the period 2019-06-13 to 2019-12-31.
(Circulated)
- (viii) Financial Paper No. 1/2020 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$792,330,925 for the period 2020-10-01 to 2020-12-21.
(Circulated)
- (ix) Financial Paper No. 2/2020 – Supplementary Estimates (Current and Capital) totalling \$17,403,413,490 for the period 2020-01-01 to 2020-12-21.
(Circulated)

The Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance named Monday 28th, December, 2020, for the consideration of the Financial Papers.

9.

(5) By the Minister of Public Works:

Audited Financial Statements of the Guyana National Shipping Corporation for the year ended 31st December, 2019.

(Circulated)

(6) By the Minister of Housing and Water:

Audited Financial Statements of the Central Housing and Planning Authority for the year ended 31st December, 2018.

(Circulated)

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. GUYSUCO

Member Asking: **Mr. Jermaine Figueira, M.P.**

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Agriculture**

- (a) Can the Minister inform the House, the amount of direct financial assistance GUYSUCO has received from the Government for the last ten (10) years (ending August, 2020) and give the reason for each?
- (b) Can the Minister also state what was the cost, in US Dollars, for GUYSUCO to produce a ton of sugar for each year (2010-2020)?
- (c) Can the Minister inform this House what percentage, in US Dollars, of GUYSUCO's income (please state sugar and molasses sale) is absorbed as employment cost and debt servicing for each year (2010-2020)?

10.

- (d) Can the Minister likewise say what was the world market price, in US Dollars, for a ton of sugar for the last ten (10) years and what was the price per ton, in US Dollars, did GUYSUCO receive from selling to each of its overseas customers (buyer's name, country and amount sold)?
- (e) Can the Minister equally inform this House what is GUYSUCO's total indebtedness as of August 31, 2020, please include and state (all bank loans, GRA arrears, NIS arrears, pension funds arrears)?

(Notice Paper No. 4 (Q1 Opp. 1) published on 2020-09-14)

ANSWERS

- (a) "2010 to 2014 - \$20B 2015 to July, 2020 – this was a murky period of which we are uncertain about since NICIL, SPU and other agencies would have received and collected monies that is not reflected in the records".
- (b) "GUYSUCO average Cost of Production Per MT per year for the last 10 years US \$747.38".
- (c) "71% of GUYSUCO'S Income is Employment Cost
2.5% of GUYSUCO's Income Debt Servicing"
- (d) "The average world market price for Sugar for the last ten years id US\$388.57. The price per ton, in US Dollars, that GUYSUCO received from selling to each of its overseas customers is listed below:
- European Union (US\$445.23), United States of America (US\$593.05), CARICOM (US\$581.30), Regional (Non- CARICOM States (US\$741.04), Australia (US\$623.90), Italy (US\$488.27), Middle East (US\$708.24), United Kingdom (Us\$540.05)".

11.

- (e) “\$72.5B In tabulating the Cost of Production and subventions, consideration must be given to the contributions GUYSUCO was making in areas such as Drainage and Irrigation for immediate communities, Rice and other Crops as well as Residential areas, Community Health Care Services and Sports Facilities. It’s also very important to note that over the last three years, the former Government placed more than seven thousand (7000) sugar workers on the breadline and this caused severe disruptions in their families and killed the village economics in the areas closed estates. \$72.5B is the indebtedness on record. A large percentage of this indebtedness is owed to GRA and NIS (Entities of the State). During the 2015-2020 period it was widely published in the Press that \$30B GYD was borrowed from commercial banks by GUYSUCO, NICIL, SPU. At the time, Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Noel Holder, is on public recording saying that he is not aware of the loan. The whereabouts of the proceeds of this loan is not clear to GUYSUCO’s. Hopefully, the Auditor General’s Office will bring some clarity to this matter”.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

Member Asking: **Mr. Ganesh Mahipaul, M.P.**

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Local Government and Regional Development**

Can the Honourable Minister please provide a list in writing of the names of all the Community Development Councils across the country?

(Notice Paper No.10 (Q4 Opp. 4) published on 2020-10-19)

ANSWER

“The People’s Progressive Party Civic Government took office in August, 2020 there were no records of any Community Development Councils being established. The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development is currently consulting with the citizens across the country with the view of establishing Community Development Councils”.

3. **SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT (SLED) PROGRAMME**

Hon. Ganesh Mahipaul, M.P., asked the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

Budget 2020 approved \$105M for the Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) programme. Can the Honourable Minister submit a list of the Groups, Organisations and other Beneficiaries that will benefit from this programme and provide the list of the project proposals that were submitted to his ministry for approval? Can the Honourable Minister detail the criteria that would be used to disburse the \$105M and what are the requirements for the persons or groups to benefit from the SLED programme?

