

Suriname

KEY FACTS

Official name: Republiek Suriname
(Republic of Suriname)

Head of State: President Desiré (Desi)
Delano Bouterse (from 12 Aug
2010)

Head of government: President Desiré
Bouterse

Ruling party: Coalition: De Mega
Combinatie (Mega Combination,
alliance of four political parties,
led by Nationale Democratische
Partij (National Democratic Party)
(NDP) (from 2010)

Area: 163,265 square km

Population: 546,000 (2012)*

Capital: Paramaribo (Parbo)

Official language: Dutch

Currency: Suriname dollar (Su\$) =
100 cents

Exchange rate: Su\$3.30 per US\$ (Jul
2013)

GDP per capita: US\$8,686 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 4.47% (2012)*

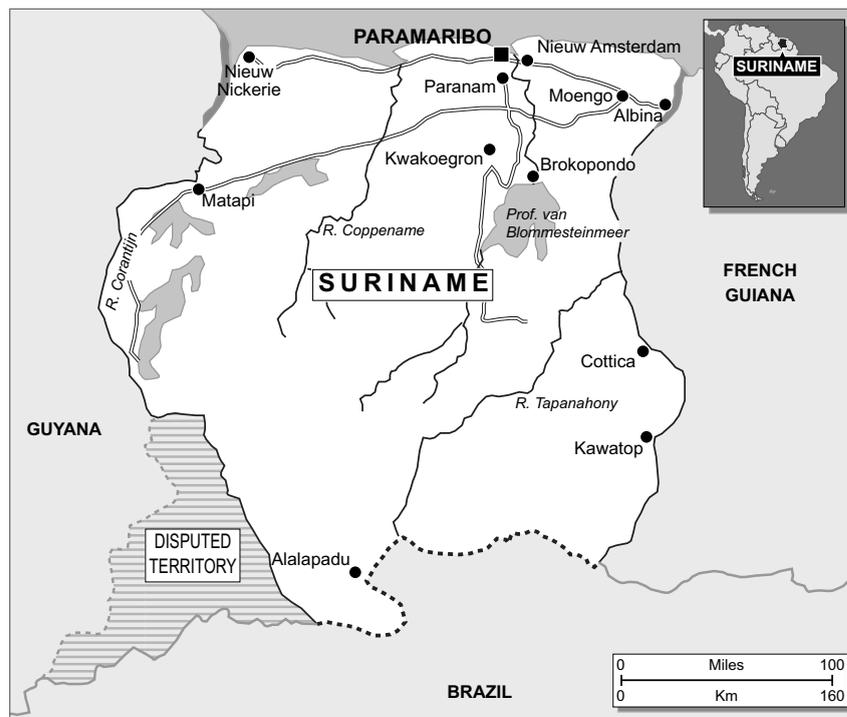
GDP: US\$4.74 billion (2012)*

Inflation: 4.99% (2012)*

Balance of trade: US\$803.20 million
(2012)

Annual FDI: US\$69.80 billion
(2011)

* estimated figure



Suriname's President Desiré Bouterse is one of the few, if not the only, of the world's heads of state that has faced charges of murder and a possible 20 year jail sentence. Not only that, in 1999 Mr Bouterse had been convicted *in absentia* for importing cocaine from Suriname into the Netherlands. Were he to return to the Netherlands he would spend 11 years in jail.

Presidential past

Bouterse again went on trial, this time for murder, with 24 others, in 2008, two years before he was elected president with a two-thirds majority in 2010. The 25 men stand accused of the murder in December 1982 of 15 men who had been arrested in their houses in Paramaribo and taken to Fort Zeelandia, a former Dutch fort that served as Bouterse's headquarters. The men were journalists, lawyers, professors, businessmen, soldiers and trades union leaders. Their bodies had been delivered to a local hospital on 9 December.

Bouterse denies having been present at the time.

In April 2012 Suriname's National Assembly passed an amendment to the Amnesty Act that would provide the President with a pardon. President Bouterse called the legislation a 'New beginning, to heal the whole nation.' In May there was confusion when the military court in charge of the case adjourned the trial while the attorney general's office reviewed the constitutionality of the new law. However, legal experts argued that only a constitutional court could carry out such a review, yet the court provided for under the 1987 Surinamese constitution had never been established. The issue was still unresolved at the end of 2012. Referring to President Bouterse's manoeuvrings, the US based Human Rights Watch (HRW) has stated that 'these international crimes are too serious to be forgotten. In protest at the amnesty granted to the president, the Netherlands recalled its ambassador and suspended aid.

