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Our Community Is Thriving!



Moms, daughters, and granddaughters shared hugs and laughter at Imdadul Islamic Center's packed Mother's Day celebration on May 11. As the photos show, the event radiated warmth, family, love, and gratitude, complete with roses, soulful songs, brunch served by the brothers, and with dignitaries like Guyana's Honorary Consul, Mani Singh, in attendance. **More on Page 14**

Guyana Consulate General transitions to new passport

The Guyana Consulate in Toronto has begun implementing a new biometric passport system, requiring in-person appointments and data collection. With biometric enrollment and new electronic features, the upgraded passport system reflects a comprehensive move by the Guyanese government to modernise passport services, enhance identity protection, and augment its ongoing modern service delivery initiatives.

required to schedule an appointment for application, and to complete biometric enrollment in person, marking a new passport process for Guyanese nationals here in Canada.

According to a release from the Consulate General here in Toronto, all new passport applicants must contact the Toronto office at 505 Consumers Road to book an appointment, and must appear in person to provide biometric data, including fingerprints, digital signatures, and photographs.

Walk-ins and mail-in applications are no longer accepted under the new passport application system.

The Consulate General also confirmed that all other consular services **See Page 10: Consulate**

Toronto - The Consulate General for Guyana in Toronto has transitioned to a new biometric identification system for processing Republic of Guyana passports, which became effective on May 1.

Diaspora members are now

Prominent diaspora MPs get key Cabinet roles

Prime Minister Mark Carney unveiled his new cabinet on May 13, appointing 28 ministers and ten secretaries of state, signaling a significant shift with 24 new faces in key positions. Among the notable appointments were four influential MPs deeply connected to our diaspora community: Anita Anand, Shafqat Ali, Ruby Sahota, and Maninder Sidhu, each entrusted with pivotal roles in shaping Canada's domestic and international policy landscape.



Anita Anand



Shafqat Ali



Ruby Sahota



Maninder Sidhu

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Ottawa - Prime Minister Mark Carney on May 13 set the course for his administration, announcing a diverse and strategically focused cabinet that notably includes several prominent members of our diaspora community. At the same time, he directed his ministers to "bring new ideas, a clear focus, and decisive actions to their work", underscoring his intent for swift and effective governance.

Leading the cabinet's significant diaspora representation is Anita Anand, MP for Oakville East, who was appointed Canada's Foreign Minister, becoming the first Hindu woman to occupy this powerful cabinet post.

Anand's distinguished career includes previous cabinet roles such as Minister of Defence, Transport,

and Public Services and Procurement. Notably, she played pivotal roles in Canada's Covid-19 vaccine procurement and military aid to Ukraine.

Her appointment comes at a critical time, tasked with resetting strained ties with India, and managing sensitive relations with the US administration led by President Donald Trump.

In a Facebook post following her swearing-in, Anand stated, "I am honoured to be named Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. I look forward to working with Prime Minister Mark Carney and our team to build a safer, fairer world, and deliver for Canadians."

Earlier this year Anand indicated she would not seek re-election, and planned a return to academia; however, she was persuaded by PM Carney to remain in politics, a reflection of her significant expertise and political stature.

Born in Nova Scotia to parents from Punjab and Tamil Nadu, Anand holds four distinguished degrees, including a BA from Queen's University, a

Bachelor of Jurisprudence from Oxford, and law degrees from Dalhousie University and the University of Toronto.

Acknowledging the historic nature of her appointment, she took her oath of office on May 13 with her hand placed on the Bhagavad Gita, affirming her Hindu faith, cultural heritage, and her commitment to inclusive representation.

Another appointment by PM Carney of a player deeply immersed in the Brampton community saw Shafqat Ali, Member of Parliament for Brampton-Chinguacousy Park, stepping into the influential role of President of the Treasury Board.

Ali succeeded Ginette Petitpas Taylor, who served under former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Anand, who previously held this prestigious position. Ali's new role has placed him at the helm of overseeing Canada's largest employer, the federal public service, managing spending, and supervising government operations.

Ali was first elected to parliament in 2021 and secured re-election with 49 percent of the vote in 2025. He built his reputation through active participation in key parliamentary committees, notably those on environment, sustainable development, citizenship, and immigration.

Prior to his career in politics, Ali was an **See Page 5: Key roles**

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The Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham was the chosen site for the sacred ceremony that united Devika and Rajiv in marriage on May 16. In photo above are the bride and groom with friends at the wedding reception; in photos below are, bottom left, Devika and Rajiv with the VCC's Adit (left) and Keoli Kumar (right); top left: the newlyweds flanked by family members Arya (front, left) and with Rajiv's mom, Almel, (front right); in back row, from left are Vidya, Jazmynn, and Malik; in photo at right are the lovely bride Devika with husband Rajiv following the official ceremony.



The Page 17 report in our May 7 edition on the Toronto Arya Samaj/Vedic Cultural Centre's Indian Arrival event incorrectly named Nadia Umadas, who is standing fourth from the right. In photo, left to right, are Harry Persaud; Adit Kumar; Rabi Nauth, Committee Chair; Honorary Consul Mani Singh, Consulate General of Guyana, Toronto; Nadia Umadas; Varun Kumar; Sanjay Kumar; and Hema Singh.

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MP Anita Anand at her swearing-in on May 13



MP Ruby Sahota (centre) with PM Carney and Governor General Mary Simon



MP Maninder Sidhu (centre) with PM Carney and Governor General Mary Simon

Key roles in Ottawa for diaspora MPs

From Page 1

entrepreneur and real estate professional in Brampton, bringing a practical understanding of local economic dynamics to his cabinet responsibilities.

Expressing his commitment via *Facebook*, Ali stated, “It is truly an honour to be trusted by Prime Minister Mark Carney to join his team and to be sworn in to Cabinet as President of the Treasury Board... I am enthusiastic about moving forward rapidly to implement our government’s program for Canadians.”

Another strategic move by PM Carney saw Maninder Sidhu, MP for Brampton East, appointed Canada’s Minister of International Trade. Sidhu, who has represented Brampton East since 2019, brings extensive experience in international trade and customs brokerage to the prestigious role.

He previously served as Parliamentary Secretary to both the Minister of International Development and the Minister of International Trade.

Sidhu’s role is considered critical, particularly in navigating trade tensions with the US under President Trump.

Reflecting on his appointment, Sidhu noted it was “an honour of a lifetime to be appointed as Canada’s International Trade Minister. I’m grateful to Prime Minister Carney for the confidence he has placed in me to diversify trade, support Canadian businesses in reaching new global markets, and help create good-paying jobs across Canada.”

