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GECOM HOLDS WORKSHOP FOR NEWLY APPOINTED RETURNING OFFICERS

Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), Dr. Steve Surujbally has charged the 10 newly appointed Returning Officers to "treat with ALL stakeholders professionally, and not to engage in political activism or partisanship during their period of public service as Senior representatives of GECOM. Dr. Surujbally gave this charge during the opening session of a two-day Workshop aimed at orienting the Returning Officers about the serious nature of their tasks and the responsibilities that are vested in them. The Workshop was held at the King's Plaza, Main Street Georgetown on July 15-16, 2006.

Emphasising the need for the Returning Officers to follow established guidelines that were constructed within the framework of the associated Laws and Regulations, Dr. Surujbally cautioned that to do otherwise would be ultra vires and would tarnish the reputation of GECOM and its Secretariat.

Noting that total commitment is required for efficient delivery of their responsibilities to be accomplished, Dr. Surujbally stressed that the current environment dictates nothing less of the Returning Officers. Acknowledging that the hours might be long and the atmosphere charged, he told the Returning Officers that any wavering commitment could result in unsatisfactory and even unacceptable outcomes with great harmful consequences.

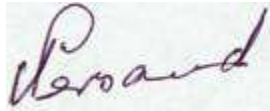
Underscoring the need for the Returning Officers to be "ever vigilant", Dr. Surujbally entreated them to continually test and rehearse the communication, logistics, security and training, plans that are associated with their responsibilities. He advised that, having so done, contingencies must still be built in where necessary.

Dr. Surujbally impressed upon the Returning Officers that the acceptable conduct of elections, where all stakeholders will be totally satisfied with the officially declared results, is inherently linked to the efficient execution of their responsibilities and in

extensor, the solidification of the democratic process.

Among the topics discussed at the workshop were (i) the Role of Returning Officers; (ii) Identification of Offices for Supervisors and Deputy Returning Officers; (iii) Confirmation of Polling Places; (iv) Scheduling of Activities associated with preparations for Election Day; (v) plans for monitoring/supervising the Districts; and (vi) Placement of Supervisors and Deputy Returning Officers .

The Workshop was facilitated by Mr. Gocool Boodoo - Chief Election Officer, Mr. Calvin Benn - Deputy Chief Election Officer and Mr. Keith Lowenfield - Assistant Chief Election Officer. Witnessing the proceedings were Ms. Alison Sutherland - Commonwealth Observer and Ms. Ann Fudge and Mr. Eugene Petty - OAS Observers.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Persaud', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Vishnu Persaud, MCIPR

Public Relations Officer