The economy

Suriname's economy has long been dominated by the mineral and energy sectors (gold, oil and alumina) which account for approximately 30 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Agriculture and manufacturing, though relatively small, remain important goods producing sectors.

The service sector, 45 per cent of GDP, is driven primarily by trade and transport activities, while personal services and transport and communications have been the fastest growing sectors. In 2001, financial services overtook trade, restaurants and hotels as Suriname's single most important service activity in the country. The tourism sector constitutes 15 per cent of GDP. The informal sector is also significant and may increase current estimates of GDP by up to 16 per cent according to the Bureau of Statistics. In 2011, GDP growth accelerated to 5 per cent from 4.5 per cent in 2010 and 3 per cent in 2009, driven mainly by continued buoyant commodity export prices (gold, petroleum and alumina), elevated government spending and large capital investments in the mineral and energy sectors. Growth is expected to average around 4–5 per cent in 2012–13.

Overall, the medium-term economic outlook for Suriname is favourable. Growth prospects for the coming years look promising. Major new gold and bauxite mines are to be opened in 2013, providing further impetus to economic growth and government revenue. A key challenge for the economy is the containment of inflation expectation associated with the 2011 devaluation of the exchange rate, as well as the possibility that recently implemented revenue measures, which focus on consumption tax increases, would add to inflationary pressures in the short run.

To mitigate some of these impulses, the authorities have been and are expected to remain vigilant, tightening monetary policy as needed. Inflation levels are still very high (17.7 per cent for 2011) but are slowly easing.

The oil rush

Following the resolution of a protracted border dispute with Guyana in 2007, investment by oil companies in Suriname has increased dramatically. In 2011 the national oil company, Staatsolie, had reached a turnover of over US\$200 million. One estimate put Suriname's oil reserves at 15 billion barrels. Companies

prospecting or producing include Canada's CGX Energy, Teikoku from Japan, the Spanish Repsol, Statoil (Norway) and Murphy (US).

Staatsolie holds all mining rights to hydrocarbons and private oil companies can participate in the Suriname oil industry only by signing a production sharing contract with Staatsolie. In this arrangement, the oil company explores at its sole risk and account. If a commercial discovery is made and hydrocarbons are produced, the contractor gets reimbursed for its investment (cost oil) and also gets a share of the profit oil. Suriname's laws guarantee contract stability.

The Suriname Basin is largely unexplored and has a very significant remaining potential. With only 22 wells drilled offshore, of which 17 had hydrocarbons and a seismic grid of 5–10km on average, the basin's potential has not been evaluated properly. The geological ingredients all point to good prospectivity, except that structuration is mild and stratigraphic traps are more ubiquitous than structural closures, which calls for more detailed seismic grids than are currently available.

Staatsolie developed a number of new geological concepts based on recent seismic and aeromagnetic data, as well as on existing information. Based on this new thinking, a number of untested plays were developed and this work shows that the basin holds significant potential in stratigraphic as well as structural plays.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Good
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1602 Dutch traders arrived.

1651 British settlers and plantation owners arrived in the region and set up the first community and commercial estates using African slaves.

1652 Britain ceded territory to The Netherlands (later referred to as Dutch Guiana) and gained New Amsterdam (New York) in exchange.

1800s After slavery was abolished, indentured labourers from China, India and Java were brought in to work on plantations.

1916 The mining of bauxite began and gradually become the country's principal export.

1948 The country was renamed Suriname

1954 Suriname gained self-government from The Netherlands, which continued to control defence and foreign affairs.

1975 Full independence was granted.

Johan Ferrier became president and Henck Arron of the Nationale Partij Suriname (NPS) (National Party of Suriname) became prime minister. Around 30 per cent of the population emigrated to The Netherlands, fearing an early collapse of the new country.

1980 A military coup, led by Sergeant-Major Desi Bouterse, ousted first Prime Minister Arron and then President Ferrier, who was ultimately replaced by Henk Chin A Sen. Bouterse ruled through the National Military Council, imposing martial law, censorship and banning political parties.

1982 Fiscal aid from The Netherlands and the US was halted following the murder of 15 members of the opposition by the army.

