

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

I GUYANA – BASIC INFORMATION

- Guyana, with an area of 83,000 square miles or 215,000 square kilometres, is located on the northern coast of South America, and is the only English-speaking country on that continent. It is bounded on the north by the Atlantic Ocean, on the east by Surinam, on the south and south-west by Brazil, and on the west and north-west by Venezuela.
- Guyana is physically divided into four types of landforms: (i) a flat coastal, clayey belt which is about 4.5 feet below sea level, and in which most of its agricultural activity occurs; (ii) a sand belt, to the south of the coastal belt, which includes the Intermediate Savannas; (iii) an undulating, central peneplain which comprises more than half of the country's area, and in which are located lush, almost pristine, tropical forests, and extensive mineral deposits. This landform stretches from the sand belt to the country's southern boundary and encompasses, also, the Rupununi Savannas which border Brazil; and (iv) the highlands which are to be found in the midwestern area. This portion of the Guiana Highlands includes the Pakaraima mountain range.
- Guyana has a plenitude of natural resources: fertile agricultural lands on the coastal plain and in the riverain areas; vast areas of tropical hardwood forests of various ecosystems and with a multitude of plant and animal species; abundant fish and shrimping grounds, both in its numerous rivers and in the Atlantic Ocean to its north; and a wide variety of minerals, including gold, diamonds, a range of semi-precious stones, bauxite and manganese. Moreover, because of its many rivers (the word "Guyana" means "land of many waters"), its potential for hydropower is immense.
- Guyana lies wholly in the tropics and possesses an equatorial climate that is characterised by seasonal rainfall, high humidity, and small variations in temperature. There are two rainy seasons which occur from May to June, and from November to January. The average daily temperature is about 80° F (26° C).
- The country has a multi-racial population which in 1999 was estimated to be about 745,000, or just over three persons per square kilometre. However, because about 90 percent of the country's population lives in the coastal zone which comprises only about 7.5 percent of its total land area, the actual living-space of most of the population is cramped.
- Guyana became independent in 1966 and between then and 1975/76 real GDP grew at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent. However, between 1977 and 1989, because of a combination of factors including the international oil crises and the severely interventionist policies pursued by the government which was then in office, the economy virtually collapsed. As a result, there was a stark decline in per capita income, and widespread poverty.
- In 1989, the then government, through the introduction of an Economic Recovery Programme, embarked on a far-reaching structural adjustment programme which liberalised the economy, and returned it to a path of growth. So much so, that between 1991 and 1999, Guyana experienced positive rates of growth of GDP each year, except for 1998 when growth was negative. In 1999 its GDP per capita was US\$800, about the same level it had attained in 1975/76.
- Despite this impressive recovery, however, about 35 percent of the country's citizens was estimated in 1999 to be below the poverty line, and 21 percent of them was assessed as living under conditions of extreme poverty. Moreover, about 50 percent of the country's workforce did not work, although only 9 percent of the total working population had indicated that they were seeking employment. Only these, therefore, as is the custom, were classified as being unemployed. Rates of underemployment were reported to be high.
- The country's economy is primarily based on the production and export of its natural resources, with agriculture (mainly sugar and rice), gold, timber and bauxite, accounting for most of the output of the productive sectors. However, over the last year or so, the manufacturing sector has displayed significant signs of growth.

II CONSTRAINTS TO GUYANA'S DEVELOPMENT

Politics and Race

- The major obstacle to Guyana's development is to be found in the divisive nature of its politics. Ever since the years leading up to the country's independence, the nation's every activity has been dominated by two political parties, the main followers of which are drawn from one or other of the two major racial groups. By and large, Indo-Guyanese support the Peoples Progressive Party, and African-Guyanese the Peoples National Congress.
- Partly because of the prevalence of fierce racial political rivalries between these two groups, and partly because Guyana's constitution is largely based on the Westminster model which does not embrace inclusivity in governance as one of its main characteristics, there has been little or no meeting of the minds between these powerful political parties on any major political, social or economic issue since Guyana became independent. On the contrary, confrontation of every sort and form

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

has been the norm.

- It is evident, however, that if Guyana is to attain even a modicum of development in the next ten years or so, it is essential that a number of decisions, that are based on intelligent, objective discussions and consultations between the two parties, be made. Unfortunately, there is very little that a national development strategy can do about such matters, except to make specific recommendations for more inclusivity in government, for greater participation in the decision-making processes, for increased observance of the principles and tenets which would prevail in a society which cherishes law and order, for greater respect for human rights, and for more openness in government. A detailed strategy for the attainment of these goals has been put forward in the Chapter on Governance in this National Development Strategy (NDS).

Infrastructure

- Guyana is very poorly supplied with roads. Although there is a coastal road which runs along most of the country's coastline, it is not continuous, but is interrupted whenever it intersects the main rivers of the country. Moreover, at least one part of this coastal road is not yet completely sealed. There is also a north-south road which begins in Georgetown, and proceeds south to the Takutu river, on the border between Guyana and Brazil. Most of this road, however, has not been constructed to international standards, and at least one stretch of it is difficult to traverse in wet weather. In addition, there is a number of lesser roads which connect the coastal villages to the east-west road. There are very few permanent roads in the hinterland of the country.
- Of the existing road network of just over 1,600 miles, only 19 percent comprises primary roads, while 21 percent consists of feeder roads which link coastal agricultural areas to the primary road network.
- The gross inadequacy of our transport system militates against our social and economic development in several ways. First, it increases production costs and, therefore, reduces our competitiveness, particularly in the mining and forestry sectors. Second, it inhibits our capacity fully to utilise those of our natural resources (gold, timber, diamonds, soils suitable for agriculture) that are not located on the coastland. Third, by severely limiting communication between those who live on the coast and those who inhabit the hinterland, it effectively divides the country into two almost unbridgeable cultures. Fourth, it acts as a barrier to the unity of the country in both a physical and spiritual sense: because we are not unified physically, we seem to find it difficult to think as Guyanese, to act as if we are one nation. Fifth, it restricts our coastal population's penetration of the interior, and forces coastlanders to live in a cramped and crowded manner on the coast, struggling and competing for land-space and other amenities, while more suitable areas are available farther south. And sixth, our failure to occupy the greater part of our country, might tend to bolster some of the claims of our neighbours to our territory.

Public Utilities

- The main public utilities in Guyana are those which provide electricity and telecommunications services. They are owned by two monopolies, in which the majority of shares are held by foreign companies, with the government holding minority interests.
- Electricity rates are considered to be high by most customers. Moreover, the services that are provided leave much to be desired: outages and brown-outs are not infrequent, and the consequential damage to electronic and electrical equipment not insignificant.
- The telecommunications sector, also, does not, at the moment, appear to be in a position to maximise its contribution to Guyana's development. Access to telecommunications is far from universal. Indeed, unless drastic changes occur, the prospects of even partially attaining such coverage in the near future appear to be remote. This is a somewhat frightening situation, because our effective utilisation of the advances in information technology which have taken place over the past two decades or so, and therefore our capacity rapidly to modernise our economy, depend in large measure on an efficient and modern telecommunications system.

Human Capital

- Guyana's educational system, which at one time was considered to be among the best in the Caribbean, deteriorated severely in the 1980s. And although it has displayed a remarkable recovery in the 1990s, it still does not produce the quality of personnel, in the requisite numbers, that is desperately needed if we are going to stand the slightest chance of modernising our economy. The country lacks a critical mass of expertise in almost all the disciplines and activities on which it now depends, and on which it will increasingly rely in the future.
- In addition, the educational system does not sufficiently focus on the training of Guyanese in science and technology, on technical and vocational subjects, on business management, and on computer science.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

- Furthermore, there are wide disparities, among the geographical regions of the country, in the availability of education, both in regard to its quality and in respect of the physical facilities in which it is provided.
- Perhaps worst of all, many of the better-educated professional teachers have emigrated to other countries over the past two decades or so, mainly because of the low emoluments which are meted out to them in Guyana. As a result, there is a serious dearth of trained teachers at every level of our educational system.
- This shortage of human capital is a most severe constraint to our future social and economic development. Although difficult, it may be possible, over the medium and long-terms, to train and educate a number of the personnel that would be required to assist in the development of our economy in general, and in the implementation of this NDS, in particular. In the short-term, however, measures and strategies must be devised to meet the estimated deficits. These might include the encouragement of expatriate Guyanese either to remigrate permanently, or to return home for specific periods to perform specific tasks; they might embrace the mobilization of overseas Guyanese, who remain permanently abroad, to undertake certain duties, through the utilisation of the new advances in Information Technology; and they might entail the seeking of technical assistance in a number of areas, particularly to implement donor-funded programmes and projects.

