



## CALENDAR OF KEY ECONOMIC EVENTS

### November 2006

*This feature presents a summary of local events of economic interest covered in the two daily newspapers, Stabroek News and the Guyana Chronicle.*

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#### **NOVEMBER**

*AN ADVISORY* Committee is to be established, likely before year end, to oversee the implementation of policies for sustainable utilization and management of fisheries resources, the Government Information Agency (GINA) has reported.

*THE* government and poultry stakeholders yesterday agreed to apply the old tariff to import chicken for the Christmas season to help ensure an adequate and affordable supply.

*LOCAL* farmers are to get information technology resource centers to update them with the latest agricultural and marketing techniques to help them better compete in the world market.

*FARMERS* in Regions Two (Pomeroon/Supenaam) and Three (West Demerara/Essequibo Islands), will soon benefit from improved facilities being provided under the Poor Rural Communities Support Services Project (PRCSSP), with the signing of two contracts totalling some \$41.5M yesterday at the Ministry of Agriculture. One contract for some \$33M caters for the supply and installation of

equipment for a storage facility for the seed paddy plant under construction at Endeavour on Leguan Island in the Essequibo River. The other contract signed yesterday is for the construction of facilities at Better Success in Region Two to preserve fish and shrimp in a more scientific and hygienic manner to enhance competitiveness.

*CONTRACT* farming is the wave of the future in the cash crop and vegetable sector and farmers in this area will be well advised to take note of the trend and upgrade their operations accordingly. The advice was given to farmers in Region Five (Mahaica/Berbice) by senior officials in the agricultural sector during a recent meeting to launch the West Berbice branch of the Guyana Agricultural Producers Association (GAPA).

*THE* National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) is to set up drip irrigation systems on two farms in West Berbice to show vegetable and fruit farmers how they can use this method to increase productivity through guaranteed all year round irrigation for their crops.

*OFFICIALS* of the fishing industry have underscored the importance of the

sustainable management of resources which they say are not infinite and if not managed properly could lead to the destruction of many aquatic species and eco-systems. The Fisheries Management Plan (FMP) notes the need to manage fisheries resources in a sustainable manner so as to protect and preserve these for future generations.

*THROUGH* the Farmer to Farmer programme with the Washington, D.C.-based Partners of the Americas, volunteer Kent Ayers is working here from yesterday to November 17 to advise on marketing options for the cattle industry.

*WEST* Berbice cash crop farmers have been shown how they can produce top quality vegetables by growing them in water alone. The novel method of vegetable production, known as hydro phonics, was introduced to the farmers by staff of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) in Guyana during a one-day seminar and demonstration at Number 22 Village, West Coast Berbice last week.

*FARMERS* at Ithaca, West Bank Berbice, yesterday reported that salt water was in pasture lands south of the village and is causing problems for cattle rearers there. Some farmers said the inflow was occurring at high tides during dry weather when salt water from the Atlantic travels far up the Berbice River and then gets into their drainage system through a large breach near the Guyana Power and Light tower which supports high voltage lines crossing from west to east Berbice.

*THE* government's focus over the next five years will be on transforming agriculture to include developing and diversifying sub-sectors. This will be complemented by support of related links such as appropriate research, effective extension services, technical training, improved production, post-harvest technologies and marketing.

*CATTLE* farmers along the left bank of the Abary River, a farming area hard hit by recent floods, are to shortly get Government assistance for flood control works as the November-December rainy season draws closer. Agriculture Ministry is buying a \$20M Hymac excavator to be assigned exclusively to the area.

*FARMERS* and residents of upper Mahaica River are elated at the formation of a community development group which will help them better recover from the 2005 and 2006 floods which devastated their crops and gear for future threats.

*MINISTER* of Agriculture, Mr Robert Persaud has assured local cattle farmers that they will soon get international assistance to improve the quality of their beef exports to standards demanded by regional and other external markets. He said the aid will be forthcoming through a US\$14.8M agricultural exports diversification project (AEDP) being funded by an Inter-American Development Bank/Government of Guyana (*IDB/GOG*) arrangement.

*PREPARATIONS* are in full swing for cultivating the 2007 Spring rice crop at West Berbice and Mahaicony in Region Five (Mahaica/Berbice). That follows completion of the Autumn crop harvest and preparing dry land is the main activity in progress. Some 60 per cent, of the targeted 45,000 acres, has already been ploughed in West Berbice.

*RICE* farmers are upset at massive payments owed them by millers for the first rice crop this year and this is inhibiting sowing for the next crop. He told a press briefing at the organizations. About 2,300 rice farmers from Berbice and Demerara are owed more than \$750M for paddy purchased as early as September this year.

