

Seema wins Diwali Queen

SHASTRI BOODAN

Penal resident Seema Moonilal, 22, has captured this year's Diwali Queen competition. She won the title on Monday night to earn the first prize of \$20,000 at an event which was held at the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC), in Chaguanas.

Moonilal beat a field of nine finalists which included regional and international contestants.

Placing second was Canadian Suvina Smolksy, and in third spot was Navina Misir, of the United States, who also won the title of Miss Photogenic.

Shaenna Gilharry, of Belize, won the talent round of the competition. Gilharry was the only finalist to sing. She rendered the Sundar Popo classic titled Your Mother's Love.

Gilharry said she chose that song because it was very popular in T&T. The award for the Best Sari went to Ashwaita Bachoe, of Suriname.

Bachoe wore a red and gold embroidered sari complete with accessories. The award for Best Hair went to Raveena Nandlal, while the award for Best Makeup was won by Amisha Lulkool.

The contest began shortly after 7 pm under the patronage of President Anthony Carmona.

All contestants did an opening dance item and introduced themselves to the audience. The talent competition featured one dramatic monologue titled Journey To The Nagar which was written and performed by Raveena Nandlal.

Shaenna Gilharry performed a song item and the remaining contestants chose to perform dance items before the panel of 10 judges.

Moonilal, a final year student, pursuing biomedical engineering at UWI, St Augustine, planned to work within the next year to raise women's issues and highlight opportunities for young women.

In the question and answer segment of the competition, Moonilal was asked her opinion on the statement: 'Many people claim that beauty pageants debase women.'

Her response was that pageants do not debase women but instead give them a forum in society where they can showcase their opinions and talents.



Contestants in the Miss Diwali Nagar pageant perform their opening routine on Monday night.

PICTURES EDISON BOODOOSINGH



President Anthony Carmona and his wife, Reema, were among specially invited guests at the Nagar on Monday night.



Members of the Dragon Boys Tassa Group during their performance.