

## **Remarks Of The Honourable Clement Rohee MP**

### **Ministry Of Home Affairs**

#### **On The Occasion Of Guyana Prison Service Week 2011**

It gives me great honour and privilege to have been accorded this opportunity to address you on the occasion of Guyana Prison Service Week 2011. For more than 27 years the Guyana Prison Service has set aside a period heralded as Prison Service Week, during which a number of programmes and event are staged at all prison locations.

Prison Observance Week provides a time for us to reflect on the progress made in correction of Offenders and of the contribution of the Guyana Prison Service to public safety.

I want to thank the Prison Officers for the work they have done and continue to do. The public may not always know of the risks that you face each day, but as they sleep at nights, and as they walk down the street safely during the day, you can feel justly proud of the contribution you are making. Prisons Officers are called to protect the public by managing offenders and assisting in rebuilding persons with behaviour challenges. As Minister of Home Affairs and your Minister, I have been inspired by the work that you have been doing.

This year, there have been some important developments in the Guyana Prison Service that I must mention.

1. The establishment of the Sentence Management Board. This Board is expected to work with relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate interventions to transform the lives of inmates so that they can be returned to society to lead productive lives.

2. The establishment of the Guyana Prison Service Agriculture Development Board. The Ministry in setting up this Board aims to make prison locations self sufficient in terms of meeting the dietary requirements for inmates. This will go a long way in reducing the nation's cost to incarcerate and rehabilitate prison inmates.

3. The appointment of the Recruitment Board which includes civilian members. The Recruitment Board supports the Prison System by reviewing applications for employment in the Guyana Prison Service, and it will ensure that job specifications for the positions for enlistment are met. The Board is also responsible for interviewing applicants, making recommendations and overseeing other issues dealing with employment in the Prison Service. This initiative is expected to increase the performance of prisons across the country and ultimately improve efficiency and effectiveness in the Agency.

4. The Ministry of Home Affairs, cognizant of the critical role the Guyana Prison Service is required to play in the Criminal Justice System of the country, has moved to develop a new

Strategic Plan 2011-2015 for the Guyana Prison Service to ensure that the Agency is modernized and transformed to meet the evolving challenges posed to a correctional institution.

5. A training facility for Prison Officers has been established at the Lusignan Prison Complex to enhance the professional competencies of staff to meet the diverse roles they are required to perform.

6. The Ministry of Home Affairs and by extension the Government of Guyana has worked towards improving the accommodation and general facilities for officers and inmates. Among the number of buildings that have been rehabilitated this year, an Officers' Quarters at Kingston has been constructed with the hope that improved conditions of service will be translated into greater staff motivation, consequently improving outputs by Prison Officers. Resources were also invested in the construction of a new Capital Dormitory which is expected to significantly improve living conditions for inmates at the Camp Street Facility.

Finally, a number of other initiatives have been undertaken to improve the Prison System and these include:

- (i) separating young first time inmates from seasoned offenders,
- (ii) teaching literacy, numeracy, vocational skills and behavioural change programmes to inmates
- (iii) recruiting specialist and custodial staff and improving the professionalism of ranks through training.

I wish to re-emphasize and place on record my admiration for the work that you do. I know the many challenges that you face and it is my hope that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Prison Administration will continue to work together to remove these challenges in order to achieve the mandate of the Guyana Prison Service.

As we celebrate another Week of Observance with all the hard working and dedicated Prison Officers, I want to assure you of my Ministry's commitment and that of the Government towards ensuring that the Guyana Prison Service functions effectively and contributes robustly towards the improvement of safety in our country.

I thank you and Happy Week of Observance!