

Guyana and the Islamic World, 1948-2008

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the relationship between Guyana and the Islamic World, from 1948 to 2008, and it brings to light the two track relationship, government to government and people to people. Guyana has a significant Muslim minority, who forged strong bonds with the umma before the country gained independence in 1966. Guyana, unlike other Caribbean countries has had strong ties with the Islamic World because of religious and political ties with the Islamic World which dates back to the 1700s when Islam reached the shores of Guyana through the African slave trade, and again with the coming of the Hindustani Muslims from India between 1838 to 1917. Modern Guyana's political history started with the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP), a left wing party, founded by Dr. Cheddi Jagan in the 1950 who forged strong ties with nationalists in Ghana, Iran, Indonesia, Syria, and Egypt. The party's lofty goals, anti-colonialism, socialism and nationalism were analogous with Nasserism. Former Guyanese President, Dr. Cheddi Jagan travelled to Syria and Egypt in the 1960s and identified with the Iranian's nationalist movement under the leadership of Dr. Mossadegh. A CIA covert operation led to the illegal removal of Dr. Jagan from power in the 1960s and the Peoples National Congress (PNC), the other political party came to power in Guyana and continued the same Jagganite foreign policies. Libya, Iraq, and Egypt opened embassies in Guyana and in the 1990s the Government of Guyana established diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Kuwait. And in 1998 Guyana became a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) which brought it permanently close to the Islamic world. In 1996, Dr. Jagan made an official visit to the Middle East which included visits to Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

Guyana and Iran

The 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran marked a new beginning of Guyana/Iran relationship. During the regime of Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran the two countries did not establish diplomatic relationship. But after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Guyana and Iran established diplomatic ties in the 80's, and through various multilateral organizations such as the UN, the Group of 77, the Non-Aligned Movement, and more recently OIC, has cooperated on various issues. Iran appoints a non-resident ambassador to Guyana, who is based in Caracas.

Former envoy of Guyana to the OIC, Dr. Odeen Ishmael, who dealt with Iran says, "The relationship is very good. We do have diplomatic relations and consult regularly at the UN and within the OIC. Iran was one of the sponsors of Guyana to become a full member of the OIC." The Ambassador reveal that trade is beginning to take shape between the two countries, transportation is a major factor impeding the sale of Guyanese rice to Iran. The cost of transportation has made it unfeasible; however the Iranians have been purchasing Guyanese jewellery for their markets according to the ambassador. "Politically, relations are good. Iran has never attempted to enforce its religious ideas on us. Iran has given also given us much support on debt relief issues at the UN and in the OIC as well. Ambassador Ishmael continues, "We have also received strong support regarding our territorial integrity from Iran." Finally, the Ambassador Ishmael revealed, "Iran also is very supportive at the UN of the proposal for a New Global Human Order and was a co-sponsor of the UN resolution on the NGHO."

With the Islamic Republic severing ties with Israel and South Africa in 1979, relationship with Guyana grew tremendously. Reza Shah's close ties with Israel and South Africa severely damaged Iran's relationship with Developing Nations. Iran was also isolated by Arab governments across the Middle East; however, relationship with Iran took a quantum leap after the 1979 Revolution. Guyana and Iran, among other Developing Nations isolated Israel and South Africa. Guyana like Iran, at the UN voted for the famous General Assembly Resolution branding "Zionism as racism," which was reverse in the past decade.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan and Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati held a bilateral meeting in Colombia on 18th of October 1995 during the Non- Aligned Summit. Jagan said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has made significant gains in many areas and we are interested in having close cooperation with Iran at international forums."¹ Dr. Jagan extended an invitation to the Iranian Foreign Minister to visit Georgetown.

In July of 1997, special envoy and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Mr. Mahmood Vaezi visited Guyana. In meeting with the Guyanese President, Samuel Hinds, Mr. Vaezi handed him a written message from Iran's President Mr. Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani inviting him to take part in the OIC Summit in Tehran in December 1997. The envoy expressed Iran's willingness to expand relations between the two countries. Dr. Odeen Ishmael in December of 1997 attended the OIC Heads of Government Summit in Tehran and in July of 2000 an Iranian trade fair and exhibition was held in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana. The exhibition was meant to acquaint Guyanese with Iranian goods, while the Iranians examined local items for export, and it was intended to encourage Iranian-Guyanese joint ventures.

Sunnism and Shism

Guyana has had a small group of Shia Muslims who were part of the great migration from Hindustan from 1838 to 1917, but most were neutralized by the Sunnis. Hence, Guyana never experience Shia/Sunni antagonism. Guyana did not experience any major juristic problems within the period 1838-1920s. At no time were there more than 750

Shia, and by 1950 they seemed to have been absorbed into the Sunni Muslim group'. However, after the Iranian revolution of 1979, and with the coming to power of Imam Khomeini in Iran, there was a sudden upsurge of Shiism across the world. Soon thereafter following the arrival of a Shia missionary in Guyana, two groups were established, one in Linden, Demerara and another in Canje, Berbice. During Muharram in 1994 a Shia organization, the Bilal Muslim Mission of North America sent a couple of people to visit Guyana. Shia Muslims resent the main Muslim body because of what they perceive as "Wahabis propaganda".

Since then BMMA has been paying regular visits to Trinidad and Guyana. BMMA sent hundreds of copies of the Quran translated by S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali and other literature. BMMA also supplied the small community in Trinidad and Guyana with TV, VCR, computer, printer and fax machines. They also finance administration a few *madrasahs* in Guyana and dispatches reading material and other literature on a regular basis. However, the impact of Shiism in Guyana is yet to be determined.

For the first time in recent history an Islamic scholar, Dr. Mohammad Namazi from Iran visited Guyana during Ramadhan of 2002. The 32 years old scholar is a *Quari* and *Hafiz ul-Quran* who has been sent by the Organisation of Culture and Islamic Relations, an NGO in the Islamic Republic of Iran with branches in the United States, Canada, France, Norway, India and other countries. According to the local press, his visit was the result of an invitation from the Guyana Islamic Forum (GIF) for education, peace and religious solidarity, in association with the International College for Advanced Studies and the Muslim Youth League of Guyana. Namazi was born in Qum, Iran and spent seventeen years studying at Qum theological seminaries, specializing in natural sciences and was awarded PhD in Islamic studies. Guyana is now linked to Qum, Iran. Many inquires have been made by those who want to expand cultural relationship between the Muslims of Guyana and Qum. A few Guyanese have also studies in Qum.

During July of 2003, two graduate students from Qum established an education center in the capital Georgetown. This was building on the work that they have been carrying out in the region and Guyana for a number of years. Currently, there are a few Iranians in Guyana. According to the Iranians, the education centre will function as a resource center to be accessed by teachers and lecturers alike. A large section of the center will be given over to the sciences and mathematics resources. The Iranian, Mohammad Hassan Ebrahimi, director of Guyana's International Islamic College for Advanced Studies who was kidnapped in 2004 and found dead a month later. His killers were never found and the motive of his murder remained an enigma.