Prior to his appointment, he posted on *Facebook* about his future mission, stating, “Canada is a trading nation — and we must strengthen and expand the infrastructure that connects us to global markets”.

Here in our community, the Canada Guyana Chamber of Commerce (CGCC) recognised Sidhu’s appointment via a statement made on its *Facebook* page.

In its statement, the CGCC expressed optimism in working collaboratively to address economic challenges.

The CGCC noted that PM Carney was aiming “for a smaller, more efficient cabinet that empowers ministers to make decisions independently, with a focus on delivering a broad agenda that includes a US trade deal, economic revitalisation, a middle-class tax cut, housing initiatives, crime reduction, and major infrastructure projects”.

The CGCC highlighted the strategic importance of Sidhu’s role, noting his past contributions to the business group as a Gala speaker and previous visitor to Guyana. It added he will “handle international trade, a crucial role as Canada faces economic challenges and trade tensions with the US under President Trump”.

Additionally, “The CGCC looks forward to collaborating with Minister Sidhu in this context.”

Another eminent federal figure familiar to our community, Ruby Sahota, MP for Brampton North-Caledon, was appointed Secretary of State for Combatting Crime. Sahota, who has represented her constituency since 2015, previously served as Minister of Democratic Institutions and Chief Government Whip.

Born and raised in Brampton to parents who emigrated from Punjab, India, Sahota’s educational background includes degrees from McMaster University and Western Michigan University Cooley Law School.

Acknowledging her appointment on social media, Sahota shared, “Honoured to be sworn in as a member of Prime Minister Carney’s cabinet as the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime. I know this role comes with great responsibility and I look forward to leading the government’s efforts in combatting crime, building safer communities, strengthening justice, and serving with integrity.”



Prime Minister Mark Carney



MP Shafqat Ali (centre) with PM Carney and Governor General Mary Simon

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Editorial

Conquering cancer

It is a lovely day for cricket. The players are on the field; the experts celebrate every run with high-fives; and Caribbean rhythms are rallying players and spectators.

This is our cricket in its most communal, joyous, and profoundly Caribbean form. Now, imagine channeling this engagement into helping to find a cure for cancer.

On May 31, this vivid tableau will come alive in Mississauga's Celebration Square, where T-5 teams will participate in the inaugural Cricket to Conquer Cancer event.

Organised by the esteemed Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation (PMCF), this tournament will harness our diaspora's cherished tradition to drive life-changing cancer research. More than simply a sporting event, it represents a community-led movement, turning every wicket taken and every run scored into powerful acts of healing and hope.

Cricket has long stood at the heart of Caribbean identity, a legacy that transcends generations, borders, and even oceans. For our diaspora communities from Georgetown, Port-of-Spain, Kingston, and now across Canada, cricket embodies resilience, unity, and our deep cultural pride.

On May 31, cricket will perhaps face its most formidable opponent in battling cancer, a relentless adversary impacting millions worldwide. Cancer diagnoses are projected to surge globally by 77 percent by 2050, disproportionately affecting younger generations. Indeed, early-onset cancers among people under 50 have risen nearly 80 percent since the early 1990s. The need for innovative and community-driven solutions has never been greater.

In response, the PMCF has called our community to action, inviting us to engage in a meaningful battle against cancer through cricket. Teams will play in a fast-paced version of cricket alongside intense spectator engagement.

In the last year, each team has been on a fund-raising journey, seeking to collectively raise one million dollars to support PMCF's pioneering cancer research work. Each ambitious objective in raising \$6,000 underlines the communal spirit and the collective commitment essential for a community to work with PMCF in conquering cancer.

At the core of this powerful initiative stands PMCF itself, a globally revered institution recognised as one of the world's top five cancer research centres. PMCF's legacy of innovation and achievement includes revolutionary immuno-therapy treatments, ground-breaking discoveries in stem cell research, and state-of-the-art liquid biopsy testing.

Such remarkable eminence assures communities that its participation in Cricket to Conquer Cancer is not merely symbolic, but directly supports proven, tangible advancements, and ground-breaking solutions in cancer treatment.

The PMCF's rallying cry, *Carry The Fire*, captures the essence of this extraordinary community effort. More than a slogan, it symbolises collective courage, resilience, and the enduring spirit of healing. It burns brightly within our Caribbean communities, where the virtues of perseverance, solidarity, and unity fuel our everyday life.

As a diaspora, cricket uniquely fosters a powerful communal bond; beyond the excitement, the event represents a cultural fusion, merging Caribbean festivity and Canadian multiculturalism into a unified force for a global good.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer is a demonstration of how cultural traditions can powerfully amplify and enrich humanitarian initiatives. The PMCF's esteemed global reputation inspires confidence and ensures every dollar raised is impactful, life-changing, and healing. By linking sport, heritage, and research, this event embodies a dynamic and sustainable model for community engagement alongside scientific advancement.

As our community gathers on May 31, every high-five in the crowd, every well-timed shot, and every ball bowled evidences our teamwork, resilience, and optimism.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer offers an unparalleled opportunity to blend joy and purpose into an unforgettable day. As shots hit the boundary, wickets fall, and we celebrate each triumph, we reaffirm our shared mission in healing, uplifting each other, and contributing to a noble cause.

On May 31, a lovely day for cricket has now become more than just a game; it is our community's affirmation that we are a team batting together to conquer cancer.

Minority mandate and a major test ahead for PM Carney

From banker to ballot box, Prime Minister Mark Carney arrived to deliver a new government for Canada – something that was increasingly demanded.

When former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation in January amid unprecedented unpopularity, Carney was not yet a politician. The Liberal Party of Canada was set for a massive defeat in the upcoming election.

Fast forward to March 2025, and he was massively chosen by Liberals to take the reins from Trudeau to become Canada's new leader. Within days of being sworn in, Prime Minister Carney made the ceremonial visit to the Governor General to call an election.

On April 28, millions of Canadians exercised their right to vote for a government that would lead the nation into its newly-found trade war with the US. Under Prime Minister Carney's leadership, the Liberals won the day, and the right to form government.

For political observers and many Liberals, the electoral victory of Prime Minister Carney's Liberals was reminiscent of the 2004 election, when then former prime minister Paul Martin won a fourth term for the Liberals after succeeding former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien as leader of the Liberal party.

Martin served as Chrétien's finance minister, and in a bitter end to their relationship, Chrétien was forced out and Martin swept the party's leadership.

Like Chrétien, Trudeau's departure was a buildup of growing pressures that included a dramatic fallout with his finance minister. However, unlike Chrétien, Trudeau was replaced by an individual who did not even have a seat in the House of Commons.

