



April to May 2010

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## FOOTPRINTS ADVISORS HOLDS DISCUSSION WITH THE PSC



Footprints Advisors meeting with PSC

In April members of the Private Sector Commission met with the CEO and representative from Footprints Advisors and one representative from John Fernandes Ltd to discuss the possibility of having a fast ferry service coming to Guyana. CEO of Footprints Advisors, Mr. Jan Sierhuis has been contracted by CARICOM to conduct a feasibility study on the prospect of having this fast ferry service operate among the territories of the Southern Caribbean. Mr. Sierhuis highlighted that the service would model one which currently operates within Trinidad and Tobago and carries 900 passengers and 180 vehicles as well as cargo. The Trinidad and Tobago ferry has proven to be quite lucrative and as such it shows that stakeholders would prefer this over air travel. Marketing Director of John Fernandes, Mr. Bernie Fernandes alluded to the fact that if Guyana is to buy into the fast ferry service there would be need for a ferry terminal where the vessel would on-load and off-load passengers, cars and cargo. The main destinations would be Barbados and Trinidad, with the latter being the hub. The main issues that would have to be addressed for the ferry service in Guyana would be those concerning customs, immigration and security. The final plan prepared by Mr. Sierhuis is expected to be completed by June, thereafter reviewed by COTED then presented to the respective governments. The Private Sector representatives are in full approval of this initiative. Capt. Gouveia sees this as a wonderful idea for trade as well as tourism in Guyana.

## CONVERSATION ON THE SG-SCS

Representatives from the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company (GT&T) met with members of the Private Sector Commission on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 to discuss the impending Surname Guyana Submarine Cable System (SG-SCS) and the benefits and opportunities that would be available. The new system is expected to be ready in July. The response from the private sector was positive. Companies and businesses are quite happy and are looking forward to utilizing the service. DSL customers are likely to benefit automatically from this new service. The new capacity is four times the amount of the 256kbs and customers will be charged the same price to utilize this new service.



GT&T reps. in discussion with private sector members

### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

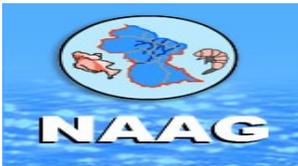
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Following its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday, May 7, 2010, the Private Sector Commission (PSC) elected a new executive body. Mr. Ramesh Dookhoo was duly elected to serve as Chairman; Mr. Yog Mahadeo as Vice Chairman; Mr. Chandradat Chintamani as Honourary Secretary and Mr. Andrew Astwood as Honourary Treasurer. Speaking at the AGM, Past Chairman of the PSC, Capt. Gerald Gouveia, highlighted some of the achievements of the PSC under his leadership and his excellent relationship with the media. In closing he spoke about the issues within the private sector which need to be addressed urgently, namely the reluctance of some city businessmen to pay their taxes, the unkempt state of the city and brain drain. Mr. Dookhoo in his address as Vice Chairman expressed his delight in Guyana for being able to endure the global economic crisis while the rest of the region was wavering. He also highlighted the successes of the PSC's partnership with the National Competitiveness Strategy. Guest Speaker at the AGM was Honourable Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni Singh. The Minister lauded the work of the PSC and reiterated Government's commitment to private sector development. Of main concern to him was the inaccurate portrayal of Guyana's economy and he pleaded with the media and other stakeholders to ensure that their reports are always factual. Thanking the gathering for their unrelenting support to the PSC was Executive Director, Mr. Roubinder Rambarran. He also expressed his gratitude to Capt. Gouveia for the hard work and determination he gave to the PSC during his tenure as president. The new executive body is made of a team of hard working and dedicated men who promise to work assiduously in the development of the private sector. They articulated their gratitude for being elected and are very eager to commence work. Capt. Gouveia explained that he would be more than happy to continue to work with the PSC and its new executive.



**Mr. Ramesh Dookhoo  
New Chairman  
Of the  
Private Sector  
Commission**

## **NATIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION OF GUYANA**



Created three years ago, The National Aquaculture Association of Guyana (NAAG) is an active and dynamic public-private partnership that was formed to facilitate the establishment and growth of a sustainable aquaculture industry in Guyana. The vision is for aquaculture to be the leading economic sector in Guyana by 2015. According to President of NAAG, Mr. Beni Sankar, aquaculture has the potential; but the science has to be accurate. NAAG receives assistance from USAID/GTIS and as a result they were able to build their secretariat. NAAG is currently receiving assistance from Israel. Aquaculture is fully supported by the Government of Guyana, through the Ministry of Agriculture's, Agriculture Export Diversification Programme (ADP). One of the clusters out of this programme is the aquaculture cluster. It is through this working group that the aquaculture sector hopes to receive the desired technology, development of ponds, the right quality of water, correct feed, development of fingerling production and markets. NAAG provides a few of these services but they are very limited. The general objective of NAAG is to ensure fish produced in Guyana is as competitive as fish produced in any part of the world. Mr. Sankar is hopeful that aquaculture will be successful in Guyana.

