



## **Inaugural Address**

**by**

**His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo,**

**President of the Republic of Guyana**

**at the**

**Presidential Investiture Ceremony,**

**State House, Georgetown, Guyana, September 2, 2006**

This, for me, is both a proud and humbling moment. To have been elected by you the people of Guyana to be your President is indeed an honour – an honour made even greater since that mandate emanated from an electoral process that was certified as the free expression of the will of the people and acknowledged as such by other contenders.

My foremost response must therefore be an expression of gratitude. I thank you the gracious people of this land of ours, for the confidence which you have once more reposed in me. On my part, I solemnly pledge to do everything within my power to be worthy of the trust and confidence of all the people of this beloved land, which is the one space on Planet Earth which all of us can legitimately call home.

A few moments ago, I received a telephone call from the Leader of the PNCR IG, Mr. Robert Corbin congratulating me and expressing his regrets at not being able to be present at this ceremony since he is out of Georgetown. I wish to thank him and his party for their gracious acceptance of the will of our people.

My consciousness, like my responsibility and commitment, both as a person and as President, transcends ethnic, religious, cultural and gender biases. I truly and whole-heartedly commit myself to serve all the people of Guyana, regardless of race, religion, gender, geography or political partisanship and to do so without fear or favour. I am and shall continue to be the President for all of Guyana.

I am fully aware on the responsibilities that now fall on my shoulders- very human shoulders. These are responsibilities that I cannot carry out alone. I need you to walk with me, as I walk with you along the road of development. It is now time for us to take down the trappings of and dispense with all feelings of hurt and animosity generated by the competitive political campaign and work together to advance the goals of development and national unity. All citizens, political parties, religious organizations, non-governmental bodies and the business community should join in this task.

All of this will require hard work, Above all, it will demand a competitive economy that will generate wealth and create employment. While I believe that increased competitiveness is underway, its continuing growth will demand aggressiveness and resourcefulness on the part of all of us, government, the opposition, the private sector, employers and workers alike. The principal objective of our competitive economic policy must be to promote higher and sustainable levels of investment and economic growth and create jobs for all our people. This in turn will enhance the dignity, self-respect and self- reliance of our people and lead them to truly believe that they have a stake in the economy and a worthwhile place in our society. No effort should be spared and no novel path left unexplored in the project of incubating a new class of young Guyanese entrepreneurs, equipped with the expertise, enthusiasm and resources to be competitive in a globalized world economy.

Even as we advocate internationally for reform , nationally we must focus on the creation of a humane society that caters for the social well- being of all of our people, particularly the aged, single-mothers, the physically and mentally challenged, children at risk, women vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and the poor. Together we must aim for and ensure that none of our children have to sleep on the streets, and that hunger, homelessness, untreated illness, or like deprivations is banished from our land.

Meanwhile, we must be constantly aware that we live in a culturally and politically plural society that is working its way to cohesiveness. The process is as exciting in possibilities as it is fraught with danger. We must be open to the possibilities and vigilant against the dangers. We can allow our real and perceived differences to divide us to our peril, and dissipate our national energies. Or we can resolve to harmonize our diversity to our national benefit, if not glory. It is a destiny we have to choose. I know we will choose harmony, respect and hope.

Our cricketers have demonstrated that sport is an avenue that leads to cohesiveness and success. Come next year and World Cup Cricket, we will demonstrate to the world how successful we can be in promoting an enterprise in which national pride is at stake. I also urge upon our people in the creative arts, to continue to take various elements in our history, our flora and fauna and by these especial genius, to place these on the imagination of our people in the effort to develop a Guyanese consciousness. And I urge parents, teachers and religious leaders to foster tolerance, respect and compassion for others among their charges through lessons and messages that teach positive values.

At the political level, I have already indicated that there is scope for all parliamentary political parties to work together under an enhanced framework of political cooperation, rooted in the primacy of parliament, grounded in a system that is responsive and accountable, and extended to civil society to

deepen its participation in decision making. Such a process cannot be hastily contrived if the objective of promoting inclusivity is to be achieved.

Over the next weeks I intend to meet with the leaders of the several political parties represented in the National Assembly in order to engage them in finding a modus of co-operation through which they can contribute to national development. We will have to hammer out together this framework of co-operation in which the ideas and views that are sound and positive can become part of an evolving policy environment and provide those parties that are interested, the opportunity of assisting with their implementation..

It is expected that the National Assembly, the highest representative forum in the land, will play a pivotal role. We have always envisaged the National Assembly as the place where contending interests seek compromise and mutual understanding in the quest for a united and prosperous Guyana. This is not a sentimental or transient position. Just for the record, let me quote from the 1992 PPP/Civic manifesto as regards this matter: "The new state will be founded on universally acclaimed principles of freedom, equality and solidarity where the only paramount institution will be parliament, guided by a new constitution fashioned by the Guyanese people."

I propose to work vigorously with that august body to have all the agreed-upon unfinished constitutional and legal reforms completed. These include the establishment of the remaining constitutional commissions, and the completion of local government reform which is so necessary to fortify democracy and bring it closer to its real repository, the people.

As improvements continue in our physical infrastructure with the objective of enhancing the living standards of our people; as we seek to make our borders safe and simultaneously reach out the hand of friendship and co-operation to our Latin American and CARICOM neighbours, and those farther afield; as we travel the world super-highways opened up by the ICT and other technologies to an advantageous engagement with a globalized world economy; as we strive to eradicate the scourges of crime, HIV/AIDS and illicit drugs from our society, we will be well on our way to building a modern Guyana. Above all, we will be engendering in our people a sense of national pride, and in our younger people in particular, a sense of hope.

Before I close, let me congratulate GECOM for delivering on elections 2006 in such a highly professional manner which has earned plaudits at home and abroad. Let me thank the leaders of the political parties for accepting the results of the elections readily; this augurs well for peace now, and in the future our political development. I thank my own party and our civic partners and the Guyanese Diaspora for their solidarity and excellent support during the elections campaign. Thanks to the security forces for their role in the maintenance of the peace before, during and after the elections. Thanks to the observers for ensuring the polls met international standards. And most of all, special thanks to you the people of Guyana for your laudable conduct during the elections campaign and on elections day.

On a personal note, my only regret is that my mother and father are not here to share this day with me. But they have left me five loving, faithful sisters- Sheila, Chinee, Jean, Rema and Shanta. They and their

families have given me the love, care and support over the years so that I can continue to serve my people. I want them to know how much I appreciate that.

To my people, I want to praise your resilience and fortitude. In spite of our challenges, you my compatriots have always been warm, friendly and hospitable. You the people have always endeavoured to do your best. I know you will continue to place the interests of your country above partisan considerations. I believe that together we can move our country forward into a rewarding future.

Long Live Guyana!

Thank You