*THE* government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, yesterday signed some \$732M in contracts to improve and support water

rehabilitation works in several rice farming communities on the Essequibo Coast. At a ceremony in the Ministry of Agriculture in Georgetown, a \$409.4M contract was signed for the rehabilitation of the Dawa pump station at Tapacuma, while a \$290M contract was signed for the construction of sluices at Golden Fleece and Westbury. A supervision contract valued some \$33.6M was also signed yesterday for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the projects.

*SUGAR* workers who went on strike for five days on separate occasions last week and this week, have returned to work and are likely to settle for a 5.5 per cent increase in wages and salaries for this year, according to the Guyana Agricultural and General Workers Union (GAWU).

*WORK* on the state of the art sugar factory under construction at Skeldon, Berbice, is moving apace and centrifugal machines that arrived in the country recently will be installed shortly, according to the project director. Centrifugal machines are used to separate sugar crystals from molasses and Project Director of the Skeldon Sugar Modernization Project (SSMP), Mr Paul Hough said “work is still on track for start up in the first crop of 2008.” Officials say the US\$110M factory will become the most modern in the Caribbean and among the best in Latin America.

*AN INDIAN* firm building a large steel mill in Trinidad is working with the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to evaluate various potential iron ore bodies here, Prime Minister Samuel Hinds has announced. He said the GGMC is also working with ESSAR Steel of India to re-evaluate potential manganese ores in Guyana and any iron or manganese found could be used in its steel mill going up in Trinidad.

*THE* Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) is projecting a

massive increase in petroleum prospecting and drilling following resolution of the Guyana/Suriname border dispute. The prediction followed discussions held with representatives of various investing companies, among which are SADHNA, CGX of Canada and its subsidiary, ON Energy, the Government Information Agency (GINA) said.

*GUYANA* forest products exporters are looking to increase the current 12 per cent share of the lucrative Barbados lumber market in the years ahead. That’s the word from Luvindra Sukhraj, Director of Guyana’s Forest Products Marketing Council (FPMC) who last week headed a four-person team to the island, speaking with major stakeholders in the sector and getting an update on market conditions there. Guyana exports US\$6.8 million worth of forest products, excluding logs and pilings but including products such as sawn lumber, doors and windows and shingles.

*THE* Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) Social Development Programme, initiated to aid economic growth and reduce poverty in rural areas through sustainable utilization of state forest land, is proving beneficial, according to the Government Information Agency (GINA). The scheme, started two years ago, is among the government’s initiatives to ensure sustainable development and targets equitable geographical distribution of economic activities and diversification of the economy, the agency said yesterday.

*REPRESENTATIVES* from the Forest Products Marketing Council of Guyana (FPMC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Guyana Trade and Investment Support (GTIS) project, and Guyana’s timber companies will be attending the North American Wholesale Lumber Association (NAWLA) Traders Market, taking place in Dallas, Texas.

*THE* Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) has forecast that the local mining sector is headed for a second consecutive record-breaking year in gold production, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported. GGMC said, at the end of October, a total of 161,263 ounces of the yellow metal had been declared, exceeding expectations. The agency said last year was the first in Guyana's mining history when small and medium scale miners produced more than 120,000 ounces. Production trends averaged 16,000 ounces per month for the current year, indicating that the industry can surpass the 2005 overall figure of 162,527 ounces, GGMC reported.

*ANOTHER* feasibility study on a project to build a highway from Bon Fin in Brazil to Lethem in Guyana is likely to be undertaken during the first quarter of next year, once funding is approved by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Government Information Agency (GINA) has reported. GINA said if approval is given, the IDB will provide US\$900,000 and the Guyana Government US\$225,000 for the survey.

*PROJECT* Coordinator of the Urban Development Programme (UDP), Mr Fredrick Flatts, has reported that all municipal projects under the scheme are progressing well, the Government Information Agency (GINA) said yesterday. According to the agency, he said the No. 79 market at Corriverton, Berbice, is being renovated and extended at a cost of \$28M. Other works involve resurfacing floors with stone, improving ventilation, restructuring the sanitary block, electrical works, painting and fencing the market. Work on the \$38M New Amsterdam Market and Town Hall project is far advanced also, he reported.

*PERMANENT* Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Mr. Ganga Persaud, yesterday signed a \$3M contract with Eron Lall Civil Engineering Construction for infrastructural

works on the Lusignan landfill site, East Coast Demerara.

*MAJOR* sea defence works have been completed at Leonora, West Coast Demerara, in keeping with the government's thrust to strengthen and improve sea and river defences throughout the country, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported yesterday. It said that following the destruction of sections of the sea defence by extremely high tides in October last year, the government initiated a \$200M project for remedial works at Leonora and nearby Stewartville.