Diversification

- Guyana relies too heavily for its economic existence on the production and export of a few virtually unprocessed commodities. In other words, the country's economy is almost totally dependent on the production and export of raw materials. Moreover, most of these products are sold in guaranteed preferential markets at prices which even now are generally higher than those that are obtainable in the non-preferential world. As a consequence, the Guyanese producer has had no incentive, indeed no overwhelming reason, to be competitive, to be as efficient as possible.
- Moreover, because of the ready acceptance of certain of our export products in these favourable conditions, we have tended to concentrate on only a few products, and to continue to employ outmoded production practices. It is evident, however, that within less than a decade, primarily because of the inexorable process of globalisation and the pervasive influence of the World Trade Organisation, this special treatment will be removed. Indeed, the prices obtainable from the preferential markets are already being reduced. We must therefore both diversify our economy and increase our productivity, not only because of the impending worsening of trade conditions in our traditional markets but, more important, because it is intrinsically in our best interests to widen our production base, to become competitive, and to be as profitable as possible.

Institutions

- Many of the institutions which we inherited at the time of independence, and which were designed for different conditions, different times, and different circumstances, are still being used, albeit less efficiently, by our current administration. It should not be surprising to learn, therefore, that many of them act as a brake on our development. This applies to the policy-making arms of our government, to those departments and sections which administer and implement policies, and to those more directly concerned with production. It applies to our research organisations, to our land registration and distribution authorities, and to our judicial system. Indeed, if the truth were told, there is hardly a government agency in Guyana which would not benefit from a searching re-examination of its role, its *modus operandi*, and its effectiveness.

Investment

- The relative absence of massive and regular investment inputs into our country constitutes another of the major constraints to our development. This is not to deny that, over the past eight years or so, there has been some measure of investment in Guyana. Unfortunately, the total dollar value of these investments has not been enough to raise our economy, from the relatively low base to which it had sunk, to any significant degree and, perhaps more important, they have not been made in sectors, and for activities, that could drastically transform our economic structure.
- There are several reasons for this failure to attract suitable investment, among which are political tension; investment policies and strategies that are not unambiguously stated; lethargic investment efforts; inadequate investment promotion and management; and industrial unrest. Whatever the reason, the existing obstacles to investment must be frontally tackled and overcome in an expeditious manner, for without investments, the economy is bound to languish and may indeed ultimately decline.

III THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

- The overall objectives of this National Development Strategy are as follows:
 - i. to attain the highest rates of economic growth that are possible;
 - ii. to eliminate poverty in Guyana;
 - iii. to achieve geographical unity;
 - iv. to attain an equitable geographical distribution of economic activity; and
 - v. to diversify the economy.
- These objectives virtually speak for themselves. It is necessary, therefore, merely to state (i) that economic growth is essential if the national and sectoral developmental goals that are put forward in this document are to stand any chance of being followed; (ii) that for both economic and ethical reasons no nation ought to tolerate situations in which a significant proportion of its citizens cannot earn enough to provide themselves with the barest necessities of life. Hence the concentration on the eradication of poverty; (iii) that the geographical unification of our country is both developmentally and politically important. Penetrating our interior, and occupying our hinterland would put us in a more favourable position to utilise all the available resources in all parts of our country, would contribute significantly to the moulding of a truly Guyanese society, and would perhaps act as a psychological deterrent to those neighbours of ours who appear to have neo-imperialistic designs on our territory; (iv) that the attainment of an equitable distribution of economic activity would help to remove existing income disparities, and raise the standards of living in areas that are currently economically depressed; and (v) that, as has been already explained, it is vitally necessary to diversify our economy, particularly if we are to survive in the competitive world of globalisation.

IV THE STRATEGY

- A multi-pronged strategy has been devised to attain these objectives.
- The strategy has been informed by two basic considerations. First, that we could considerably assist in removing the scourge of racism from our land, if we developed and put into practice inclusive systems of governance in which all would feel that they have a stake, in which all would know that they are involved, and in which there were established both procedures and penalties to ensure transparency and accountability. Second, that a considerable degree of harmony would prevail in our country if we were able to formulate and implement social and economic policies which would lead not only to significant economic growth, but also to the widest distribution of the benefits of such growth among the population, no matter in what district they are located, and to what racial group they belong.
- Accordingly, the first prong of the strategy has been crafted to ensure that the practices that are followed by all future governments of Guyana are as inclusionary, participatory, accountable and transparent as possible. This imperative applies to the regional and local governments, as well as to the central administration.
- The strategy's second prong, which is inextricably linked to the first because the one cannot succeed in the attainment of ethnic harmony without the existence of the other, lies in the domain of macro-economic policy and economic management, and is multi-faceted. It includes (i) reforming the tax system (by eliminating some taxes, reducing others, introducing a more effective and equitable tax, and simplifying taxation procedures). Through this, it is intended to increase the quantum of investment in Guyana, and to provide incentives for investors both to engage in new ventures and to operate in economically depressed areas; (ii) formulating an investment strategy and code both to encourage financiers to invest in the country, and to spell out clearly the terms and conditions under which they would be required to operate; (iii) establishing a one-stop investment agency to expedite and facilitate the actual investment process in Guyana; (iv) enhancing the efficiency both of the country's revenue collection agencies and of those institutions that are charged with procurement, with other forms of expenditure, and with their monitoring; and (v) designing systems that would focus particularly on trade promotion, and on mobilising our economy to export more. In this regard, one aspect of the strategy is the establishment of two Export Promotion Zones.
- It cannot be over-emphasized that this macro-economic strategy, while containing vital elements for the propulsion of the growth of the economy, is designed to achieve such growth while, at the same time, maintaining low inflation rates, and external viability. The promotion of financial stability remains the primary objective of monetary policy.
- We attach the highest importance to the third element of the Strategy, which is the establishment of a road network

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

throughout the length and breadth of Guyana over the next ten years. We have put forward a transport infrastructural strategy which, if followed, will result (i) in the rehabilitation and modernisation of the coastal roads, and the placement of bridges across the Supenaam, the Essequibo, the Demerara and the Berbice rivers; (ii) in the construction of an up-to-date north-south road from Georgetown to the Takutu; (iii) in the building of a series of roads connecting both the coastal road and the north-south highway with all the regions and villages in this country; and (iv) in the establishment of a number of strategic highways linking Guyana with the rest of the Americas, through Brazil, Venezuela and Surinam. Although this road network will contribute to the attainment of all of the NDS's objectives, it will particularly assist in the penetration of our interior, in the opening up of new lands for a wide variety of economic activities, and in the facilitation of eco-tourism. Above all, it will contribute immensely to the social and physical unification of Guyana.