(Notice Paper No.11 (Q5 Opp. 5) published on 2020-10-19)

ANSWER

“The Sustainable Livelihood Entrepreneurial Development (SLED) Programme was originally implemented by the former Government under the Ministry of Social Protection. During this period, it was evident that there was no system in place to account for funds allocated and there were no criteria in terms of its implementation with close to \$250M being expended without any scrutiny, a comprehensive audit is currently underway.

This programme is a new initiative in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development and as such, the modalities to identify Groups, Organisations or other beneficiaries are still at the developmental stage. The criteria to be used in identifying potential beneficiaries will be based on projects that are goal oriented that foster sustainable development plans and strategies for socio-economic development and empowerment”.

13.

4. **NEW HOUSING SCHEMES**

Member Asking: Ms. Annette Ferguson, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Housing and Water

Budget 2020 provided an allocation of \$3 Billion for the “Housing Sector”. The Honourable Minister in his budget presentation alluded that, “the sum will be utilized for various activities including land preparations for the new housing schemes.

Can the Honourable Minister provide the following:

- a. List the areas where the new housing schemes are to be developed?
- b. When activities will commence and likely to be completed?
- c. Number of house lots and commercial lots for possible allocations in each housing scheme listed at (a) above?

(Notice Paper No.12 (Q6 Opp.6) published on 2020-10-19)

See **Appendix I** for the Answers to the questions above.

5. **APPLICATION FOR HOUSE LOTS**

Member Asking: Ms. Annette Ferguson, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Housing and Water

Can the Honourable Minister provide the number of Applications on file as at 2nd August, 2020?

(Notice Paper No.13 (Q7 Opp.7) published on 2020-10-19)

See **Appendix II** for the Answers to the question above.

6. **EARLY RELEASE OF SIXTY-FIVE (65) PRISONERS**

Member Asking: Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P.

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

- (1) The Director of Prisons(a.g) has confirmed that sixty-five (65) prisoners were granted early release from prison. Could the Hon. Minister of Home Affairs state the circumstances and the factors taken into account to grant early release to the aforementioned prisoners?
- (2) Additionally, could the Hon. Minister state the names, length of incarceration and the offences for which the prisoners were convicted?
- (3) Could the Hon. Minister state whether the above information will be made public in view of this matter being of public welfare and interest?

(Notice Paper No.16 (Q10 Opp.10) published on 2020-12-01)

See **Appendix III** for the Answers to the questions above.

For Oral Replies

7. ***NATIONAL INSURANCE SCHEME**

Mr. Jermaine Figueira, M.P., asked the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance the following questions:

- (a) *Can the Minister inform this House about the length of time (days) it takes the National Insurance Scheme to process and make payment on medical or maternity claim from the date NIS would have received all the relevant documentation from the claimant?

15.

- (b) *Can the Minister further say whether signed letters from employers verifying commencement of deductions and claimant pay slips are no longer acceptable by NIS to aid in the verification to expedite claims payment?
- (c) *Can the Minister inform the House why (b) above affects accelerated processing of maternity claims in 2020?
- (d) *Can the Minister inform the House the extent to which employers' method and speed of remitting employees NIS deductions to NIS works against the employees' in their moment of need?
- (e) *Can the Minister inform this House of the number of women from January 1 to September 30, 2020, that had to wait two months or more from the date of sending in all the relevant documents to NIS to receive maternity claims?
- (f) *Can the Minister inform this House of the number of persons from January 1 to September 30, 2020, that had to wait two months or more from the date of sending in all relevant documents to NIS to receive medical claims?
- (g) *Can the Minister further inform this House what short term measures will be put in place for NIS to reduce the waiting time for processing medical and maternity claims?

(Notice Paper No. 8 (Q2 Opp. 2) published on 2020-10-01)

Thereafter, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance replied.

8. ***INTERNET SERVICE IN GUYANA**

Hon. Devin Sears, M.P., asked the Prime Minister the following questions:

- (a) *Given the present COVID-19 environment, can the Minister say why the Government has not operationalised Act No.18 of 2016 to liberalise the telecommunication sector to create competition in data services, especially the internet?
- (b) *Can the Minister inform this House how many DATA (internet) service providers operate in each of the ten regions in Guyana as at 30th September, 2020, and state which provide primary sourced data (direct access and fiber cable) and which provide secondary sourced data in these regions?
- (c) *Can the Minister further inform this House how many households have data (internet) via land lines and or wireless service for each of the ten regions in Guyana as at 30th September, 2020?
- (d) *Can the Minister further inform this House how many persons have data (internet) via mobile phone service for each of the ten regions in Guyana as at 30th September, 2020?
- (e) *Can the Minister further inform this House if he supports the need to reduce VAT on data given the necessity of online learning in this COVID-19 environment?