*LOCAL* air transport has received a boost with the completion of the new runway at the Ogle Aerodrome, East Coast Demerara, which is being upgraded into a municipal airport through a private sector initiative. The new runway, 600 metres long and 18 metres wide, was officially declared open yesterday afternoon.

*THE* expected increase of airline operators on the local market will present a number of advantages among which is increased competitiveness, Minister of Transport and Hydraulics, Mr Robeson Benn has observed.

*THE* takeover of all the Courts furniture and electronic companies in the Caribbean, including those in Guyana, by a company based in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) should be finalized by mid-December, the firm announced yesterday. In a statement, Courts plc said it recently entered into a sale and purchase agreement with Cobalt Holding Co Ltd. - a wholly-owned subsidiary of BVI-based Regal Forest Holding Co. Ltd. (RFH), with respect to the sale by Courts plc of its interest in all Courts Caribbean companies.

*DEMERARA* Bank Limited, which is this month observing 12 years of operations, has achieved a record \$263M net profit for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006. The profit is the highest level achieved by the

financial institution since it opened its door on November 21, 1994, according to Mr. Roger Duff, Senior Bank Manager.

*TRAVELSPAN GT* Inc. yesterday announced its scheduled Guyana-New York flights will start November 30 with Xtra Airways, a brand new state of the art Boeing 737-800 jet. The company said it has been granted approval by the Department of Transport in Washington allowing it to operate scheduled flights from Guyana to New York.

*CEL\*STAR* Caribbean, Inc. (“CSC”), a Delaware company owned by SMM Deutschland GmbH of Germany, and Guyana cellular telephone licensee Cel\*Star Guyana Inc. (“U Mobile”), along with U Mobile’s former parent company Trans-World Telecom (“TWT”), have announced the full settlement and withdrawal of their claims and counterclaims against each other in the Guyana lawsuit concerning the historic ownership of the shares of the Guyana company.

*LOOKING* to “tough negotiations” and calling for the government to ensure a level playing field, Guyana Telephone and Telegraph (GT&T) head, retired Army Major General Joe Singh, yesterday said his company is not afraid of the competition that looms with Caribbean giant Digicel. At the commissioning of the GT&T cellular and land line facilities at Land of Canaan, East Bank Demerara, he suggested that the government would have to give competitors a nudge to “level” with the company’s advantageous position in the market before even talking of competition.

THE *Office* of the Prime Minister has dissociated itself from an article in the Tuesday edition of the Kaieteur News, which suggested that the government is on the verge of issuing three licenses to private radio operators, the Government Information Agency (GINA) said yesterday.

DIGICEL yesterday announced that it will be investing some US\$60M to better Guyana’s cellular network with its acquisition of Cel\*Star. The takeover of Cel\*Star came just three months after U Mobile’s Marketing Director, Mr Keith Melin, vehemently denied that the fast-growing Digicel had been negotiating the acquisition of the company with them.

*PLANS* for the implementation of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Economy by 2008 are still on track, says Dr Edward Green, Deputy Secretary General of the regional grouping.

*REFURBISHING* of the Windsor Forest Community Centre on the West Coast Demerara has been completed at a cost of \$2.6M

THE US \$12M project, at Corriverton, Corentyne, Berbice, beginning February 2007, will further enhance the lives of thousands of residents through the provision of safe water, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported. The agency said two treatment plants will be installed to serve about 8,400 people living between Number 51 and Moleson Creek

*AMERINDIAN* communities are getting more potable water as the government strives to meet the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) among which is halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015

*THE* National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) has reported that several major projects countrywide, with the current focus on maintenance, are almost complete. According to the Government Information Agency (GINA), one such is the construction of a main sluice at Charity, Essequibo Coast, in Region Two (Pomeroon/Supenaam), where 75 per cent of the work has been completed and the rest is likely to be finished later this month. GINA

said it was undertaken at a cost of about \$30M to enhance the drainage capacity in that area.

*IN ITS* continued focus on disaster preparedness, particularly in the face of the anticipated year-end rainy season, the government has authorized the additional expenditure of \$416M for infrastructural and rehabilitation works in flood-prone areas along the coast and the water conservancies.

*THE* government has assembled a special task force under the direction of Cabinet to head and oversee a massive multi-million-dollar clean-up and beautification of Georgetown and its environs.

*THE* government, through the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF), has awarded several more contracts to improve potable water supply in Region Two (Pomeroon/Supenaam), Regional Chairman, Mr Alli Baksh has reported. He said the deals were approved by the Government and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for work between La Belle Alliance and Richmond; Reliance and Cotton Field/Bush Lot; Riverstown, Aurora, Walton Hall and Queenstown.

