

So far, the recession Hasn't Hit Guyana

by Janet Jagan

The President at last week's press conference, made an important statement to the effect that despite the recession hitting the developed world, Guyana has, so far, been spared the ravages that other countries have encountered. He also stated that Guyana will end the year with a positive growth rate of about three percent, slightly below the projected rate.

This is certainly good news. Guyana is in a much better position than most of the Caricom nations, probably because we have concentrated so strongly on food production. Trinidad, because of its dependence on oil, is feeling the brunt as world prices for oil, natural gas, petroleum products and methanol have dropped considerably. The price of oil today has fallen to about US\$50 per barrel, quite a drop from the unrealistic price in the \$150 range. As a result, Trinidad has had to reduce budget spending by \$6Billion.

Drop in tourism is also facing many of the Caricom tourist destinations,

including Jamaica and some of the small islands. In fact the recession, now global, which began when the US economy shot into a severe crisis, has caused grave problems in the tourist industry all over the world, with passenger rates in air-

crash of several major industries, chief of which is the automobile industry.

It is hard to predict the future and the President warned that we cannot be complacent. However, we are fortunate to have a caring government which has

meant more occupation of lands for farming and animal husbandry.

The government, to further the "Grow More Food Campaign" is providing farmers with chemicals and fertilizers, along with some 600,000 packages of

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lines dropping drastically and the domino effect in all aspects of tourism. This, of course, is a result of the uncertainty that exists worldwide as people cut down or cut out all unnecessary spending – fearing loss of employment, higher costs for essentials, fears about housing loans, etc. In the USA, alone, unemployment is rising at a rapid rate due to the recession and the

led us into a direction of economic stability. Certainly the emphasis on agricultural development along with the necessary back-up of improved drainage and irrigation and more scientific methods of production have kept Guyana self sufficient. The emphasis on "Buy Local" has focused on the need for consumers to purchase Guyana's local products and the state's land policy has

vegetable seeds to help production in all ten regions at a cost of some \$20Million.

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When the anticipated reduction in the price of wheat came about, the PPP/C was on-the-alert and organized consultations so that the reduced price of flour would benefit the consumers. Government announced that there would be a reduction in the price of flour averaging 17% and a comparable reduction in the price of bread.

The same is true with the prices of fuel products – gasoline and kerosene, which have gone down in prices as the price of crude oil has dropped so rapidly.

The government-owned gas stations, Guyoil, have immediately reflected the downward trend in prices, making it impossible for the others not to reduce likewise. There have been problems in getting mini-buses to reduce charges, even with the lowering cost of fuel. That is an ongoing problem. But it is not hard to see the hands of a caring government in seeing that consumers are not exploited as prices move up and down.

And, believe it or not, **Stabroek News** did not carry the report of the President's statement that Guyana's economy remains stable despite global recession and that Guyana's growth rate is 3%. But on the same day the President's statement (made on November 20 and reported on the 22nd of November) was made S/N's letter column carried a remark by a contributor: "The PPP is approaching two decades of governing with nothing to show, other than the Skeldon sugar factory, an entity which will contribute very little to the development of the nation." I can only suggest a visit to an Ophthalmologist and the Ear, Nose and Throat doctor.