

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS
OF THE 22ND SITTING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FIRST
SESSION (2020-2021) OF THE TWELFTH PARLIAMENT OF GUYANA HELD
AT 10.00 A.M.
ON THURSDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2021
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 on – leave)

Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (1)

Hon. Mohabir A. Nandlall, S.C., 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

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

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

Hon. Khemraj Ramjattan, M.P.

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)

Hon. Dr. Nicolette O. Henry, M.P.

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

Hon. Tabitha J. Sarabo-Halley, M.P.

Hon. Geeta Chandan-Edmond, M.P.

Hon. Christopher A. Jones, M.P., Opposition Chief Whip

Hon. Annette N. Ferguson, M.P.

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***Non-Elected Member**

4.

Hon. David A. Patterson, M.P.

Hon. Coretta A. McDonald, A.A., M.P.

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

Hon. Haimraj B. Rajkumar, M.P.

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

Hon. Natasha Singh-Lewis, M.P.

Hon. Sherod A. Duncan, M.P.

Hon. Juretha V. Fernandes, M.P.

Hon. Vincent P. Henry, M.P.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Officers (2)

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

Ms. Hermina Gilgeours, Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly

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COMMENCEMENT OF SITTING

The Sitting commenced at 10.15 a.m.

PRAYERS

The Clerk led in Prayers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER-

The Speaker made the following announcements:

(1) LEAVE

Honourable Members, leave had been granted to the Hon. Bharrat Jadgeo, M.P., Vice-President, for that day's Sitting.

(2) MEDIA AREA

The Honourable Speaker informed the House that the Top Row (South Northern Corner) of the Dome is reserved for Media Houses and once that corner is fully occupied no other Media House will be allowed.

(3) VISITORS AREA

The Honourable Speaker informed the House that the Top Row (South Western Corner) of the Dome is reserved for Visitors. Visitors must write the Clerk of the National Assembly if they are desirous of attending a Sitting of the National Assembly.

(4) REFERENCES MADE TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

The Honourable Speaker informed the House that when they are making references or quoting the President, they must provide the document or state the page number and paragraph.

(5) PODIUMS IN DOME

The Honourable Speaker informed Members that if they wish to make their presentations

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without a mask, they can use the podiums in the center of the Dome.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE-

For Written Replies

1. MINISTERIAL ADVISORS

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

Minister Answering: **The Minister of Home Affairs**

1. Could the Hon. Minister state the qualifications, portfolio responsibilities and terms and conditions of appointment of the Ministerial Advisors" appointed by the PPP Government, within the Ministry of Home Affairs?
2. The criteria used in selecting these individual(s)?
3. What process, if any, was employed to determine whether these person(s) are of good character and are fit and proper to hold these high offices, especially, when they would be representing the Ministry of Home Affairs and by extension the Government of Guyana?
4. Please provide the National Assembly with their salaries, benefits, and allowances?
5. What additional costs, if any, are attached to the services which they render and for which the Government of Guyana and by extension, taxpayers are responsible?
6. What are the job descriptions of these persons?
7. Could the Minister state how be it that these Advisors contribute to the improvement of the Minister's performance?

(Notice Paper No. 41 (Q23 Opp.23) published on 2021-02-01)

ANSWERS

- (1) “An Advisor to the Minister of Home Affairs has been appointed by the PPP/C Government who is eminently qualified and experienced in Public and Political Relations, Marketing and Graphic Design and in Parliamentary Procedures. Responsibilities encompass the foregoing areas and more. A three (3) year Contract, six-month gratuity, vacation allowance and leave are the terms and conditions.
- (2) The criteria used are integrity, knowledge and experience, initiative and an empathetic approach to problem solving.
- (3) Previous parliamentary experience as MPs, personal vetting by the Minister and the solid recommendations scrutinized ensured that capable persons of good character are selected.
- (4) Salary is GS:13. Gratuity is at 6-month intervals at 22.5%. Vacation allowances is one month’s salary and annual leave is 35 days.
- (5) Rental costs are incurred as are security and driver.
- (6) To provide advice to the Minister on tasks which he assigns or requests.
- (7) Tasks assigned to the Advisor significantly reduce the item and improve the quality of advice to the Minister”.

2. BREATHALYZER KITS AND TESTS

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

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

1. Can the Hon. Minister state if all the Policing Divisions are provided with fully functioning breathalyzer kits?

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2. Can the Hon. Minister state how many breathalyzer kits have been provided to each division?
3. Can the Hon. Minister state when each breathalyzer currently in use was last calibrated?
4. Can the Hon. Minister state how many persons were tested during the last quarter of 2020 and how many charges laid for persons failing such tests?
5. Can the Hon. Minister state the number of successful prosecutions achieved during the last quarter of 2020 against persons failing breathalyzer tests?

(Notice Paper No. 42 (Q24 Opp.24) published on 2021-02-01)

ANSWERS

1. "Region No.1 and No.8 are yet to be given kits.
2. Kits per division provided are: One (1) each to divisions No. 2, 3, 4A, 4B, 5, 6 and 9; two (2) each to No. 4C, 7 and 10. Traffic HQ has an additional two (2) kits.
3. Breathalyzer kits rely on their original equipment manufactured calibration.
4. Two hundred and eighty-nine (289) persons were tested and one hundred and fifty-nine (159) charges were made.
5. Eighty-five persons were successfully prosecuted on failing sobriety tests".