The centre housed 12 computers and over 1000 books on various topics relating to Islam have been either bought or donated. An extensive audio visual collection has been put together with over 800 different titles, and the centre had hope to work closely with local schools and colleges allowing the youth of Georgetown to benefit from the center regardless of their faith. It is hoped that through actions rather than words the center will be able to set an example of Islamic behavior that will be exemplary for the present and future generations of Guyanese Muslims according to Iranians.

According to the founders, the center is in desperate need of financial and other aid that can be provided, by the "believers." The running cost of the center is estimated at five hundred English pounds (500) a month, including payment of all utility bills. One of the centre's main objectives is to establish links with other Shia communities in the region, such as in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Antigua, Aruba and Suriname.

Trade and Culture

In June 2002 President Bharrat Jagdeo invited the newly-accredited Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Guyana, Mr. Ahmad Sobhani for his country to participate in the Guy Expo. The President extended the invitation to the Ambassador during an accreditation ceremony at the Office of the President earlier today, noting that the "participation by Iran will certainly encourage the possibilities for trade between the two countries."²

Iran had exhibited many products at various venues in Guyana, and the President said that this exercise should be preserved to strengthen economic relations between the two countries, as their relationship is reflective of the countries desire to work together. "In the past groups of businessmen from Iran have held trade fairs in Guyana to showcase your country's products. These exhibitions should be continued in the interest of developing economic relations," the President said.³ The Iranian Ambassador was also encouraged to explore possibilities of investment for his country locally, as Guyana has potential for investment in several areas including agriculture, mining, manufacturing and information technology which is now evolving.

President Bharrat Jagdeo noted that Iran and Guyana have had multilateral engagements in the past and have worked together closely on issues of global peace and development. Some of the forums at which they have been engaged are the OIC, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G77 and the United Nations. In accepting the Letters of Recall from Mr. Sobhani that accredits him as the Ambassador of Iran to Guyana, President Jagdeo extended good wishes to his homeland and his predecessor.

Ambassador Sobhani said that there are common grounds on which the two countries could work. Examples he cited are the issues of security and international relations. He urged that efforts to strengthen relations between Iran and Guyana be strengthened, especially in the area of trade. At present, Iran is involved in commerce and culture in Guyana. "I hope we can establish the foundation for bilateral ties and promoting mutual knowledge about the two countries."⁴

Iran held a trade fair and exhibition in July 2002 in Guyana. The event was opened by Guyana's Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry Geoffrey Da Silva. The exhibition was meant to acquaint Guyanese with Iranian goods, while the Iranians examined local items for export, and it was intended to encourage Iranian-Guyanese joint ventures. This trade link between Guyana and Iran was established through a joint venture agreement with the Iranian firm of Sadr Export House Company and local businesses. Research and Marketing Manager of the Iranian company, Mr. Mehdi Sourı was in Guyana with other

Iranians on a promotion tour complete with goods for sale at the Muslim Youth Organisation (MYO) complex, in Georgetown the capital of Guyana. Mr. Mehdi Souri of Sadr Export House Company coordinated the event. Among the offerings were carpets, plastic utensils, ceramic vases, and table lamps.⁵

The Iranian businessman disclosed that a branch will be established locally to respond to the needs of Guyanese and to explore other areas of development. "(We want) to have a mutual relationship", he said. "I think we can use your lumber and have our experts come here and make furniture", Souri said.⁶ He said the idea of the exhibition is to get acquainted with Guyanese traders and to get to know their needs. "We want to help to produce what they need, and to make them self-sufficient."⁷ Souri in 2002 held discussions with Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry, Mr. Geoffrey Da Silva. Mr. Mohamed Khan of MFK Trading in Georgetown also signaled an intention to enter a joint venture agreement with Sadr Export House Company.

Relationship with the Muslim Far East: Indonesia/Malaysia

Guyana has strong ties with Indonesia and Malaysia. Regardless that Guyana and Indonesia established diplomatic relationship only in 1999, ties between those two countries dates back further. When Dr. Cheddi Jagan, a strong proponent of South to South cooperation was elected President of Guyana in 1992 he made a four-day visit to Malaysia in December 17-21, 1993. "The President who was accompanied by Senior Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Clement Rohee, met with the Hon. Dr. Mahathir Mohamed for discussion on ways of improving the existing relations between Guyana and Malaysia."⁸ In Malaysia, President Jagan visited a number of places of economic interest including the Samling Corporation which is part owner of the Barama Company and the South Investment Trade Technology Date Exchange Centre which now have investments in Guyana. The President also met with representatives of the Malaysian business community. In 1995 the Government of Guyana and the Government of Malaysia signed a Technical, Economic and Cultural Agreement during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in New Zealand, in November. "Since the visit to Kuala Lumpur by President Cheddi Jagan in 1994, during which Guyana and Malaysia established a Joint Commission, diplomatic initiatives have focused on the realization of closer economic and technical cooperation between the two countries"⁹

Since Guyana and Indonesia established diplomatic relationship in 1999 relationship has grown warmer despite geographical constrains. Indonesia now appoints an ambassador to Guyana and the two countries are looking to expand economic ties. However, since the end of the Jagan government little effort has been made to develop strong economic ties with Southeast Asia where Dr. Jagan left off.

In January 2007, Guyana's Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation Dr Henry Jeffrey and Indonesia's Ambassador to Guyana, Suprijanto Muhadi signed a reciprocal trade agreement on the promotion and protection of investments in the two countries. The agreement makes it now possible for concrete activities between

businessmen of the two countries. However, there is not direct trade between Indonesia and the region largely because the region is considered to be too distant to be competitive with the exports from Latin America and Brazil. This small start is expected to see reciprocal access to the Indonesian markets.¹⁰

More recently, Indonesia has appointed an ambassador to Guyana who hosted the 62nd Independence Anniversary of Indonesia at the LeMeriden Hotel in Guyana in August 2007. In attendance was the President of Guyana who remarked, “Countries and regions of the world are now being drawn closer together not just by the realities of globalisation but also by the common challenges which we now face together, such as terrorism poverty and climate change. I believe it is important for governments everywhere to embark on a consolidated and concerted effort to address these problems.”¹¹ President Bharrat Jagdeo further stated, “We are prepared to work with the rest of the international community to find global solutions to these global issues.” The Head of State said solidarity and mutual support are especially important to the economic and social progress of Guyana and Indonesia. He said, “In the past, we have sought to work together in all relevant fora to ensure that the international trading system and other forms of economic cooperation are made more just and equitable.”¹²

Guyana is looking to Indonesia for help Guyana in the agro-energy sector. Jagdeo continued, “I am aware of Indonesia's expertise in agro-industry, tourism and other promising sectors. It is therefore, my hope that Indonesian investments and technical assistance can help us to open up fully these areas that are rich in potential.”¹³

He continued in the same vein, “Special occasions such as its independence anniversary provide a nation with an opportunity to reflect on its history and to take stock of its achievements. Like Guyana, Indonesia emerged from the shadows of a long colonial past. Notwithstanding the many challenges faced in its early years of independence, Indonesia's economy has enjoyed economic growth at a steady and impressive rate.”¹⁴ The Guyanese President praised Indonesia for its bold role in South-South cooperation both on a bilateral level and through international bodies such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-77 and the United Nations by keeping the spirit of Bandung alive within the family of independent nations.