KEY INDICATORS

Suriname

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*0.52	*0.52	*0.53	*0.53	*0.55
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	3.10	3.00	3.70	3.80	*4.74
GDP per capita	US\$	5,927	5,676	6,975	7,096	*8,686
GDP real growth	%	4.1	3.5	4.5	4.5	*4.5
Inflation	%	14.6	0.7	6.9	17.7	*5.0
Unemployment	%	9.4	9.0	7.6	–	–
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	1,708.1	1,404.3	2,068.5	2,466.7	–
Exports (goods and services)	US\$m	–	–	–	–	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	1,349.7	1,295.5	1,442.8	1,679.1	1,760.4
Balance of trade	US\$m	358.4	108.8	625.7	787.6	803.2
Current account	US\$m	353.0	209.5	692.2	251.1	*304.0
Total reserves minust gold	US\$m	433.3	659.0	638.9	735.6	885.1

1985 The ban on opposition parties was lifted and a new constitution, which included a strong military role, was devised. 1987 A democratically elected president and a 51-seat National Assembly were re-established. Elections were won by an opposition coalition. A National State Council of politicians and military was established under the constitution, but with an ill-defined 'advisory' role it did not achieve satisfactory government.

1990 Bouterse staged another coup and resumed power.

1991 A civilian government was elected. International aid was resumed. Bouterse retired from the army and founded the Nationale Democratische Partij (NDP) (National Democratic Party). Ronald Venetiaan was elected president.

1996 The nationalistic NDP won a majority of seats in the general elections and joined a coalition government. President Jules Wijdenbosch, an ally of Bouterse, named him special advisor and gave him diplomatic immunity from foreign drug smuggling charges.

1999 A poor economy resulted in widespread strikes, which brought down the government.

2000 Early elections were won by a coalition, Nieuwe Front voor Democratie (NF) (New Front for Democracy); Ronald Venetiaan became president. International relations with Guyana deteriorated over a disputed maritime boundary, including an area rich in oil.

2004 The Suriname guilder (fl) was converted to the Suriname dollar (Su\$), at a rate of Su\$1.00 per fl,000. The UN attempted to resolve the maritime dispute with Guyana.

2005 The ruling NF coalition narrowly won parliamentary elections. After two unsuccessful presidential elections, Ronald Venetiaan won in the third round.

2006 Major floods devastated homes of around 30,000 people in Upper Suriname. The country's long-term foreign currency, sovereign credit rating was raised from -B to B, as efforts to pay back loans were seen as largely successful. The EU provided eur20 million (US\$15.4 million) to upgrade the country's infrastructure and reconstruct the banana industry.

2007 The Japanese agreed to finance the construction of a new fishery centre, meeting international standards and capable of providing modern facilities for the enlarged fishing fleet. The UN ruled that both Suriname and Guyana should share the oil-rich offshore territory.

2008 Desi Bouterse, the former dictator went on trial for the murder of 15 political opponents in 1982. A three-month US humanitarian mission began providing medical treatment and engineering

projects in rural areas. Suriname joined the International Criminal Court (ICC). 2009 High school teachers, customs officers, fire fighters and waste collectors went on strike in a dispute with the government over discrepancies within a newly introduced salary scheme for the public sector. The UK-based multinational BHP Billiton sold all of its interest in the bauxite mines it operated in Suriname to domestic mining companies.

2010 In parliamentary elections, the newly established De Mega Combinatie (Mega Combination) coalition of four political parties, led by the NDP, won a total of 23 seats out of 51, enabling it to control the national legislature though a coalition. Desiré Bouterse was elected president by a more than two-thirds majority of parliament.

2011 In July, Suriname re-applied for membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). The Dubai (United Arab Emirates) ports' operators DP World, purchased controlling interests in two Paramaribo ports, Integra Ports Services (IPS) and Suriname Ports Services (SPS).

2012 On the 2 April parliament enacted an amnesty law granting President Bouterse immunity from prosecution for this role in the killing of political opponents during his previous dictatorship in the 1980s. On 11 May a court martial adjourned the trial of President Bouterse and 24 others accused of killing opponents, until a constitutional court reviews the earlier amnesty legislation.

2013 In July the IMF says it expects Suriname's strong growth of recent years to continue for 2013 but decelerate 'somewhat' in 2014. It pointed out that there were, however, 'risks to the outlook, particularly related to gold prices and fiscal pressures'.

Political structure

Independence date

25 November 1975 (from The Netherlands)

Form of state

Parliamentary democratic republic

The executive

The presidency is decided by an electoral colleges based in parliament, for a term of five years. The president is Head of State, head of government and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. During a term in office, the president is accountable to the national assembly. The president has wide executive power to appoint and dismiss ministers, enact laws and declare war (with the assent of the national assembly).

The political system is multi-party and numerous parties must form coalitions to come to power. To win the presidency, a

coalition needs a two-thirds majority in the national assembly. Failing three rounds, the vote goes to the United People's Congress, which contains assembly members and local and regional councillors, which elects a president by a simple majority.

