



GUYANA

Country name: long form: Co-operative Republic of Guyana, short form: Guyana, former: British Guiana

HISTORY

Originally a Dutch colony in the 17th century, by 1815 Guyana had become a British colony. The abolition of slavery in 1842 led to black settlement of urban areas and the importation of indentured servants from India to work the sugar plantations. This ethnocultural divide has persisted and led to turbulent politics. Guyana achieved independence from the UK in 1966, but until the early 1990s was ruled mostly by socialist-oriented governments. In 1992, Cheddi JAGAN was elected president, in what is considered the country's first free and fair election since independence. Upon his death five years later, he was succeeded by his wife Janet, who resigned in 1999 due to poor health. Her successor, Bharrat JAGDEO, was reelected in 2001.

GEOGRAPHY

Position: Northern South America, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Suriname and Venezuela. Guyana has many rivers and dense rainforests.

Map References: 5 00 N, 59 00 W

Border countries: Brazil 1,119 km, Suriname 600 km, Venezuela 743 km, coastline Atlantic Ocean

note: the third-smallest country in South America after Suriname and Uruguay; substantial portions of its western and eastern territories are claimed by Venezuela and Suriname respectively.

Climate: tropical; hot, humid, average temp. 25-30C, moderated by northeast trade winds; two rainy seasons (May to mid-August, mid-November to mid-January), average annual rainfall is 2250mm

Natural hazards: flash floods are a constant threat during rainy seasons



PEOPLE - DEMOGRAPHICS

Population: 705,803

note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2004 est.)

Median Age: (2004 est.) total: 26.2 years, male: 25.6 years female: 26.8 years

Population growth (2004 est.): 0.61%

Infant mortality rate (2004 est.) total: 37.22 deaths/1,000 live births; female: 32.95 deaths/1,000 live births; male: 41.28 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth (2004 est.): total population: 62.43 years; male: 60.12 yrs; female: 64.84 yrs

SOCIO-CULTURAL

Ethnic Groups: East Indian 50%, black 36%, Amerindian 7%, white, Chinese, and mixed 7%

Religions: Christian 50%, Hindu 35%, Muslim 10%, other 5%

Languages: English, Amerindian dialects, Creole, Hindi, Urdu

Literacy: (2003 est.) definition: age 15 and over has attended school total population: 98.8% male: 99.1% female: 98.5%

Food: fish, shrimps, crab, chicken, goat and beef, curries, dhal, rice, roti, fruits such as guava, mango, bananas, coconut, cassava, spinach

HEALTH

Major Infectious Diseases: malaria (Malaria is endemic in the interior), cholera, dengue fever, typhoid, HIV/AIDS (2003 est.)

Adult prevalence rate: 2.5%

People living with AIDS/HIV: 11,000

Deaths: 1,100

ECONOMY

Overview: The Guyanese economy exhibited moderate economic growth in 2001-02, based on expansion in the agricultural and mining sectors, a more favorable atmosphere for business initiatives, a more realistic exchange rate, fairly low inflation, and the continued support of international organizations. Growth then slowed in 2003.

Chronic problems include a shortage of skilled labor and a deficient infrastructure. The government is juggling a sizable external debt against the urgent need for expanded public investment. The GDP purchasing power parity was \$2.797 billion and GDP per capita purchasing power parity was \$4,000 (2003 est.) with an inflation rate of 5.7%.

Agriculture: The main products are sugar, rice, wheat, vegetable oils; beef, pork, poultry, dairy products; fish (shrimp)

Major Industries: bauxite, sugar, rice milling, timber, textiles, gold mining. The bauxite mining sector should benefit in the near term by restructuring and partial privatization.

Currency: Guyanese dollar (GYD)

GOVERNMENT

Government type: republic within the Commonwealth

Head of State: President Bharrat JAGDEO (since 11 August 1999)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Samuel HINDS (since December 1997)

Independence: 26 May 1966 (from UK)

Capital: Georgetown

National holiday Republic Day, 23 February (1970)

Military age and obligation: males age 15-49 fit for military service

ENVIRONMENT

Natural resources: bauxite, gold, diamonds, hardwood timber, shrimp, fish

Environment – current issues: water pollution from sewage and agricultural and industrial chemicals; deforestation

Environment – international agreements: *party to:* Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94 *signed, but not ratified:* none of the selected agreements

TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES

International disputes: all of the area west of the Essequibo (river) is claimed by Venezuela preventing any discussion of a maritime boundary; Guyana has expressed its intention to join Barbados in asserting claims before UNCLOS that Trinidad and Tobago's maritime boundary with Venezuela extends into their waters; Suriname claims a triangle of land between the New and Kutari/Koetari rivers in a historic dispute over the headwaters of the Courantyne; Guyana seeks UNCLOS arbitration to resolve the long-standing dispute with Suriname over the axis of the territorial sea boundary in potentially oil-rich waters.

Illicit drugs: transshipment point for narcotics from South America - primarily Venezuela - to Europe and the US; producer of cannabis

Source: CIA World fact Book, January 2004

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