3. BUSINESSES IN VIOLATION OF THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY MEASURES

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

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

1. What are the number of business entities which have been in violation of the COVID-19 Emergency Measures as at the 12th January 2021?
2. What actions have been taken against these entities?
3. What plans does the Ministry have to curb such violations.

(Notice Paper No. 43 (Q25 Opp.25) published on 2021-02-01)

ANSWERS

1. “Twenty-three (23) businesses were cited as of January 12.
2. Warnings and court actions were taken against violators.
3. To encourage respect for and enforcement of the law designed to prevent the spread of the pandemic”.

4. PREGNANT FEMALE PRISONERS

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

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

1. What is the protocol for pregnant women prisoners who give birth whilst serving their prison terms?
2. What is the state of Guyana's compliance with Rule 24 of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders?
3. What prison facilities and post-partum support do these women and babies have access to?
4. What is the frequency of their access to each other whilst the mothers are in prison?
5. What is the length of time that the newborn babies are allowed to remain within the prison facility and what are the procedures for these babies when they leave the prison facility?
6. What is the number of women who have given birth while serving prison terms in the last quarter of 2020?

(Notice Paper No. 44 (Q26 Opp.26) published on 2021-02-01)

ANSWERS

1. “According to the Prison Act Chapter 11:01, Rule 240 a female prisoner may have her baby with her during the normal period of location and longer (to a maximum of twelve (12) months). If required in special circumstances, the baby may be supplied with clothing and necessities at the public’s expense. In addition, a separate room is assigned to the female who gives birth.

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2. Since the establishment of the female prison, Guyana has always sought to comply with Rule 24 of the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders. The rule states that instruments of restraints (Handcuff, body belt and foot chain) shall never be used on women during labour, birth and immediately after birth.
3. The Guyana Prison Service provides several post-partum supports to women and babies such as:
 - The mother and child are seen daily by the prison Doctor.
 - Their routine clinical schedules are maintained where they are allowed to visit the Family Health Clinic of the New Amsterdam Public Hospital.
 - A special diet is provided based on the recommendation of the Doctor.
 - The Prisoners Welfare Officer provides counselling to the mother.
4. The prisoner is provided with daily access to the support services or based on clinical appointment.
5. Newborn babies are allowed to stay a maximum of twelve (12) months in prison with the mother. Upon completion of that time, the mother can place the child in the care of her family members or the child can be placed in the care of the Childcare and Protection Agency of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security until the mother is released from prison.
6. During the last quarter of 2020 only one (1) female inmate gave birth to a baby boy, while serving a sentence at the New Amsterdam Public Hospital”.

5. POLICE OFFICERS MISCONDUCT OR BREACHES

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

Minister Answering: The Minister of Home Affairs

In the last quarter of 2020, what is the number of police officers who have been accused of: -

1. Committing criminal offences?
2. Breaching disciplinary guidelines under various codes of conduct that guides the Police in their conduct and performance?
3. What action(s) have been taken to deal with cases of proven misconduct or breaches of the various codes of conduct?

(Notice Paper No. 45 (Q27 Opp.27) published on 2021-02-01)

ANSWERS

1. “Thirteen (13) ranks.
2. Twenty-two (22) ranks
3. Case files were sent to Court for criminal proceedings to be undertaken. Administrative action files were also sent to Commanders and Heads of Departments for defaulters to be sanctioned”.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

MOTION

BUDGET SPEECH 2021 - MOTION FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 2021

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2021.

**(Moved by the Senior Minister in the Office of the President with Responsibility for Finance
on 2021-02-12)**

The following Members spoke to the motion:

Hon. Nicolette Henry, M.P.

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Hon. Priya Manickchand, M.P., Minister of Education

Hon. Juretha Fernandes, M.P.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 12.08 p.m. the Sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 1.24 p.m. the Sitting was resumed.

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2021.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

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

Hon. Maureen Philadelphia, M.P.

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

At 1.58 p.m., while Hon. Maureen Philadelphia, M.P., was speaking to the motion, the Speaker withdrew from the Chamber and Hon. Lenox Shuman M.P., Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly took the Chair.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Hon. Hugh Todd, M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation

Hon. Nima Flue-Bess, M.P.

Hon. Nigel Dharamlall, M.P., Minister of Local Government and Regional Development

13.

Speaker's Return to the Chamber

At 4.21 p.m. the Speaker returned to the Chamber.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Hon. Ganesh Mahipaul, M.P.

Hon. Yvonne Pearson- Fredericks, M.P.

Hon. Deonarine Ramsaroop, M.P.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

At 5.15 p.m. the Sitting was suspended for refreshments.

RESUMPTION OF SITTING

At 6.23 p.m. the Sitting was resumed.

Assembly resumed the debate on the motion for the approval of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial year 2021.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

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

Hon. Richard Sinclair, M.P.

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

Hon. Jermaine Figueira, M.P.

The Prime Minister moved that the Sitting continue beyond 8.00 p.m. to continue and conclude the debate on the motion.

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Hon. Jermaine Figueira, M.P., continued and concluded his speech.

Hon. Bhagmattie Veerasammy, M.P., also spoke to the motion.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8.46 p.m., on a motion by the Prime Minister, the Assembly was adjourned to 10.00 a.m. on Friday, 26th February, 2021.

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

PARLIAMENT OFFICE,
Public Buildings,
Brickdam,
Georgetown.

25th February, 2020.