National legislature

The unicameral De Nationale Assemblée (commonly referred to as DNA) (National Assembly) has 51 members, elected by proportional representation, for five-year terms.

Last elections

25 May 2010 (parliamentary); 19 July 2010 (presidential, indirect).

Results: Parliamentary: De Mega Combinatie (Mega Combination, coalition of four political parties, led by Nationale Democratische Partij (National Democratic Party) (NDP) won 40.22 per cent of the vote (23 seats out of 51), Nieuwe Front voor Democratie (NF) (New Front for Democracy and Development, coalition of four parties) 31.65 per cent of the vote (14), Volksalliantie Voor Vooruitgang (People's Alliance for Progress, coalition of three parties) 12.98 per cent (6), Partij voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling door Eenheid (Party for Democracy and Development through Unity) 5.09 per cent (1), A Combinatie (A-Com) (A Combination, coalition of three parties) 4.7 per cent (seven); four other political parties and coalition failed to win any seats. Turnout was 73.21 per cent. Presidential: parliament voted for Desi Bouterse by 36 votes (out of 50), Chandrikapersad Santokhi 13.

Next elections

May 2015 (parliamentary); 2015 (presidential, indirect)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition: De Mega Combinatie (Mega Combination, alliance of four political parties, led by Nationale Democratische Partij (National Democratic Party) (NDP) (from 2010)

Main opposition party

Nieuwe Front voor Democratie (NF) (New Front for Democracy and Development, coalition of four parties).

Population

546,000 (2012)*

Population

Last census: August 2004: 492,829

Population density: Three inhabitants per square km. Urban population 69 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.3 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

East Indian (37 per cent), Creole (31 per cent), Javanese (15 per cent), Black (10

per cent), Indian (3 per cent), Chinese (2 per cent).

Religions

Hindu (25 per cent), Protestant (25 per cent), Roman Catholic (23 per cent), Islam (20 per cent), traditional beliefs (5 per cent).

Education

Primary schooling begins at age 6 and last until aged 12. An exam determines the route either to a general lower secondary, or technical school. Advancement at age 16, following further exams, leads to either an academic, pre-university senior, or upper vocational, school. Teaching may be delivered in either Dutch or English.

Higher education is provided through either a University, Institute, Academy, or Polytechnic College.

Literacy rate: 93 per cent adult rate.

Compulsory years: 7 to 12.

Enrolment rate: 92.18 per cent net primary; 2.93 per cent net secondary enrolments.

Pupils per teacher: 17 in primary schools.

Health

HIV/Aids

HIV prevalence: 1.7 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

Life expectancy: 67 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.3 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef)

Birth rate/Death rate: 19.4 births per 1,000 population; 6.8 deaths per 1,000 population (2003).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 21 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

Main cities

Paramaribo (Parbo) (capital, estimated population 246,132 in 2012), Lelydorp (19,991), Nieuw Nickerie (15,109), Moengo (8,252), Meerzorg (7,381), Nieuw Amsterdam (5,579), Marienburg (4,998), Wageningen (4,765).

Languages spoken

Sranan Tongo (Creole) is the *lingua franca*. English, Sarnami (Hindi), Javanese and Chinese are also spoken.

Official language/s

Dutch

Media

Press

Daily newspapers include *De Ware Tijd* (www.dwtonline.com) and *De West* (www.dewestonline.cq-link.sr) and a periodical *Dagblad Suriname* (www.dbsuriname.com).

Broadcasting

Radio: All stations broadcast programmes in Dutch with other local languages.

Stichting Radio Omroep Suriname (SRS) is government-owned; commercial stations include Radio Paramaribo, Radio Apintie (www.apintie.fm), Radio Nickerie (RANI), Radio 10 (www.radio10.sr); ABC (www.abcsuriname.com) is a radio and TV broadcasting station.

Television: Government-owned commercial TV services include STVS (www.parbo.com/stvs) and ATV (<http://www.atv.sr>).

Other news agencies: Caribbean Net News: www.caribbeannetnews.com

Economy

The major economic resource of Suriname is bauxite, which is either exported as aluminium oxide or refined and exported as aluminium. Other primary industries include gold mining, oil production, agriculture (bananas, rice and citrus fruits), fish and shellfish and timber for exports.

In January 2013 the IMF reported that economic activity remains strong, and inflation pressures have abated considerably. Suriname is estimated to have grown by 4 per cent in 2012, buoyed by the oil and gold sectors, as well as public investment.