Now elected as a Member of Parliament and set to lead a minority government, Carney will aim to unload the unpopularity of the Trudeau era and redefine how his government will deliver.

Prime Minister Carney stepped into this role with an unprecedented and precarious economic crisis ahead, based on a rapidly evolving trade war.

Also, he faces the vocalisation of an Alberta secessionist movement, whilst the separatist Parti Québécois is on the rise in Quebec: a country in a trade war; and one divided.

Leading a party that was on the brink of defeat, the calm prime minister with the monotone delivery will need to address mounting challenges, but has the opportunity to be a transformative leader.

Prime Minister Carney was finally lured into politics; he was admired by the political establishment within the Liberal Party.

'It have grass, wild and hard, but yard fowl will pick it out'

The dream begins with sunlight saturating the cricket field, each blade of grass illuminated with the radiant promise that only a child's longing can muster.

I am a young boy back in the homeland, fueled with the energy that the tropics infuse into ripening fruit, and which makes a bird so buoyant with *joie de vivre* that it leaps constantly on an overhead electric wire.

In the dream, the young boy is chasing greatness as he strides onto the cricket pitch, carrying a rough bat fashioned from a fibrous coconut stalk.

I am at the centre, stepping onto the rolled pitch, my racing heartbeat keeping time to imagined applause from the crowd in the stands. Someone has turned up the radio commentary for communal ears; the still, humid air is punctuated with celebratory, baritone blasts echoing from the sea-depths of a resonating conch shell.

The pitch has been freshly-rolled; its yellow surface is like a pastry, shiny in spots with a sugar glaze. In the distance, the heavy rollers rest by the grounds keeper's shed like battle tanks after a fight, guarded by an infantry of pails.

In that moment, everything is in its place. The young boy takes guard; he then taps an exploratory bat onto the pitch, short tap, and lengthier tapping-tap-tapping – the sound on the solid tympanum of packed clay a Morse code of anticipation.

And then as occurs in all dreams, the rupture arrives. In its collapse, the field begins imploding with shouts from the grounds keeper's shed, the man's voice coarse, punctuated with an interrobang that merges question with exclamation: "How much time I have to tell allyuh to stay off the people pitch?"

The grounds keeper sweeps into the foreground crackling with the electricity of dissonance. His words are weighted like the heavy rollers, an implacable juggernaut fueled with vexation.

"Yuh think yuh father put that pitch down in this hot sun? Is them in the big white house who do that! And they standing up and watching me and you right now! You don't belong here! Get off the people cricket pitch right now!"

How quick is the pace in a dream, that it could swing outwards without warning, volleying past to take the edge, lofting the sacred so it falls into the waiting hands of the forbidden. Decades later I am recalling this piercing delivery of venom as the grounds keeper's voice snaked through that boyhood dream.

It was later in adulthood when I came to appreciate the foundational architecture holding up that shout; that it was not merely a command, but a reminder, later excavated like a rusted sword that still kept its edge, out of the artifacts of my childhood. That even in our dreams back in the homeland, we were

His ability for sound and solid leadership based on thoughtful policy is why he arrived at the right place at the right time.

The former Central banker successfully convinced voters that he was the right candidate to confront President Trump's trade war and threats to (economically) annex Canada. Now there is an expectation that he will deliver.

Canadians are seeking financial relief, and the threats of a looming economic crisis have aggravated fears of financial tragedy.

Prime Minister Carney needed to demonstrate to Canadians that he was aware of this, and that his government would respond. When he took the stage as the newly-minted leader at the Liberal leadership convention, he announced that the consumer tax on carbon would be ended.

In his inaugural speech, awkwardly proclaimed in front of his predecessor, Prime Minister Carney knew that gesture signalled his new leadership, and that it needed to immediately demonstrate a turning away from the previous regime.

Similarly, at the first cabinet meeting after the election, he signed a note of instruction directing the preparation of the legislation to be tabled first thing when Parliament returns later this month to implement a tax cut.

Canada's new prime minister promised to lower the personal income tax rate for some Canadians by one percent, which he claimed would save some families up to \$840 a year.

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne said that the Liberals will introduce ways and means motions to table the tax-cut legislation, and this was a strong signal to Canadians.

When Paul Martin won his minority government, a fourth Liberal victory, it was the beginning of the end for the party. Two years later, his government was defeated in the House of Commons, and was replaced by Stephen Harper's Conservatives.

Prime Minister Carney is clearly aware that his actions from Day One will impact on the longevity of his government, and on the future of the party.

The latter might not be a burning priority for Prime Minister Carney; however, he is acutely aware that Canadians were enraged by his predecessor, and expect a government that would not inflict further hardship, but will be agile and responsive.

Canada's new prime minister is on a path to not repeat errors of the past, and despite the monumental challenges ahead, he appears to be set to lead, and ready to guide Canada through some of its most transformative years.

cut down and made to observe our limits.

Later, I would read our Caribbean's own Martiniquais philosopher Frantz Fanon. He spoke directly to me about our inheritances of loss and rejection; how colonialism did not simply occupy our lands, but also infiltrated our psyche.

That a colonised child, holding aloft a coconut branch mimicking a cricket bat, grows up doubting the legitimacy of his incipient talent, his own desires; that every aspiration is weighed down not by a lack of ability, but by unwritten rules that kept doors shut, excluding who was allowed to belong, and where.

Now it appears that dreams also age, simultaneously becoming vintage, acquiring grey on the edges, alongside wrinkles on the forehead, and crows' feet by the eyes.

Lately, when the boyhood dream returns, I am mired ankle-deep in the softened yellow clay of the pitch. The crew-cut turf is cracked, and mottled with receding bald spots. The tanks are tilted; the infantry is riddled with bullet holes from rust.

The grounds keeper has been swept away with yesterday's detritus; however, it is an absence that comes with agency. My grandmother used to say, "It have some grass that grow hard and wild; but yard fowl will pick, pick, pick, and pick it out".

I believe my grandmother was saying even grass will pass. Now uprooted, the grounds keeper carried the enforcer's authority, those surveillant watchers in the "big white house". He guarded the grass, the pitch, the perimeter of boundary rope that kept me beyond the margin; he was mandated, a gatekeeper keeping us out of fields our ancestors' hands had manicured.

Now even he has been picked away. Today, the clarity that arrives with adulthood in my quieter moments keeps discovering unresolved eddies. These eddies swirl and swirl, whispering unwholesome truths in my dreams about my early upbringing.

In this recurring dream is an eddy where childhood longings orbited. Today, it is no longer a simple dream, but baggage with a pathology of invitations withheld, and opportunities denied.