A cornerstone of Guyana's foreign policy is south to south cooperation and not surprising, President Bharrat Jagdeo said, “This ideal has motivated countries of the South to work together to develop mutually beneficial co-operation and a deeper understanding between their peoples. An important step in this direction was taken in 1999 with the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. I am pleased to note that, despite the great distance which separates us, we have been able to develop strong ties of friendship and collaboration.”¹⁵

On Guyana/Indonesia relations the Ambassador said though limitations persists the coexistence between the two countries bilaterally and multilaterally are positive.

Ambassador Muhadi said, "With all limitations which - are existing, we have tried with optimism to increase the activities and programmes...exports from Indonesia to Guyana, which started long before the formal diplomatic relations were established, observably increases from one to another ."16

According to the Indonesian Ambassador many nationals from his country work in Guyana. He said, "The Indonesian Embassy will -facilitate private sectors in both countries which attempt to create contacts. Indonesia is actively looking for any possibilities to develop the relation between the two countries. I hope that both Indonesia and Guyana will improve the bilateral co-operation for the betterment of both countries and peoples."17

Guyanese Muslims Strong ties to Pakistan 1947

Guyana/Pakistan fraternal bonds are deeply rooted and date back to the Pakistan movement that commenced during the 1940s. The outcry for a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent drew sympathetic ears in Guyana during that period. After the division of 1947, the Muslim leadership under the Sadr Anjuman called for a Pakistani consulate in Guyana to represent the Hindustani Muslims there. They did not feel comfortable that an Indian Consul will look after their interest. Pakistan began mothering the Hindustani diaspora of Guyana politically and culturally, and the Guyanese Muslims as this paper illustrates identified with Pakistan by supporting that young nation financially and politically. They saw themselves as Pakistanis and saw Pakistani leaders as theirs. After the independence of Guyana, the two countries established diplomatic relationship and appointed Honourary Consuls in respective countries.

The Hindustani Muslims of British Guiana were very diverse like their brethren in the motherland."18 And events of 1947, the division of the subcontinent along religious lines had serious repercussions for Muslims in British Guiana. Muslims overwhelmingly gave financial, political and moral support to the Pakistan movement. To understand this phenomenon we must first look at the origin of the Hindustani Muslims of British Guiana. From 1838 to 1917 about 240,000 North Indians from the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), Bihar and Bengal migrated to British Guiana. Among them were Sunni and Shia Muslims, who numbered about twenty percent and were predominantly from the United Provinces and Oudh (now Uttar Pradesh), and Bihar. A small number came from the Bengal. Small batches also came from Karachi in Sind, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi in the Punjab, Hyderabad, in the Deccan, Srinagar in Kashmir, and Peshawar, Mardan in the Northwest Frontier (Afghan areas), and Baluchistan bordering Iran. They came from Hindustan, the name that Muslims accorded India and back them Hindustan bordered Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Hindustani Muslims spoke Urdu, Avadi, Brijbasha, Mateili, and Bhojpuri; in addition, a handful spoke Farsi and Pashto, among other North Indian languages.19 Under caste Muslims were identified as *Musulman, Sheik, fakirs, ghosis, hajams, Julahas, Mahomedaan, Syeds, Mughuls, and Pathans*.20 The majority of Muslim women bore names like *Nasimun, Ameerun, Rashidan, Kariman or Aseeman* which became corrupted

after many generations, and today due to the loss of their Urdu language, these names among many others have become *Nasimoon, Karimoon, Ameeroon, Rashimoon, Aseemoon, or Nazmoon*²¹. Most men bore three to four names and most common were the suffix *Uddin, example: Alimuddin, Zahiruddin, Shahabuddin or Kamaluddin*.

Support for Pakistan

From the 1940s to 1950, the Sadr Anjuman was headed under the brilliant leadership of Mr. Rahman Baksh Gajraj, President and Mr. Gool Mohamed Khan, Vice President. It was a dramatic period in Muslim history when many Islamic nations waged nationalist's struggles against imperialism. Global events had ramifications on the local Muslims population in British Guiana and more precisely the call for a Muslim homeland in the Subcontinent received a sympathetic ear in British Guiana among the Muslims. *Voice of Islam*, the official organ of the Anjuman wrote, "Pakistan is a creation of Man, but it came with approbation of God and no matter what evils acts may be committed against it Pakistan will live on, unconquered."²² Celebration was held all over British Guiana and at the Jamma Masjid in Queenstown, after the *Jumma Namaz* "the whole day was observed as a holiday. Greetings and congratulations were cabled to Mr. Jinnah, Governor-General."²³ At mosques the flag of Pakistan was hoisted. The editorial of *Islam* of March 1948 welcomed in euphoria the birth of Pakistan and called for a Pakistani representative in British Guyana.²⁴ The pages of *Voice of Islam* and *Nur-E-Islam* the new name of the united organization give prominence to news from Pakistan. Its pages from 1948-1950 were filled with news concerning Pakistan and in particular Kashmir. In fact, a section of the journal was titled Pakistan Affairs. To get a deeper appreciation what was featured in the journal, take a look at the following headlines: "India's Lust for Conquest of Kashmir May lead to World War,"²⁵ and "In Kashmir India is Obstructing Holding of Plebiscite."²⁶ Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan's speech, "the Truth about Kashmir," was featured in the journal.²⁷ Relationship was further consolidated in 1949 when Mr. R. B. Gajraj travelled to the UN and met Pakistan's first Ambassador to the UN, Mr. M. A. H. Ishaqani, and he referred to him as "our Ambassador."²⁸ Ambassador Ishaqani also reciprocated with a visit to the Muslims of British Guiana.

Jinnah a Hero

Among the Muslims in British Guiana who were aware of events taking place in the subcontinent, Jinnah was a hero to them. The Muslim leadership in British Guiana saw him as a "saviour of the Muslims" in India who were being slaughtered by Hindus in the wanton Hindu/Muslim violence²⁹ They saw him as their leader as well, and he is frequently referred to as "our" leader.³⁰ For the brief period that he lived after the creation of Pakistan the Muslim print media in British Guiana carried many stories of his social and political life. Their affection for Jinnah is succinctly put together in a poem titled, "Ode to Qaid-E-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah."³¹ It was written by A. Samadeen who hailed from Albion, in the county of Berbice and was published in *Islam and Nur-E-Islam* in January 1950 after the death of Jinnah. This journal being the only major Muslim periodical of its time and the voice of British Guiana's largest Islamic organisation encapsulated the sentiments those locals held of Jinnah.