Although Suriname did not suffer directly from the global economic crisis, as its banking sector is considered conservative, it did feel the effects as domestic investors disbursed more funds outside Suriname then foreign investors financed projects in Suriname. The US-based Alcoa's US\$65 million expansion of its Paranam alumina refinery, opened in 2005, led to production of 250,000 tonnes per year. Paranam is the only alumina refinery in operation since the Australian-based BHP Billiton closed its mining operations at the end of 2008, and had ceased all operations in Suriname by 2010. Foreign direct investment in Suriname was negative for most of 2000s (the exception was in 2005 when FDI was US\$27.9 million); it returned to positive FDI in 2011, of US\$69.8 million.

Migrant workers and the remittances they send home constitute an important resource for many families in Suriname.

However, as the global economic crisis bit, jobs and wages were cut leading to reduced prospects and benefits. According to the World Bank, remittances had been US\$140 million in 2007, but this had fallen to US\$2 million in 2008 and was still only US\$4 million in 2010 (1 per cent of GDP); it was estimated to have risen to US\$5 million in 2011.

In July 2012, the Rosebel Gold Mines (Suriname's largest gold producer) announced gross earnings of US\$608 million (net US\$196 million) for 2011. Taxes, royalties and dividends for the

treasury amounted to US\$156.5 and constituted a 'major contribution' to the Surinamese economy, according to the natural resources minister.

On 15 August 2012, the US Moody's Ratings Agency, Investor Service upgraded Suriname's bond rating from B1 (considered 'junk') to Baa3, which constitutes a grading fit for investment purposes. The grading was granted based on prudent fiscal management and improved debt sustainability, positive short- and medium-term growth prospects, and greater resilience to external shocks. However, weak institutions still remain a key rating constraint on the need to improve the investment climate.

External trade

As a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom), Suriname operates within the single market (Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)), which became operational in 2006. Goods, services, businesses and money are free to move within CSME without barriers and tariffs.

Natural resources include a major world source of bauxite, rainforest timbers, gold, iron ore, seafood and agricultural products.

Imports

Principal imports are capital equipment, petroleum, foodstuffs, cotton and consumer goods

Main sources: US (26.7 per cent of total in 2011), Trinidad and Tobago (25.4 per cent), The Netherlands (16 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are aluminium oxide, gold, crude oil, timber, shrimp and fish, rice and bananas.

Main destinations: UAE (26.1 per cent of total in 2011), Canada (18.6 per cent), US (11.2 per cent).

Agriculture

Just 0.5 per cent of Suriname's total landmass is accounted for by permanent crop and arable land, concentrated predominantly along the coastal plain. Despite the dearth of land devoted to agricultural activities, Suriname is self sufficient in most basic foodstuffs and the sector accounts for up to 10 per cent of total GDP. Some 20 per cent of the country's workforce is employed in the agricultural sector.

The staple food crop and most important agricultural export is rice, the farming of which is highly mechanised. Suriname exports 40,000 tonnes of rice annually to the EU. Other major crops include palm oil, coconuts, bananas, sugar, citrus fruits and coffee.

The commercial fishing industry accounts for about 7 per cent of Suriname's total export earnings; the sector has grown in importance in recent years. Fishing for

shellfish, in particular, has increased. The typical total fish catch is over 19,000mt, plus over 7,700mt of other seafood, per annum.

A new fishery centre, providing mooring facilities, an ice factory, freezing stations, fuel stop and workshops for the enlarged fishing fleet was under construction in 2007, with finance provided by the Japanese government.

Suriname has vast forestry resources in relation to its size. Approximately 80 per cent of the country's total landmass is covered by forests and woodland, but just 2 per cent is exploited as access is limited.

Industry and manufacturing

Industrial activities in Suriname centre on the processing of agricultural produce (particularly timber), bauxite mining and timber processing. The sector contributes approximately 15 per cent to total GDP and employs one fifth of Suriname's labour force.

In 2003, Alcoa announced a US\$65 million, 250,000 tonne expansion to its Paranam alumina refinery, which will increase capacity by approximately 12 per cent. The project was completed midway through 2005.

Tourism

Much of the tourist infrastructure is located in the capital and along the coast. The historical inner city of the capital, Paramaribo, and the Central Suriname Nature Reserve are included on Unesco's World Heritage List.

The contribution of travel and tourism to the economy has fallen steadily from 6.9 per cent in 2007 to 4.4 per cent of GDP in 2011, and only accounts for 5 per cent of employment (8,500 jobs).

