

## **MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY DR CHEDDI JAGAN PRESIDENT OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA IN HONOUR OF ENERGY WEEK 1994**

Energy is one of the most vital physical needs of humanity. In our world, people's access to sources of energy is a crucial factor in the development of nations.

The industrial revolution was a very important juncture in world history, because of the decisive manner in which it allowed some countries to advance and caused others to fall into varying states of dependency. In this division, those who controlled the traditional sources of energy became dominant.

Guyana, like so many other developing countries has been a victim of this dependence which was intensified by centuries of colonial bondage. We have not been able to strike oil, although being in the geographical neighborhood of three significant oil producers. Yet at the same time, our consumption habits are generally oil (petroleum) based.

Electricity in every home and factory is an assumed service crucial to essential processes as well as for devices for comfort and luxury. And most of the electricity we generate is oil based. Our transportation services - motor cycles, cars, buses, trucks, boats or aeroplanes are also oil based. So too are our instruments of production whether in manufacturing, construction or agriculture.

The result is that Guyana consumes annually petroleum products imported at a cost of over US\$60 million. When we take our fuel bill and add it to our debt payments we arrive at the impossible situation where imports eat up most of our export earnings.

While serious attempts are being made to reduce drastically our debt and to increase our exports, drastic reduction in our oil import bill must be vigorously pursued if we are to improve significantly our country.

For Government, this is a top priority. A team of top officials in the energy sector worked for several months on a complete review of the energy sector and made recommendations for a new thrust in the satisfaction of Guyana's energy needs. I am happy to say that Cabinet has recently approved of a national energy plan which places emphasis on a rapid shift towards the utilisation of renewable sources of energy.

Indeed, steps have already been taken in this direction. Discussions are going on with potential investors for the development of a major hydropower station and for the utilisation of bagasse at sugar estates to produce electricity. When completed, these projects will make a meaningful contribution to the reduction of our dependence on imported fuel.

Meanwhile, efforts are also being made to develop mini and micro hydropower stations and small units on locations at rice mills and sawmills to utilise their industrial waste to generate electricity.

Government is also prepared to support efforts by the business community to develop all feasible ventures for the utilisation of renewable sources of energy. Solar power and wind power can be put to a wide range of uses. The initial capital cost is often a discouragement although the long term benefits are compensatory.

The Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the Energy Authority have been given the task of identifying simple and low cost devices and to popularise them among all Guyanese. The lending institutions are expected to play their part also in helping interested customers to acquire such devices.

Renewable sources of energy are not only a source of balance of payments improvement, but also are more environmentally friendly than the use of fossil fuels. There is therefore an added incentive for us to pursue very seriously these alternative forms.

A few days ago, when I opened the 5th Caricom Regional Science, Technology and Mathematics Fair, I saw several very innovative displays by the students, some of whom are still in primary school. These included very simple arrangements for the use of alternative sources of energy. I hope that the IAST and entrepreneurs can use this inspiration from our younger generations to duplicate their efforts on a commercial scale.

Another lesson from the students of the Caribbean was the need to save on energy. Energy conservation is the other major plank of our national energy policy. Too much energy is being wasted on a daily basis. In homes and offices, unnecessary lights, air conditioners, fans, etc. not only increase the individual expenditure but also pushes up the national fuel bill. The same goes for transportation. Because of the huge increase in the number of buses and taxis on our roads, there is a large under-utilisation of individual vehicles.

We must not do things because we can personally afford to do so even if there is massive waste. We must think of the plight of the less fortunate and the country at large. Energy saved means dollars saved; dollars saved means greater and faster development.

Government is doing all it can to make the lives of Guyanese more comfortable. And this includes the improvement of our electricity service. You will recall the miserable situation my government inherited. Special efforts have been made to upgrade this service. Repairs have been done and new units have been put in place. Isolated areas have or are about to receive electricity.

We want to satisfy all of the nation's needs. We do not have the means of doing so immediately. But we can reduce the wait by saving on material financial resources. I urge you on World energy Day, 1994 to safeguard and encourage the gains we are making.

Use energy wisely!

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