- Essential components of this third element of the Strategy are the construction of two deep water harbours in the Berbice and Demerara rivers, the improvement and extension of Timehri and Ogle Airports, and the rehabilitation of many of the country's interior airstrips.
- The fourth element in the Strategy is devoted to the role which Information Technology can play in the modernisation of Guyana. Considerable importance is attached to this aspect of our development, for we see the new approaches in IT as affording our country the opportunity to circumvent the beaten paths of development, and to leap-frog, so to speak, into the 21st century. The formulators of the NDS see Information Technology as one of the important means of improving our capacity to govern our country and to manage our economy, to increase our competitiveness, to attract investors, to market our products and diversify our production, to enhance the efficiency of our social services and, most important, to acquire knowledge and develop our human capital.
- Because our telecommunications system has been identified as one of the main obstacles to the development of this sector, the first strand in this element of the strategy is the rationalisation and liberalisation of the telecommunications sector.
- Other strands in the IT strategy include (i) the reform of the Public Utilities Commission (ii) the full computerisation of the Public Service, beginning with the ministries, departments, and institutions that are responsible for finance, education and health; (iii) the utilisation of IT in the process of education, and in the provision of health services at all levels; (iv) the establishment of Internet linkages between the University of Guyana and institutions of learning in other parts of the world; (v) the forging of linkages with expatriate Guyanese in order to utilise them as part of the Guyanese work force, even though they may be resident abroad; (vi) the provision of fiscal incentives to encourage the establishment of computer-based services; (vii) the fixing of deadlines for the full computerisation of various sectors of the economy; and (viii) the setting up of public centres to provide access to computers and the Internet for those not fortunate enough to possess the necessary equipment.
- The fifth prong is focussed primarily on the enhancement of our social services and, through this process, on the eradication of poverty, and the improvement of our productivity. Over the next decade or so, the Strategy envisions the expenditure of significant proportions of our financial resources to provide universal access to educational and health facilities at all levels, and in all places. In addition to increasing the number of physical structures throughout the country, from which these services will be offered, particular attention will be paid to ensuring that the necessary teaching materials, medical equipment and medicinal supplies are available. The imperative of having in place adequate cadres of trained teachers and qualified health workers has also been provided for in this prong of the Strategy. In particular, the difficulty of persuading a significant number of trained public servants to work in the hinterland has been acknowledged, and incentives are provided in the Strategy to encourage them to do so.
- The need for the provision of adequate shelter for Guyana's population in general, but especially for those in the lower-income bracket, looms large in the Strategy. Not only are specific fiscal incentives provided to the private sector and to the commercial banks to encourage them to engage either in the financing or in the actual construction of houses for the poor, and for those who now exist in depressed areas, but the distribution of land, free of charge, to the very needy, is also prescribed.
- Strategies have also been evolved in our poverty eradication drive, for the provision of micro-credit to small and medium scale entrepreneurs in the agricultural, manufacturing, and service sectors.
- This description of what may be termed the social element in this NDS is not exhaustive. What are presented here are the barest bones of a more comprehensive attack on those social factors which contribute to the debilitation of our society.
- However, the main means of alleviating poverty lies, in the final analysis, in the nurturing of an enabling environment which would lead to the creation either of jobs or of job opportunities. This thrust is subsumed by the strategies set forth in the section devoted to tax reform and economic management, by our strategy to enhance the quality of our institutions, and by our proposals for land reform, for example.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

- One last point in regard to the measures presented for the alleviation of poverty: many of the prescriptions are location specific in the sense that particular geographical areas are identified either for the provision of incentives, for example, or for the construction of housing schemes, rural roads, or schools and health centres.
- As has been discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, one of the major constraints to our development is to be found in the inadequacy, irrelevance, and obsolescence of many of our government institutions. Accordingly, the sixth plank in the overall Strategy has been the reform of our public sector institutions. Each of these has been examined in the various sectoral chapters, and specific strategies have been put forward for their improvement. This approach has been followed not only in the social, but also in the production sectors.
- A special element of the Strategy, the seventh prong, is directed to such factors as the role of the family in the process of social and economic development, and to the importance of gender considerations in all our social and economic activities. These cross-cutting, but integral, aspects of our socio-economic development are examined with the main objective of ensuring that they are taken into account in the formulation and implementation of policies, no matter what particular subject or sector is being catered for. Specific procedures and policies are put forward for improving the quality of the lives of both the Guyanese family (infants, youths, parents and the elderly) and the women in our society. Perhaps the most important strand in the strategy, however, is our recognition that matters of gender must not be considered as mere appendages to other aspects of development. On the contrary, they must be "main-streamed" and must influence all our decisions.
- Eighth, it has been emphasized that the conservation of Guyana's environment should be the prime consideration in the Strategy. The imperative of conserving our ecosystems and our other natural resources pervades our document and is repeatedly stressed. The chief problem that is envisaged in this area is the reconciliation of economic development with the necessity of conserving the environment. Accordingly, prescriptions are made for the environmental monitoring and control of all of our social and economic endeavours. The importance of sustainably utilising all our resources is, also, carefully delineated.
- Ninth, there is a prong of the strategy that relates particularly to Amerindians. It recognises that theirs is a specially disadvantaged group and, accordingly, it makes detailed prescriptions for their development. These include the demarcation and distribution of land; the preservation of their culture; the improvement of the quality of their training and education at all levels; the improvement of their health facilities; and the general social and economic development of the areas which they inhabit. The Strategy pays particular attention to the facilitation of the participation of Amerindians in the main-stream of Guyanese society while, at one and the same time, ensuring the sanctity of their culture and traditional ways of life.
- And finally, a strategy has been devised to implement the NDS. Apart from financing its implementation from government revenues, and from the normal multilateral and bilateral sources of financing, great dependence is placed on the involvement of private sector financiers even in the construction and repair of road, bridge, and port infrastructure. Specifically, it is strategised that we would enter into a build, operate and transfer ownership (BOT) and build, operate, own (BOO) arrangements with potential investors. In return for their services and finances, these investors will either be allowed to charge tolls, or be recompensed for their expenditure by being given the opportunity to utilise our natural resources, or by being paid in cash over a specific period, or through combinations of all these methods.
- The obtaining of critical masses of personnel effectively to negotiate with potential investors; to design, build and monitor the construction of the infrastructure that it is planned to establish; to formulate developmental policies and strategies and to oversee their implementation; to increase productivity in the agricultural sector; to enhance our manufacturing capacity and capability; and to ensure that our forests are sustainably developed, and that our mineral wealth is exploited for our benefit will be extremely difficult, especially during the early years of the NDS when, although a massive amount of training and education is projected, the trained persons will not yet be available for the various tasks. Therefore, a strategy has been put forward which would rely (a) on the provision of technical assistance by international and bi-lateral agencies, (b) on the remigration of expatriate Guyanese, (c) on the utilisation of the skills and knowledge of non-resident Guyanese; and (d) on the hiring of personnel, from whatever source, if their expertise is considered essential to our progress. A strategy for general migration, as our economy grows and develops, is also put forward.

V GUYANA IN THE YEAR 2010

It is envisaged that, if the programmes that have been formulated in this National Development Strategy are fully implemented, Guyana would, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, display the features and characteristics that are described in the remaining sections of this chapter. It cannot be over-emphasized that

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

what is being portrayed here is not a vision of the sort of country we would wish Guyana to be. Our descriptions of the country, and its various sectors, as we perceive that they would be in the year 2010, are based on our analyses of the various strategies we have put forward, and on our assessment of the effects which their implementation would exert on the political, social and economic configuration of our country. It is our view that if we have erred in our assessment, we have erred on the side of caution and conservatism.

The country as a whole

If all our strategies are followed, it is forecast that the average annual growth of the country's Gross Domestic Product, between 2001 and 2010, would be 9 percent. We are convinced that, even if the strategies are not followed optimally, at the very worst, barring a series of cataclysms, the average GDP growth would be of the order of 6.0 percent. **It should be stressed that because of the currently low level of our economy, Guyana at the end of the "strategy period", could not by any means be described as an affluent society. Indeed we would still be far from the forefront of even the developing countries. However, both our standard of living and our quality of life would have been much improved. Moreover, the scourge of poverty would have been, to a great extent, removed from our country, and Guyana would have been firmly placed on the path of sustainable political, social and economic development.**

Furthermore, we would have become, or be in the process of becoming, a self-reliant society; a society which was no longer dependent upon overseas governments and international agencies for its very existence. Indeed, we would have become more private-sector oriented, and would have built-up a significant number of successful entrepreneurs, of all races, and in a variety of fields.

