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Lalshwar Singh

Memorial Service for the Late President Jagan  
held at St James's Church, Piccadilly,  
on Sunday 25th May 1997

Your Excellencies  
Distinguished Guests  
Fellow Guyanese  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Tomorrow, as you know, we celebrate Guyana's 31st Anniversary of Independence. We will mark this auspicious occasion, this year, with some sadness. I say sadness because the man who has been in the forefront of our noble and patriotic struggle for independence and the restoration of democracy; the man who has ignited and sustained the fire in us, for over 50 years, for freedom, justice and self-dignity is not with us to celebrate this important date in our country's history.

What a cruel turn of history it has been. Today when Guyana is experiencing such important and significant strides in the transformation of our country, we have lost such an outstanding leader and distinguished statesman. A leader who, through his indomitable courage and relentless struggle, earned the accolade, as the father of the nation.

But amidst the grief and anguish, we take heart for Dr Jagan has left us an enduring legacy. The challenge facing us now is to work assiduously to fulfil his dreams for Guyana, and the people to whom he devoted his entire life.

It is said that Dr Jagan's early days of life on the sugar plantation and his experience of grinding poverty and lack of opportunities moulded his destiny. But it was the seven years that he spent, as a student, in the **United States** that made him even more political conscious. Returning to Guyana in 1943, it was in 1946, with his wife, Mrs Janet Jagan, that he made a formidable impact as he entered the political arena. Through his tireless struggle in Guyana's Legislative Council, he served notice on the political establishment of the day. He made it clear that the Guyanese people's interest must be paramount in the pursuit of independence and the development of Guyana. Often alone, he struggled single-handedly to secure and protect the fundamental rights of the working people. **Yes, his adversaries knew then, the struggle was on; the battle lines were drawn. Alas, the people found in Dr Jagan a leader in whom they could place their confidence and trust. A true champion of the working people.**

