

New Year's message from the Government of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

Guyana stands at the dawn of a new year, 2016. This marks Guyana's Golden Jubilee, a monumental landmark celebrating 50 years as an independent state.

2016 follows a year of political change in Guyana. That change in government is the second in 50 years. It rejuvenated hope. It brought an end to minority authoritarian governance. But it also came with new challenges, of threats from external forces aimed at compromising our national patrimony. We thank the international community for its unwavering support of our country in defense of our territorial integrity and our sovereignty. As in the past, so shall it be in this new year and forever more: We will not yield, not even a blade of grass.

As we embark on this historic year of reflection and celebration, as a people, it is incumbent upon us to rally together to make 2016 a year of meaningful change and progress. Over the past seven months the work to transform Guyana started. We can see a new landscape, of a clean and green Guyana, emerging.

However, 2016 must be the year of fundamental reorganization of the manner in which our nation's business is administered. There are major priority items which must be advanced – a reorganization of our productive sectors including sugar, rice and mining; constitutional reform; telecommunications liberalization; creating a green economy; expansion of national radio and television to all corners of Guyana; attracting major investment; revitalization and strengthening of our agriculture sector; creating a business friendly environment and repositioning our tourism product.

The issues of constitutional reform and telecommunications liberalization are especially critical priority items for 2016. We need to remove all traces of authoritarian powers in our principal law, and to open up Guyana to the new wave of making telecommunications a viable industry. We need to end one-company monopoly in the telecommunications sector. The archaic telecommunications framework needs to be demolished and replaced with a forward-thinking system which will allow for low cost connectivity in all forms and across all geographic spaces without the constraints of limited bandwidth, weak signal and slow access. We need e-governance and e-commerce to be our new mode of doing business.

We need to transform Guyana's ICT sector.

We want our young people, those in the formal education system and those who would have graduated from it, to master new technologies to access jobs and develop careers. Our spectrum is a national asset, and it must be used and protected.

Your Coalition Government is committed to pursuing an agenda which puts Guyana first and which pursues a good life for all in a green economy. Our Coalition Government has re-established and reinforced the fundamentals of our democracy: observance of the

doctrine of separation of powers among the executive and legislature and the judiciary; respect for the rule of law and the rights of citizens; support for a plural, free and open media; and care for our elderly and children and our working people.

This is also the year in which Local Government Elections will return after 18 years. All citizens are encouraged to participate fully in these elections as you exercise your right to elect the community leaders of your choice and reactivate participatory, grassroots democracy in Guyana.

Our Government urges all citizens to help make our environment better. We all need to join the clean up campaign. We all need to adopt the fresh approach. We need to reclaim our status as both proud and hospitable Guyanese.

The Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana extends to all Guyanese here and in the Diaspora, best wishes for a successful, transformative and peaceful 2016.