Jinnah the hero, reads the poem, was a star who rose “in that Eastern land, and brought forth with it a hero, brave. That star was the birth of Pakistan, and guiding it came Jinnah, his people to save.”³² He was seen as a “giant” who fought against the “stalwarts of Hindustan”³³ who wanted to subjugate the Muslims. Jinnah led the *azadi* movement or the freedom movement. The Qaid-E-Azam was called, “son of azad,” “son of freedom and a “faithful soldier of Islam.”³⁴ Jinnah sudden death was a solemn moment among the Muslims of British Guiana and prayers were held at mosques nation-wide. The Muslims of British Guiana and their brethren in Pakistan while in sorrow shouted, “Pakistan Zindabad,” or long live Pakistan.³⁵ The emotions of Jinnah’s death among the Muslims of British Guiana is capsulated in the following stanza: “Oh Noble Monarch of a new-born state, Oh faithful soldier of Islam, with broken hearts on this cruel date, we bid thee our last and humble Salam.”³⁶

The Qaid-E-Azam Funds

The Qaid-E-Azam funds was established in 1947 during the turbulent period of division for the wretched and poor who poured into Pakistan, mainly in Karachi and Lahore. The horror of division was known in British Guiana via newspapers from the region and from the Pakistani Ambassadors to the United Nations and London who fed Caribbean Muslims pro-Pakistani news. Not surprising, it was through the *jamaat* system that Guyanese Muslims became aware of the brutality and wretched poverty that Muslims refugees faced during the process of migrating to Pakistan. Throughout the length and breath of British Guiana, *masjids* collected 936.62 BG dollars for their destitute brethrens in Pakistan. The sum of about 936.62 BG dollars were collected and delivered in 1948. Mr. Gajraj travelled to Pakistan and met with Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and this government.³⁷

The majority of Muslims were farmers and small shop owners who dug deep into their pockets for Pakistan. The BG dollar back then carried a high value. Donations came from all economic strata, rich and poor, as well, widows like the hazel-eyed Mrs. Bibi Hamidan of Maida Village, Corentyne, and a stern, pious and generous Muslim of Afghan origin. Many fondly called her *ama* and she was a gem. To educate children *Quran*, she swiftly allowed the lower flat of her house to be used as a *madarsa*. My great grandmother Baitullan Khan of Kitty, Georgetown, who single handedly raised her children contributed 96 cents. Batullan lost her husband, Pheer Khan, my great grandfather when she was still in her 20s. Among other women who contributed were Mrs. Abdool Rahman of Kitty, a hefty \$50, Mrs. Saheedan, Mrs. Mariam Boodhoo, Mrs. Sakina, and Mrs. Jumnee of Peters Hall, Mrs. Rabbia Khatoon of Versailles, Mrs. Muridan Nowaban of LBI, Mrs. Mariam Hanhi of Triumph, Mrs. S. Razack of Windsor Forest, Mrs. Zainab Alli of Wakenaam, Mrs. Shakeedan and Mrs. Hassanally of Bagotstown. Almost every Muslim family from Maida and Kildonian Villages who were mostly farmers and small shop owners contributed to the Jinnah Refugee Fund. From the Essequibo Coast to, East Bank and West Bank Demerara to West Coast Berbice and to Corentyne Coast to Skeldon Muslim donated (see annex).

President of the Sadr Anjuman Mr. R. B. Gajraj donated a large sum of money to the tune of \$240.00, while the Sadr Anjuman contributed \$50.64. A Mr. Karamat Khan of Mahaicony contributed \$50, Mr. Sardar Mohammed of Essequibo \$ 25, Mr. Sultan A. Hamid of Windsor Forest \$25, Mr. A. Razack of Windsor Forest \$30, Mr. A. Rahaman and the Fyriish Jamaat \$13.90 and Moulvi Abdool Hack and the Albion Jamaat \$25. Interestingly, a few non-Muslims donated to the Pakistan funds, Mr. Sukhai of Essequibo, Mr. Ram, Aurora, Essequibo, Mr., Boodhan Singh and Mr. S. P. Singh of Stabroek market. The famous Guyanese millionaire today, E. Beharry made a modest donation. The famous Gafoors, millionaires of Guyana today, contributed \$1.50.

A Village Call Pakistan

In 1947 a small area between La Jalousie and Windsor Forest that was predominantly populated by Muslims was unofficially named Pakistan symbolizing the strong bond between these two people. There were also some Chinese and Hindus who lived there. The first batch of Chinese immigrants settled in that area. The name was "adopted" by the Moslems who wanted to do something in honour of the establishment of the Moslem state of Pakistan in August of 1947. It was more their affinity to the newly created Pakistan which they viewed as their new motherland instead of Hindustan, and more importantly because all of the villagers were Muslims. Many Ustaads and Imams who were fluent in Urdu originated here. It is in this part of Guyana that is it alleged the first mosque was built somewhere between Philadelphia and Vergenloogen by Muslims indentured labours. The relationship between these two people are as strong as it was in 1947.

Guyana Pakistan historical relationship continued after Guyana's independence in areas of culture, politics and commerce. When Guyana gained its independence in 1966 Pakistan presented Guyana an oriental rug and since then relationship has grown bi-laterally and multi-laterally thorough the UN, NAM, the OIC and the Commonwealth. The two countries have exchanged Honourary consuls. More recently Pakistan's High Commissioner to Guyana Mr. Musa Javed Chohan said, "I am happy to inform you that I have the blessings of the President and Prime Minister that more needs to be done on both sides and that there needs to be greater awareness between the two countries and we have to go beyond cricket,"³⁸ Foreign closer ties between Guyana and Pakistan to more substance in areas economic and commercial relations will be the focus of newly appointed Pakistan High Commissioner to Guyana.

Despite geographical distance and limited trade, the two countries have strong bonds of cultural affinities since many Guyanese have their roots in South East Asia. This, he noted, gives consideration to the promotion of interchange in the cultural arena. However, when it comes to people to people relationship, there are strong ties between Guyana's Muslims and Pakistan who keeps this bond alive and strong, and has stated before, Pakistan has more or less mothered the Guyanese Muslims since 1947.

Guyana and Palestine

The Guyana/Palestinian fraternal relationship dates back to the 1950s during the height of the anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. The Jagans were staunch supporters of liberation struggles in places such as India, Algeria and Ghana, and they were also very opposed to Zionism which led to the Palestinian Nakaba and the creation of Israel by European Zionists.