(Notice Paper No. 9 (Q3 Opp. 3) published on 2020-10-01)

Thereafter, the Prime Minister replied.

9. ***CONSOLIDATED FUND**

Hon. Annette Ferguson, M.P., the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with responsibility for Finance the following question:

17.

*Can the Honourable Minister with responsibility for Finance inform the Assembly of the total sum of monies remaining in the Consolidated Fund by the A Partnership For National Unity and Alliance For Change Government as at 2nd August, 2020?

(Notice Paper No.14 (Q8 Opp.8) published on 2020-10-19)

Thereafter, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance replied.

Hon. Annette Ferguson, M.P., asked the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance supplementary questions.

Thereafter, the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance replied.

***10. NATIONAL PROCUREMENT BOARD**

The Speaker informed Members that the following Question was inadvertently published on Notice Paper as a Question for Oral Reply. In accordance with Standing Order No. 19(6), the Honourable Speaker directed that the question be converted to a question for Written Reply:

1. The publication of the new appointees to the Public Procurement Board stated the following persons have been nominated and appointed to serve on the board:
 - Mr. Tarachand Balgobin as Temporary Chairman
 - Mr. Bernard Lord - Member
 - Mr. Desmond Mohamed - Member
 - Mr. Steve Ninvalle - Member
 - Mr. Mark Conway - Member
 - Ms. Gloria Beharry - Member

18.

In accordance to Part 111 of the Procurement Act 2003, Section 16, clearly addresses the creation and membership of the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board,

Section 16(2) states:

“The administration shall be managed by the National Board which shall consist of seven (7) members appointed by the Minister from among persons of unquestionable integrity who have shown capacity in business, the professions, law, audit, finance and administration”.

Can the Honourable Minister state the following:

- (a) *Whether the names listed above were appointed in keeping with Section 16 (2) of the National Procurement act?
- (b) *The current construct is six (6), when will the additional person be appointed?

2. Section 16(3) states:

*“the members of the National Board to be appointed by the Minister shall comprise:
(i) not more than five persons from the Public Service;
(ii) not more than three persons from the private sector after consultation with their representative organizations”.*

Can the Honourable Minister state the following:

- (a) *State from the list of appointees, where the persons are employed?
- (b) *State who are the representatives from the Private Sector?

3. Section 16(4) states:

“Two members of the National Board shall serve on a full-time basis and the remainder shall serve on a part-time basis. The Minister shall appoint as Chairman one of the full-time members”.

19.

Can the Honourable Minister state the following:

- (a) *Whether there is a conflict of interest in appointing Mr. Tarachand Balgobin as Temporary Chairman, since he is a full time Public Servant and the Act does not allow for this arrangement?
- (b) *Is there consideration for the appointment of a substantive Chairperson of the Board?
- (c) *If yes, is there a period for the appoint and when?

(Notice Paper No.15 (Q9 Opp.9) published on 2020-10-28)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS, INCLUDING POLICY STATEMENTS

(1) COVID-19 /COVICURB CAMPAIGN

The Prime Minister made a statement re. COVID-19/ COVICURB CAMPAIGN.

(2) The Guyana, Venezuela Border Controversy Case

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation made a statement re. the Guyana, Venezuela Border Controversy Case.

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

The Hon. Speaker informed Members that a request for leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly on Definite Matters of Urgent Importance was received from Hon. Ganesh Mahipaul, M.P., re. the Commencement of Meetings of Standing Committees. His Honour indicated that the matter was important but not urgent and therefore disallowed the request.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS-

Presentation and First Readings

1. LAW REFORM COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020 – Bill No. 11/2020

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill, which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Law Reform Commission Act.

2. DECEASED PERSONS ESTATES' ADMINISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020 – Bill No. 12/2020

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill, which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Deceased Persons Estates' Administration Act.

3. SMALL BUSINESS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020 – Bill No. 13/2020

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill, which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Small Business Act.

4. HIRE-PURCHASE BILL 2020 – Bill No. 14/2020

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill, which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to make provision for the regulation of hire-purchase, credit sale and conditional sale agreements; and for related purposes.

21.

