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Corrupt practices of PPP responsible for hidden mining contracts – AFC

Oct 29, 2022 News

...says Govt. evading responsibility by not hosting press briefings

Kaieteur News – Despite calls from various sections of society for the release of large-scale mining contracts, the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) government continues to conceal the US-multimillion, and more recently US-multibillion, contracts. The refusal to publish the agreements, however, is a clear indication of corrupt government practices, the Alliance For Change (AFC) has said.

The Party’s Leader, Khemraj Ramjattan, during a press conference yesterday told members of the media that when governments choose to hide such massive arrangements, it signals their interest in keeping deals quiet to ensure they benefit.



AFC Leader, Khemraj Ramjattan

Ramjattan pointed out that while in Opposition, the PPP condemned the former Coalition administration and even assured it would manage the country’s natural resources better, yet the terms of mining agreements remain secret.

The former Minister of Public Security went on to remind that the Coalition had published the 2016 oil contract it entered into with oil major ExxonMobil to ensure Guyana understand the terms accepted by the country.

In the meantime, he told this newspaper that the Party would “have to do all that it takes at the Parliamentary level and other places” to ensure the terms of new agreements are made public. For instance, Ramjattan referenced the recent gold find by Omai which amounts to over US\$6 billion or twice the country’s total debt, US\$3.2 billion; he said he hopes that the country will know how this new find will benefit the citizens of Guyana.

In fact, Ramjattan urged, “That’s a major gold find and I believe that we are going to get lots of other gold finds but we have to have a scenario where there is complete transparency to members of the public, to parliamentarians, to the press about these contracts.”

At the same time, the party leader reasoned, “The one reason why any government anywhere in the world do not want to be transparent with its natural resources is corruption. All the big set of monies that can come in as a result of these finds and major discoveries are going to be distributed is the scare of being transparent. Always it is corruption. If there was no corruption, they would have been extremely transparent about it.”

He was keen to note that governments seek to ensure such deals benefit their friends, family and favourites which would be exposed if contracts are published.

Weighing in on the subject of transparency was the Party’s Chairperson, Catherine Hughes, who noted that the PPP has not been hosting regular press briefings to update Guyana. She said, “Under the APNU/AFC administration, every week we actually had a press conference under which we divulged and provided information to the press on all the contracts that were signed and provided an opportunity for the media and the people of Guyana to scrutinize and to question those contracts.”

To this end, Hughes explained, “I think it is a farce to talk about transparency and a true democracy when you are not willing to put those contracts in the public domain and of course to provide information on those agreements and to allow scrutiny.”

Vice Chairman of the AFC, Ricky Ramsaroop also chimed in to highlight that since the PPP assumed office, the Parliamentary Natural Resources Sectoral Committee has not met to discuss matters relating to that industry.

Additionally, Ramsaroop reminded that the National Coordinator of Guyana Secretariat for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (GY-EITI), Dr. Rudy Jadoopat was removed earlier this year and since then contracts have not been uploaded to the website.

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Last time the country's third Extractive Industries Transparency (EITI) report made yet another call for the government to release all mining contracts, especially those dealing with large-scale concessions.

Since becoming a member of the global body, the report notes that the government agreed to adhere to several requirements. In this case, EITI requirement 2.4 (a) of the 2019 Standard states that Guyana should publicly disclose all mineral agreements entered into force prior to the reporting period, in this case, 2019.

Importantly, the report highlights that the country's Mining Act (1989) does not include any expressed restrictions on the public disclosure of mineral agreements and licences by the government. It goes further to state that even the mineral agreement signed on November 18, 2011 for Aurora Gold Mine developed by Guyana Goldfields is silent about restrictions on the public disclosure of the mineral agreement. Be that as it may, that very agreement, along with many others, is not available online for citizens to understand what concessions were granted to these firms versus what the country would get in return. In light of this, Guyana's third EITI report recommended that a work plan be drafted for the electronic publication of all mineral agreements in the mining sector.

In August of this year, Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo was asked for an update on the release of the mining contracts by *Kaieteur News* Publisher, Mr. Glenn Lall when the VP again promised to make the contracts public.

Jagdeo said, "I don't think these agreements should be secret. Right, because the concessions are standard... Many people don't remember this but the Minister of Finance used to sign every duty-free letter that was when I was there and we changed it. When I became President and even before that, we started moving to change it where all of that, the administering of duty-free concessions would be done by the GRA and not by a political individual and secondly, they would be based on legislation."

He therefore indicated, "I don't see the reason why many of these are not in the public domain already. I'll find out about it."

Despite giving this assurance, there has been no word on the mining agreements to date.

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Weekend Cartoon



Bridge Watch

Demerara Harbour Bridge

Today **Wednesday, December 28**

Thursday, December 29

10:00am **10:00**

10:30pm **22:30**

Events shown in time zone: Guyana Time [Calendar](#)

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