Dr. Cheddi Jagan said a few times, “The Europeans solved their Jewish problem at the expense of the Palestinians.”³⁹ Eventually Mr. Arafat will resurrect the Palestinian nation and the two men would meet in South Africa after Dr. Jagan became President of Guyana. After Guyana’s independence in 1966, and the coming of LFS Burnham, policies towards the Palestinians did not change. Guyana continued its moral support to the stateless Palestinian and in 1964 established formal ties with Palestine.

Many CARICOM nations follow suit, looking to Guyana for leadership in this area. Not surprisingly, many Arab countries opened embassies in Guyana. One Surinamese diplomat who was stationed at the U.N. revealed “we always monitored Guyana’s voting at the U.N. on issues relating to the Middle East and followed suit.”

Under the brilliant diplomacy of Guyana’s then Ambassador to the U.N, Mr. Rudy Insanally who was well liked among the Arab circle at the U.N relationship with the Arabs states grew strong. In 1974 the PLO gained U.N. recognition and it was in this forum that ties were further consolidated. Guyana and Cuba became members of the U.N. Standing Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people.

When the Hebron massacre took place, Assembly President Samuel R. Insanally of Guyana stated on 25 February "This murderous violence must be unreservedly condemned", he said that “everything must be done to prevent or punish those acts, as well as to "calm the unrest which such crimes can only provoke.” The massacre of innocent Palestinian worshippers and the consequent "outbreak of violence leading to loss of lives in the Palestinian occupied territories" were also deplored by the Commission on Human Rights.⁴⁰

The Committee frequently meets to appraise the situation in Palestine and the so called peace process. Guyana has fully supported the peace process and frequently issues statements to encourage dialogue. “The Government of Guyana urges both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to fully implement not only the agreements reached at Wye last month, but also others which have been concluded over the years. Too much time has already been lost and too much is at stake to allow this very unique opportunity to dissipate.”⁴¹ Mr. Insanally urged the world not to forget that a just and comprehensive solution between Israel and its neighbours must be achieved. “There is one requirement that should not be forgotten: the question of Palestine must be resolved through a just, comprehensive and definitive peace in the Middle East, and for this to be achieved, not only must the Palestinians be allowed to exercise their inalienable rights, but the disputes between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon, which are linked to the core issue, must

also be resolved.” He continued to urge the international community that a peace settlement should be achieved “in the context of [Security Council resolution 242 \(1967\)](#). The peace process is based significantly on the principle of land for peace. That principle cannot be overlooked or abandoned at any time.”⁴²

Guyana has condemned Israeli “repression and settlement activities.” And despite 60 years there is no resolution to the conflict. According to the Guyanese diplomat, the Secretary-General's report of 2006 speaks of the tragic plight of the Palestinian people. “Despite several United Nations resolutions calling on Israel to cease its repression, that nation continues its settlement activities in Palestine and the occupied territories.”⁴³ Dr. Insanally asserted, “Palestinian and other Arab lands and property are being constantly confiscated and many homes demolished daily. Thousands of Palestinians remain imprisoned in Israel amid graphic reports of their torture and abuse.” Settlements have expanded and the West Jerusalem has grown larger. “Now that the Government of Israel has expanded the boundaries of Jerusalem and created an umbrella municipality to administer it, it is feared that this development may serve to worsen the plight of the Palestinians.”⁴⁴ And those activities are “very distressing, of course, is the negative impact on the Palestinian economy caused by closures of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip during the year, and by unremitting water shortages, which have affected agricultural production and the living conditions of the Palestinian people,”⁴⁵ according to Insanally.

In commemorating “Palestine Solidarity Day,” the government issued the following statement: “the Government and the people of Guyana are pleased to renew their pledge of full support. We believe that the Palestinian people will be ultimately successful in their struggle, since, as history has shown time and again, justice will in the end prevail over injustice.”⁴⁶ Yearly the government of Guyana issues such statements.

Every year on Palestine Day the government of Guyana calls for the liberation of Palestine and in 2002, at the United Nation, Guyana's Minister of Foreign Affairs said, “Old conflicts persist, denying entire populations the opportunity to live in peace and security. The situation in the Middle East must be of special concern to us all, since it threatens to become a wider conflict. The right of the Palestinian people to national self-determination — a right guaranteed by international law — must be upheld if there is to be a just and lasting solution to the region's problems.”⁴⁷

In 2007 at the 62nd Session of the UN General Assembly, Insanally said, “Similarly, in the area of peace and security there is continuing blatant disregard of the rule of law by many States that, in pursuit of their own selfish national interests, do not hesitate to fan the flames of conflict in various parts of the world. As a consequence, millions in Darfur, in Palestine, in the Middle East and elsewhere are forced to endure unspeakable pain and suffering — pain and suffering which, in today's world of instant communication; we not only hear about but also actually see and feel in real time. Our common humanity obliges us to call once again for a return to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and in particular the peaceful settlement of disputes, wherever and whenever they occur.”⁴⁸

After the death of President Yasser Arafat, President Bharrat Jagdeo made several statements and several events were held in Guyana reflecting on the life of Arafat by the government and the private sector. Guyana's President Jagdeo sent condolence message to the Palestinian Authority and hailed Arafat as a "towering symbol of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to a homeland of their own".⁴⁹ President Jagdeo urged his Foreign Minister to host a symposium on the life of Yasser Arafat, and the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana Secretariat (CIOG) launched the book of condolence for the former Palestinian President. The Guyanese leader was worried that Guyana was not appropriately remembering the late leader.⁵⁰

Among those who signed the book of condolence were Minister of Tourism Industry and Commerce, Manzoor Nadir; British High Commissioner, Stephen Hiscock; Member of the Board of Trustees of the Queenstown Masjid, Ayube Hamid; Deputy President of the CIOG, Sultan Hamid Ramcharran; and Chief executive Director of the CIOG, Shaikh Moeenul Hack.

Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo asked this Foreign Affairs Minister, Rudy Insanally to put together a series of lectures at the Foreign Service Institute in memory of Arafat. "Hopefully, this will put in perspective his struggles for an independent homeland for the Palestinian people," he said. President Jagdeo was concerned by "to distort the facts about the Palestinians' struggle, and said "in Guyana we cannot allow that to happen. Guyana has always recognized Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian people's struggle."

