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## Teixeira says...

By Staff (https://guyanachronicle.com/author/yate  
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**Gov't to use social media to discuss Parliament's governance-building role  
-cites importance of Constitutional amendments to enhancing democracy.**

PRESIDENTIAL Adviser on Governance, Gail Teixeira, said yesterday that the legislative arm of the government will be making more use of the Internet and social media to reach out to the general public.

Among the many uses to which the technology-driven mediums will be put is informing the public about the role of Parliament in strengthening democratic governance.

Speaking on the issue of governance on a magazine show at NCN's television studios yesterday, Teixeira, herself a former Minister of Health and Minister of Home Affairs, gave an account of the government's efforts at cementing participatory democracy over the past decade or so.

"One of the things in the new Parliament, in the Tenth Parliament, will be [to examine] how we can engage the public better through the website, through Facebook, to know which days Committees are meeting [so that they can come and observe the proceedings]," she said.

Just weeks ago, the Parliament Office embarked on a project to enhance its Internet presence by setting up a Facebook account. The Tenth Parliament is constitutionally expected to be in place by December 28, 2011.

Teixeira said the period 1992 to 1999 was about trying to reconstruct Guyana and to take immediate action to try to bring some relief to people in terms of education, health and water.

“There wasn’t much money there, and the country itself was demoralized and not in good shape. And so, a lot of the efforts between 1992 and 1999 had to do with physical reconstruction and so forth. But clearly, the attempt to reconstruct Guyana would not be enough to move the country forward, because we are a multi-ethnic society; a diverse society in terms of religion, culture, ethnicity, as well as linguistically,” she said.

Teixeira said the 1999 to 2001 period, by contrast, was very critical and a very important time in Guyana’s history, since it was the time of the Constitution Reform process which was headed by a Commission that was very broad-based.

The history of this period, she said, is important because the Commission went all over Guyana and received submissions. She also noted that at the time, there was a parallel inter-party dialogue going on.

But by 2003, she said, they had brought the amendments to the Constitution to the House, and those were adopted. “This set a new model for Guyana in terms of what is called an inclusive governance model, and certainly Article 13 talks about participatory democracy,” she said, adding:

“The Constitution enshrined really critical issues that I think the Guyanese public needs to be more familiar with. It built into the Constitution a power-sharing mechanism, which is downplayed by the Opposition in a variety of ways.”

Going into a bit more details, she said: “In Guyana, the Leader of the Opposition’s position is enshrined in Law; his benefits etc are enshrined in law. But more than that, the Constitution enshrines in him almost a veto power over the President in a number of identified critical, constitutional posts. So he and the President must concur. They must also reach agreement on specified appointments and nominations to the service commissions, such as the Police Service Commission and the Judicial Service Commission.”

Noting that it is the Leader of the Opposition who is tasked with giving the President six names from which to choose the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission, Teixeira said the holder of that office has already be written to on the subject of selecting the chairman of the Human Rights Commission.

“This is a very important shift in terms of trying to find spatial opportunities between the President and the Leader of the Opposition; in terms of reaching concurrence wherever possible; in terms of a critical post that in most other countries, it is either a direct appointee of the Head of State, and in some cases maybe, with some involvement with Parliament,” she said.

Noting that the Constitution makes provision for those who feel their human rights have been violated to go directly to the Courts on a Constitutional Motion, Teixeira said such a proviso does not only apply to Guyana's Constitution but also any of the rights treaties that Guyana has ratified, whether it is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, the Rights of the Child, the Convention on Women and Gender Equality, the Convention Against Torture.

"The earlier Constitution stated freedoms, but these were not enforceable," she said.

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