Moreover, we would be more comfortable with ourselves as a nation and, would, in large measure, have been relieved of the social tensions which now so oppressively overwhelm us.

In addition, by 2010, our economy would have become much more diversified, with the manufacturing, service and information technology sectors making much more significant contributions to our GDP than they now do. This is not to suggest that we will not be still actively involved in traditional and non-traditional agriculture, and in forestry and fisheries. What will be occurring in these sectors, however, will be a greater processing of the raw-material that we produce and, consequently, a significant increase in the value that is locally added to our products, before they are exported.

Also, at the end of 2010, economic activity would be more geographically widespread in Guyana. A significant proportion of our country's citizens would have left the coastland and would be occupying the hinterland areas of the forest and mining belt, and of the Intermediate and Rupununi Savannas. This exodus to the interior would have been facilitated by the economic incentives which had been provided for investors in those areas since 2001, by the improvements in the social services that had been made away from the coast, and by the establishment of a network of roads connecting interior villages and settlements to each other, and to the coastland.

Democracy and Governance

By 2010, Guyana would be a truly participatory democratic society in which no one is denied the opportunity to be involved in the administration and management of the nation.

Indeed, the right of minorities to share equitably in the country's governance at all levels, and in all administrative committees and commissions, would not only have been acknowledged in law and in the constitution but would have been conscientiously pursued. Furthermore, oversight institutions would have been established to ensure that these minority rights are honoured, and that those who breach them are legally punished.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

Moreover, civil society (including trade unions and other non-governmental organisations) would, by law, have been formally engaged in the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programmes which affect not only their special concerns and interests, but also those of the nation at large. Such practices would not only have provided the basis of a truly participatory democracy, but would also have ensured the transparency of all government actions and decisions.

In addition, further extending the process and fundamentals of an inclusive democracy, would be a local government system with greatly increased authority, with the power to formulate their own developmental plans and strategies, and with the legal right, within clearly specified boundaries, to enact local laws, and to collect specified rates and taxes, as approved by Central Government.

At the end of the first decade too, it is foreseen that the Central Government of Guyana would be administered by a well-honed Public Service, whose emoluments would have been significantly increased, and whose professionalism would have been considerably enhanced. The primary objective of the Public Service would be the formulation and implementation of policies that would create an environment in which the private sector would be able to flourish, and in which a national entrepreneurial spirit would be nurtured and encouraged. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the Central Government would have redefined its role and *modus operandi* through a ground-up re-examination of the purposes and functions of each Ministry and agency. Through this process not only would many unnecessary layers of governmental approvals and interventions have been eliminated, but investment and other decisions simplified. Many citizens in the more industrialised economies, including business persons, pass most of their lives without the need to come into direct contact with government officials. Guyana would have moved decisively in this direction by 2010.

By 2010, also, a more representative and better trained and equipped Police Force, capable of maintaining law and order, and protecting the lives and property of Guyanese citizens, would have been put in place and would be working effectively.

The judiciary would also have been transformed. Appointed through a process in which all major political parties would have participated, and provided with adequate resources and facilities, Guyana's judges and magistrates would not only be independent, and thus able to make objective judgements, but would also be better equipped to administer justice fearlessly and professionally.

The Environment

By 2010 Guyana would have been subjected to an environmental regime in which no development project which had not passed the rigorous tests of an environmental impact study, would have been approved. Moreover, projects thus approved would have been continuously monitored in order to ensure that the provisions of the relevant laws and regulations and conditions had been followed. In addition, the country's natural resources would have been sustainably managed. Guyana would have been able to practise sustainable management because it would have paid special attention to the training of a requisite number of environmental scientists and environment inspectors, it would have enacted a body of laws that are designed to protect the environment, and it would have put in place, not only a central Environment Protection Agency but, as important, bodies of trained personnel in each relevant ministry or corporation whose tasks it is to recommend policies and programmes to the central Agency. **Special attention would also have been paid to the preparation and implementation of policies to reverse the despoilation of the country's urban areas and to enhance their environmental quality.**

As a consequence, at the end of the period covered by this National Development Strategy, not only would there be evidence that the quality of life in cities and rural areas had improved, that our natural resources were being managed on a sustainable basis, and that the environment in our hinterland was not being

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

degraded, but, perhaps as important, it would have also been made clear that the protection and improvement of the environment was one of the major bases of the country's development strategy.

Macroeconomic strategies

The macroeconomic strategies which would have been pursued between 2001 and 2010 would have been based on a radical reform of the tax system. This would have included fiscal incentives for both local and foreign investors, the introduction of a value-added tax, and a phased decrease in rates and taxes, including income tax, across the board. This latter strategy would have been made possible because of the expansion of the economy, and the consequential widening and deepening of the tax base; because expenditure on the Public Service, as a proportion of revenue, would have been reduced as a result of its rationalisation and reorganisation; because debt service payments would by then have been much curtailed as a consequence of the debt write-offs that had been granted by the international community; because revenue collection would have been significantly improved through the reorganisation and strengthening of the country's revenue collecting arms, the recruitment of qualified staff, the provision of modern equipment, and the adoption of more efficient procedures. In addition, tax enforcement mechanisms would have been much strengthened, and new tax sources identified.

Over all, also, the tax system would have been much simplified, and uniform rates established and applied for comparable goods and services.

These fiscal and managerial policies would have been implemented within the context of a strategy to reduce inflation and improve external balances.

By 2010, also, all the Public Enterprises in the country would have been privatised. The strategy which would have been adopted in most of these transactions would have been to capitalise a proportion of the enterprise to a strategic partner, and to share the remaining portion of the ownership among the government, the workers of the industry and the Guyanese public at large.

The disposal of these shares would have been much facilitated by the establishment of a national stock exchange, and the forging of linkages between Guyana's exchange and those in other parts of the Caribbean.

Also, by 2010, the oligopolistic structure of the banking system would have been weakened. Only a relatively few commercial banks currently operate in Guyana. Not surprisingly, there is very little competition among them. This has led to inefficient financial intermediation, as evidenced by the wide spread of interest rates. In order to encourage the establishment of more banks, the requirements for establishing banks in Guyana would have been brought into line with those of other CARICOM countries, while maintaining the highest standards of accountability. In addition, special training courses would have been mounted, with the Government's assistance, for the training of the management and personnel of commercial banks. The courses would have been designed to reduce the high costs which they now seem to incur. There would also be in Guyana, by 2010, a greater deposit of personal foreign remittances. This would have been occasioned by permitting Guyanese citizens, resident in Guyana, to hold United States dollar accounts in the country.

In addition, the currently high reserve requirements would have been reduced. This would have not only enabled more banks to be established, but would also have resulted in increased lending by the banks to the private sector for investment.

Transport Infrastructure

It is anticipated that by the year 2010 an inter-connected road system would have been established in Guyana. This network would have enabled easy access by road to the neighbouring countries of Brazil,

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

Venezuela and Surinam; reduced the costs of utilising the country's timber and natural resources, thus making them more competitive in international markets; diversified agricultural development by making more easily available suitable areas in the hinterland, particularly in the Intermediate and Rupununi savannahs; relieved the over-crowded coastland of a significant proportion of its population, thus improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of both the coastal and interior areas; and made more feasible the equitable distribution of economic activity, not only in the agricultural but also in the manufacturing and small-industries sector.

