



**ADDRESS TO THE NATION  
HER EXCELLENCY  
JANET JAGAN, O.E.,  
PRESIDENT OF GUYANA**

**Tuesday, December 23, 1997  
Office of the President**

Fellow Citizens of Guyana,

I offer you Season's Greetings and my thanks for returning our Government to office. We had a very peaceful elections on December 15, 1997.

With a preliminary count of ballots at the place of poll on elections day, the results were generally known to all parties and elections observers. It was clear that the PPP/Civic had won a convincing victory. However, the official announcement of the results has been held up due to faulty documentation and other technical and procedural glitches.

I am convinced that these should be thoroughly investigated. Even though the elections were free and fair, we must perfect our electoral machinery by ensuring that future elections are not marred by administrative and personnel problems.

The international observers — specifically the teams from the Commonwealth, the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) — have all said at different times and in different ways that the elections were free and fair.

We must not forget that the International Observers watched the counting of votes at the majority of Polling Stations. So there cannot be any challenge to the purity of the count.

The head of the Guyanese observer group, the Electoral Assistance Bureau (EAB), (which had over

one thousand observers spread across the country) has established the transparency of the electoral process.

The business and investment community grouped in the Private Sector Commission (PSC) has pledged support for the strengthening of democracy in Guyana.

The local and foreign media, with known exceptions, have hailed December 15 as a victory for Guyana. The Stabroek News, I am pleased to note, has commented favourably on the fact that the democratic will has been asserted through free and fair elections.

But as a result of the difficulties to which I have referred and the delays in certifying and declaring the results, numerous valid questions and legitimate concerns have been raised. Every party wanted an earlier declaration of the results, but this did not happen.

The political parties which monitored the preliminary count at the various places have their tally sheets which clearly established the winner. We knew from our count that the PPP/Civic had won. Yet the difficulties during the process to certify the count was exploited by the major minority party to raise claims of rigging and fraud, and to stir unrest. Seditious statements, calculated to incite racism and promote mutiny, have been issued from some political quarters.

While we recognise avenues for democratic protests in our open society, my attention has been drawn to noisy marches in the commercial sections of

Georgetown which have tended to disrupt business activities. Criminal elements have been exploiting the terror campaign to rob and assault peaceful and innocent people.

The Security Forces have guaranteed the peace and they must be commended. We have total confidence in the ability and preparedness of our police and soldiers. I want to convey the nation's appreciation for the exemplary manner in which they have conducted themselves and protected our citizens. I ask that they should not be intimidated by cowardly threats for doing their duty.

My Dear Fellow Guyanese,

This is a time for the national leadership of this country to assess the situation and to act maturely. The resolution of differences and disagreements cannot be achieved in an atmosphere of tension. We need a cooling down of emotions.

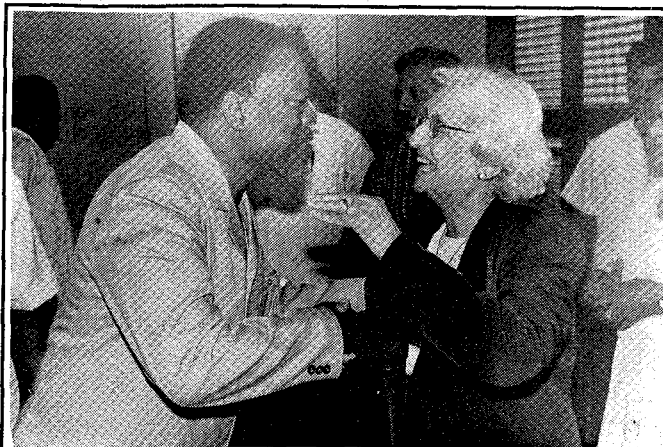
We must not let ourselves choke on a heavy dose of political hate. We must see reason and share the hope that there is no problem which cannot be set right through dialogue and tolerance.

I am, and will remain, open to a process of dialogue. Without this we will achieve nothing except to prolong political polarisation in Guyana.

For the sake of the people of Guyana as a whole – and I wish to emphasise now that my remarks are



*Her Excellency Janet Jagan, OE, was sworn-in as Guyana's first woman President on Friday, December 19, 1997.*



*Prime Minister-designate Hon. Samuel Hinds with President Jagan.*



*"The People have won... Guyana has won!"*



*Georgetown Mayor and GGG Presidential Candidate Mr Hamilton Green warmly congratulates new President.*

addressed to all Guyanese — we must ensure that our differences are settled by discussion and, above all, with a spirit of reconciliation.

Guyana is in a season which should be the occasion for peace and goodwill to all. Let us give all our families the chance to enjoy the Christmas and New Year they deserve while we work to resolve our differences.

Dear Fellow Guyanese,

We came into this second term with renewed vigour to continue the good work that has been started. We came with a clear vision to make Guyana into a shining monument of progress and plenty. We came with an open heart to forge greater cooperation and broader alliances to share in the vital task of nation-building.

Throughout Guyana there are high expectations for greater things to happen, for improvement in living standards and enhancement of the welfare of all Guyanese everywhere. We will therefore not squander the mandate which we legitimately received on December 15. As we stretch our hands out in friendship to all those who would reach out for them, we will continue to put our shoulders to the wheel to ensure that we go back to work to make Guyana a better place.

In my inaugural address Friday afternoon at State House, I promised that the government I will

lead will be an all-inclusive one that will seek to get more people involved in the building of our country.

I promised to be a President of all the people and for all the people.

I wish to reiterate to the nation that I stand committed to these principles and promise to do all in my power to ensure they are observed.

Fellow Guyanese,

Yesterday I made the first set of appointments to the new Cabinet. I am proud to be associated in this Cabinet with Mr. Samuel Hinds, our Prime Minister designate.

I want to take this opportunity to thank him most profoundly for the service he gave to this country as President.

In Sam Hinds we have an exemplary patriot who put nation above self when called to give national service. His stewardship between March 6th and December 19th did much to keep the nation marching forward after his predecessor, President Cheddi Jagan, died.

I have also announced the appointment of Head of the Presidential Secretariat, Dr. Roger Forbes Luncheon, as Special Advisor on National Security. Five Ministers in key sectors have been confirmed. Shortly, the Cabinet will be complemented with the number, strength and talent to allow our Government

to move full steam ahead to address the many problems that remain unsolved and to bring development to every area of Guyana.

Finally, My fellow Citizens,

I call on Guyanese everywhere, at home and abroad, in the city and in the countryside, along the rivers and in the hinterlands, to join hands, hearts and minds, to take a deep breath and exhale the tensions of the election campaign and its aftermath.

I would like all of us to ensure that we enjoy the Christmas season to the best of our ability and within our means. Let's spend the rest of this year reflecting on what we have achieved together during these past five years.

And let's get ready to start the next five years in January 1998 with the level of national unity, determination, togetherness, and the spirit of give-and-take that will be necessary to ensure that we continue to consolidate on the gains we have made.

I wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

May our country prosper as we work together.

Long Live The People Of Guyana.

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Cheddi Jagan Research Centre