President Jagdeo noted that the Palestinians have been subjected to the most serious injustices in the world, as they were removed from their country and scattered around the world. In many instances, they even live "as refugees, hoping that one day they can go back to their independent homeland." "We in Guyana should never allow the history of the struggle of the Palestinian people to fall by the wayside and that is why it is important that we give due recognition to Yasser Arafat's struggle," the President said.⁵¹

The President of Guyana expressed his dismay of the destruction of the life and struggle being witnessed today in Palestine. However, he expressed the hope that the international media would focus more on Palestine and the situation there. Guyanese must understand, he urged, "that no Palestinian life is more or less important than that of an Israeli, and hence, any attempt in the international media to paint such a picture is a distortion."⁵² The President also reiterated support for an independent Palestinian homeland, and expressed hope that this moves beyond words and bears fruit of strong action. He also recalled his interactions with Arafat at United Nations forums and praised his deep commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people and a sense of justice.⁵³

Guyana's Foreign Minister and former Ambassador to the United Nations, Rudy Insanally, subsequently declared that Guyana, "as a member of the U.N. Standing Committee on the Alienable Rights of the Palestinian People, remains committed to the Palestinian cause to their homeland and to a just solution to the Palestinian problem..."⁵⁴

He continued, “As a member of the U.N. Standing Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Guyana remains committed to working with the international community for an early solution to the Palestinian problem that would bring an end to the suffering of this long beleaguered people.”(GINA)

After the death of Yasser Arafat, a public forum to reflect on the life and accomplishments of the Palestinian leader was held in Guyana at the Foreign Service Institute. The Forum was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Presenters included former Foreign Minister Rashleigh Jackson, General Secretary of the PPP Donald Ramotar and Mr. Kerry Arthur of the Central Islamic Organization.⁵⁵ They reflected on the struggle of Arafat who fought for peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian people and the history of the Palestinian problem. The forum was moderated by Foreign Affairs Minister Rudy Insanally, who noted that Guyana has, for years, been a member of the Standing Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and in 1987 this country hosted a meeting of that Committee. According to him Guyana has always sought to play a prominent part on the issue of Palestine and, more comprehensively, on the situation in the Middle East. “Guyana’s association with the struggle is well known and ongoing,” Minister Insanally said that Guyana will “continue to advocate peace and justice for the Palestinian people who, for too long, have been denied a homeland of their own and peace and security.”⁵⁶ Mr. Insanally praised Yasser Arafat for his struggle for Palestine and his peace overtures towards to Israel. Insanally said referring to Arafat, said, “He spearheaded the efforts in the aspirations of freedom for Palestinians. He was probably one of the few who moved from being a guerilla fighter to a Nobel Prize winner,” Minister Insanally noted. “His memory will persist.”⁵⁷

In this presentation, Former Foreign Affairs Minister Rashleigh Jackson recounted the history of Palestine and the Palestinian cause which was spearheaded Arafat and he grew parallel to 1939 commission which sought to establish a Jewish settlement in Guyana. “If that had happened, we might be in a similar position to the Palestinian people,” Jackson opined.⁵⁸ Jackson’s chronicled the Palestine struggle since the Balfour Declaration, the 1947 declaration of an independent Israel and praised Arafat for taking the Palestinian issue back to the United Nation. the history of the issue before the UN.⁵⁹

General Secretary of the PPP Donald Ramotar and Kerry Arthur of the Central Islamic Organisation of Guyana also reflected on the life of Arafat and the Palestinian struggle. According to Ramotar it was Arafat who restored the dignity to the Palestinian people. Kerry Arthur examined the struggle of the Palestinian people and its impact and influence on the Muslim community. He noted that for Muslims around the world, the symbol of Arafat cannot be removed. “He embodies the core of the problems that Muslims face all over the world. The Palestinian/Israeli conflict cannot be separated from religious sentiments. The problems of the Middle East cannot be either.” Arthur said.⁶⁰

Another senior Guyanese diplomat who travelled often to the Middle East and unofficial ambassador of Guyana to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Dr. Odeen Ishmael, met President Arafat several times. Their most recent meeting was in 2000 at

the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) heads of government summit in Doha, Qatar. I believe that then Foreign Minister Rohee was there as well.

Odeen in a recent interview said, "I always liken Yasser Arafat to the Prophet Moses who led his people through the wilderness but died before he reached the 'Promised Land'. In a conversation that lasted over an hour, "He (Arafat) talked about the hopes for the Palestinian state, the role Guyana can play in the U.N. Committee on Palestine, the role of Guyana in the OIC."

Palestinian sources reveal that in 2001 President Arafat indicated his intention to visit Guyana and this may have intimidated the Government of Guyana. However, Georgetown was happy for such a visit to take place. This visit was to be tied up with a visit to the U.N. in September 2001 from where he would have travelled to Cuba and Guyana.

However, the visit never became a reality. Arafat would later remain a prisoner in Ramallah. Sharon came to power with his brutal reoccupation of Palestinian ghettos in Gaza and the West Bank and a second Intafada began. Arafat was then imprisoned in his headquarters in Ramallah and never made it to Guyana and Cuba. However, the Guyanese people must be aware that Guyana was well known by President Arafat and he was sincere to show his thanks to Guyana with a personal visit.

Dr. Odeen Ishmael was the last Guyanese diplomat who had a conversation with Arafat and in this lively chat, much the tone of Arafat, he revealed his hope of going back to Jerusalem. Odeen said, "He had strong hopes of going back there. He told me his family home is still there, but it is now occupied by an Israeli Jewish family. He still has the title for the property." Ishmael stressed that Arafat was popular among the Palestinians. In a show of support and unity at the Qatar Summit, the Palestinian delegation included members of the Christian community, among them two bishops from Jerusalem.

Arafat was loved by all Palestinians, Muslims and Christians, women, children and refugees in the ghettos of Gaza and the West Bank. He died a hero to his people and a legendary figure that blazed the Palestinian cause globally. The genuine outpouring of grief and the down to earth welcome he received in death in Ramallah testifies to this.

I end with a quote from Dr. Ishmael: "The Arafat era is coming to a close, but even when he eventually dies, Arafat will remain larger than life -- the leader of a people and a cause that will eventually win." Now that Arafat is out of the picture we can see how sincere the Israelis are in peace and their seriousness in freeing the Palestinians from their brutal occupation.

More recently, Guyana appointed a honorary consul in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is not recognized by the majority of countries in the world as Israel's capital but recently Guyana did when it appointed a Honourary Consul in Jerusalem which is a disputed city. The final status of Jerusalem has not been resolved and will be settled based on United Nations Resolutions 242, 338, 252 and 476. Is this a 360 degree turn in Guyana's foreign

policy? Since 1966 Guyana has been a strong advocate of Palestine. To date the author has not been able to get an explanation from the Government of Guyana on this issue.

Guyana was an active member of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and for decades championed the Palestinian cause since the days of Forbes Burnham and Dr. Cheddi Jagan. It is quite obvious that this is an honorary consul and not an embassy. Guyana needs representation in many parts of the world and for a poor country it's economically practical because it's an unpaid job by a volunteer; however its political ramifications are enormous because of the highly contested status of Jerusalem. This move by Georgetown will have serious repercussions on multilateral/bilateral relations.