Specifically the road network, by 2010 will comprise:–

- i. A new 4-lane highway connecting Georgetown to the existing Soesdyke/Linden Highway;
- ii. a widened carriageway on the East Bank road between La Penitence and Peters Hall;
- iii. a completed highway linking Linden, by way of Mabura–Kurupukari, Annai–Good Hope and Lethem, to Brazil across the Takutu;
- iv. a road improved to modern standards, with a paved surface, connecting Kwakwani, Ituni, Linden, Rockstone, Anarika, Allsopp Point and Bartica and crossing the Essequibo River by a bridge in the vicinity of Kokerite Island;
- v. a paved two-lane road from Parika to Makouria and Anarika, and between Patentia and Kamuni;
- vi. a two-lane laterite road from Konawaruk southwards to the Siparuni River, to meet the road between Kurupukari and Annai, with a branch to Orinduik and other villages in the Pakaraima Mountains;
- vii. a rehabilitated and completed road between Itaballi and Kurupung;
- viii. a two-lane road between Itaballi and Eteringbang, and a bridge across the Cuyuni River to link the Guyana road system with that of Venezuela;
- ix. a two-lane branch road from the Itaballi–Eteringbang road to Towakaima and Matthews Ridge, and a two lane road from Port Kaituma to Yarakita;
- x. a two-lane road from Supenaam to Towaikaima, with branch roads to Santa Rosa and Koriabo;
- xi. a two-lane road from Kwakwani eastwards to Epira and Orealla and a two-lane road northwards from Orealla to Moleson Creek;
- xii. a two-lane road from Marudi to Camp Jaguar, and another from Marudi to Oronoque Camp;
- xiii. a two-lane road from Orealla to Camp Jaguar;
- xiv. a two-lane road from Annai eastwards to Apoteri to meet the road from Orealla to Camp Jaguar at Lanaballi River; and
- xv. a two-lane road from Port Kaituma to Yarakita.

In addition, there would have been constructed high-span bridges across the Demerara River at the same site as the Demerara Harbour Bridge, and the Berbice River upstream of Everton; a series of bridges and causeways linking the islands in the mouth of the Essequibo River to Morasi on the East Bank and Supenaam on the West Bank; and another high-span bridge across the Essequibo River at Monkey Jump.

Another new feature in 2010 would be the existence of deep water harbours at the mouths of the Essequibo and Demerara Rivers.

Moreover, the airstrip at Timehri Airport would have been extended, and the entire Airport refurbished to accommodate an increasing number of passengers. The airport at Ogle would have been privatised, and much improved and extended.

The Manufacturing Sector

By 2010 the manufacturing/industrial sector would have been much diversified and expanded. There would be more local processing of agricultural products, and more tertiary and secondary conversion of the abundant wood and other vegetable raw material resources which exist in Guyana. Furthermore, a wide range of industry, based on the tertiary manufacturing of traditional agricultural products, such as sugar, rice and coconuts would have been established. Moreover, many of the manufacturing industries which had been established in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, but which had proved to be unsuccessful, because of a variety of factors, would have been resuscitated. In addition, a whole new range of industries, emanating from the two Export Promotion Zones to be established in the Berbice and Demerara Rivers would, by that time, be operational.

This diversification and expansion of the industrial sector would have been achieved by attracting foreign and local investment through a liberal tax regime; by the encouragement of investment specifically in the manufacturing sector; by reducing the corporate taxes now imposed on that sector; and by the general increase in demand for industrial products which would stem from the intensification of activities in the agricultural, construction and transport sectors.

Moreover, the promulgation of a liberal investment code and strategy would have assisted greatly in the creation of an environment that is much more conducive to development than that which obtained in the 1990s.

The spread of entrepreneurship would have been considerably facilitated by the provision of several courses in Business Management, Marketing, Accountancy, and ancillary subjects by both the Government and the private sector. The Government would also have assisted by fiscally encouraging the expansion of credit facilities, especially micro-credit facilities, designed to assist in the establishment of Small and Medium Scale Industries.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, would also have been much expanded and diversified. In addition to crops, such as rice and sugar, which have been traditionally produced, greater attention and emphasis would have been placed in the first ten years of the new century to the cultivation of crops such as oil palm, coconuts, green vegetables, ground provisions, fruits and flowers. Although a significant amount of these products would be utilised locally, the greater proportion would be destined for the tourist havens of the Caribbean, and the niche markets of North America and Europe.

This expansion and diversification of the agricultural sector would, as in the manufacturing sector, have been greatly assisted by the tax incentives provided by the government; by the market intelligence made available to producers by the central authorities and by the expansion of the information technology base in the country; by help provided by the government, in some cases, in the actual marketing of the products; and by the research and extension services of the National Agricultural Research Institute.

By 2010 the livestock population of the country would have been significantly increased, and its quality much enhanced. As a consequence, not only would Guyana be self-sufficient in meat and milk, but a considerable amount of our beef production would have been exported. This would have come about because of improvements in the quantity and quality of feed supplies through the local production of energy-based and protein feeds; through the extension of the area available for pasturage mainly by improving the productivity of the saline soils to the north, and the acid soils in the interior; through genetic improvement of the livestock; and through greater attention to animal health.

Perhaps of the greatest significance, however, would have been the boost which the sector would have received through the opening-up of new areas for agriculture. This would have been made possible by the improvement and expansion of the country's infrastructure, the provision of adequate social services in the new areas, and the preparation of land use plans and programmes, with the specific objectives of diversifying the agricultural base and increasing production.

Sugar

By 2010, sugar would have become more competitive because of (i) higher field productivity, based on improved farm practices and improved genetic varieties; (ii) the utilisation of additional areas of land mainly in the Skeldon, and Albion/Rosehall areas; (iii) enhanced sugar recovery through the replacement of the existing obsolescent mills by larger state-of-the-art factories which, in addition to giving higher yields, exhibit significant scale economies. Special benefits would have been obtained through the construction of a new 350 tch factory at Skeldon; (iv) the rationalisation of the industry through the merging of some estates and some operations; (v) the utilisation of diffusion technology at two estates; and (vi) the co-generation of power from both the Guyana Power and Light Company and GUYSUCO's own bagasse.

In addition, private peasant farmers would have been supplying a significant proportion of the cane required for the new mills.

By 2010 also, GUYSUCO would be producing special sugars; would have introduced new pack sizes and packaging; established a distillery; built a refinery; and developed a market in the Caribbean for refined sugar.

Rice

The rice industry, also, by 2010 would have considerably improved its competitiveness. This would have come about by the attainment of increased productivity through better farming practices and the use of improved varieties; increased mill recovery through the modernisation and rationalisation of most of the rice mills; and by achieving greater efficiency in the use of water. In addition, because of the assistance which would have been provided by government in the obtaining of market intelligence, there would be a more diversified international market for Guyana rice, although the major importers would remain the European Union and CARICOM.

Greater access to unsecured credit and liberal tax incentives would also have contributed to the spatial expansion of the industry, the main areas of expansion having occurred in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary Rice Development Scheme, south of Jagdeo Canal; the Jackson/Moleson backdams; Black Bush backlands; Manarabisi; Hogg Island; Akawini in the Pomeroun; and areas south of the Supenaam River.

In addition, the rice industry would have become much diversified, and rice straw (for mushroom production and as a ruminant feed), rice flakes, and popped rice would have been regularly produced.

Fisheries

The fisheries sector, also, would, by 2010, be displaying much vitality. There would have been increased production of both shellfish and fin-fish in an environmentally sound manner, and the production base would also have been considerably expanded, i.e. both industrial trawling for marine fish and small scale artisanal fishing would have been intensified. In addition, inland fishing, for food and for ornamental fish, and both brackish and fresh water aquaculture would have been much expanded and thriving. Indeed, growth in this sector would have been achieved mainly through the expansion of aquaculture.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

Concomitant with the increase in the supply of fish, which would have been exploited on a sustainable basis, would have been a most significant expansion in the country's trawling fleet and processing plant.

The growth of the sector would have been mainly due to tax incentives; the rehabilitation of the Botanic Gardens Fish Culture Station and the efficacy of its pilot-scale demonstrations; the increased harvesting of currently under-utilized marine fish species by private investors; improved quality in the post-harvest handling of artisanal fin-fish; the expansion of cold storage facilities; the provision of market intelligence by the government; the provision of assistance in the marketing of fish (especially ornamental fish) by the government; and the transfer of suitable areas of government-owned land for aquaculture activities.