Around 12 per cent of Suriname, including a portion of intact, pristine Amazon rainforest is supposed to be protected from logging and mining. The launch of ecotourism may provide the economic incentive to protect the land, although this will need the support of the six native tribes of the interior as well as the Maroons (descendants of escaped slaves who recreated their West African communities). Suriname's involvement in ecotourism has been controversial. Local people have not benefitted from investment or provision of services and have been denied access to traditional hunting locations in favour of foreign revenue.

Mining

In a typical year for the economy of Suriname the mining sector contributes approximately 12 per cent of total GDP. The sector also employs some 5 per cent of the country's total workforce.

One of the largest producers of bauxite in the world, Suriname's reserves stand at

600 million tonnes. The US imports 400,000 tonnes of alumina from Suriname each year and it contributes up to 60 per cent of exports and 10–15 per cent of government income.

The deposits in the major mining areas, Moengo and Paranam, are maturing and were expected to reach the end of their life in 2006. Another, new production site opened in 2006, at Kaaimangrasie and Klaverblad, and were expected to last until 2010. Other reserves in the east, west and north of Suriname are expected to last until 2025.

Around 80 per cent of gold production is in the informal sector but in 2011 the government introduced a comprehensive programme to bring order to the sector, which incorporated government policies, security and law enforcement and educating local operators about the impact of gold mining on the environment. The programme will register all informal gold operators (miners), provide improved services to mitigate the damage caused by informal mining and impose proper taxation of the activity.

In July 2012, the Rosebel Gold Mines (Suriname's largest gold producer) announced gross earnings of US\$608 million (net US\$196 million) in 2011.

Other commercially viable minerals include iron ore, copper, nickel, platinum and kaolin.

Total proven oil reserves were 111 million barrels in 2007, with production at 5.4 million barrels from the Saramacca and Calcutta oil fields. Sustainable production is determined at 16,000 barrels per day (bpd). The state-owned Staatsolie has a monopoly and is responsible for exploration, production and refining crude oil, alone or in conjunction with other oil companies.

While oil exploration was focussed onshore up to 2007, it moved offshore along Suriname's coastal area after a UN tribunal made a decision concerning the disputed oil-rich territory claimed by both Guyana and Suriname. The ruling declared that both countries were entitled to explore the region off the Atlantic coastline with Suriname being granted 17,871 square kilometres. An estimate of the recoverable oil in the area is 2 billion cubic metres (15 billion barrels) and 1.19 trillion cubic metres of gas.

The country's only oil refinery produces 7,000bpd of diesel, fuel oil and bitumen. Staatsolie has plans to increase this amount to 15,000bpd by 2012. In 2005, Suriname, plus a number of other Caribbean states, signed an agreement with Venezuela to establish PetroCaribe, a multi-national oil company, owned by the participating states. PetroCaribe buys

low-priced Venezuelan crude oil under long-term payment plans. Any use of natural gas or coal is commercially insignificant.

Energy

Total installed electricity generation capacity was 389MW in 2007, producing over 1.6 billion kilowatt hours. Around 75 per cent of all electricity was generated by hydropower. One of the world's largest man-made lakes, of around 1,560 square kilometres (depending on rainfall), the Brokopondo Reservoir, provides the water for the dam which generates the energy for the bauxite refinery in Paranam on the Suriname River. It typically allocates 25 per cent of its electricity output to power 75 per cent of the capital Paramaribo's needs.

Banking and insurance

Suriname's banking sector has traditionally been highly indebted and needs reform. The government has equity stakes in six of Suriname's eight banks, including a 10 per cent stake in the largest bank, De Surinaamse Bank. Domestic borrowing is mostly undertaken by the government.

Central bank

Centrale Bank van Suriname

Main financial centre

Paramaribo.

Time

GMT minus three hours

Geography

Suriname is located on the northern coast of South America, facing the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered by French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south.

The terrain is hilly and most of the country is covered by tropical rain forests, except along a narrow strip of low-lying coastal plain. This area, which is swampy, is 80km at its widest and is home to most of the population. There is a 3,000km network of rivers, most of which flow northwards into the Atlantic Ocean. River travel is the main means of access into the forested interior. The most important rivers are the Corantijn, Suriname, Mariwijne and Coppename. A huge man-made lake, the WJ van Blommestein Meer, one of the largest reservoirs in the world, lies astride the Suriname river in the north-east of the country.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Tropical but cooled by trade winds. Rain throughout the year but heaviest from November–January and from April–July. Average daily temperature remains fairly constant throughout the year at 27 degrees Celsius (C); daily range from 22–35

degrees C from May–October; slightly lower temperatures from November–April.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all, valid for six months from date of arrival.