Guyana and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is an international organization grouping fifty-seven countries and whose charter was finally revised after four decades to tackle social, political and economic troubles in the Muslim World in 2008. The Organization was established in Rabat, Morocco, on 25 September 1969 when the first meeting of the leaders of the Islamic world was held in the wake of the Israeli occupation in 1969 of Jerusalem. In 1969 the organisation had less than 20 members, and today that number has grown to 57 which include two countries in the Americas, Guyana and Suriname. Russia, Bosnia, and Thailand are observer member of the OIC, and another 10 countries are looking to join the group. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) is an affiliate organisation of the OIC and all member states except Guyana are member of that Group as well as the Islamic Scientific Cultural and Education Organisation (ISESCO).

Six months after that historic event in March 1970, the First Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during which the OIC General Secretariat was established to ensure coordination among member states. The Conference appointed a Secretary General for the Organization and chose Jeddah as the city to house its temporary Headquarters, a new and very modern headquarter is being constructed in Jeddah at the moment. At the early stages the OIC focused much attention to Arab/Israeli conflict but the organisation made little success because its charter has constrained its ability to become more than a paper tiger.

The OIC is the world's largest pan-Islamic body, and the 2nd largest multi-lateral organisation after the United Nations, is looking for reinvent itself in 21st century. The OIC is not a religious organization contrary to misconceptions. More recently, US President, G. Bush appointed Sada Cumber, a Pakistani born Texas businessman as US envoy to the OIC. "It is an important organization, it has a constructive role to play in the world, and the president is signaling our desire to have a greater dialogue with the organization as well as Muslims around the world," said White House spokeswoman Dana Perino. The UK also, for the first time, sent an envoy to the OIC Summit, Mr. Shahid Malik, and Minister for International Development. Russia is also a member of the OIC and India is keen in joining this body but its application has been stymied by Pakistan.

At the recent 11th OIC Heads of State Summit in Dakar, Senegal, the organisation adopted a new charter. The summit focus attention on growing "Islamophobia" in the West, the revision of its charter, the implementation of the 10-year OIC Programme of Action, the renaming of the organization and tangible steps to forge better cooperation among member states. A 10 billion dollar economic development package put together by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE will be unveiled to tackle poverty and other social ills in member states including Guyana and Suriname, who will benefit from these new developments. Debt relief for least developed members is also part of the economic relief package.

It was also in 1996 that Guyana officially became a permanent observer in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). This further strengthened Guyana's ties with the Middle East, coupled with its traditional support for a Palestinian homeland. In 1997, during the 8th Summit of the OIC in Teheran, Iran, Dr Mohammed Ali Odeen Ishmael, Guyana's Ambassador to Washington represented Guyana. With strong support from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Guyana's application for permanent membership in the OIC was accepted in 1998 and Guyana became the 56th member state of the OIC that year. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Clement Rohee was head of the Guyanese delegation to the OIC heads of government summit in Doha, Qatar in 2000.

Dr. Ishmael was a member of the Doha delegation as well. The Ambassador has attended all OIC Heads of States Summit and Foreign Minister Conferences since Guyana's membership. In June of 1999 Ambassador Odeen Ishmael led Guyana's delegation to the twenty-sixth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso. Dr. Odeen Ishmael was also head of the Guyanese delegation in June of 2000 at the 27th session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Most recently, in June of 2001, the Washington based diplomat was once again head of the delegation of Guyana to the 28th Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Bamako, Mali. He is indeed the unofficial ambassador of Guyana to the OIC. Naturally, Guyana's participation in the OIC has strengthened ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Their strong support for the Palestinian causes has drawn these two countries closer. Dr. Odeen Ishmael also attended the OIC Foreign Ministers Summit in Tehran in May of 2003.

At the Bamako Conference Guyana made a call for international observers in Palestine. The Palestinian delegation in Mali was very pleased with Guyana's call for international observers, and actually the Guyanese delegation was the only delegation that made this demand. In his speech, Odeen Ishmael said, "In this regard, effective mechanisms must be identified to implement the relevant proposals aimed at achieving a lasting settlement to the situation. Guyana supported the call for international observers to be positioned in Palestinian territory to monitor the situation" according to Ambassador Odeen Ishmael.

The ambassador represented Guyana's interest in this organization and shaped his country's strong ties with member states and the politics of the organization. At the OIC and at the UN Guyana continue to champion the fight for a Palestinian homeland.

Guyana also supports UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and has called on Israel to implement them. At the Doha Summit, Chairman Arafat held discussion with Ambassador Odeen Ishmael. The Chairman acknowledged Guyana's continued support towards the Palestinian cause and promise to pay an official visit to Guyana to say thanks.

Since the presidency of President Bharrat Jagdeo, Guyana has attached little importance to the OIC. Behind the scene the president micro-manages the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and delays the appointing of delegations to attend OIC meetings, an example was the recent Dakar Heads of State Summit. Two days before the summit President Bharrat Jagdeo approved CIOG's CEO, Fazeel Ferouz and Guyana's Ambassador to India, Ronald Gajraj to attend the summit. The delegation was sent without any briefing and without the necessary documents to enter the summit. It turned into an embarrassing situation. Gajraj never made it to Dakar and Ferouz was initially denied entry to conference because Georgetown did not inform Dakar of his attendance. They did not send him with the necessary papers, nor fax them to Dakar. The fact that Senegal's Presidential Envoy had met Ferouz in Guyana cleared the way for him to sit in the Guyana chair.

Senegal placed great importance to this summit and sent a three-member delegation to personally invite the presidents of Guyana and Suriname to attend the upcoming summit. To date, no Guyanese heads of state have attended an OIC summit. The visit of the Senegalese delegation to Guyana was ignored by the Guyana state media, GINA. The delegation paid a visit to President Jagdeo which the state media, GINA did not cover. Guyana's relationship with the OIC under the current government has wane. It was under the leadership of Dr. Cheddi Jagan that Guyana became a member of the OIC in 1998, and under the presidency of Mrs. Jagan, Guyana actively participated in OIC meetings and was represented by Dr. Odeen Ishmael, an astute and charismatic diplomat who attended all OIC meetings up to 2003. Mr. Clement Rohee, while he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the Heads of State Summits in Malaysia and Qatar. However, the current Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Insanally is yet to attend an OIC Foreign Minister Meeting or heads of government summit. Suriname, which became a member of the OIC in 1996, has been actively represented in OIC forums by Mohamed Rafeeq Chiragally and Dr. Anwar S. Lall Mohamed.

Thirty-Seven heads of states attended the Dakar Summit, and according to the OIC office in Jeddah and ISESCO in Rabat, Morocco, CIOG's Fazeel Ferouz was there only on the final day of the summit because get left Guyana on March 12 and arrived in Senegal on the evening of March 13. The Heads of State Summit began on March 13 and ended on March 14, 2008. This is another embarrassing diplomatic blunder especially after Senegal sent a three-member delegation to invite President Bharrat Jagdeo personally to the Heads of State Summit.

