

THE MERITS OF DIGITIZATION OF HISTORICAL RECORDS - Ashook Ramsaran,

The preservation and protection of Guyana's historical records is crucial for safeguarding Guyana's rich and diverse heritage. The records are historical artifacts and also serve as a testament to the cultural and social evolution of the nation, influenced by various arrival groups, including Africans, Indians, Chinese, Portuguese, and the British. Preserving these records ensures that future generations, researchers and historians can easily access authentic historical data, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Guyana's unique cultural tapestry. This digitization and preservation project further enhances better understanding and support for the Guyana's **"ONE GUYANA**

The objective should be to preserve, digitize, and make accessible the historical records of Guyana from all available sources, particularly those records from the eras of slavery and indentured servitude, and including First Peoples, in a comprehensive and all-inclusive process reflecting the diverse influences of all peoples and events in Guyana's history and culture, and be stored in a national museum and available online as the central repository of Guyana's history.

A sustained, methodical process includes advanced data collection and data extrapolation from scanned documents, recommendation of expertise from other similar historical records preservation, as well as expertise on database formulation for preservation, on-line storage and easy accessibility.

THE URGENCY FOR DIGITIZATION OF HISTORICAL RECORDS – by Dr Vishnu Bisram

Preserving one's history is paramount to one's existence and future as generations to come will have access to knowledge about the history of their ancestors. Although this May, Indians would have been in Guyana for 186 years (starting on May 5, 1838), documents relating to their arrival and oppressive conditions, perseverance and survival as well as death on the plantations have not been preserved and protected. Their history is not widely known or properly documented. To date, there is no official archival cataloguing, storage and preservation of those documents in Guyana. Successive governments in Guyana failed to take measures to preserve and/or digitize documents not only those relating to Indians but other groups as well (Africans, Chinese, Portuguese, and native Amerindians). So documents have been left in ruins, becoming 'powderized' and pulverized or flaked into bits as they are not properly stored in conditions conducive to preservation in hot, humid conditions. The Indian and African working class virtually built then-Guiana, laying the groundwork for the future Guyana after independence. Documents relating to them must be preserved.

There were almost 240,000 indentured labourers who came with thousands more who died aboard the ships. Each shipload of Indian indentured labourers carried detailed emigration passes which were deposited in Georgetown upon each ship's arrival. These and other documents related to the indentured were well kept by the colonial government. They were handed over to the Government of Guyana upon attainment of independence in 1966. Preservation of Indian documents should be a top priority of the government.

GUYANESE HISTORICAL DATA IS A NATURAL RESOURCE - By Brian Ramphal

Why should we care so much about Guyanese historical records with such intensely deep emotions? In the sprawling digital epoch, where our lives intertwine with a platform-based existence, it's time to reevaluate the treasures we hold dear. Among Guyana's rich bounties—its rainforests, rivers, and diverse cultures—lies an untapped resource as crucial as any mineral or crop: that is, our data.

From the moment of birth, our existence generates ripples in the vast ocean of information. Announcements of newborns weave through networks, marking the inception of a digital footprint that parallels our physical journey. As Guyanese children transition into students, artists, professionals, and elders, every step is chronicled, intentionally or not, across an array of platforms. This continuous stream of data, encompassing culture, language, experiences, love, and life, is not merely digital exhaust. It is a mosaic of the Guyanese spirit, a detailed narrative of our collective journey, and a testament to the richness of our shared heritage.

Imagine the potential of harnessing this data in education, where tailored curricula reflect the linguistic and cultural nuances of our people. Consider its application in healthcare, with services designed around the unique genetic and environmental profiles of the Guyanese populace. Envision local businesses thriving by tapping into a well of insights about the very heart of their market. This is the future we could build—a future where data empowers, unites, and reflects the vibrant tapestry of Guyana.

Our data is our gold, our El Dorado. It must be preserved and protected.

These are excerpts from articles previously published and distributed