Here is an inheritance of loss, where we were made to measure ourselves, not by talent and possibility, but through exclusion. We were made to inhabit spaces of futility through rejection, via the politeness of dismissal, and at times, forceful assertion of boundaries that kept us beyond the cricket fields.

Fanon called this space a "zone of non-being", where the colonised subject exists in a world structured by rejection. Where a young boy could only dream. But even in that dream a rupture arrives, where the pace swings outwards to take an existential edge, which still echoes today, "Get off the people blasted pitch!"



Ryan Singh



Romeo Kaseram

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication. Letters to be published will be edited where necessary. Publisher: Harry Ramkhelawan Editor: Romeo Kaseram Columnists/Writers/Photographers: Vidur Dindayal, Kamil Ali, Dwarka Lakhan, Dhanpaul Narine, Ryan Singh, Nalini Mohabir, Ramesh Ramkalawan, Russell Lutchman. Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc. 312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1 (905) 738-5005; indocaribbeanworld@gmail.com Website: www.indocaribbeanworld.com

Middle class revival a good move by TT govt

Dear Editor,

In his 1904 address to the inaugural meeting of the Free Trade League, past English Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said, "For a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle".

Churchill correctly predicted that high tax rates and other similar policies would prove disastrous for the economies of the UK, and the many other countries that went down that path.

Following the stagflation (rising prices, sluggish economic growth, and high unemployment) of the 1970s and 1980s that resulted from these policies within the UK, lower taxes, more open trade, and freer markets became accepted wisdom among economists and policymakers to spur economic growth.

I am quite pleased the newly-installed government of Trinidad and Tobago is aware of this economic philosophy.

The repeal of the property tax is a relief for a significant portion of the population, who over the years have faced rising cost of living due to the increasing cost of fuel at the pump and ever-increasing food prices, to name a few areas. The property tax would have affected home owners, most of whom fall within the middle-class economic bracket.

Economic theory has proven that a growing and prosperous middle class is a significant driver of economic growth, so any policy that aims to increase the disposable income of this sector is indeed a positive move to revive the economic fortunes of Trinidad and Tobago.

One may argue where the government will earn its revenue, but as Churchill said, you cannot keep attacking the very people who will

help you navigate choppy economic waters.

The tax burden on the middle class has to be reduced. The government needs to earn its revenue by stimulating current economic activity, developing new economic sectors, and by encouraging entrepreneurial activity by increasing the ease of doing business within Trinidad and Tobago.

Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, spoke about the invisible hand that directs all economic activity to overall efficiency within markets. Essentially, when individuals are allowed to make their own economic decisions, eventually it leads to greater societal welfare.

Redirecting economic resources from free markets to governments does not always lead to efficient use of scarce resources. How can we justify the past administration's abandonment of so many schools that were close to completion, which were left to rot after so

much was already spent on these buildings?

This abandonment, and other examples, prove that governments cannot always be trusted to efficiently manage our taxes, so why not leave those funds in the hands of the consumer?

The circular flow of money within the economy and the multiplier effect that increases the value of a dollar as it moves around cannot be underestimated.

It is a significant policy shift that the new government is embarking on, reviving the middle class to stimulate economic growth. It is policy rooted in economic theory and has been proven to work.

I commend them on this bold initiative.

Steve Seetahal, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Winston Churchill



UNC supporters celebrate the party's election victory on April 28

New TT govt must deal with key priorities

Dear Editor,

Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar's election promises emphasise a comprehensive three-year plan aimed at transforming Trinidad and Tobago into a safer, more attractive nation.

Key priorities include reducing homicides to acceptable levels, starting with targeted crime reduction strategies such as enhanced law enforcement, community engagement, and social programmes to break the cycle of violence.

Simultaneously, the government aims to attract much-needed foreign investment by improving the business environment in streamlining regulations, improving infrastructure, and promoting sectors like tourism, manufacturing, and agriculture.

A stable, investor-friendly climate will foster economic growth, job creation, and diversification, reducing dependence on the energy sector.

Protecting national sovereignty by keeping the country out of the IMF's reach is also a core goal. This involves prudent fiscal management,

increasing revenue streams, and avoiding austerity measures that hurt ordinary citizens.

The government must restore confidence, prioritising economic stability and growth.

Furthermore, ensuring that all ministers and departments perform above standard is essential for effective governance. Regular performance reviews, accountability measures, and transparency initiatives will promote efficiency and drive results.

Finally, making Trinidad and Tobago attractive for investments requires a holistic approach through improving infrastructure, reducing corruption, and fostering a business-friendly environment. It must be an environment where both local and international investors feel confident to operate.

By fulfilling these promises within three years, the government can lay a strong foundation for a safer, more prosperous, and globally competitive Trinidad and Tobago.

Gordon Laughlin, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



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Ready to rescue, rebuild, and revive

Dear Editor,

Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has done what few in politics ever manage to achieve – a triumphant, calculated, and commanding return to the national stage.

Her April 28 victory was not a fluke, but a product of shrewd strategy, disciplined messaging, and sheer political mastery.

It was a campaign that outclassed the tired, old machinery of the former PNM regime led by Dr Keith Rowley. What has truly set this new era apart is the bold, precedent-setting appointments that PM Persad-Bissessar has made.

For the first time, the nation is seeing ministers not just filling seats but bringing real-world experience, academic qualification, and a genuine passion for service to their roles. This is governance reimagined, and it is long overdue.

Even more ground-breaking is her decision to implement dual or multiple appointments in key ministries – a move some may call unconventional, but is in fact a brilliant check-and-balance system for the government's most critical portfolios.

This is not about control – it is about accountability; it is about ensuring the people's work, their money, and their future are managed with diligence and integrity.

From the outset, PM Persad-Bissessar's people-first agenda is already in motion. Immediate steps to address basic services, correct injustices, and restore hope are signs that this is not business as usual; this is a mission to rescue, rebuild, and revive.

Let us be honest: the road ahead is treacherous. The former Rowley-led PNM government has left a trail of destruction – economic



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

mismanagement, institutional rot, and social despair. Fixing this would not happen overnight.

That is why we, the people, must exercise patience and understanding. PM Persad-Bissessar is not a magician, she is a visionary, and that makes all the difference.

Here is a woman of unshakeable resilience, unmatched intellect, and a deep love for country. Collectively, her courage to return, to lead again, and to do so with fresh energy and bold ideas, is a testament to the kind of leadership Trinidad and Tobago so desperately needs.

Madam Prime Minister, your comeback is more than a political victory; it is a moment of national renewal. And we stand ready behind you, beside you, as you lead us forward.

