

President Ramotar vows to fix faulty 911 system

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...says it's vital for Police to regain public's confidence

President Donald Ramotar said he would do all in his power to fix the faulty Police emergency number 911, saying this mechanism was too vital to be failing. He also underscored the need for the chronic issue of poor Police-public relationship to be tackled head on.

Speaking on his programme, "At Home with the President" aired Monday evening, Ramotar said the issue of the non-working 911 system "has to be fixed, even if we have to go to some special arrangement to get it fixed, so that every time a phone call is made, it is answered and action is taken".

The President explained that his Administration was looking at putting in the systems, to ensure that even "if it means that I have to outsource this, I am ready to do that, because this is extremely important for the Police Force, to ensure that all calls are answered and that they act, they respond to these issues that citizens have been complaining about (and) rightfully so".

During his address at the recent Guyana Police Force's annual conference, he had spoken of the Police initiating better work ethic and engendering trust from the populace.

These sentiments were made in the context of the findings of the last survey, conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), which found that Guyana has the lowest level of trust in the Police in the region, and that trust in the local Police Force was continuing to decrease. He opined that what he found out in the report was very unacceptable, and this was exactly why he mentioned the matter, when he spoke at the Police Officers' Conference.

Unacceptable

His pronouncement was emphatic: "I was very explicit on this matter, to say how much I am disappointed, and I said very frankly (that) it is not acceptable to me, nor is it acceptable to the Guyanese people, and I expect that it is not acceptable to the leadership of the Guyana Police Force, and, therefore, we have to ensure that we work on these issues, to build back the trust of the Guyana Police Force with the population."

President Ramotar explained that his Administration, via the Police, has already started to do 'trust building' work within the communities, noting that "they had some work done in Albouystown; they had some work done in Agricola, and they are now spreading out some of that type of work in other areas, and that I think is beginning to pay off for them, because they are winning more and more support in the community and that is extremely important."

The President said that he was encouraging the Force to continue that aspect of its work. He mentioned the sore topic of response time to crime and declared that "we have been talking to them about their response time when they are called in by citizens, and I'm putting it to them ... as we have to ensure that they have a proper response time ... the shortest possible time, for their arrival on the scene must be very



President Donald Ramotar

short and as short as possible in that regard.”

An optimistic President Ramotar believes that there would be a quick turn-around. He thinks that with the general work that the Police are doing and the resources that the ruling People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) is now putting into the Police Force, that they would help considerably to restore confidence in the Police. At that same Police conference, the President laid out a 15-point plan ‘15 in 2015’ to ensure a more effective force.

President Ramotar said the public sees the work of the Police as most important for the general development of the society, as “security is extremely important and people want to work, people want to carry on their business, people want to go about their leisure, but with a feeling that they are secure in what they are doing”.

He noted that security helped production and productivity and, “it will attract more people to our country, and I believe that it is vital for us to ensure that the Police build that confidence and the public get that confidence again in the Police, to make them very respectable in every community.”

President Ramotar also implored the Police to be conscious of the fact that the leadership of the Police Force will have to do more supervision of the lower ranks and the Community Policing Groups (CPGs), to see that they were discharging their functions as intended, to understand and to be there with the ranks and to have a good understanding of what was taking place within the various communities. He pointed to the use of science and technology, as far as possible, in the detection and fight against crime at all levels. President Ramotar went as far as telling the officers that they should reopen old unsolved crimes, as “criminals must not feel that they can get away with their criminal activities (for) if they feel that way, then they will continue to want to live a life in crime, but if they know that they will be caught, that will serve as a deterrent from people to commit crime within our society”.