***Congratulations to Mr. Yog Mahedo on his appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer of the Guyana Telephone and Telegraph Company.***

***Best Wishes from the Private Sector Commission!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!***



Operations Officers of the International Financial Corporation (IFC), Mr. Pedro Andres Amo and Mr. Ernesto Martin - Montero, met with the Executive of the Private Sector Commission (PSC) on Tuesday, April 20, 2010. The IFC is partnering with the Canadian government to assist national governments to improve the conditions highlighted in the Doing Business Report. Former Chairman of the PSC, Capt. Gerald Gouveia, expressed his disappointment at the individuals conducting the survey, he alluded to the fact that they do not liaise with the leaders of the private sector organizations and as such their results are biased and untrue and dangerously distort the economic conditions in the country. These reports provide false information to potential investors. Mr. Amos stated that the surveys are not perfect and that they are used for comparisons between countries. Though the surveys are done by a different arm of the World Bank, the IFC starts with the Doing Business Reports but discusses the situation with the government. Capt Gouveia said the PSC is an advocacy organization which is divorced from the government but committed to good- faith relations with the government. The IFC, according to Mr. Martin-Montero is the private sector arm of the World Bank. Their aim is to give advice to governments to create better investment climates in countries. On the issue of Trade Logistics, former Vice Chairman of the PSC, Mr. Ramesh Dookhoo, said that the Commission is involved with the government; the document outlining required improvements in the area of trade transactions has been prepared and a copy will be forwarded to the IFC. He gave details on the two public-private dialogue bodies that exist – the Energy and the Infrastructure Strategy Group. These groups have been meeting regularly and addressing the energy situation as well as the road to Lethem. Mr. Amo said that the IFC is moving towards the possibility of movable assets being used as security and Mr. Dookhoo thought that this would be a welcome intervention. He stated that there is not enough entrepreneurial borrowing in Guyana and suggested that many projects are not viable at the high interest rates which prevail.



## PSC INTERACTS WITH THE MEDIA

The PSC met with media representatives on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at the Commission's Boardroom to discuss possible ways of partnering to achieve both the objectives of the PSC and the media. Executive Director of the PSC, Mr. Roubinder Rambarran welcomed everyone and started the meeting with a PowerPoint presentation about the PSC including its operations and strategic plan for 2010. Following the presentation, a discussion was stimulated by Chairman of the PSC, Mr. Ramesh Dookhoo, to garner from the media representatives possible ways of working together. Representatives from the media highlighted that their main problem is access to information and the PSC promised that they would serve as the avenue for channeling information from their various members to the media.

Media representatives at the meeting .

**The Private Sector Commission (PSC) has representation on the Civil Society Consulting Group (ConSoc). ConSoc serves to improve the exchange of information and dialogue between Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and civil society in Guyana. The group engages the representatives of the Buxton / Friendship community action council as part of a process to build relationships and dialogue with clusters of community councils under the Citizen Security Programme. The PSC is currently working to rectify the problem meted out to residents in the Buxton / Friendship area; the issue is associated with access to finance from commercial banks and hire purchase stores.**



# PSC URGES RESOLUTION OF ALL OUTSTANDING GRA TRANSACTIONS

A Sub-Committee of the Private Public Dialogue Body (PPDB) on Trade Transactions with the Guyana Revenue Authority (GRA) was recently established to address issues which affect the interests of the Private Sector and the Integrity of the Operations of the GRA. This Sub-Committee, which comprises representatives of the Private Sector, the Commissioner General of the Guyana Revenue Authority accompanied by staff of the Customs & Trade Administration, with the National Competitive Strategy Unit in attendance, met for the first time on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in the Boardroom of the Guyana Revenue Authority. Foremost on the Sub-Committee's Agenda was the large volume of incomplete transactions for goods issued with *Permit for Immediate Delivery (PID)* and *Prior to Processing* status by the Guyana Revenue Authority. The Commissioner General, Mr. Kurshid Sattaur, explained that these incomplete transactions resulted in a significant amount of uncollected taxes in the first instance and contributed to a significant understatement of imports in the national statistics. They were an administrative burden on the Guyana Revenue Authority and effectively contributed to delays in the expedition of the processing of goods by the Customs & Trade Administration. The Commissioner General also submitted that the large number outstanding transactions under both of these facilities constituted an abuse of the discretion extended by the GRA. In recognition of these concerns, the Private Sector Commission formally requests that all enterprises granted the benefit of having their goods cleared under either the *Permit for Immediate Delivery* or *Prior to Processing* facilities of the GRA immediately arrange to clear all outstanding transactions, inclusive of all liabilities in the form of outstanding/back taxes and duties due and payable to the GRA. Further, in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the GRA, the Private Sector Commission urges all enterprises to conclude their affairs with the Authority promptly in future.

## NWG on MDG's



The National Working Group (NWG) comprises representatives from the Public, Private Sector and civil society with the primary objective to promote Public - Private partnership to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The role of the Secretariat of the NWG

is to drive an agenda to emphasise the MDGs in the operations of the private sector by

fostering partnerships between the public, private and civil society sectors, while pushing the agenda of Corporate Social Responsibility and the promotion of sustainable Development Oriented Business Practices (DOBP). This will be pursued through broad collaboration with stakeholders in identifying sustainable development projects and matching resources with those projects and encouraging the replication of local poverty initiative (s) that are linked to policy change. The project is executed by the Office of the President and implemented by UNDP. The NWG is chaired by Major Gen (retd) Joseph Singh. It is the only MDG Working Group that is currently functioning in the region. Last year the NWG bought 20 hives and bee-keeping kits for the Kururukururu Agriculture Group. About 20 families (about 100 community members) are benefiting from this project. The bees are kept in a citrus orchard to promote pollination of the citrus orchard. The first harvest of the hives resulted in 22 gallons of honey, 17 gallons of which were sold directly to the public and 5 gallons were for sampling and grading. Efforts are being made to link the bee keepers up with a local company that would use honey in the production of its malt products. The NWG wants to encourage the private sector to grow more inclusive markets by linking some of their business /manufacturing processes to the bee keepers. This way the community will be able to promote market driven sustainable livelihoods. There is interest in increasing production of the bees and in queen bee rearing. Interestingly most of the bee keepers are women.



A Bee-keeper at work.