

ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. CHEDDI B. JAGAN,
PRESIDENT OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1992

Fellow Guyanese:

I take this opportunity on the eve of my departure for Trinidad to attend the Caricom Summit to thank all of you for the confidence shown in me and my PPP/Civic colleagues in electing us to high office; and above all, for the maintenance of peace and stability.

Fortunately, the period of tempers and tensions is over. And rapidly, our dear land is returning to normal.

Regrettably, election day was marred not only by genuine concerns of voters who were inadvertently disenfranchised, but also by hooliganism, violence, loss of property and lives. Fortunately, those who were bent on sabotaging and derailing the electoral process did not succeed.

The quick action by the Election Commission Chairman, Mr. Rudy Collins, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, Canadian and Carter Center observer teams, the EAB, the Private Sector Commission and the disciplined forces saved the day.

In view of conflicting reports, my Government has decided to set up a Commission of Enquiry into the events around October 5th. The distinguished Guyanese jurist, Justice B.O. Adams, will be the Commissioner. This exercise is intended not so much to cast blame, but to establish what should be done in future to ensure elections that are transparent, free and fair, and free from fear. Never again would there be questions and doubts about the electoral process, as was witnessed during the past twenty-five years.

At the same time, we propose, after Mr. Rudy Collins would have voluntarily retired, to consult and select a new Elections Commission, which will immediately set about to revise the voters list, issue new voter identity cards, establish an independent electoral machinery and ensure adequate security in future elections. The United Nations, the OAS, the Council of Freely Elected Heads of Government and the Commonwealth Secretariat will play an even greater role in all elections.

This brings me to **local government elections**. Village district elections, which have not been held since 1970, and municipal elections which had been boycotted, would be held in the shortest possible time. Democracy will be established not only from above but also from the grass-roots, from the bottom.

Another source of disgust and regret was the **looting of state property**. Our nation has been disgraced by those who stole vehicles, equipment and other essentials needed for the smooth functioning of Government. I hope that good sense will prevail, and those with stolen property will return them by taking advantage of the amnesty granted by the Attorney General.

Corruption is a cancer, which my Government is determined to eradicate. As promised in the PPP/Civic Manifesto, it is proposed to set up an Integrity Commission with "watchdog" sub-committees which will work in close cooperation with strengthened Accountant General's and Auditor General's departments. The Finance Minister has already indicated that additional staff and resources would be made available to these strategic state institutions.

Improved racial/ethnic relations is also our goal. We will do everything possible to ensure that we are not dragged into a quagmire of racial/ethnic prejudice, hatred, incitement and violence, which so much mar the world scene today. To allay fears of racial/ethnic insecurity we propose after consultations to set up shortly a Commission on Racial/Ethnic Equality. The United Nations has agreed to provide funding for this Commission.

We are working out a comprehensive programme to bring about racial/ethnic amity and cooperation. Our education system will be geared to break down prejudices and stereotypes and to provide opportunities for everyone to acquire qualifications for jobs.

Our **Service Commissions** will function independently and appointments and promotions will be based on merit, qualification and experience. And laws will be made to make racial/ethnic incitement and unfair employment practices a criminal offence.

I wish to reiterate what I have repeatedly said in the past: **there will be no political witch-hunting and recrimination**. However, at the same time, we expect that laws, regulations and conventions pertaining to democratic practices and political transitions will be respected.

For instance, in the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, according to convention, with a change in government, resignations are tendered by those who hold key positions in the diplomatic service, boards and commission. I understand that even in the Presidential Secretariat there are some political appointees who

were not recruited through the Public Service Commission.

-3-

My Government is aware that at various layers of the public service system there are special political appointees, persons on sinecure appointment, and party activists contracted from the public purse to carry out the election campaign of the former regime.

The PPP/CIVIC Government intends to pursue a humane, compassionate and principled employment policy. While it is not interested in dismissing anyone, it reserves the right to request transfers, if necessary. It will also ensure that there are no super-salaried political free-riders on the backs of the hard-working Guyanese taxpayers!

We are also honouring conventional practice which was not put in place for me as Opposition Leader: diplomatic passport, office and staff, security guards, etc. As regards security, a top level meeting was held between the Commission of Police, the Chief of Staff, Ms. Janet Jagan, Dr. Roger Luncheon and Dr. Cedric Grant. Our delegation made it clear that security arrangements must continue to be provided for a limited period for members of the past Government; that special attention should be paid to the security of the former President, Mr. Hoyte, and that the Commissioner of Police, in his judgement, must assess the situation and decide on the necessity for, and level of, security arrangements.

I hope that these disclosures will allay fears and apprehensions, as our dear land fervently needs sanity, cool heads and cooperation during this difficult transition period when the Treasury is practically empty. If we are to go forward, we need to do so together.

That's why the PPP has instructed its more than 200 country wide groups to help to set up broad-based Citizens' Committees, incorporating representatives from political, business, religious social/cultural and professional groups. These will not only help the police to combat crime in the communities through community policing. They will also formulate one or more community projects for social and physical infrastructure -- schools, health centres, community centres, housing, drainage and irrigation, roads and so on -- something along the line of the erstwhile self-help projects. These will lead to human development from the grass-roots level.

I want to appeal to our citizens throughout the country to embark not only on a grow-more-food campaign but also on a clean-up campaign. In terms of basic human needs, clean air, water and environment are equally as important as food, clothing and shelter. We Guyanese have a reputation for hospitality. Let us extend a helping hand to our neighbours and friends. Through self-help and mutual aid, let us rebuild our beloved Guyana.

With our dedication and discipline let us ensure that we once again become the beacon of Caribbean development, and that we should in the shortest possible time recapture the glory of Guyana as the Caribbean's "bread basket".

This is the sentiment I wish to convey on your behalf when I meet our Caribbean leaders this week. I hope on my return to fully apprise you about the Caricom Summit, but until then please keep alive the faith in the democratic process and in our prospects for rapid economic prosperity.

Long live our united people!
Long live Guyana!