

# *Guyanese President Urges Amerindian Leaders to Be Accountable*

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Georgetown, October 30 (RHC-GINA) -- More than 200 Indigenous leaders and community representatives in Guyana were urged to ensure accountability during management of their communities.

The call was made by President Donald Ramotar during his feature address at the opening of the National Toshias Conference (NTC) at the International Conference Center at Liliendaal, Georgetown.

The president also urged the indigenous leaders to continue efforts towards developing their communities and Guyana in an accountable and transparent manner.

Observing that the NTC offers the opportunity to assess the progress of work aimed at improving the lives of hinterland citizens, he added that over the years these efforts have transformed various communities and villages.

Pointing to the steady work towards strengthening institutions and the rights of Amerindians, he noted that the Amerindian Act of 2006 “remains one of the main important pieces of legislations in our country.”

Describing it as one of the most advanced pieces of legislation in relation to indigenous people throughout the world, the President expressed the hope that it would be an example for others whilst serving as an inspiration towards achieving some goals.

He pointed out that Guyana has gone further than any country in the world to guarantee the rights of Amerindians. Whilst Amerindians make up 9.7 % of Guyana's population, they also have rights to 14.1 % of the land mass. There is no other country where the native population has those rights, the President said.

Noting the achievement of universal primary education, the President pointed out that the country is not very far away from achieving universal secondary education. This, he stated, has been done through substantial investment in the building of secondary schools with dormitories in the hinterland. The provision of all the facilities is aimed at easing the pressure of parents in order for them to be able to afford to keep their children in school.

However, the President acknowledged the existence of challenges including having more trained teachers, even though over the last five years teacher training has moved from 58% to 75 %.

More places are being provided in tertiary institutions for Amerindians to occupy and work is ongoing with the University to provide some degree programmes online. This will enable persons to have a university education without leaving their villages.

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