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Long Live Cheddi Jagan

The passing of President Jagan has meant a serious blow to the political process in Guyana. The loss is not only to the People's Progressive Party (PPP) or the PPP/Civic administration. More than that, given his role in the process of national development at this time, it's a loss to the entire country.

Dr Jagan has been a staple feature of the Guyanese and Caribbean political process for the past five decades. His contribution to the struggle against colonialism and for independence transcended Guyana's borders. His struggle for Adult Suffrage at home and against colonial domination of the West Indies singled him out as a true revolutionary, a heroic fighter for the working class and the oppressed and a voice for the people. His political stance in the pre-independence, Cold War days kept him in the headlines and he soon became a household name throughout the Caribbean and the world. And his relentless efforts to forge anti-colonial and anti-imperialist unity at home is recorded in the annals of this country's history.

Cheddi Jagan was a real man of the people. Nobody — absolutely no one — has said anything negative about him since his death at the end of a heroic battle for life that lasted longer than even his doctors expected. Even his enemies have been unable to express anything but public accolades and acknowledgement of his life-long commitment to honesty and his hatred for corruption and corrupt practices.

The man who Guyana has lost was indeed a man whose vision went beyond the shores of his own country. Caricom leaders, for example, have all been expressing their profound regrets at the loss of an elder statesman who was absolutely clear about where this region has come from, where it is and where it should be heading if its people are to be truly free. He attended all Caricom summits before taking office and became Chairman of Caricom during the last years of his life. He always expounded a sense of regionalism and abhorred the continued barriers put up in the way of genuine regional

integration. His ideas for a Regional Integration Fund were embraced by the Caribbean Community and he ensured that Guyana, under his leadership, acceded to and set out to implement decisions agreed to at summits, bureau meetings and intersessional meetings.

But his ideas were not only for the Caribbean or the Hemisphere. Indeed, his relentless pursuit of a New Global Human Order during his final three years won him more respect and admiration at the international level. These ideas, which were aimed at encouraging the North and South to work together in the mutual interest of humanity, won support from statesmen and governments throughout the world, on all continents.

He was overthrown twice three decades ago, but those responsible lived to tell the true story about the machinations involved. They also lived to apologise and voice their regrets that they had been unfair to such a sincere, honourable man. And he too lived to prove them wrong, leading his party to victory once again in 1992 at the first free and fair elections held since he was deprived of office through the machinations of local and external forces.

Dr Cheddi Jagan did not live to see the unity of the people of Guyana he fought for ever since the PPP was split in 1955. But he did much during his last years to facilitate such unity and he paved the way by always keeping doors open to his political opponents.

Guyana, the Caribbean and the world will sincerely miss Cheddi Jagan in the years to come. But even though we mourn, it would have been his wish that we continue from where he left off; that we would ensure completion of the process of national reconstruction and development which he and his government pursued since 1992.

It is now for us all to pledge that we will continue the good works so that the process he began would be completed by us all in a manner that would have made him proud to have been the man that he was.

He's gone, but Long Live the memory and spirit of Cheddi Jagan.