Siddharta Ramischand, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Residents respond to a major road accident in Guyana

Call for greater caution on Guyana's roads

Dear Editor,

As the rainy season intensifies across Guyana, we must, more than ever, support President Dr Irfaan Ali's call for greater caution on our roadways, particularly among motorcyclists, who continue to be overrepresented in fatal accidents.

Ali's disclosure that 43 percent of this year's road deaths involve motorcyclists is a grim reminder that we are in the midst of a national safety crisis.

Rainy conditions reduce visibility, impair traction, and make sudden braking dangerous – yet many road users still speed, overtake recklessly, or fail to wear helmets and seatbelts. This is not just careless; it is deadly.

We must return to the basics of road safety by embracing the Five Cs of Driving: Care,

Caution, Consideration, Common Sense, and Courtesy.

These principles are not just slogans – they are life-saving habits. Care means checking your brakes and tires before you hit the road. Caution reminds us to drive slowly in wet weather.

Consideration urges us to respect every road user, from the pedestrian to the cyclist. Common sense demands we avoid distractions and intoxication. And courtesy – remember that little patience can prevent a lifetime of regret.

We owe it to our families, our fellow road users, and ourselves to be better. Let this rainy season be a turning point, not a continuation of tragedy.

Alex Ramraj, Guyana, via email.

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Positive IMF report notes Guyana's ongoing transformation

In an extremely positive *Country Report* this month, the IMF has stated that Guyana is undergoing a remarkable economic transformation. The international financial watchdog noted "previously one of the poorest countries in South America, experiencing very modest growth and exceptionally high debt, Guyana has emerged as the first Heavily Indebted Poor Country to reach high income status".

The report added, "Between 2022 to 2024, the country recorded the highest average growth globally, reflecting not only substantial increases in oil production but also a steadfast focus on ensuring a competitive non-oil economy."

Real GDP growth climbed to 43.6 percent in 2024, driven by a 57.7 percent expansion in real oil GDP, and 13.1 percent increase in non-oil activity. This year, it is forecasted that real GDP and real non-oil GDP will grow by about 10.25 percent and 13 percent, respectively. Inflation is expected to edge up to around four percent by end-2025 from close to three percent in end-2024 – largely due to higher food prices.

Stated the report: "The overall growth in the economy reflects expanding oil production, and robust performance in the construction, services, and agriculture sectors. Growth in the non-oil sector is being supported by strong domestic demand, rising private sector activity, increased public investment, and targeted interventions in key sectors such as agriculture and tourism."

Putting the country's success in perspective, the IMF stated that Guyana is determined to utilise its natural resource revenue as a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient development.

It further stated that the authorities recognise that this transformation must be underpinned by strong institutions, sound macroeconomic policies, and continued engagement with development partners. The government also remains cognisant of the challenges that accompany rapid resource-driven growth.

As such, Guyanese authorities have reiterated their commitment to maintaining a stable macroeconomic environment and ensuring that their resource endowment translates into tangible improvements in living standards for all Guyanese, while avoiding the pitfalls associated with resource dependency.

Last year, the mining and quarrying industry comprising sand, stone, diamonds, and manganese, is estimated to have grown by almost 25 percent, driven by greater activity in the construction sector, which is forecasted to grow by 27 percent – supported by favourable policies such as the expansion of the housing drive, and the lowering of interest rates.

The agriculture, forestry, and fisheries experienced mixed performance with rice growing by double digits on the back of investments in drainage and irrigation, farm-to-market roads, and the expansion of cultivated land. However, the sugar industry continued to struggle in spite of efforts to bring it back to life.

The IMF contended that social transfer policies implemented in recent years have increased disposable income and reduced the poverty rate. It suggested that going forward, additional targeted transfers, integrated into a medium-term fiscal framework, could further support inclusive growth, and help Guyana advance faster toward its Sustainable Development Goal of no poverty.

Incidentally, as part of its continuing efforts to increase disposable income, the government unveiled an ambitious range of measures aimed at improving the standard of living of the population last year.

Among these initiatives are a one-off cash grant of (G) \$100,000 to every citizen of Guyana 18 years and above, as of January 1,

2024, once they have a national valid identification card and/or a valid passport.

The government also announced plans to raise the minimum monthly wage for public sector workers to (G) \$100,000 by the end of 2025. The minimum wage for the public sector is currently \$75,000.

In addition, families benefitted from a new (US) \$50 per child income tax allowance, easing the financial burden on parents. These measures aim to increase disposable income while reducing economic disparity across the country.

Currently, all students in Guyana receive a (G) \$50,000 annual *Because We Care* cash grant, which is another initiative that increases the disposable income of households.

One of the most notable announcements was a (G) \$10 billion injection into the National Insurance Scheme. The government also announced new healthcare and education policies aimed at supporting future generations.

Beginning in 2025, a universal healthcare voucher of (G) \$10,000 will be issued for all children to cover essential medical tests, particularly for early detection and prevention of non-communicable diseases.

Another major development was the decision to abolish tuition fees at the University of Guyana starting January 2025, benefiting over 11,000 students. The government also commenced eliminating outstanding loans owed by graduates of the University of Guyana.

In November 2024, the government announced that it will be signing a two-year agreement with the Guyana Public Service Union, which includes a retroactive ten percent salary increase for 2024, as well as an eight percent increase for 2025. This percent increase, retroactive from January 1, 2024, will amount to a 35 percent cumulative salary increase over the last four years.

At a macro level, the IMF noted that following a strong fiscal impulse in 2024, the budget deficit is expected to narrow from 7.3 percent of GDP to just below five percent of GDP in 2025, as higher oil revenues more than offset the projected increase in spending. The large current account surplus of 24.5 percent of GDP in 2024 is projected to moderate to about nine percent of GDP in 2025, reflecting the imports of the fourth oil Floating Production Storage and Offloading vessel.

It noted that while there are no clear signs of overheating, enhancing the close monitoring of macroeconomic developments, and continuing to proactively respond through tighter policies, would be essential to ensure that the economy avoids overheating and remains on a balanced expansion path.

The IMF recommended gradually closing the overall fiscal deficit by 2031, followed by a narrowing of the non-oil primary deficit over the projected lifespan of oil reserves to the levels consistent with ensuring intergenerational equity, and preserving fiscal and macroeconomic sustainability.

The IMF stated that monetary policy remains appropriately tight, helping to contain inflation. Maintaining broad money growth in line with non-oil GDP growth, continuing to carefully manage liquidity in the banking system, and tightening monetary policy further, if signs of overheating or imbalances emerge, remain key to guarding against inflationary pressures, it stated.

