

**Statement By The Hon. Minister Of Home Affairs On The Occasion Of The Commissioning Of Remodeled Police Stations At Brickdam And East La Penitence Georgetown**

It is indeed a privilege and honour for me to address you on this important occasion to mark the commissioning of the remodeled Brickdam and East La Penitence Police Stations from a batch of twelve stations targeted for remodeling. What we are witnessing today is another revelation of Government's ongoing efforts to modernize the Guyana Police Force so as to enhance citizen security.

Government with the support from the IDB has undertaken to enhance public safety through the Citizen Security programme (CSP). The CSP has three major components:

Institutional modernisation of the Ministry of Home Affairs;

Crime and violence prevention through community based interventions; and

Modernisation of the Guyana Police Force

The Ministry of Home Affairs is currently accelerating the implementation of the Citizen Security Project. Last week, Cabinet approved consultancy services for the implementation of five (5) areas of the Citizen Security Programme:

The development and implementation of a comprehensive training scheme for the Guyana Police Force

Institutional Modernisation of the Ministry of Home Affairs

Design, develop and implement an integrated crime information system

Updating and implementation of immigration policies and plans

Monitoring and evaluation of the Citizen Security Programme

As you are already aware, a major objective of the modernization of the Guyana Police Force is to guarantee that the public is served by a more responsive, competent, accountable, better equipped and professional police force.

The remodelling of police stations is both a reflection of the importance Government attaches to law and order and its commitment to ensure that communities are afforded security and protection.

This investment is part of the broader programme of the Government aimed at making our Police Stations more community-friendly.

Ladies and gentlemen, the law enforcement related challenge we face demands that policy makers design comprehensive and holistic responses aimed at modernizing policing to improve professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness. These remodeled Police Stations are a welcomed development and represent a significant investment by this Government in its drive to boost public security.

Government being mindful of its role in improving public perception of the Guyana Police Force and enhancing their capability made every effort to provide adequate resources required for them to function effectively. One hundred and seventy million dollars (\$170 Million) has been spent in remodelling a first batch of 12 Police stations in Regions 4 and 6 through the GOG/IDB Citizen Security Programme. This year, an additional 145 million dollars is being spent from the Central Government Budget to rehabilitate Police Stations in all ten Administrative regions.

The remodelled Police Stations will now have a case management room, a modern interrogation room, ID parade and witness rooms, domestic violence room and waiting room for children.

Like all modern police stations, the case management room is equipped with computerized technology so that our police officers can rapidly and efficiently prepare their cases for prosecution.

The case management room and the accompanying technology allows for computerizing of compiled data, faster data retrieval and cross- referencing of information on suspects and weapons used in other cases.

The modern ID parade room will allow for victims to identify suspects without face-to-face contact with them.

The domestic violence room will provide a user friendly non threatening environment for victims to report abuses.

The interrogation room will allow for the gathering of sufficient information without distraction

and fear. It will provide the necessary environment for Ranks to conduct their investigation while respecting the human rights of individuals.

There will also be a waiting room for children of victims of domestic violence. All this is to ensure that our stations cater to the diverse needs of the public they serve.

Rehabilitation works have been done on the inquiries area and other parts of the stations to make them more aesthetically acceptable to the public.

The remodeling has transformed this facility into a modern and purpose built police station and is in keeping with Government's focus on improving the overall performance, capacity, and efficiency of our law enforcement agency. This is being achieved through:

Improving the infrastructure;

Strengthening capacity in law enforcement agency;

Fostering public-private partnership in enhancing citizen security;

Improving the legislative environment; and

Improving the IT capability to support evidence based policy making

Ladies and gentleman, while it is noteworthy that Government is doing its part in enhancing the Police Force, it is imperative that individual Ranks and Officers do their part to enhance the quality of service given to the public.

You are all aware that the primary task of the Police Force is the Provision of Service to be Public. Thus members of the Guyana Police Force should seek to serve the public in a professional manner. It is important that you do so; since the Guyana Police Force must constantly strive to garner the support of the Public in its quest to control crime and other forms of illegal activities in this country.

Many members of the Public have their “real contact” with the Police Force when they go to Police Stations to make reports. The encounter at the Station is vital to the forging of better Police-Community Relations.

There is need for greater enhancement of the administrative arrangements at Police Stations.

Based on reports I receive on a regular basis there is too much slackness taking place at Stations. Such slackness can put the security of Police Stations at risk. Moreover, these remodeled Police Stations will not achieve their objectives if there is weak administrative arrangements and the slackness I spoke about.

Too often lower ranks take action on their own without bringing the matter to the attention of their superiors. Some even overrule their superiors. Such indiscipline and lack of respect for functional superiority cannot be tolerated in a disciplined organization such as the Guyana Police Force.

Placing persons in lock-ups without sufficient cause that is, without conducting proper initial investigations will only help to show bias and negatively affect police public relations not to mention the unnecessary over-crowding in the lock-ups, especially at weekends.

Any Rank high or low, who is of the view that he or she can behave in an uncouth, disrespectful and impolite manner towards any person who approaches a Police Station for help and believe they can get away with it had better think again because in the context of the current modernization and reform of the Guyana Police Force there is no place for such Ranks in the Organization. Take warning!

Even if Satan's Mother turns up at a Police Station, you have to listen to her. That is primarily what you are at the Station for to serve and protect not to reject and abuse them. You never know who you may be chasing away from the Station. It might be to your own peril. And don't tell me that Ranks at Police Stations could never find themselves at peril. So long as you have life you can face peril

It is better to listen to a complaint than to turn the complaint away because that complaint out of a sense of frustration may very well turn to a hired gun to resolve his or her problem.

Training of Police Ranks needs to be intensified. Too many good, useful and time tested basic training tools for Police Ranks have been discarded. Station Sergeants must hold regular instruction classes twice per month as a method of in-house training for the Ranks at Police Stations.

The role of Junior Officers and Senior Officers in charge of Sub-Divisions and Divisions is critical in ensuring that there is compliance with the Force's Standing Orders relating to the proper management of Police Stations.

In many instances, the conduct of many ranks at Police Station reflect the quality of the managers in charge of those facilities.

Officers and Ranks are responsible to ensure the upkeep of the station. I therefore take this opportunity to encourage you to do whatever is required to keep your Stations in a proper manner. You should not wait on notified inspections to clean up your surroundings. This should be an ongoing exercise.

It is important that we strengthen the social contract, to work together, as the police and communities, in order to curb the incidence of crime in our country. The commissioning of these remodeled stations will provide our officers with the physical resources to better serve the community.

I thank you