



Indian Diaspora Council

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Shared heritage, aspirations and interests

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Press Statement

Commemoration of Indian Arrival Days 2026 in St. Vincent, Reunion Island & Suriname

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC) joins with its global affiliates and its membership in paying an honored tribute and expressing its gratitude to those who made the first journeys as indentured laborers from India arriving in the following former colonies:

June 1, 1861 - St. Vincent & the Grenadines (*SS Travancore*)

June 3, 1828 - Reunion Island (*SS Yangon*)

June 5, 1873 - Suriname (*SS Lalla Rookh – shown on the right*)



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 their destination countries.

IDC president Ashook Ramsaran, who was born in Guyana which recently commemorated its 186th Indian Arrival Day on May 5, states that: “We pay homage and commemorate an historic event which took place several generations 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 St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Reunion Island, Suriname 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 to these countries 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 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.

As these former colonies continue to evolve and adapt as they have for decades, the future holds great promise for sustained progress that uplifts all descendants of Indian indentureship, both within their nations and across the diaspora. Their enduring vitality stands as a testament to their people, consistently strong, dynamic, progressive, and vibrant.

We extend IDC’s congratulations to the governments and people of St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Reunion Island and Suriname, and others, on the commemoration of their respective anniversaries of those historic dates. 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 their destination countries and other lands where they have subsequently settled. -*Dr. Nicole Bissessar, Director of Community Cultural Affairs, Indian Diaspora Council*

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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.