

B/W-PATTERSON, P.J.

Ja's Patterson gets Guyana's highest award

GEORGETOWN, Guyana (CMC):

FORMER JAMAICAN Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, yesterday received the Order of Excellence (OE), Guyana's highest national honour, for his role in the regional integration movement.

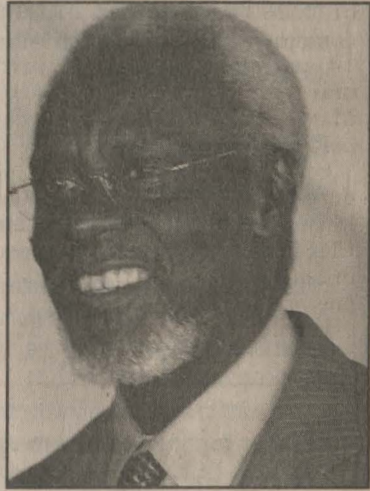
"As the citation which accompanies the award recognises, his dedication and contribution to the cause of the Caribbean community have been outstanding and exemplary. He is therefore most deserving of this distinction," President Bharrat Jagdeo said at the investiture ceremony held at State House in the capital.

Patterson said regionalism is "absolutely imperative today," unlike the 1950s when it was premised on sentiments.

"Fortunately, the young generation of the 60s, led by people like P.J. Patterson, refused to accept failure and soldiered on to build a strong and successful community which we have today. CARICOM (Caribbean Community) therefore owes much to this champion of regionalism, P.J. Patterson," Jagdeo said at the ceremony.

SPOKE FOR CARICOM

He reminded the audience, which included members of the diplomatic community, that Patterson "spoke passionately on behalf of the CARICOM nations, whether the issue was sugar, bananas, rum or bauxite,



PATTERSON

asserting our claim to fair treatment in foreign markets."

"To him goes much of the credit for the agreement on the Sugar Protocol which is the contractual basis for our exports to Europe."

Jagdeo also praised Patterson's formidable negotiating skills on any issue of debate, including Guyana's border issues with sister CARICOM State Suriname.

When he spoke, Patterson recalled coming to Guyana for the first time in 1956 and since then Guyana has been like a home to him, especially when his visit coincided with West Indies cricket.

"It has been a long, fruitful and pleasant association with Guyana," Patterson said, thanking the country for the award.