It observed that the government has made advances in enhancing governance of the National Resource Fund, and modernising public sector operations. The 2023 NRF and Public Accountability and Oversight Committee Annual Reports have been presented to the National Assembly, regular notifications of receipts of petroleum revenues, as mandated by law, are published in the

Official Gazette, and presented to the National Assembly, and the Bank of Guyana publishes monthly and quarterly reports of the NRF's financial performance.

The government has also made good progress in modernising its revenue administration capacity. The procurement framework is being upgraded, improving public access to information about procurement opportunities and processes, and building capacity among public officials. As part of broader digitalisation efforts in public sector service delivery, work is ongoing to introduce e-procurement.

The IMF also commended Guyana's continued efforts to strengthen its Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism, and anti-corruption frameworks, in line with its international commitments.

It said Guyana's Mutual Evaluation Report by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, published in 2024, found a significant improvement in Guyana's efforts to improve its understanding of ML/FT risks.

Continued implementation of reforms will further strengthen fiscal transparency and anti-corruption frameworks, including in extractive industries. Internal audit capabilities are expanding, and more effort is needed to ensure a timely publication of audit reports of some public companies and local authorities.

It was noted that Guyana remains a global pioneer in climate policies monetising forest conservation, and the authorities are enhancing the country's energy matrix, strengthening macroeconomic resilience.

Against climate change vulnerabilities stemming from sea level rise and flooding, the authorities are working to prioritise actions as outlined in the Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030 to build resilience, further promote sustainable forestry, and enhance biodiversity conservation.

Meantime, the Gas-to-Energy project is expected to secure reliable electricity provision countrywide as a transition toward a cleaner and more renewable energy mix over the longer term.

The IMF also supported the government's efforts to foster inclusive growth, economic diversification, and upgrading of labour skills, noting that addressing labour shortages and skill mismatches through training and vocational education is key to supporting the ongoing economic expansion, and increasing women participation in the labour markets.

The IMF also commended the government for reforms and investments to boost productivity, trade connectivity, and export diversification, including through high value-added products in agriculture and manufacturing.

The IMF contended that recent tariff announcements by the US are expected to have a limited direct impact on Guyana amid increased external risks. Under the April 2 US tariffs (paused for 90 days on April 9), Guyana will face a 38 percent tariff on its exports to the US.

However, only two percent of GDP in exports is subject to the tariff, as 90 percent of Guyana's exports to the US, comprising almost entirely petroleum, with small shares of gold and aluminum, is exempt from the April 2 tariffs.

Overall, in spite of its perceived risks, the IMF's review of Guyana was extremely positive.

...

Dwarka Lakhan, BA, MBA, FCSI, FICB is a Member of the Canadian Association of Journalists, and an accomplished financial writer. His book, *Winning Ways, Real World Strategies to Help You Reimagine Your Practice*, is available on Amazon and on winningways101.com. He can be reached at dlakhan@rogers.com.



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Consulate adopts new biometric passport

From page 1

remain unaffected, and continue to be available without an appointment. To book a passport appointment, applicants may call the consulate at **416-494-6040**; or **visit its official website by clicking here**.

Honorary Consul Mani Singh at the Consulate General for Guyana in Toronto welcomed the transition, noting the global recognition of the upgraded passport and its broader utility.

“The Consulate General in Toronto transitioned to the more secure biometric system on May 1. It is so advanced and secure that around 65 countries worldwide recognise the new Guyana passport,” Singh stated.

He added, “The Consulate is very happy to advance this initiative by the government of Guyana, which would benefit the diaspora. It would work as an excellent piece of identification that could be used in Guyana, in both the public and private sector. It works for acquisition of the Guyana identification card, for getting a TIN number for business purposes, and at the private level in opening a bank account, among other uses requiring valid identification.”

He also acknowledged that an adjustment period was needed.

“However, like everything else that is new, the transition has created a bit of unease, but please be assured that this latest government initiative, which we have rolled out in Toronto, is aimed to better serve the diaspora in the long run,” he noted.

Passport applicants now have the option to select between two validity periods: a five-year passport for CAD \$95, or a ten-year passport for CAD \$130.

Once the application is completed and processed, individuals must return to the Consulate General in Toronto to collect their new passport in person.

The passport upgrade in Toronto is part of a larger national

initiative by the government of Guyana to enhance travel document security and improve service delivery.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced the launch of the ten-year Republic of Guyana electronic passport, which is available through the Central Immigration and Passport Office in Guyana.

The Ministry stated that the introduction of the new passport is aligned with President Irfaan Ali’s modernisation agenda. It features advanced security elements, including an embedded electronic chip and biometric requirements, to improve identity protection and ensure compliance with international travel standards.

“This upgrade aligns Guyana with international standards for secure travel documents, ensuring smoother border crossings and enhanced authentication. Additionally, the design of the new passport embraces the One Guyana theme, reflecting the nation’s unity and cultural diversity,” the Home Affairs Ministry said in a statement.

Deputy Chief Immigration Officer, Superintendent Stephen Telford, underscored the significance of the changes, emphasising that the new passport retains the same number of pages while extending its validity and enhancing security.

In Guyana, the entire passport application process has now transitioned to a digital platform.

Applicants can schedule online appointments for biometric collection and issuance. The new electronic passports are designed to integrate with biometric embarkation and disembarkation gates at the Cheddi Jagan International Airport, with future integration planned for the Eugene F. Correia International Airport at Ogle.

