

MURTI LADY: Vishali Slemarine of the Holiday store shows off the store's vast collections of murtis.



Penal student cops Nagar queen title

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THE **UNIVERSITY** of the West Indies student Seema Moonilal has won the 2017 Miss Diwali Nagar title.

The Penal woman beat nine others for the title at a pageant held at the National Council of Indian Culture's (NCIC) Diwali Nagar site in Chaguanas on Monday night.

Ten girls were vying for the honour, including five representing various parts of Trinidad, with one each from Belize, Jamaica and Suriname and two from North America.

Draped in a green embroidery sari with matching accessories, Moonilal, a biomedical technology student, accepted her crown from NCIC president Dr Deokinanan Sharma and her sash pinned by the 2016 winner, Canadian Darnilian Motilal.

Moonilal won \$20,000 courtesy Hindustani Indian Expo.

Overcome with emotion, she said she was grateful for the opportunity bestowed upon her and thanked everyone for their support. She made special mention of the NCIC for allowing her the opportunity to compete and showcase her talent.

During the talent segment of the competition, Moonilal performed an Indian dance routine.

In the question and answer part of the pageant, Moonilal picked the question relating to a claim that beauty pageants degrade women and her thoughts on this. The question was read by presenter Nirmla Sesnarayan.

Moonilal's response was that she believed beau-

ty pageants showcase the beauty and intelligence of women and can be a platform for them to promote their ideologies and become a role model to others.

Of the other results: first runner-up was Surina Smolsky, of Canada, who received \$10,000; second runner-up was Navina Misir, from USA, who collected \$7,500; fourth place went to Shaenna Gilharry, of Belize, who earned \$5,000; and fifth place went to Rio Claro native Hama Ramoutar, who received \$3,500.

Special prizes for the evening's competition were Miss Photogenic — Navina Misir; Best Talent — Shaenna Gilharry; Best Sari — Ashwita Bachoe of Suriname; Best Hairstyle — Mayo resident Raveena Nandial; and Best Make-up — Amisha Lulkool from Couva.

President Anthony Carmona and wife Reema were also present at the Diwali Nagar.

In a brief address, Carmona praised NCIC for its continuous efforts in promoting and showcasing Indian culture and talent.

He said that despite disagreements within the country, it is through the nation's cultural diversity that people are able to live in harmony.

The President said that whatever religions someone may belong to, everyone has a vested interest in the country.

Both Carmona and his wife delivered Diwali greetings to the nation.