

Guyana Country Profile

Mon, November 15, 2021, 5:37 AM

Sandwiched between Venezuela and Suriname, the former British colony of Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America.



Map of Guyana

Most of the country is covered in tropical rainforest and, despite having rich reserves of bauxite, gold and timber, it has struggled to overcome poverty and attract investment to bolster its economy.

Since independence from the UK in 1966, Guyana has seen fierce political rivalry between the two main ethnically-based parties.

A century-old border dispute with Venezuela has revived after the discovery of major offshore oil reserves.

The hotly-disputed March 2020 election was eventually resolved in favour of opposition candidate Irfaan Ali, who became the country's first Muslim president in August.

Facts

Current Leader: President: Irfaan Ali



Guyanese President Irfaan Ali

A former housing and tourism minister in People's Progressive Party governments, Mr Ali beat the incumbent president, David Granger of the People's National Congress, after a full recount amid allegations of government vote-rigging.

A coalition led by the People's Progressive Party also won a narrow majority in the simultaneous parliamentary election.

President Ali took over not long after the US oil giant Exxon made one of the world's biggest discoveries of oil in deep waters off Guyana's coast, which could change the country's economic prospects dramatically.



President Irfaan Ali speaking at COP26 – the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference

MEDIA

The constitution guarantees free speech, although officials are apt to resort to defamation laws, says Reporters Without Borders.

A bill passed in 2017 was criticised for requiring private broadcasters to carry a daily quota of government-chosen output.

Around 39% of Guyanese citizens were online by 2017.

TIMELINE

Some key dates in Guyana's history:

1300s - Area is first inhabited by semi-nomadic Amerindian tribes, notably Warraus. Christopher Columbus sights Guyana in 1498.

1580 - The Dutch gain a foothold and set up trading posts. From 1620, the Dutch West India Company imports African slaves to work on its sugar plantations.

1780-1813 - Guyana changes hands between the Dutch, French and British.

1814 - Britain occupies Guyana during the Napoleonic Wars and later makes it a Colony of **British Guiana**.

1834 - The abolition of slavery leads to indentured workers being brought in from India.



Some Guyanese trace their ancestry to freed slaves and others to workers from India

1889 - Venezuela lays claims to two-thirds of Guyana west of the Essequibo river, but international arbitration rules in favour of Guyana in 1899.

1953 - Britain suspends a new constitution and installs an interim administration after the Indo-Guyanese PPP party's success in the first free elections.

1960 - A new constitution provides full internal self-government, but in 1964 a revolt leads to racial strife and violent riots

1966 - Guyana gains independence.

1978 - Jonestown massacre: Mass suicide by more than 900 members of the People's Temple religious sect led by Jim Jones.

2015 - Guyana's multiracial opposition coalition led by David Granger wins the general election, ending 23 years of rule by the Indo-Guyanese PPP party. The PPP returns to power five years later.

2019 - Drilling begins at major offshore oil deposits.



Guyana's spectacular Kaieteur Falls drop for about 220m

Related Articles

BBC Article: Guyana profile - Media

3 April 2018

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19546912>

The constitution guarantees freedom of speech, although officials are apt to use defamation laws to silence opposition journalists, says Reporters Without Borders.

Broadcasting legislation adopted in 2017 was criticised by some local media owners and press freedom groups. The bill requires private broadcasters to carry up to one hour of government-chosen public service output daily.

The government operates radio stations and a TV network.

There were 305,000 internet users by 2017, around 39% of the population (via Internetworldstats).

The Press

- Guyana Chronicle - government-owned daily
- Stabroek News - private daily
- Kaieteur News - private daily
- National Communications Network (NCN) TV (Channel 11) - state-owned
- National Communications Network (NCN) - state-owned, operates Voice of Guyana, Fresh FM, Hot FM
- Guyana Times - news site
- iNewsGuyana - news site
- News Room Guyana - news site

References:

- 1) **Wikipedia Article: Guyana**
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guyana>