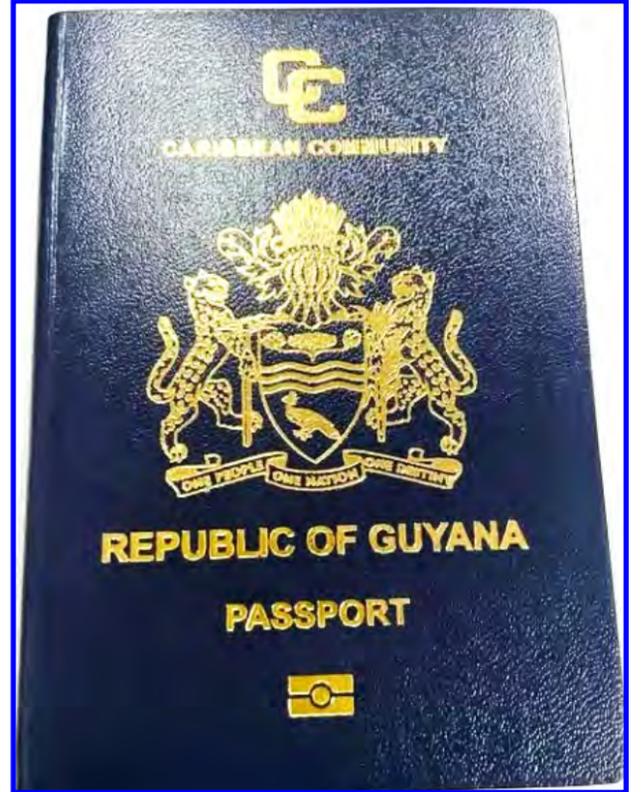
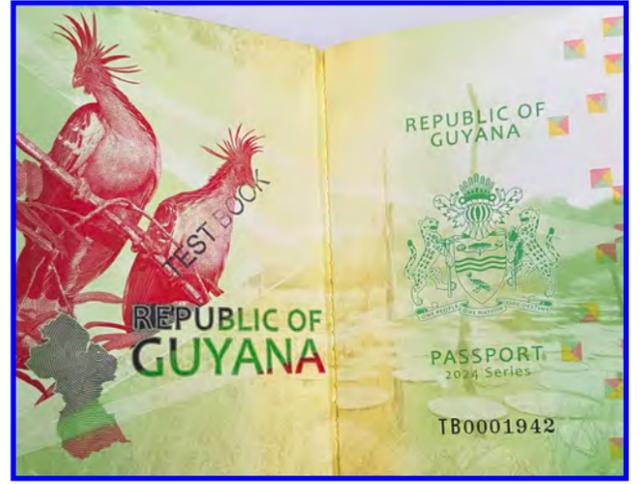
The Ministry of Home Affairs also announced that a fully digital passport application portal is under development to further streamline the process as part of the government’s broader digital transformation initiative.



Irfaan Ali



Mani Singh



In photos, the new Republic of Guyana passport

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Guyana's Liza Destiny

TT in energy outreach to Guyana, Grenada

— Trinidad and Tobago's new government has extended an invitation to Guyana and Grenada for energy collaboration talks. Guyana's Vice-President Bharrat Jagdeo and Grenada's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell have responded, signaling willingness to engage, while affirming their respective priorities and limitations.

Port-of-Spain – Following its ascension to power on April 28, the Trinidad and Tobago government quickly signaled its intention to pursue regional energy partnerships, calling on Guyana and Grenada to engage in discussions amid declining domestic production.

The outreach, spearheaded by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal, prompted careful but open responses from leaders in Georgetown and St George's.

Vice-President of Guyana Bharrat Jagdeo confirmed that discussions could take place, but made clear that his country is not currently in a position to export natural gas.

"Right now, from the gas-to-energy project, there is no gas available to supply to anyone. We need all of the gas for power generation and the fertiliser plant," Jagdeo stated in response to Trinidad and Tobago's invitation.

He explained that a proposed development project involving Fulcrum LNG, ExxonMobil, and the government of Guyana is still under review. The project aims to commercialise Guyana's offshore gas resources, but no final decision has yet been made.

"We have not approved a project yet. Tomorrow, we have to develop a project to do that," Jagdeo added.

Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to secure alternative energy sources as domestic gas output continues its decline, currently estimated to be falling short at approximately 2.5 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d). With spare processing capacity, Port-of-Spain has reached out to regional producers.

After winning the April 28 general election, Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar instructed Moonilal to explore energy cooperation with

Guyana, Grenada, and Suriname. Moonilal has since called on his Guyanese counterparts to initiate talks.

However, Jagdeo reiterated that Guyana's approach will prioritise national interests and profitability, noting that any decision regarding gas exports will depend on financial feasibility.

"If Trinidad and Tobago is interested, then the tripartite arrangement – Exxon, Fulcrum and the government of Guyana – would have to examine whether taking the gas to Trinidad outweighs those other options in terms of financial feasibility," he said.

Among the options being considered by Guyana are producing liquefied natural gas for export, supplying electricity to Brazil, developing domestic industries, or a combination of these goals.

"We want the most feasible and the most lucrative to Guyana (from) the use of our gas. If taking it to Trinidad offers that outcome, then that's fine – but private investors would have to make that decision, too," Jagdeo explained.

Guyana's first gas-to-energy project, expected to come online in 2026, will transport 50 million standard cubic feet per day (mscfd) from the Liza field to shore for local power generation and industrial development. The associated gas reserves in the Stabroek Block remain uncommercialised.

Meanwhile, Grenada's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell responded more affirmatively to Trinidad and Tobago's invitation. He welcomed the proposed discussions and highlighted the potential mutual benefits of collaboration.

"We also recognise that in the present international economic environment, Trinidad too, stands to benefit from cooperation with Grenada in this field," Mitchell said.

Mitchell confirmed that Trinidad and Tobago's Energy Minister is expected to visit Grenada soon for talks.

"The Prime Minister has indicated that she intends to send her Minister of Energy to Grenada soon to hold talks with us. We are eagerly looking forward to his visit," he added.

Guyana's currency market feels TT impact

Georgetown – Facing mounting difficulties in accessing foreign exchange at home, nationals from Trinidad and Tobago are increasingly turning to Guyana's banks and currency exchanges to meet their needs, which is intensifying pressure on this nation's already complex and evolving foreign currency market.

Earlier this month, Guyana's Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo explained that nationals from Trinidad and Tobago are sourcing foreign exchange in Guyana.

He highlighted a recent development that is adding strain to the system, which is an emergent demand for foreign currency from Trinidad and Tobago.

"[In] Trinidad it is practically impossible to get foreign currency in that market... [In] Trinidad, businessmen have to wait for ...six months to eight months... they cannot get for-

eign currency in that market..." Jagdeo noted.

As he indicated, Guyanese authorities have observed inflated invoices submitted by local companies for goods destined for Trinidad and Tobago, raising concerns about the mechanisms being used to facilitate these cross-border transactions.



Bharrat Jagdeo

Additionally, Jagdeo said that banks in Guyana have been selling foreign exchange to Trinidad and Tobago nationals who travel to Georgetown for that specific purpose.

He also pointed to the emergence of arbitrage practices among local businesses.

"There are some local companies now that are capitalising on the arbitrage," he stated, explaining that these entities are purchasing US currency at lower rates from banks and cambios in Guyana, and reselling at higher prices to Trinidad and Tobago nationals.

Pleasant outcomes in progressive Guyana

By Tameshwar Lilmohan

I recently attended several government offices in Guyana, and was pleasantly surprised at the high level of courteous and effective services that I, along with my wife, a friend and his wife, received.

Firstly, we attended the Registrar General's office at the GPO building to obtain new birth and marriage certificates.