Forestry

By 2010 all of the State Forests of Guyana would be sustainably managed, through long-term concessions and tenurial arrangements which would have facilitated the obtaining of credit to establish infrastructure, the utilisation and maintenance of modern equipment in both forests and the mills, and the adoption of silvicultural and management systems which ensure the regeneration of the forests. The necessity for conserving the environment in all forestry operations would have been the guiding principle in the utilisation of our forests.

In addition, all the forests would have been regularly inventorised. A full knowledge of the resources would therefore be in the nation's possession.

Moreover, areas for production; and areas to be protected for both environmental and bio-diversity purposes, would have been identified and demarcated. In particular, a significant proportion of our forests would have been specifically set aside for the purpose of carbon sequestration, and non-timber utilisation.

There would also have been a marked expansion and increase in production and productivity of the forest industries sub-sector. There would be fewer but qualitatively better sawmills with increased capacity, and more wood-based panel mills.

Perhaps of greatest significance would have been the expansion of tertiary conversion processes in the forest industries sub-sector, not only for furniture, but also for parquet flooring, tooth picks, wooden toys, wooden ornaments, paling staves, walking sticks, clothes pins, etc. Collectively these minor products would be making a significant contribution to economic development and growth. There would also have been a decisive increase in the production of cane furniture from nibi and kufa, and a steady expansion in the production of palm hearts.

Moreover, more Amerindian commercial forestry activity, with the advice of the Forestry Commission, would have been undertaken in areas especially demarcated for them.

All this enhanced activity would have taken place with strict adherence to sound environmental principles.

Because of the increased production of the wood raw material from the forests, and the massive diversification and deepening of the forest industries sub-sector, forestry's contribution to GDP would, by 2010, have grown substantially.

The reasons for the improved contribution of forestry to the country's development; would have been the fiscal incentives provided to both local and foreign inventors; and an expanded, strengthened and more efficient Forestry Commission capable of advising on the sustainable management of the forests, on the type of industries to be established and, most important, of monitoring the performance of the sector in order to ensure that its efficiency and competitiveness are achieved within sound environmental parameters.

Mining

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the activities in this sector would have been greatly increased because of improved access to the hinterland, the enhanced security that would have been given to holders of mining titles, the provision of tax incentives and the improvement of exploration techniques and methodologies.

As a result, the mining sector's contribution to GDP would also have grown significantly. The particular areas on which expansion would have been based are the gold and bauxite sub-sectors. After a relatively quiet period in the early part of the decade, the gold sub-sector would have increased production, partly because of an improvement in world prices, but mainly because of the opening of new mines, and the intensification of gold-mining activities by local producers. There would also have been much improvement in the performance of a privatised bauxite sub-sector, and the start-up of a new bauxite company.

In addition there would have been a not insignificant increase in the production of semi-precious stones such as amethyst, agate, green quartz and jasper.

Mining operations would, of course, have been subjected to the prevailing environmental laws of the country, and would have been continuously monitored by adequate numbers of environmental inspectors located within the mining areas themselves.

By 2010, also, there would have been greater local processing of minerals.

Furthermore, greater attention would have been paid to the social conditions prevailing in the mining communities. Minimum acceptable standards would have been established, monitored and enforced by the GGMC in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Education. Moreover, the GGMC would also have co-operated with the Ministry of Health and the Guyana Forestry Commission in the design and implementation of programmes of malaria control and eradication in the hinterland.

Furthermore, as a legal requirement, special attention would have been paid to the improvement of social conditions (infrastructure, health education, culture, sports etc.) on those Amerindian lands on which there were mining activities.

Urban Development

By 2010 all municipalities would have been rehabilitated largely through programmes implemented with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank. These programmes would have included improvements of the drainage systems in coastal towns; the rehabilitation of the transport infrastructure in all of them; the repair and expansion of existing markets and the erection of new ones; the upgrading of water and sanitary services; the clearance of slums; the rehabilitation of abattoirs; and the disposal of solid waste.

The illegal occupation of municipal space by vendors would have been curtailed, mainly because of the expanded and improved market services provided under the IDB programme, and because of the intensification of the law-enforcing activities of both Municipal and Central Government's police officers.

Incentives to beautify and care for the cities, accompanied by the infliction of massive penalties for their desecration, would have resulted, by the end of the first decade of the 21st. century, in clean attractive

municipalities. The provisions of the Environmental Protection Act would have been strictly enforced.

Several interior villages would have been upgraded to towns, e.g., Bartica, Mabaruma, Lethem. The rates and taxes of the cities would have been increased, and an upward valuation of the properties in the cities undertaken to enable City Councils to raise sufficient revenue to perform their tasks efficiently. In addition, City Councils would have been receiving pre-determined annual subventions from the State, by law and as of right, in order to enable them to maintain and improve the municipalities for which they are responsible.

And finally, an IDB project on slum clearance would have led to the selection of new sites for the construction of low income housing within and outside of the boundaries of the cities.

Human Resource Development

During the first decade of the 21st century, the highest priority would have been assigned to the development of the country's human resources. Consequently, through various programmes assisted by international funding agencies, the physical infrastructure for education at the primary, secondary, tertiary and technical levels would have been rehabilitated and expanded. Moreover, particular emphasis would have been paid to the development of the country's human resources in the hinterland.

There would also have been a special focus on the training of teachers at all levels. This upgrading in quality would have been accompanied by increases in teachers' emoluments. Schools and other educational institutions, again mainly through international assistance, would have been provided with modern teaching aids.

Throughout the educational system, special emphasis would have been placed on computer training, and by 2010 most of the students in primary and secondary schools would have been computer literate. Indeed, a considerable proportion of government's expenditure on education would have been devoted to this aspect of development. Furthermore, the country's facilities in distance education would have improved significantly during the period under review, mainly because of the use of computers and the Internet.

Moreover, in the secondary schools and at the University, greater emphasis would have been placed on science (including environmental science) and technology; first degree courses would have been expanded in range and their quality improved; and post graduate work would have been increasingly being undertaken, in such disciplines as forestry, geology, computer science and various aspects of engineering science.

By 2010 there would have been an increase in the number of private schools at all levels. These would have operated under policies and guidelines established by the government. The government schools, also, would have been managed by Boards comprising mainly members of civil society. Indeed, consciously and deliberately, the government would have involved NGOs and community-based organisations in the formulation and implementation of all aspects of human resource development at both the national and regional levels.

An increasingly greater proportion of the country's revenues would have been expended on education between 2000 and 2010, with the highest percentage being spent on primary education. Partly as a result of this, partly because of the increasing use of Information Technology, and partly because of the rapid increase in the number of trained teachers, the incidence of functional illiteracy in our society would have significantly decreased.

Moreover, by the end of the first decade, the inequality in expenditure on education between hinterland and coastal areas and among regions, would have to a large extent been corrected. In addition, special incentives would have been provided to teachers who chose to work in the hinterland.

The inequities inherent in the relationship of the expenditure between the poor and the rich would also have been addressed, and more resources would have been targeted on the more needy students, and to remedial courses for the young and the more mature. In addition, although cost–recovery procedures would have been applied at some educational institutions, the amounts charged would have been based on means tests. The poor, therefore, would still have been obtaining their education free of charge.

Health

If a survey was conducted in 2010, of the life–spans of the citizens of Guyana, it would already be evident that average life expectancy had increased since the end of the 20th century, and that the health disparities among the social groups of the country had been significantly reduced. More specifically, steps would have been taken to address both the leading causes of mortality (forms of heart disease, endocrine and metabolic diseases, conditions occurring in the perinatal period, respiratory diseases, and diseases of the digestive system), and the main morbidity problems (dental caries, malaria, acute respiratory infections, acute diarrhoeal disease, hypertension, worm infestation, diabetes mellitus, rheumatism and arthritis, and scabies). This improvement would have come about by facilitating the population’s access to health care, and by enhancing of the quality of care offered. These measures would also have made a major contribution towards the attainment of the equity or distributional objective of the NDS.

