Indian Diaspora Council
Shared heritage, aspirations and interests
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May 05, 2026 (EST-USA) ***Press Statement***

Celebrating the 188th Anniversary 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.

Guyana's President Dr. Irfaan Ali on Indian Arrival Day: "We pause to reflect on a defining aspect of our national journey – the invaluable contributions of those immigrants who came before us. They came with little but gave us so much. This day honors the foreparents who arrived on these shores, following Emancipation, most as indentured laborers. Their arrival was not just a matter of circumstance or history. It is built upon the contributions of those who were here before, and it helped to lay the foundation for the Guyana we know today. Most came and stayed and made this land their home. They toiled on plantations, cultivated the land, built villages, founded institutions, and gave us traditions, foods, languages, and values that enriched our national character. They endured hardships and injustices, but they also forged bonds, adapted to new realities, and helped fashion a multiethnic society".

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 extend IDC's congratulations to the Government and people of Guyana on the commemoration of the 188th 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 home to numerous indigenous peoples and was initially settled by the Dutch before coming under British control in the late 18th century. Known as British Guiana, it maintained a plantation-based economy until the 1950s. Guyana gained independence in 1966 and became a republic within the Commonwealth in 1970. The legacy of British rule remains evident in its political system and ethnically diverse population, which includes Indo-Guyanese, Afro-Guyanese, Amerindians, and people of mixed heritage. *According to the World Population Review's 2025* census, Indo-Guyanese (East Indians) comprise 44% of the population, followed by Afro-Guyanese at 30%, people of mixed heritage at 17%, and indigenous Amerindians at 9%.

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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.