

# Congrats to our Women who Serve in all Areas of Life

by Janet Jagan

April 10, 2008 was another proud day for women as the PPP/C Cabinet grew by one more woman minister and for the first time a woman was sworn in as Guyana's Foreign Minister.

Carolyn Rodrigues moved from Minister of Amerindian Affairs to Minister of Foreign Affairs while Pauline Campbell Sukhai moved up from Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Amerindian Affairs. Each represents the PPP/Civic coalition introduced by the late President Cheddi Jagan when he formed the government in 1992, with Rodrigues representing the Civic and Sukhai the People's Progressive Party of which she has been a member for many years. And both represent an ethnic group, the Amerindians, who, up until the 1992 restoration of democracy by the PPP, had enjoyed few rights and privileges in our society, being relegated to second-class citizenship.

Under the tenure of



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the PPP/Civic and the establishment of the first Ministry of Amerindian Affairs with the intense focus on Amerindian rights, Guyana's first people have attained rights over their lands, a focus in their culture improved education, including the establishment of new secondary schools, extended health care, housing, pure water supplies and job opportunities hitherto not available.

Last year Amerindian Affairs Minister Carolyn Rodrigues could report to the second Latin American Congress of National Parks and Protected Areas held in Argentina, organized by the World Conservation Union, the United Nations Environ-

ment Programme, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the Argentina National Parks Administration as follows: "The efforts of the government in bettering the lives of the indigenous people have resulted in Guyana's Amerindian development being way ahead of many countries with indigenous populations."

In a media report on her return from that conference, Minister Rodrigues said that she was proud to report that "Guyana is safely ahead in the international arena, dealing with Amerindian issues." She said this is because of the mutual cooperation from the government and the Amerindian people pertaining to land rights and legislation. She had also reported to the Conference on the matter of the nation's Wai Wai population, establishing a community, a conservation area where the Wai-Wais now have full authority of a protected area to pursue an economic strategy based on eco-tourism, research and traditional crafts. Miners and loggers have been banned from their pro-

TECTED area. These are some of the directions taken by the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and the government to meet the views and needs of the Amerindian community, so ignored and overlooked in the past.

Ms Rodrigues' excellent credentials for achievement in the Amerindian

She was also one of the members of President Cheddi Jagan's team that toured China, Malaysia and India in 1993 and has a fine record in community work.

Today women are taking their place in all aspects of life, including more and more in the decision-making area of society. The

USA. In Latin America there are two women Presidents, in Chile and Argentina.

Guyana has set the pace by appointing the first woman Chief Justice, electing the first woman President and now the first woman Minister of Foreign Affairs. Women are taking their rightful places on the

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community will be carried on by the new Minister, Pauline Sukhai who has been a Member of Parliament since 1992 and an active "foot soldier" in the PPP and the Women's Progressive Organization, a well educated woman who has been a protagonist for women's rights for many years.

newly elected Socialist Party forming the Spanish government just announced that it has more women in the Cabinet, than men, probably the first such position in the world. In the USA a woman, Senator Hillary Clinton is fighting a tough battle to be the first woman candidate for the Presidency of the

world stage and their numbers are bound to increase as each year goes by. Congratulations to our women ministers, members of Parliament, and all those women in leadership roles, in community services, in the schools and hospitals and everywhere they make their contributions to society, big or small!