Visa

Required by nationals of most countries; for current list of exceptions, see www.surinameembassy.org. All visitors must have return/onward passage. Business visas require a letter from the employing company explaining the purpose of visit, and the details of all the contacts in Suriname plus an itinerary.

Currency advice/regulations

Import and export of local currency is limited to Su\$150. There are no restrictions on the import and export of foreign currencies, subject to declaration of amounts over US\$10,000

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever vaccination certificate required if arriving from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

Yellow fever, typhoid and polio vaccinations. Malaria prophylaxis recommended and water precautions should be taken.

Hotels

Paramaribo and Nieuw Nickerie have a number of modern hotels but beds are limited. Service charge of 10 per cent is usual.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 1 Jul (Abolition of Slavery Day), 25 Nov (Independence Day), 25–26 Dec (Christmas).

Variable dates

Holi (Hindu, Mar), Good Friday, Easter Monday, Eid al Fitr.

In addition, Chinese, Jewish and Indian businesses will be closed for their own religious holidays.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0800–1500.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0730–1630.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0700–1500.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0700/0730–1630; Sat: 0730–1300.

Electricity supply

110/127V and/or 220V AC, 60 cycles

Getting there

Air

National airline: Surinam Airways (SLM).

International airport/s:

Paramaribo–Johan Adolf Pengel

International Airport (PMB), 46km from city; duty-free shop, bank, cafeterias, car hire.

Airport tax: US\$35, payable only in US dollars or euros.

Surface

Road: A coastal road links Paramaribo with Guyana (at Nieuw Nickerie) and French Guiana (at Albina).

Water: There are sea links with the US and Europe. Car ferry services run from French Guiana and Guyana.

Main port/s: Paramaribo.

Getting about

National transport

Most infrastructure has been on the country's narrow coastal plain, with links to the interior weak. Much of the sparsely-populated country is accessible only by air or river.

Air: Domestic flights to towns in the interior are operated from Zorg en Hoop airfield near Paramaribo by Surinam Airways and Gum Air. Charter services are available.

Road: There are over 4,000km of roads, of which around a quarter are paved. Coastal towns are linked by road from Nieuw Nickerie in the west, through Paramaribo, to Albina in the east. Roads in the interior are not surfaced and are poorly maintained.

Bridges over the Coppename and Suriname rivers link the east and west of the country.

Buses: Paramaribo and most towns have a local bus service. Bus routes link coastal towns but service is irregular and tends to be crowded.

Water: River transport is the main means of travel in the interior and in some coastal areas.

City transport

Taxis: Taxis are available, but scarce after 10 pm and on Sundays and holidays.

They are not metered and fares should be agreed in advance of journey.

Car hire

Available in Paramaribo at the airport and through main hotels and the Tourist Information Office. International driving licences required.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international dialling code (IDD) for Suriname is +597 followed by subscriber's number.

Chambers of Commerce

Suriname Chamber of Commerce & Industry, PO Box 139, Mr JC de Miranda Straat, Paramaribo (tel: 473-527; fax: 470-802; e-mail: chamber@sr.net).

Banking

De Surinaamse Bank NV, Henck Arronstraat 26-30, Paramaribo (tel: 471-100; fax: 477-835).

Finabank NV, Dr. S. Redmondstraat 55-61, Paramaribo.

Hakrinbank NV, Dr S. Redmondstraat 11-13, Paramaribo (tel: 477-722; fax: 472-066).

Landbouwbank NV, Lim A Postraat 28-30, Paramaribo (tel: 475-945, 475-101; fax: 410-821).

Nationale Ontwikkelingsbank (NOB), Coppenamelaan 160-162, Paramaribo (tel: 465-000; fax: 497-192).

RBTT Bank (Suriname), Kerkplein 1 Paramaribo (tel: 471-555; fax: 411-325).

Surinaamse Postspaarbank (SPSB), Knuffelsgracht 11-13, Paramaribo (tel: 472-256; fax: 472-952).

Surinaamse Volkscrediet Bank (VCB), Steenbakkerijstraat 2, Paramaribo (tel: 472-616; fax: 472-616).

Central bank

Centrale Bank van Suriname, PO Box 1081, Waterkant 16-20, Paramaribo (tel: 473-741; fax: 476-444; e-mail: info@cbvs.sr).