The survey would also have noted that, because of the activities of the Ministry of Health, and because of the linkages which had been established with other sectors of the economy, especially those responsible for monitoring the environment, Guyanese in 2010, lived in healthier circumstances.

The administrative delivery of health services in 2010 would also be more efficient and effective than it was in 2000: institutional responsibilities would have been redefined and rationalised; there would have been greater participation in all stages of health governance by NGOs and local communities; and the geographical and hierarchical structure of the health care system would have been drastically reorganised.

Moreover, the corporatisation of the main hospital in the country, the Georgetown Public Hospital, would have contributed greatly to the enhancement of the quality of health care.

In order to meet the specially acute shortage of medical personnel in the hinterland, a system of incentives to work in these areas would have been established.

The general shortage of medical practitioners would have been attended to, in some respects, by expanding and upgrading the medical faculty of the University of Guyana, by the use of Information Technology, and by increasing significantly the emoluments given to doctors and other government employees in the health sector. In addition, there would have been intensified in–service training in a number of areas. Furthermore, arrangements would have been put in place for the regular attendance in Guyana of medical specialists from abroad to cover those disciplines in which Guyana was deficient. The evacuation of medical patients overseas for treatment not available in Guyana, though much reduced, would have become more efficient and effective. Special units for the treatment of cancer and kidney ailments would have been established.

A system of targeted and selective fees, depending on the financial status of the patient, would have been implemented. This policy would have been formulated and implemented in order to ensure that more resources were available for health care, while not denying anyone’s access to basic medical services because of the inability to pay. Indeed, the primary objective of the targeting exercise would have been the obtaining of additional resources in order to assist the poor more effectively. Within this context, the charges for private wards and private rooms in Government–owned hospitals would have been substantially increased.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

It would also have been noted in the survey of 2010 that the quality and compass of primary health care had been significantly improved, a full range of services (preventive curative, supportive and rehabilitative) being offered.

There would also have been a heightened public awareness of the deleterious effects of AIDS and the methods that could be followed to minimise its dissemination. This would have come about as a result of an intensive and aggressive anti-AIDS campaign conducted throughout the first decade of the 21st century.

Housing

A big dent in the housing problem which existed throughout Guyana at the end of the 20th century, would have been made by 2010.

This achievement would have been due to joint action by Government and private enterprise. On its part, Government would have provided land and infrastructure at little or no cost (depending upon the financial status of the citizen), and financial incentives to builders and the banking system: tax concessions, reduced tax rates on building materials, incentives to banking institutions etc. On their part, the Private Sector would have helped by investing in all types of housing for low, middle and high income groups. In addition, commercial banks and the New Building Society, would have assisted through the provision of loans with longer payback periods and lower rates of interest, because of the support provided by the Government.

There would also have been a re-location of squatting areas through the provision of alternative sites, improved infrastructure, and enhanced utilities. Special attention would also have been paid to the improvement of squatting areas through the use of international financing, as has been done, e.g., in Mexico and Trinidad, and through the granting of titles to squatters.

Moreover, many houses would have been built between 2000 and 2010 as a result of the B.O.T. infrastructural arrangements which had been made with respect to roads and bridges. This was especially important for the middle and upper classes. In addition, a significant number of houses would have been built as a result of self-help schemes.

Most important, the strategy for housing development, had taken into account the establishment of more settlements in hinterland areas e.g., the Intermediate savannahs, the Rupununi, the Bartica Triangle, and the North West District. This was important with respect to the attainment of the overall objective of equitably distributing economic activity throughout Guyana.

It should also be noted that the implementation of the housing strategy, in addition to fulfilling a social need, would also have greatly assisted in the country's overall economic development by providing jobs not only in the construction sector, but also in the forests, in the sawmill and the plywood industries, and in the transportation sector.

In order to ensure the smooth operation of the strategy, great reliance had been placed on a reactivated urban planning unit and on the implementation of the following fiscal measures: the establishment of a special fund for providing rental subsidies to low income families; another for supplementing the mortgage payments of low-income families; a re-discount line for mortgages in the Central Bank; and the reform of mortgage banking institutes.

A significant proportion of the funds obtained under the HIPIC arrangement for the eradication of poverty, would also have been devoted to providing houses and house facilities for those below the poverty line.

Gender Issues

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

If a survey were also undertaken in 2010 on the status of women in our society, it would have been noted that the situation of women had been considerably improved. In particular women would:–

- i. be more significantly involved in mainstream enterprises, because of specially targeted credit schemes, operated by both commercial banks and women’s credit institutions, and supported by government’s policies and tax incentives;
- ii. occupy more positions of high status in both the public and private sectors, in numbers closer to their proportionality in the population. This degree of progress would have been the direct result of special government programmes to train women in certain non–traditional areas, including public and private management, and to identify women of exceptional capacity. Moreover, focal points would have been established in all Ministries and agencies to ensure the inclusion of gender considerations in policy making. In addition, private firms and government agencies would have been ranked by their performance on various gender indicators, thereby encouraging both sectors to move towards gender equality;
- iii. have a greater representation than men as students at the University of Guyana. This would be the continuation of a trend which began in the 1990s. This increased representation of women at the tertiary level of education would have been due to policies, established since 1975, to extend co–education to *all* secondary schools, and to institute reforms aimed at addressing gender sensitivity in education; and
- iv. be exercising greater control in their engendered roles within the household. The strategies adopted to attain this important objective would have included the establishment of special funds for supplementing mortgage and house rental payments; the improvement of health education and health services and the stricter and more pervasive implementation of legislation, passed in the early 1990s, to address the domestic violence from which women so seriously suffered.

Underwriting these specific measures would have been the improvements made in the education system, the general growth in the economy, and the massive increase in work opportunities across the country.

Moreover, legislation on the concept of ‘equal pay for work of equal value’, would have been enacted and enforced, and a number of benefits for pregnancy and maternity would have been provided.

Poverty Eradication

By 2010 the levels of poverty in Guyana, in both rural and urban areas, would have been considerably reduced, if not completely eradicated, and the disparities in wealth among regions significantly attenuated. This most important objective would have been attained primarily because of the rapid growth of the economy in the first decade of the 21st century. The expansion of the economy would have led to the creation of new jobs; the fiscal and monetary strategies formulated in the overall NDS would have made access to credit by all classes of our society much easier than it had been in the 1990s; and the training programmes in management, marketing and accountancy, for example, together with the technical assistance provided in these disciplines, would have increased the number of entrepreneurs and widened the population of this important group.

In addition, the special attention paid in the NDS to general education and health would, by 2010, have removed many of the poverty–making factors which inhibited the economic and financial development of the erstwhile poor.

It should also be noted that a special HIPIC programme which began in 2000 was designed specifically to alleviate poverty in Guyana. This programme, would have contributed to enhancing the access of the poor to health, education and adequate housing; to increasing job–opportunities through the provision of micro–credit; and by formulating and implementing projects directly targeting the poor and poverty–stricken areas.

Labour

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

As has already been described, by 2010 there would be little or no unemployment, the range of employment opportunities would have been considerably expanded, the labour force would be much better trained, and there would be a rapidly growing and vibrant class of entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the Public Service would have been significantly down-sized. Most of the employment opportunities would therefore be in the private sector.

In order both to ensure the rights of workers and the profitability of private enterprises, new systems of negotiation would have been evolved. Most important, the various Trades Unions would have become more sophisticated and professional, possessing the capacity and capability to collect and analyse their own data. They would also, by 2010, be in a better position objectively to criticise management policies and practices and to offer suggestions for their improvement. The habit of confrontation that was so prevalent in the 1990s would have changed to one of negotiation. In addition, the ILO conventions with regard to such matters as child labour, acceptable standards of employment, the physical protection of workers, and the provisions affecting minimum wages would have been studiously followed.

