

Moments We Will Remember

One PPP leader is reported in the press as saying that per capita the funeral of Dr Cheddi Jagan was the biggest in the world. At first glance the statement looks more like an emotional rather than a factual observation. However, after taking a number of variables into account the opinion may not be an exaggeration.

From the time the body was placed at State House for viewing, going through the ceremony at Parliament Buildings through the journey at Albion, then the second phase of the viewing of the body at Albion until the final act of cremation the total count of participants and observers has been estimated to have been in the vicinity of 250,000 persons. As a percentage of the population this means about 40 per cent of Guyana may have turned out to see Dr Jagan. The funeral of Dr Jagan has created history in the Caribbean. But that comes as no surprise because the man himself created history.

After witnessing this momentous funeral one is tempted to repeat the words of Dr Jagan's son and daughter when they told their interviewers that Guyana will never again witness such an outpouring of numbers and emotions. Dr Jagan's daughter was more guarded. She said maybe not in the next 100 years.

It is a plausible statement to make to say that Guyana and the Caribbean will not for a long time experience an event such as Dr Jagan's funeral in terms of the sheer weight and volume of participants and observers.

There are many heroes whose last rites will

make history and many names will easily come to mind.

But the numbers though they made history do not tell the whole story of this wondrous event. The funeral of Dr Jagan saw a strange cultural trait which one would think was common to other lands rather than the English-speaking Caribbean; we tend to forget the existence of eastern culture in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

As the procession moved eastward on its journey to Berbice human emotions showed phenomenal shapes. At Industry a woman and her child threw themselves in front of the military vehicle bearing the body of the late President. The traffic escort had to rescue both mother and child.

The event was repeated at Enmore and again the police escorts were on hand to save the day. Then for a third time we saw this attempt at human sacrifice at Canje.

Finally Dr Jagan got his wish from the Guyanese people. A wish he appealed for his entire life. His funeral cemented different people with different racial and cultural backgrounds.

The unity of the races in a monumental show of respect for this great man was best exemplified in the Afro-Guyanese village of Buxton. Here the people requested the procession to stop so that they too could directly participate in administering the last rites.

It is now up to the nation to let this multi-racial glow burn brightly and burn forever.