

# BUSINESS

## Three receive Sabga C'bean Awards for Excellence

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THE DIRECTOR of Women's Health at the Ministry of Health, Dr Adesh Sirjusingh, is one of the three recipients of the Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence and \$500,000 for their contribution in various fields.

The Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Awards for Excellence, held on Saturday night at ballroom of the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre in St Ann's, saw \$1.5 million awarded to three Caribbean nationals.

The other laureates are Joanne C Hillhouse from Antigua and Barbuda and Dr Mahendra Persaud from Guyana, who received awards for excellence in the categories of Arts and Letters and Science and Technology, respectively.

Sirjusingh, known for his exceptional work in improving maternal mortality, received the Public and Civic Contributions Award.

He said when he started his career, too many mothers were dying.

"Something had to change. At that time, haemorrhage was the number one cause of maternal deaths in Trinidad and Tobago.

We were able to prevent every single case of maternal mortality. Trinidad and Tobago was noted as not performing well in the area of maternal and newborn health,

and for the first time, just this year, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognised Trinidad and Tobago as one of the best

performers in the region," he said.

Sirjusingh said there is still much work to be done. "Getting this award is very important, not just for me but for the work we have been doing in the public sector. Far too often, we hear the negatives.

"I'm actually working on digitising health records, trying to use data for targeted use of our resources, and we are also planning to eliminate cervical cancer in a few years time; these are just a few of our projects," he said.

### Giving back

Author and former journalist, Joanne C Hillhouse said as a child she didn't see Antiguan stories. She is the founder of the Wadidli Youth Pen Prize, a non-profit organisation that mentors writers through various programmes.

Hillhouse said, "I felt like I wanted to start doing things to create the enabling environment that I did not have. I would not be a children's book writer if I was not a volunteer reader and if I had not gone into schools and seen the blank faces staring at me."

She said children connect to stories that they can relate to. "They want a story that could reach them, and in trying to serve them, I started writing children's stories in addition to the adult stories that I had in me," she said.

She said she is inspired by Antigua and Barbuda's culture. "I will not be here without the community that gave birth to me. I wouldn't be here



**EXCEPTIONAL WORK:** Chairman of ANSA McAL Foundation Andrew Sabga, from left, Dr Adesh Sirjusingh-Laureate, Public and Civic Contribution; Joanne Hillhouse-Laureate, Arts and Letters; Dr Mahendra Persaud-Laureate, Science and Technology; chairman Regional Eminent Persons Panel Prof Compton Bourne; and executive chairman of ANSA McAL Group of Companies A Norman Sabga at the ceremony for the Anthony N Sabga Awards for Caribbean Excellence, on Saturday, at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre in St Ann's. —Photo: ISHMAEL SALANDY

without the fold artistes, calypsonians, the mas builders, every part of the creative space that inspires my writing," Hillhouse said.

Dr Mahendra Persaud from Guyana, known for his work in rice research, received his award in the category of Science and Technology. He said he worked with a team whose efforts have led to the overall improvement of rice production and productivity and making rice profitable in Guyana.

"In 2020 rice contributed 20 per cent to Guyana's GDP. We are not finished. The team and the farmers, and I, are working on zinc-fortified rice. So by the end of this year, we will be able

to release a new variety of rice with higher levels of zinc. We are also in the final stage of testing and fine-tuning our aromatic rice to be released in 2025," Persaud said.

"At this point in time, we are very sure that wheat can grow in Guyana. We still have lots of work to do, but we are very certain," he said.

### Extra visibility

Chairman of the ANSA McAL Foundation, Andrew Sabga, said to date, 57 individuals have received awards since the programme began in 2006.

This award programme is providing a little extra visibility to individuals who are leaders in their respective fields and the

recognition and financial award they receive will go a long way to advancing the work that they do, he said.

Sabga said the awards were important to his father, Anthony N Sabga, who founded it in 2006.

"These awards are very near and dear to my family's hearts not only because it carries my father's name but because the event and the concept was dear to him; he pursued excellence himself.

"The region was also special to him as a home market and as his home. In the creation of these awards, we see the realisation of his dream, the identification and support of Caribbean talent," Sabga said.

## Labidco launches 'Plants for a Purpose' initiative

THE La Brea Industrial Development Company Limited (Labidco) launched its "Plant for a Purpose" initiative on the La Brea Industrial Estate on Saturday.

This initiative will play an important role in offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and promoting ecological diversity within the La Brea Industrial Estate, the company said in a news release on Saturday.

Three hectares of land on the Estate deemed unsuitable for industrial activity will be utilised for biological carbon sequestration through tree planting.

Phase 1 of the project commenced with the planting of 181 trees on approximately 4,000 square meters of land.

The trees planted included mango, guava, cashew, coconut, and tamarind. "They were selected for their ability to thrive in relatively poor soil conditions and are expected to sequester approximately two tonnes of carbon when matured," the release stated.

Delivering remarks at the event, chairman of Labidco Dr Joseph Khan said that by launching this project, Labidco is demonstrating

that sustainability and industrial development can coexist.

He said the hope is to do more than just sequester carbon, but also involve the community in the company's sustainability endeavours to "encourage the creation of a circular economy, where resources are used efficiently, waste is minimised, and economic growth is decoupled from environmental degradation".

Also in attendance was Minister of Labour and Member of Parliament for La Brea Stephen Mc Clashie.



**ECONOMIC GROWTH:** Stephen Mc Clashie, from left, Minister of Labour and Member of Parliament for La Brea; Riyadh Mohammed, advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; Dr Joseph Khan, chairman of Labidco; and Dr Donnie Boodial, deputy chairman of Labidco plant the first tree on Saturday.