

Donald Ramotar: ‘Man of the year’

December 28, 2014 | By [KNews](#) | Filed Under [APNU Column](#), [Features / Columnists](#)

President Donald Ramotar deserves to be selected as Guyana’s ‘Man of the Year.’ He has succeeded, after only three years in office, in outpacing all previous presidents in terms of personal unpopularity and political underperformance.

The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) confirmed widely-held perceptions about Guyana’s President. The Report determined that there had been a decline in Ramotar’s approval rating and an increase in the number of those who think the economy worsened this year [Stabroek News 19th November]. LAPOP also found that, referring to President Ramotar’s recent decision to suspend Parliament, fewer than 9 per cent of people agreed that the National Assembly should be suspended in a time of crisis.

The LAPOP Report added that “...the political outlook for the Guyanese regime suffered a moderate but general reversal in legitimacy levels in 2014.” It attributed loss of confidence in Ramotar to several factors including “...popular perception of economic performance, citizens’ sensing that the government may not be able to successfully negotiate agreements with opposition members in the parliament, or a broader public perception of a government inability to satisfy citizen demands.”

Ramotar’s prorogation of parliament on Monday 10th November enraged the nation. This ‘Proclamation’ effectively paralysed the parliamentary process and smothered the voices of the people’s legitimate representatives in the National Assembly – an affront to the Guyanese electorate who, three years ago in November 2011, voted for A Partnership for National Unity and the Alliance for Change to have the majority of seats in the National Assembly.

Ramotar, as President, had earlier displayed gross disrespect for the National Assembly by refusing to assent to the Local Government (Amendment) Bill which had been passed by the National Assembly along with the Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Bill, the Local Government Commission Bill and the Fiscal Transfers Bill. These had all been scrutinised by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government before passage. He withheld his assent to the Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Bill 2013 which stated that elections must be held on or before August 1, 2014.

Ramotar tactlessly told his supporters at a town hall meeting in New York that he did indeed promise – in the PPPC 2011 election manifesto –

that, once his party was returned to office, local government elections would be held within the first year. He then admitted reneging on his own promise explaining, fatuously, "... I did not anticipate that we would have had a one-seat minority in Parliament and that created political uncertainty... within what we call the politics of the country."

Ramotar's low rating in terms of public security is consistent with his rating on governance. Ramotar himself had raised the alarm over the state of human safety and the rate of murders and warned the Guyana Police Force, on 24th April 2014, that the country might be facing an "avalanche of crimes." The Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014, compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), has now cited Guyana as having one of the highest homicide rates in the world with just over 20 deaths per 100,000 of the country's population. This country was listed as "the 16th most homicidal country globally." The Report pointed out that Guyana's estimated rate of homicide per 100,000 of the population was 20.2 persons for 2012.

Ramotar, in the wake to the publication of the Report, summoned Guyana Defence Force Chief-of-Staff Brigadier Mark Phillips and Guyana Police Force Commissioner Seelall Persaud to the Office of the President. Ramotar, according to the Government Information Agency, instructed his security chiefs, rather implausibly if not impossibly, to "get on top" of the crime situation.

Ramotar, apart from his busy schedule of cutting ribbons, delivering 'keynote' speeches, holding press conferences and opening exhibitions has actually been doing very little about solving the country's day-to-day problems. His tenure has been rocked by eruptions of angry public protests, both on the coastland and in hinterland communities.

The Barima-Waini Region has seen public protests over the deplorable condition of schools' toilets, roadways and the unstable electricity supply. The Pomeroon-Supenaam Region has seen protests by paddy farmers over payments for paddy and services to the industry. The Essequibo Islands-West Demerara Region has seen protests against torture and extra-judicial killings by members of the Police Force. The Demerara-Mahaica Region has seen protests over the failure to hold local government elections.

The East Berbice-Corentyne Region has seen protests over crime on the Corentyne and, on the East Bank Berbice, bad roads. The Cuyuni-Mazaruni Region's regional administrative centre, Bartica, saw residents protesting about losing electricity for several days in July. Transport operators also protested about the delay in the reconstruction of the Bartica-Potaro Road.

The Potaro-Siparuni Region's regional administrative centre, Mahdia, once again saw protests against poor roads, electricity, water and other services. The Rupununi Region's regional administrative centre, Lethem, saw residents converging outside the Lethem Power Company Inc. (LPCI) compound protesting against the hike in electricity tariffs for the community.

The Upper Demerara-Berbice Region saw protests, including the blockage of the Linden-Kwakwani Road, to call attention to the deplorable state of the vital roadway which has been deteriorating for years without serious long-term repairs.

President Ramotar has now single-handedly engineered a political crisis, ruined his reputation and arranged for the termination of his presidency. The President, after such a stellar performance, surely, must be Guyana's 'Man of the Year.'