5. **ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (AMENDMENT) BILL 2020 – Bill No. 15/2020**

The Minister of Human Services and Social Security, on behalf of the Government, presented the following Bill, which was read the first time:

A BILL intituled AN ACT to amend the Adoption of Children Act

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 12.59 p.m., the Sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 1.59 p.m., the Sitting was resumed.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

(i) **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

MOTION

ITEM 1 - GLOBAL PANDEMIC OF COVID-19

The Minister of Health moved the following motion:

WHEREAS the global pandemic of Covid-19 has changed the world as no other event in humankind's history with the world's economies slowing down with travel bans, lockdowns, curfews, school and university closures, closure of businesses and loss of jobs, increased poverty, and increased cases of domestic violence against women and children;

AND WHEREAS the first confirmed case of Covid-19 was identified in Guyana on March 11, 2020;

AND WHEREAS the former Government's response exposed its level of woeful unpreparedness despite advice and assistance from PAHO and other international bodies;

AND WHEREAS between March 11 and July 31, 2020, only 4,705 PCR tests were done at an average of 26 per day with a 7 day wait period; health facilities across the country, including the Public Hospital Georgetown, were under-resourced with PPE, drugs, medical equipment and sanitation supplies.

AND WHEREAS between August 2 and December 16, 2020, over 350 tests per day were done with an average turnaround time of 24-48 hours with more test kits, additional laboratory equipment, and trained personnel across the country;

AND WHEREAS over these nine months, there have been 6,042 confirmed cases, 5,197 recoveries and 687 current cases with 158 deaths as of Dec 17;

AND WHEREAS billions of dollars have been expended from the October, 2020 Emergency Budget to restock the empty shelves of the public health sector with supplies of drugs, medical supplies and equipment, not only to treat Covid-19 patients, but also to treat HIV/AIDS, cancer, non-communicable diseases, malaria etc., and recommence the vaccination of our children which had lapsed badly in the last two years;

AND WHEREAS the Health sector has amplified its capacity to do as many as 1500 PCR tests on a daily basis with a 24-48-hour turnaround time;

AND WHEREAS rapid antigen tests, which have been recommended by the World Health Organisation, have been deployed to every region, which would improve waiting time to less than 30 minutes per test coupled with the deployment of PCR point of care testing to Regional hospitals over the next few weeks and improved contract tracing;

AND WHEREAS the private health sector is now included and involved in the fight to reduce the number of cases including building laboratory testing capacity;

23.

AND WHEREAS the advent of several vaccines that have shown great promise, some with over 90 % efficacy are being cleared for use such as Pfizer, Moderna, etc.;

AND WHEREAS Guyana is accessing its vaccines through the COVAX Facility, launched in April by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Vaccine Alliance {GAVI} and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), in response to the pandemic and which seeks to ensure that people in all corners of the world are able to access COVID-19 vaccines once they are available;

AND WHEREAS preparatory steps are underway to ensure Guyana is ready for a COVID-19 vaccine and it is expected that Guyana will be receiving in total, vaccines equivalent to 20% of its population, an initial 3% then 17% afterwards;

AND WHEREAS Guyana will have to acquire more or other vaccines through other means;

AND WHEREAS Health workers will be the first to receive the vaccine and elderly persons and persons with co-morbidities will be second in line;

AND WHEREAS the vaccines that receive Emergency Use Authorisation require special cold storage spaces to match the specific temperatures ranging from -70 C to 2 degrees C;

AND WHEREAS the Ministry of Health has started publishing bids for contractors to procure and install refrigerators and vaccine carriers, which must be completed before Guyana receives its first quota of the COVID-19 vaccines next year;

AND WHEREAS the new vaccines will require training health care staff that will be administering the vaccines so that Guyana will be ready to roll out the vaccines quickly;

24.

AND WHEREAS a National Vaccine Task Force is being set up including the private sector and other civil society bodies to lead this major logistical undertaking;

AND WHEREAS the Government will be tabling the Corona Virus Immunization Bill in the National Assembly in early 2021,

BE IT RESOLVED:

That this National Assembly: -

- recognizes the seriousness of the Covid-19 pandemic in Guyana and the challenges it has posed and will continue to pose to our people and the nation over the coming year;
- pledge to support required resources needed to test, treat, and immunize our citizens;
- commit to support measures to bring relief to all Guyanese, especially those most in need with humanitarian and other initiatives to restore normalcy as soon as is feasible.

(Notice Paper No. 24 (M10 Govt.7) published on 2020-12-17)

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Hon. Dr. Karen Cummings, M.P.

Hon. Dr. Vishwa Mahadeo, M.P.

Hon. Tabitha Sarabo-Halley, M.P.

Hon. Vindhya V. H. Persaud, M.S., M.P. Minister of Minister of Human Services and Social Security

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 4.25 p.m., the Sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 5.25 p.m., the Sitting was resumed.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Hon. Ganesh Mahipaul, M.P.