Travel information

Surinam Airways, Jagernath Lachmonstraat 136, PO Box 2029, Paramaribo (tel: 465-700; fax: 491-213; e-mail: publicrelations@slm.firm.sr).

Tourist Information Centre, Waterkant 1, Fort Zeelandia Complex, Paramaribo (tel: 479-200; fax: 477-786; e-mail: stsmktg@sr.net).

Ministry of tourism

Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism, Prins Hendrikstraat 26-28, Paramaribo (tel: 420-422; fax: 420-425; e-mail: odc@minctc.sr).

National tourist organisation offices

Suriname Tourism Foundation, Dr JF Nassylaan 2, Paramaribo; PO Box 656, Paramaribo (tel: 410-357; fax: 477-786; email: info@suriname-tourism.org).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Cultuurtuinlaan, Paramaribo (tel: 474-177; fax: 470-301).

Ministry of Defence, Kwattaweg 29, Paramaribo (tel: 474-244; fax: 420-055).

Ministry of Economic Affairs, Kleine Waterstraat 4, Paramaribo (tel: 75-080).

Nations of the World: A Political, Economic and Business Handbook

Ministry of Education, Dr. F. Kaffiludistraat 117-123, Paramaribo (tel: 498-383; fax: 495-083).

Ministry of Finance, Onafhankelijkheidsplein 3, Paramaribo (tel: 472-619; fax: 476-314).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gravenstraat 6-8, Paramaribo (tel: 471-209; fax: 410-851).

Ministry of Justice and Police, Gravenstraat 1, Paramaribo (tel: 473-033; fax: 412-109).

Ministry of Internal Affairs, Onafhankelijkheidsplein 2, Paramaribo (tel: 476-461; fax: 421-170).

Ministry of Labour, Wagenwegstraat 22, Paramaribo (tel: 477-045; fax: 410-465).

Ministry of Natural Resources, Mr. Dr. J.C. de Mirandastraat 13-15, Paramaribo (tel: 473-420; fax: 472-911).

Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation, Dr. S Redmondstraat 118, Paramaribo (tel: 473-628; fax: 421-056).

Ministry of Public Health, Gravenstraat 64, Paramaribo (tel: 474-841; fax: 410-702).

Ministry of Public Works, Verlengde Coppenamestraat 167, Paramaribo (tel: 462-500; fax: 464-901).

Ministry of Regional Development, Van Rooseveltkade 2, Paramaribo (tel: 471-574).

Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing, Waterkant 30-32, Paramaribo (tel: 472-610; fax: 470-516).

Ministry of Trade and Industry, Nieuwe Haven, Paramaribo (tel: 479-886; fax: 477-602).

Ministry of Transportation, Communications and Tourism, Prins Hendrikstraat 26-28, Paramaribo (tel: 420-422; fax: 470-425).

President of the Republic of Suriname, Onafhankelijkheidsplein, Paramaribo (tel: 472-841; fax: 475-266).

Vice President and Council of Ministers, Dr. S. Redmondstraat, 1e Etage, Paramaribo (tel: 474-805; fax: 472-917).

Other useful addresses

Algemene Aannemers Vereniging (AAV), Gravenstraat 73, Paramaribo (tel: 478-419; fax: 474-531).

Associatie van Surinaams Bedrijfsleven (V.S.B.), Domineestraat 33 boven, Paramaribo (tel: 476-585; fax: 421-160).

Orde van Raadgavende Ingenieursbureaus in Suriname (ORIS), P.O. Box 1864, van Roosmalenstraat no. 30, Paramaribo (tel: 472-275, 474-381; fax: 474-408).

Stichting Planbureau Suriname, PO Box 172, Dr S. Redmondstraat 110, Paramaribo (tel: 473-146).

Suriname Embassy (USA), Suite 108, 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: (+1-202) 244-7488; fax: (+1-202) 244-5878; e-mail: embsur@erols.com).

Vereniging Surinaams Bedrijfsleven (Suriname Trade and Industry Association), Prins Hendrikstraat 18, PO Box 111, Paramaribo (tel: 475-286/7; fax: 472-287).

Other news agencies: Caribbean Net News: www.caribbeannetnews.com

Internet sites

De Ware Tijd (English bulletin available): <http://www.dwt.net>

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: <http://www.eclac.cl>

Inter-American Development Bank: <http://www.iadb.org>

Organisation of American States: <http://www.oas.org>

Latin World: <http://www.latinworld.com>

Latin Trade Online: <http://www.latintrade.com>

Republic of Suriname homepage: <http://www.sr.net.srnet/InfoSurinam>