Why not designate **desk officer in handle, inter alia**, OIC affairs like what normal countries do? We do not have to look too far, just next door Suriname's Mr. Rafiq

Chiragally is that government's Envoy to the OIC. Dr. Odeen Ishmael served for several years in a similar capacity when he represented Guyana at many OIC forums but the Government of Guyana is yet to give a logical answer as to why he has been sidelined from the OIC. Sending Mr. Gajraj from India to Senegal is not an issue of geography and money, because it is easier to get from Caracas to Dakar. The PPP Government needs to put personal grudges aside and conduct international affairs professionally.

According to the Surinamese Mission to the United Nations, Paramaribo was represented by a robust four-member delegation led by its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lygia L. Kraag-Keteldij and comprised of its Ambassador to the UN, Henry L. Mac Donald, Ambassador of OIC Affairs, Mr. Rafiq Chiragally and Ms. Jacintha Asarfi. The OIC and its subsidiary organs, the IsDB and ISESCO have been supporting the health, transportation and education infrastructure in Suriname. It is not only for this reason that this small Dutch speaking country in South America sent a strong delegation to Dakar, but more importantly the recognition at such global foras to lobby for development assistance for the country and forging of other **multi-bi collaboration**. Suriname is now eligible for a 35 million dollar debt write off from the OIC and will benefit from the proposed 10 billion poverty and development programme. Saudi Arabia already pledged 2 billion dollars to this fund.

The OIC and its arm, International Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO) have taken important decisions in favour of Least Developed Countries. Again, ISESCO prepared the "Letter of Intent" for Guyana to join that group and Guyana is not expected to pay dues, which will be waived. With no member of the government present in Dakar, according to ISESCO, the letter could not be signed and has been sent to Guyana for signature. After four years of failed attempt to get Guyana to sign the "Letter of Intent," to Dr. Frank Anthony for signature. Guyana Ministry of Foreign is micro-managed and diplomats are not brief before they attend these meetings, and often are confused or have not idea what to expect. And more recently, in June 2008, Guyana did not attend the OIC Foreign Minister Conference in Kampala, Uganda adding more credence to speculation that Georgetown is scaling back relationship with the OIC.

Conclusion

Guyana's relationship with the Islamic World dates back to advent of Islam, the hijra in the Jazira Arabiya, the expansion of Islam to West Africa and South Asia, whose descendents today make up the bulk of Guyana's population? Guyana strong ties with the Islamic World were kept alive by the South Asian Muslims after the demise of Islam among the Africans. India mothered the South Asian Muslims of Guyana but after 1947 Pakistan took over that role. With the rise of nationalist politics in Guyana 1945-1960s, political ties were established with the Islamic World. Since then and especially after independence in 1966, Guyana's ties with the Islamic World accelerated politically, economically and culturally during the presidency of former President Burnham, Desmond Hoyte, Cheddi Jagan and Janet Jagan, and especially when joined the OIC under Dr. Jagan's presidency in 1998. Under the current presidency of Bharrat Jagdeo, ties with the Islamic World grew cold.

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- ¹ IRNA, Iran New Agency, October 19, 1995
- ² GINA, Guyana New Agency, June 26, 2002, <http://www.op.gov.gy/speeches/hciran.htm>
- ³ *Ibid.*,
- ⁴ *Ibid.*,
- ⁵ *Iran looks for joint venture with Guyanese*, Guyana Chronicle, July 25, 2002
- ⁶ *Ibid.*,
- ⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ⁸ GINA, Guyana News Agency, Georgetown, Guyana, available on line at: www.gina.gov.gy
- ⁹ GINA
- ¹⁰ Gina, January 31, 2007
- ¹¹ Guyana/ Indonesia solidarity key to nations' advancement, Georgetown, GINA, August 21, 2007
- ¹² *Ibid.*,
- ¹³ *Ibid.*,
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*,
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*,
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*,
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*,
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Author during field research found some Muslims who still read and speak Farsi which support evidence in various Muslim periodicals that a handful of learned Muslim spoke Farsi.
- ²⁰ This information was extracted from the immigration records stored at the National Archives of Guyana.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Voice Islam*, March 1948, p.27, Georgetown, Guyana (publication of Guyana strongest and largest Islamic Organisation of that period, after the British Guiana Islamic Association merged with the Sadr in 1947 and the two Journals *Voice of Islam and Nur-E-Islam* merged).
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Voice of Islam*, March 1948, p.6, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ²⁵ *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, April 1950, p.39 Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ²⁶ *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, April 1950, p. 47, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ²⁷ *Voice of Islam*, April 1948, p. 53 Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ²⁸ *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, 1949, p.31, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ²⁹ A. Samadeen, Ode to Qaid-E-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Vol.2, No.1, January 1950, p. 23, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ³⁰ *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, 1949, p.31, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ³¹ A. Samadeen, Ode to Qaid-E-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, *Islam and Nur-E-Islam*, Vol.2, No.1, January 1950, p. 23, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ³² *Ibid.* p.23.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*
- ³⁷ *Voice of Islam*, April, 1948, p. 71 and *Voice of Islam*, March, 1948, p.27, Georgetown, British Guiana.
- ³⁸ Guyana/Pakistan economic, trade relations to improve, December 15th, 2007, <http://www.guyanachronicle.com/news.html>
- ³⁹ Queens, New York, October 1993, visit to the UN General Assembly.
- ⁴⁰ http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1309/is_n2_v31/ai_15715988/pg_1

⁴¹ General Assembly Session 53, meeting 74, Question of Palestine, Report of Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People,

http://www.undemocracy.com/generalassembly_53/meeting_74#pg009-bk01

⁴² *Ibid.*,

⁴³ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁴⁷ Part of a speech delivered at the 57th session of the UN General Assembly in 2002. Available on line at: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/eed216406b50bf6485256ce10072f637/6acc947722e2f4ff85256c53004afa3c!OpenDocument>

⁴⁸ Speech delivered at the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly in 2007 at the 14 Plenary Meeting. Available online at:

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/eed216406b50bf6485256ce10072f637/b816564cd254e0f78525738400651544!OpenDocument>, accessed on March 15, 2008.

⁴⁹ Ricky Singh, Caricom, Bush and Palestine, <http://www.guyanachronicle.com/ARCHIVES/archive%2018-11-04.html>, accessed October 13th, 2003

⁵⁰ President Jagdeo signs book of condolence for Yasser Arafat, Georgetown, GINA, November 19, 2004

⁵¹ GINA

⁵² GINA

⁵³ GINA

⁵⁴ Ricky Singh, <http://www.guyanachronicle.com/ARCHIVES/archive%2018-11-04.html>, accessed October 13th, 2003

⁵⁵ **Guyanese reflect on the life and legend of Yasser Arafat**, Georgetown , GINA, December 2, 2004

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*,

⁶⁰ Guyanese reflect on the life and legend of Yasser Arafat, Guyana Government News Agency, <http://www.gina.gov.gy/archive/daily/b041202.html>, December 2, 2004