Hon. Alister Charlie, M.P.

Hon. Gail Teixeira, M.P., Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Governance

Hon. Sherod Duncan, M.P.

Hon. Sarah Browne, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs

Hon. Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Phillips, M.S.S., M.P., Prime Minister

Hon. Lenox Shuman, M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly

Thereafter the Minister of Health replied.

The motion was then put and carried.

(ii) PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS

1. **APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE THE UNREST AT THE LUSIGNAN PRISON, THE SUBSEQUENT DEATHS OF AND THE INJURY OF SEVERAL PRISONERS ON THE 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2020**

At the request of Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P., the following motion was deferred:

WHEREAS, Article 138(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Guyana prescribes that no person shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of the sentence of a Court in respect of an offence under the Laws of Guyana of which he has been convicted;

AND WHEREAS, in accordance with the Commission of Inquiry Act, Chapter 19:03, “The President may issue a Commission appointing one or more Commissioners and authorizing such Commissioners to inquire into any matters in which an inquiry would in the opinion of the President be for the public welfare”;

AND WHEREAS, it has been widely reported and confirmed that several prisoners were shot by members of the Guyana Prison Services in or near the Lusignan Prison, resulting in injuries and two deaths on the 19th September, 2020;

AND WHEREAS, the lack of information surrounding the following matters are of public concern;

AND WHEREAS, the Home Affairs Minister has failed to provide answers on these matters of public importance and the public remains without credible information, after the 19th September, 2020 as to the circumstances which led to the unrest, injuries sustained and the subsequent deaths of several prisoners;

AND WHEREAS, it is important, in the public's interest to know and understand the specific facts and circumstances that led to the shooting and subsequent deaths of three prisoners so as to prevent a recurrence;

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government to make full disclosure on all aspects of the tragedy at the Lusignan Prisons on the 19th September, 2020 and to declare what actions have been and are being taken to reduce the opportunities for such situations from re- occurring.

(Notice Paper No. 17 (M7 Opp 1) published on 2020-12-01)

2. **CONDEMN THE BRUTAL AND HORRIFIC KILLING OF JOEL HENRY, ISIAAH HENRY AND HARESH SINGH, BETWEEN THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 6 to 9, 2020**

At the request of Ms. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P., the following motion was deferred:

WHEREAS, Guyanese citizens, Joel Henry, Isiah Henry and Haresh Singh, all under the age of 20 years old, from the village of N0. 3 Village, West Coast Berbice, were brutally, barbarically and horrifically killed, and the bodies found at or near the Cotton Tree Back Dam in the Mahaica/ Berbice Region No. 5;

AND WHEREAS, the period September 6 to 9, 2020, will go down in the history of our country as the period when these unspeakable crimes left the nation numb and in a state of shock and sadness;

AND WHEREAS. these brutal, senseless, barbaric, depraved and horrific killings have caused untold pain, agony, grief, anguish, anger and despair to the surviving family members, fellow villagers and the entire Guyanese Community;

AND WHEREAS, these brutal and horrific killings have evoked unequivocal condemnation from Guyanese, living in Guyana and in the diaspora;

AND WHEREAS, the diplomatic community and civil society have also unequivocally condemned these brutal, barbaric and horrific killings;

AND WHEREAS, Parliament, of which the National Assembly is a part of the supreme legislative forum of our Republic wherein the people's elected representatives discuss and determine matters of national interest and is obliged to consider the grave threats to the public welfare and public security;

28.

AND WHEREAS, Article 138(1) of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana prescribes that no person shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of the sentence of a court in respect of an offence under the Laws of Guyana of which he has been convicted;

AND WHEREAS, to date these horrific deaths which are of public importance, concern and welfare remain substantially unresolved.

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly recommends to the Government to procure and finance the assistance of expert and competent professionals who can resolve these cases;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly condemns the killing of the three Citizens aforementioned, and extends sincerest condolences to the families of the deceased; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the National Assembly calls on the Government to continue its earnest investigations, so as to ensure expeditious justice to the family.

(Notice Paper No. 18 (M8 Opp 2) published on 2020-12-01)

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

The Minister of Health extended Christmas greetings to the Members, the Clerk and staff of the Parliament Office, the Media and the citizens of Guyana. The Honourable Speaker and the Prime Minister joined the Minister of Health in extending Christmas greetings.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7.54 p.m., on a motion by the Prime Minister, the Assembly was adjourned to 10.00 a.m. on Monday, 28th December, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Manzoor Nadir". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background.

.....
HON. MANZOOR NADIR, M.P.,
Speaker of the National Assembly

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

23rd, December 2020.