

President Cheddi Jagan's New Year Greetings

January 1, 1996

My fellow Guyanese

Today is the dawn of a bright new year. Wherever you are at this moment, my heart is with you in celebration. At this time I ask that as you make your New Year's resolution, let us focus our vision on one goal - a goal to try with all our hearts to restore a sense of pride in our nation - and let this, not hatred, be our legacy to our children.

A nation that is united its common endeavour will never be destroyed Let us join hands on this first day of new year at and pledge ourselves to try for new beginnings - to try with all our heart, our minds, our souls, to restore within ourselves that sense of dignity that graced the lives of our foreparents, who struggled in common unity to better their lives.

No matter how different their culture, they looked after each other's children, they celebrated happy occasions together, they came together to help each other to build a fence, to weed a yard to clean a canal - and they forged a Guyanese nation out of their common need to make themselves a people of pride and dignity. We need to restore that dignity so that our children can experience the pride.

We have experienced many difficulties in the past. We will experience many more in the future. But, we, as a nation working together can overcome these difficulties.

You have to be the nation's police You have to guard against those who have no pride in themselves nor in their country, who seek to destroy its wealth and its beauty. One act, which may seem simple to you, could save the nation much loss in revenue, and give the national economy a much-needed boost. But more important is that you have recognized yourself as part of this nation and be responsible enough to say: "This is wrong."

For example, there are many of our outlying villages that are still waiting for funds to be realised for them to get potable water.

Yet in the city many yards have taps running night and day, pouring millions of dollars worth of alum and other purifying chemicals in the drains. This is criminal negligence and everyone who is guilty of water wastage must be told so in no uncertain terms, for they are robbing the wealth of the nation.

There are employees who steal from state corporations consumers devise systems to rob the state revenues and there are even instances of sabotage of the nation's properties. For those who steal time from work that they are being paid to do, for those who lend themselves to systems that divert revenues from state coffers, for those in authority who take bribes to turn a blind eye to unlawful acts that harm the society, be warned that when you are caught the penalty will be severe - for your actions are counter-productive to the best interests of the nation as a whole and can be rightly termed unpatriotic. When you see people living in squalor, destitute children, children who are not in school, and those who are robbed of medical attention you must know that people like those who smuggle gold out of the country are to be blamed. We must name them and tell them that they are wrong. We must tell people who manipulate the market to increase the cost of living that we, the people, want to build this country and they will not be allowed to stand in the way. Under our new democracy you have a say and you must make your voices heard.

Brother and Sister Guyanese, I propose a toast. Let us forget past hatreds, let us reach out to build strong bonds of friendships, and let us pledge to link our hands across every chasm in our nation so that we can build a strong homeland so that future generations of Guyanese can say with pride - "I am a Guyanese."

Happy New Year to you all!!

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