



Indian Diaspora Council

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Shared heritage, aspirations and interests

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Press Statement



Celebrating 187 Years of Indian Arrival Day in Guyana

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), along with its global affiliates and members, pays tribute and expresses deep gratitude to the pioneers who embarked on the first journeys as indentured laborers from India. These individuals arrived in Highbury, Guyana, on May 5, 1838, aboard the ships *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, born in Guyana, states: “We pay homage and commemorate a historic event that took place 187 years ago, recognizing the journeys, hardships, and perseverance of a resilient people. As we reflect on the past, we draw lessons from their unique history of migration and settlement. Acknowledging their struggles and triumphs, we are inspired to take bold, pioneering steps, just as those who came to Guyana and other lands with hope and determination, building 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”. The historic visit of **India’s Prime Minister, HE Narendra Modiji**, to pay homage to the preservation of Indian heritage at the Monument Gardens on the 21st of November 2024 is validation and testament to the enduring heritage and bonds we share among the Indian Diaspora.

We continue to encourage and support active promotion 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. Despite setbacks and instances of racist problems, Guyana continues its transformation and adaptation as it has done for decades; the future bodes well 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 the 187th 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. -*Dr. Nicole Bissessar, Director of Community Cultural Affairs, Indian Diaspora Council.*

Guyana, officially the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, is inhabited by many indigenous groups. It was settled by the Dutch before coming under British control in the late 18th century. Governed as British Guiana, it had a mostly plantation-style economy until the 1950s. Guyana 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. According to the World Population Review, 2025 census, the largest ethnic group in Guyana is the Indo-Guyanese (also known as East Indians), who make up 44% of the population. They are followed by the Afro-Guyanese, who constitute 30%. Guyanese of mixed heritage account for 17%, while indigenous peoples (known locally as Amerindians) make up 9% (Guyana Population 2025).



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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.