A \$22.5M *CONTRACT* to buy ammunition for the Guyana Defence Force (GDF) has been cleared, Head of the Presidential Secretariat and Cabinet Secretary Dr Roger Luncheon announced yesterday.

*GUYANA* will have a better debt profile and will cease to be an 'international basket case' if all goes well with the extensive and committed lobbying efforts by President Bharrat Jagdeo for a US\$400M debt write-off from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

*MANAGING* Director of BK International Inc., Mr. Brian Tiwarie, has his eyes set on satisfying the local market with quarrying material and to venture into the export market. To this end, he has invested more

than US\$10M in rehabilitating the recently-acquired Linden Quarries Inc. and his fleet of vessels. On his birthday, yesterday, Machinery Corporation (MARCORP), the sole Caterpillar dealers in Guyana, handed over the keys for 14 brand new engines -- eight marine and six vehicular -- valued at US\$500,000 at a ceremony hosted in MACORP's Providence, East Bank Demerara compound. The engines will replace those on the company's tugs and excavators.

*RESIDENTS* in the West Mahaicony, East Coast Demerara village of Sarah are now getting potable water in their homes for the first time, following the completion of a \$17M Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP) project. Other places to benefit from the previously unavailable supply are Drill and more Mahaicony villages, east of Perseverance and west of Farm, officials said.

*THE* Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has called on Canada to amend its legislation to allow rum from the Caribbean to enter its market under similar conditions being enjoyed by other countries which export the product to that country.

*GUYANA*, among the most indebted poor countries in the hemisphere pushing for critical debt write-off by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), will have its debt cancelled, the Government Information Agency (GINA) reported yesterday.

*THE* Linden Town Council will today present a budget of \$111,822,835 for 2007 to the Ministry of Local Government in Georgetown, council officials said yesterday.

*THE PETROCARIBE/CARACAS* accord, through which Guyana is considering to access crude oil from Venezuela, has not been placed on the back burner, and representatives from the two neighbouring countries continue to meet for discussions.

This was disclosed by Prime Minister Sam Hinds who has responsibility for energy, when reached by telephone yesterday for an update on the oil arrangement.

*CLOSE* to 500 government officials, business leaders, union representatives, Members of Parliament, and others are being gathered by the Public Management Modernization Project (PMMP) to discuss the way the government delivers its services. The PMMP, a US\$5.6M initiative co-sponsored by the Guyana Government and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), announced Monday that it will take the discussions to all ten administrative regions, examining how to create a high performing government which delivers better services to its citizens, business and national institutions.

*GUYANA* and Suriname could earn tens of millions of dollars through a global warming deal that may be proposed this week at UN climate talks between 189 countries in Nairobi, Kenya, according to the Mongabay.com website. It said that the initiative, put forth a year ago by a coalition that now includes 15 developing countries, calls for compensation from industrialized nations in exchange for tropical forest conservation.

*FINANCE MINISTER* Dr. Ashni Singh says over the past 10 years the national economy has been subjected to severe external and domestic shocks which have curtailed growth and development. Dr. Singh cited the Asian economic collapse, rising oil prices which rose to about US\$78 per barrel by July this year, price cuts for traditional exports as being among the external factors, while on the domestic scene, the minister identified adverse weather and floods, and post election disturbances in 1997 and 2001

*FOLLOWING* the publication of the Stern report on global warming by Sir Nicholas Stern, President Bharrat Jagdeo has written British Prime Minister Tony Blair offering

the use Guyana's rainforest to alleviate the challenges.

*THE* Government of India has approved a US\$2.1M concessional line of credit for installing solar-powered traffic lights in Georgetown, Indian High Commissioner to Guyana Mr. Avinash Gupta announced yesterday. At a news conference at the Indian High Commission in Georgetown, he said he only received word of the approval of the line of credit from the Indian Government yesterday morning via an email from the administration's offices in New Delhi.

*IN AN* effort to promote investment in Guyana, President Bharrat Jagdeo has had several meetings with investors, business organizations and British Government officials during a packed visit to London, the Guyana High Commission there said last night.

*GUYANA* is strategically placed to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Foreign Minister Rudy Insanally stressed here yesterday.

*STAKEHOLDERS* in Guyana tourism are pursuing strategies to develop niche markets in lesser known avenues to ensure the sector continues to develop. These include bird watching. Guyana currently has more than 800 species of birds, hundreds of which can be found at resorts such as Shanklands and Baganara, he said.

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*Bureau of Statistics  
National Accounts Department  
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