

# Media Release

February 5, 2016

## GECOM's State of preparedness for Local Government Elections – 2016



**GECOM's Press Conference: PRO Tamara Rodney, Chairman Dr. Steve Surujbally, Chief Election Officer Mr. Keith Lowenfield, Deputy Chief Election Officer Mr. Vishnu Persaud.**

The Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is ahead of the work plan approved by the Commission. Several key areas are completed on the roadmap, including:

- Preparation of Registers of Voters- The preparation of voters involves the conduct of claims and objections exercise, the purification of register of voters, along with the fingerprint cross matching. The fingerprint cross matching is the system we employ to ensure that no elector is there more than once.

- Nomination Day (January 26, 2015)- All political parties, groups and individuals interested in contesting the polls submitted their respective lists of candidates.

- Post Nomination Day

- Checking of lists: involves the enablement of the Returning Officers (ROs) to use the software designed for verifying the list and the engagement of trained staff to facilitate the proper checking of lists.

- Informing about Defects: We then forward the lists to the respective representatives for verification.

- Correction of lists: Representatives are then duly informed of errors.

- Approval of lists: We duly inform representatives of the amendments. The approved list is then submitted for publishing. (check sequencing)

- Publication of lists: The official list of candidates has been submitted to the four daily newspapers for publishing, in accordance with the law. The candidates' list includes three (3) political parties, seventeen (17) voluntary groups and sixty- three (63) individual candidates.

- No Local Government Elections in four NDCs based on approved lists:

There are four Neighbourhood Democratic Councils (NDCs) in which elections will not be held because of unopposed lists. The Local Government Elections Law states where the list is unopposed, the Lists/candidates are deemed to have been elected. These areas are: Mocha/ Arcadia, Kintyre/ Borlam, Black Bush Polder and Crabwood Creek/ Moleson Creek. Similarly, there are 149 constituencies in which the lists are unopposed. Accordingly, there will be no elections in these areas also.

Lists/Candidates that are deemed have been elected will be declared as having been elected in reference to Section 54 of the Local Authorities Elections Act.

- Printing of Ballot Paper/SOPs/Tally Sheets:

Having concluded all activities associated with Nomination Day, GECOM has engaged in the designing of the Ballot Paper, Statements of Poll and Tally Sheets for all the Local Authority Areas- except for the four with unopposed lists. We are in the process of dispatching the templates for production overseas.

Elections Day is set for March 18, 2016 for civilians, while the Disciplined Services will cast ballots on March 8, 2016.

- Polling Stations: GECOM commenced work on compiling the list of Polling Stations a draft will shortly be submitted by the Secretariat to the Commission for approval.

- Staffing on Elections Day (E- Day): We began the training of staff since September, 2015. We are now at a stage where we are comfortable that we have the required numbers to work on E- Day. We are engaged in conducting an analysis relative to the engagement of staff to work at Local Authority Areas and Constituencies

- Preparation of Disciplined Forces Balloting: The respective Lists of Electors who are Members of the Disciplined Forces are currently being prepared by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) in collaboration with Senior Representatives from the Guyana Defence Force (GDF), Guyana Police Force (GPF) and the Guyana Prison Service (GPS).

The packing of Ballot Boxes to be dispatched to the Ballot Stations in each Municipality or Neighbourhood Democratic Council will be carried out under adequate supervision of GECOM personnel and witnessed by Agents/Representatives of the contesting Political Parties/Voluntary Groups/Individual Candidates.

All Ballot Boxes will be returned to GECOM after D- Day voting Tuesday, March 8, 2016 and kept in the secured custody of the Chief Election Officer under guard by Members of the Guyana Police Force.

The Ballots cast by members of the Disciplined Forces will be sorted by Local Authority and Constituency to be dispatched to the respective Returning Officers for intermixing on Election Day, which is, March 18, 2016.

The Polling Stations identified for the intermixing of the Disciplined Forces ballots will be gazetted.

The Ballots cast by Members of the Disciplined Forces will be distributed on Election Day, by the Returning Officers to the relevant Presiding Officers, to be inter-mixed and counted at the identified/gazetted Polling Stations.

The respective Lists of Members of the Disciplined Forces will be scrutinized to determine electors who voted on Tuesday, March 8, 2016.

- Transparency: The Local Government Elections Laws stipulates that Party Agents be appointed to monitor all election activities, so as to satisfy themselves that the elections are conducted in a free, fair and transparent manner.

#### Civic Voter Education

As part of the preparation for the LGE, GECOM is currently engaged in a comprehensive “Civic Voter Education Campaign for Local Government Election”. This campaign includes the production and publication of infomercials with a sign language element for the benefit of the hearing impaired, distribution of appropriate flyers at grass root level via GECOM’s Registration Offices.

- The facilitation of interactive public engagements within all of the 71 Local Authority Areas. The schedule of these meeting were being publicized in the print media and via PA systems within the respective communities.

- Engaging in weekly panel discussion, some with call-in features.
- Production and distribution of 100,000 copies each of a Brochure Titled “ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN GUYANA”.
- Public engagements were held with potential contestants in the run-up to the deadline for the submission of applications for approval of symbols requirements for lists submission on Nomination Day, etc.
- Publication of weekly full page and half page advertisements in all of the Local Newspapers focusing on pertinent aspects of the Local Government Elections process.
- Invitations dispatched to 96 Civil Society Organizations across the coastland to discuss matters pertaining to Local Government elections.
- Hotlines have been established and are adequately publicized.
- In addition, we have also participated public events including Essequibo Night and the Business Expo.