Perhaps most important of all, there would have been established among the government, the trades unions, and the private sector, a Social Partnership Agreement. This would have been based on the recognition that there are a mutuality of interests, and an inherent interdependence, among them. The parties to this social contract would have agreed, *inter alia*, to subscribe to a prices and incomes policy, to a series of long-term wage agreements, and to specific procedures governing the recognition and settlement of disputes. All this would have been based on their acknowledgment that the success of any sustained social and economic progress in Guyana would depend upon their collective commitment to a philosophy of governance which is characterised by participatory democracy and the subjugation of sectoral interests to the national good.

Youth, Culture and Sport

The strategies that were formulated in the NDS with regard to youth would have come to fruition by 2010. So that, by that year, the education and training systems which they had followed would have enabled them to obtain meaningful employment, either as entrepreneurs, as employed salary or wage earners, as professionals and technicians, as skilled craftsmen, or as teachers. The choices and opportunities available to Guyana's young people would have been considerably enlarged.

Special courses in leadership would also have resulted in a new population of young Guyanese men and women capable of assuming leadership roles in politics, business, public administration, and management.

Furthermore, the housing situation which in the 1980s and 1990s exerted such a restrictive influence on the physical and psychological freedom of Guyanese youth would have been much eased. Indeed, most of them would by 2010 have been able to buy or rent houses on reasonable terms and conditions.

Young people's involvement in sports would also have been considerably intensified. This would have come about, first, through identification and selection processes that would have enabled sports leaders to spot potential sportsmen and sportswomen throughout the length and breadth of Guyana, in the towns and in the villages, on the coastland and in the interior at a relatively early age; second, by the establishment of playing fields and sports facilities in all the country's regions; third, by the construction of at least two sports stadia to facilitate the improvement of our sports persons through their exposure to international competition, and to enable the Guyanese public to enjoy and appreciate all aspects of sport at the highest level; fourth, by the provision of coaches for every major sport, in many parts of Guyana; and fifth, through the organisation of regular and frequent national and local competitions.

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

In all these matters, special attention would have been paid to the primary and secondary schools, and to the University. Specific incentives would also have been provided for the establishment of Youth Clubs.

By 2010, also, there would be clear and indisputable evidence that the racial problems which now exist in our country would have, to a large extent, been overcome. This would have resulted primarily because of the sustained improvements of the economy; the more equitable geographical distribution of economic activity throughout Guyana; and the inclusive, participatory systems of governance which had been followed throughout the decade.

In addition to the general influence of the economic environment, a specific strategy would have been followed. The first step of which would have been to teach the history and culture of each racial group throughout the school system, in order to instill pride in their various origins. Second, the strategy would have demonstrated how, from the strengths of all our cultures, a truly Guyanese multi-cultural nation could be woven and how this weaving together of the different strands was absolutely necessary for our survival. Great care would have been taken in the selection of both reading material and teachers. Special techniques would have been used in this important exercise.

The Family

The Guyanese family too would, in 2010, be much more self-reliant than it is today. This metamorphosis would have come about because the majority of the members of the family would be better educated; be in better physical health; would be better housed and sheltered; and would be in a much better economic position than they were in 2001, because of the greater access to educational and health facilities, and the increased availability of jobs and job opportunities.

Moreover, because a Family Code would have been formulated and implemented, to give guidance to families on the maintenance of values and acceptable standards of conduct, the dysfunctional behaviour which was so integral a part of the characteristics of some Guyanese families, at the turn of the century, would have to a large extent been replaced by more understanding and co-operative attitudes. Indeed, the tenets of this Family Code would have been taught in both primary and secondary schools by teachers and social workers specially trained to impart such attitudes and ways of life to the young.

Because, also, special attention will have been paid to the child, the youth and the elderly in our society, their conditions would have been much improved, e.g. programmes on drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and teenage pregnancies would have been mounted for our youth; the NIS's medical care benefits would have been continued after retirement specifically to help the elderly; new senior citizens institutions would have been built to specifications which ensured that all the special services necessary for the comfort and security of the aged were in place; a programme of home-help for them would have been instituted; and facilities for adult training to give retirees a chance to update their skills and enable them to continue to contribute to the development of our society would have been put in place. Furthermore, arrangements would have been legalised for the state to provide counselling for abused and abandoned children; and legislation would have been enacted to increasing the minimum amount of child maintenance, to regulate day-care practices and facilities, and to empower the Children's Services Unit to remove children found to be in dangerous and threatening situations from their parents or guardians.

This list of the strategies laid down in the NDS to assist the child, the young and the elderly in our society, and people with disability is not exhaustive. It indicates however, the improvements which would have occurred, within the family, by 2010, if the strategy were followed.

Land

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

By 2010, all those who desire land in Guyana, would be in a position to acquire it easily and expeditiously. This would have come about because of the drastic removal of the red tape which hindered the transfer of land in Guyana, up to the year 2001; and by decisions of the State to lengthen the duration of leaseholds so that they might be used as collateral in loan transactions, to sell or transfer land of a minimum area to individuals; and to grant land, free of charge, to all those who are below the poverty line and desire such ownership. Restrictions would have been placed on speculating with this granted land within a specified period, and conditionalities would have been enforced in respect of its beneficial occupation.

In addition, those institutions that are responsible for the registration of land, and the transfer of titles, would have been made more efficient through the upgrading of their staff, the computerisation of their operations, and the rationalisation of their functions.

As a result, Guyanese in 2010 would not find it as difficult, costly and time-consuming, as they now do, to acquire and dispose of land, provided that they respect and meet the requirements of the zoning laws, and conform to the Environmental Protection Act.

Perhaps most important, the claims of the Amerindians and African Guyanese for the utilisation and titling of what may be generically described as ‘ancestral land’ would have been resolved.

Tourism

One of the most radical changes in Guyana’s social and economic structure, by 2010, would have occurred because of the operations of the eco-tourism sector. By 2010, the contribution of tourism to our GDP would have overtaken that of many of the traditionally important sectors in our economy. This would have come about because of the implementation of the strong tourism development strategy in the NDS, which includes a range of incentives for the development of the sector.

A number of national parks, protected areas, and national monuments will have been established and maintained, and would have provided the main attraction for our eco-tourists. In addition, an adequate number of interior resorts, hotels in Georgetown and other cities, and general tourism facilities would have been located throughout the country.

Moreover, special training courses would have been mounted in order to enhance the quality of service of those who work in all sub-sectors of the industry. In addition, campaigns that were designed specifically to apprise the general public of the social and economic advantages of tourism, and of the importance of courtesy in our tourism endeavours, would have been conducted.

The spill-over effects of the rapid growth of tourism during the decade of the strategy would have, of course, significantly influenced the growth and development of other sectors of the economy e.g. the farming community, small-scale retailers, sculptors and painters, entertainers, transport operators, and so on.

Amerindians

The Amerindians would be perhaps the ethnic group which would be most positively affected by this NDS. Indeed, by 2010, there would have been considerable improvements in their way of life; poverty would have been virtually eradicated in their areas; their land disputes would have been resolved and their lands demarcated and legally transferred to them; and their access to education, health facilities, water and housing would have been considerably enhanced and brought into line with the also improved conditions of the coastland. Moreover, because of the incentives provided, there would have been no shortage of teachers and health practitioners servicing their districts; there would have been a surge of economic activity in many of the areas that were in close proximity to their locations, for which their approval would have been an

National Development Strategy (Guyana) – Overview

essential requirement, and which would have provided them with opportunities for gainful employment; and, because of the training and education which they would have received, they would have been eligible for, and capable of undertaking, any available job in the entire country. Most important, the Amerindian of 2010, will have profited from the special efforts that would have been made to assist them to maintain their traditional values, and customs, while benefiting from the higher standards and quality of life which would then be prevailing throughout Guyana.