Indian Diaspora Council
Shared heritage, aspirations and interests
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Press Statement

Commemoration of 186th Anniversary of Indian Arrival Day in Guyana

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) joins with its global affiliates and its global membership in paying honored tribute and express its gratitude to those who made t first journeys as indentured laborers from India arriving in Highbury in Guyana on 5th May, 1838 aboard the *Hesperus* and *Whitby*.

We are always reminded of their pioneering spirit, determination, persistence and endurance under extremely harsh conditions. While survival must have been the primary concern, they strived and persevered to maintain their sense of origin, traditions and culture. Their children, grandchildren and following generations will always take pride in this unique accomplishment, recognizing and appreciating the sacrifices and achievements made on their behalf. We also recognize the invaluable contributions they have made to the diverse culture and economic development of Guyana.

IDC president Ashook Ramsaran, who was born in Guyana, states: "We pay homage and commemorate an historic event which took place 185 years ago, recognizing the journeys, hardships, travails and perseverance of a people – while looking at today and tomorrow which can take lessons from that unique history of journeys seemingly not so long ago. While acknowledging that past, we can triumph by taking bold, pioneering steps same as those who came to Guyana and other lands with just a promise, with lots of hope and determination, and built better futures for themselves and their descendants".

"Our ancestors came here partially by choice, many forced but resolved and persevered under very difficult and harrowing conditions. That shared experience, that saga of shared history, fostered an unusual kindred spirit of resolve, togetherness and kinship – a triumph over obstacles and difficulties with dreams and aspirations of a destiny intertwined by history and fate. We fully support digitization of these historical records for posterity".

We continue to encourage and support active promotion and preservation of the rich and enduring Indian culture and traditions which served their forefathers so well. We also wish to remind all the descendants of those early pioneers to recognize and reach out to others of Indian origin whose forebears also embarked on similar journeys.

As Guyana continues its transformation and adaptation as it has done for decades, the future bodes well economically and culturally for continued progress that is beneficial to all Guyanese in Guyana and abroad. Guyana's enduring vitality is a reflection of its people, always strong, energetic, progressive and vibrant.

We extend IDC's congratulations to the Government and people of Guyana on the commemoration of this 186th anniversary of that historic date. We also extend our continued best wishes to all the descendants of those early pioneers for continued peaceful and prosperous co-existence among other ethnic groups both in Guyana and other lands where they have subsequently settled.

"Guyana, officially the **Co-operative Republic of Guyana**, is inhabited by many indigenous groups, Guyana was settled by the Dutch before coming under British control in the late 18th century. It was governed as British Guiana, with a mostly plantation-style economy until the 1950s. It gained independence in 1966, and officially became a republic within the Commonwealth of Nations in 1970. The legacy of British rule is reflected in the country's political administration and diverse population, which includes Indian, African, Amerindian, and multiracial groups. The largest ethnic group is the Indo-Guyanese (also known as East Indians), the descendants of indentured laborers from India, who make up 43.5% of the population, according to the 2002 census. They are followed by the Afro-Guyanese, the descendants of slaves from Africa, who constitute 30.2%. Guyanese of mixed heritage make up 16.7%, while the indigenous peoples (known locally as Amerindians) make up 9.1%. *Wikipedia*

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Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), established in 1997, is an international non-profit organization with global affiliates and membership in 21 countries with the objective to embrace, engage and enhance the shared heritage, aspirations and interests of persons of Indian origin with optimum inclusivity.