We were directed to the Deputy Registrar General, Visham Budhoo. I was impressed by the professional way he dealt with our applications. He explained the process and the requisite documents.

Within two hours we were out with our new birth and marriage certificates in our hands. Wow!

We immediately headed to the passport office at Camp Road. There were many people at this office, either applying for, or uplifting passports.

At first, I thought "No way we are going to be attended to"; but to my surprise, the process was well-ordered. An officer examined our documents and had some concerns about the references in our applications from non-resident professionals.

The Deputy Chief Immigration Office, Stephen Telford, immediately provided guidance to the young officer, and the issue was resolved. I admired Telford's hands-on approach.

We were asked to return after the next day to uplift our passports. Again, we were overjoyed to uplift our ten-year, beautiful Guyana passport. The process was seamless.

The next day we attended the NIS office at Brickdam and Winter Place. I did not have my NIS card, and could not remember the number. However, this did not prevent me from dealing with my matter.

The Manager invited us to her pleasant office and did her best to help. She provided me with a temporary number so that my application for a new NIS card could be processed and issued on the same day, and I obtained all the information I needed about



Visham Budhoo

my NIS contributions.

On the very day we were able to attend GECOM's office in Diamond and register for our IDs. We dealt with three officers at GECOM, and they were eager to assist.

It was a joyful experience; the officers were courteous and efficient. Within an hour we were registered, and given clear instructions on how to subsequently uplift our ID cards.

We just had enough time on the same day to register for the Cash Grant at Herstelling. The three young ladies at this office were prepared to stay beyond their working hours to ensure that our registration was properly completed. I wish them well in their future endeavours.

The singular lesson I can share with others is that you must ensure that you have the necessary paperwork before attending these government offices. Be respectful of the officers, and you will not be disappointed with the services you receive.

There is no need to bend the rules, just follow the standard process. Clear your mind of the stereotypical past and enjoy progressive Guyana.



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**Mia Mottley delivers an address to mark the 400th landing anniversary
Bajans mark 400 years of English presence**

— On the 400th anniversary of the first English ship's landing on Barbadian shores, Prime Minister Mia Mottley called on citizens to confront their colonial inheritance and forge a future defined not by conquest but by dignity, unity, and self-determination.

...

Bridgetown — With little national and almost no fanfare, Barbados passed a solemn milestone this month marking the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first English vessel that laid colonial claim to the island.

Yet even with its understatement, Prime Minister Mia Mottley found the time to issue a resonant call that urged Barbadians to honour the pain of the past, while actively working to shape a new destiny for themselves and the diaspora worldwide.

On May 14, 1625, the English merchant ship *Olive Blossom*, captained by John Powell and owned by William Courteen, came ashore and claimed Barbados in the name of King James I. At the time, the captain was unaware that James I had died two months earlier, and had been succeeded by Charles I.

Though full-scale colonisation would not begin until 1627, with the arrival of settlers and the enslaved, the 1625 landing marked the symbolic start of Barbados' transformation into a British colony. It would be a transformation that set the stage for centuries of enslavement, resistance, and cultural upheaval.

In her May 14 message acknowledging the coloniser's arrival, Mottley invited reflection on the island's colonial foundations while pressing for forward motion.

"With the arrival of that ship, the *Olive Blossom*, regrettably came one of the darkest chapters in our nation's history. A system of enslavement that would test the very limits of human endurance. But 400 years on, we remain standing together and stronger," she noted in her address.

She continued, "Today, we honour those whose lives were forever altered. We celebrate the indomitable spirit of their descendants, and we acknowledge how far we have journeyed and how far, my friends, we still must go to reclaim a stolen destiny for the benefit of the past, present, and future of the global African

diaspora and the entire world."

Mottley's address framed the moment not merely as a memorial, but as a rallying point for collective reclamation. Her speech intertwined remembrance with resolve, echoing the intellectual legacy of Barbadian writer George Lamming, who in 1966 wrote that, "The architecture of our future is not only unfinished, the scaffolding has hardly gone up."

Mottley also pointed to the Charter of Barbados, which was adopted in 2021 as a living declaration of national values rooted in dignity, equality, and civic responsibility, emphasising that reclaiming national identity means both revisiting the past and reshaping the future.

"This was our benchmark that beckons us to confront the shadows of the past, dismantle lingering barriers to unity, and weave a society in which every Bajan can flourish," she stated.

She noted that concrete efforts were underway. Among these measures were the digitisation of archival records, and the construction of the Barbados Heritage District at Newton, home to the historic Newton Slave Burial Ground, which will serve as a focal point for national memory and international reckoning with the island's slavery past.

As Mottley declared, "We must answer through action. Every museum wing that is opened, every oral history project that is launched, every student that is guided through these digital archives — we see them as a seed of hope taking root, ensuring that deferred dreams do blossom into purpose and into promise."

More than commemoration, she described the day as a celebration of resilience and a reassertion of national and diasporic agency.

"So today, my friends, is not simply an anniversary of sorrow... it is actually a celebration of resilience, of innovation, and of unity. It is a testament to the unbreakable bonds that join us to one another and that join us to the wider Caribbean civilisation and the wider African diaspora," she said.

Additionally, "It is a reminder that though our past was marred by injustice, our future, yes, our future remains ours to forge on this solemn day."



George Lamming



Ask Jay...

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MAKE THEM FALL IN LOVE: HOW TO SELL YOUR HOME FASTER THIS SPRING

Spring is traditionally the best season for real estate, but the bloom is a little different this year. While April brought a wave of new listings, May is showing a shifting tide. Buyer enthusiasm is cooling as the tariff impacts the real estate market. Interest rates are unlikely to drop significantly due to inflation, and mortgage approvals are becoming more challenging.

In this new landscape, homes stay on the market longer, bidding wars are fading, and sellers are learning that pricing alone isn't enough to sell a home.

A beautifully presented home captures hearts and conveys a sense of warmth. In today's market, buyers have more choices, so your house must stand out from the crowd. Think of your home as a first date: polished, welcoming, and full of potential. Here's how to charm every visitor from the curb to the closing table.

1. Curb Appeal: Make a Grand First Impression

Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's grow!" Your front yard should echo that sentiment. Trim the lawn, edge the walkway, and power wash the driveway until it gleams. Sweep away winter's leftovers and stash garbage bins out of sight. A few well-placed flowerpots, fresh mulch, and an updated porch light can work magic. Want to impress? Set up a cozy patio set or BBQ station. Buyers should walk up thinking, "I can imagine summer nights right here."

2. Create the Illusion of Space

Space sells, and the secret to showcasing it isn't square footage – it's simplicity. Remove bulky furniture, clear out clutter, and avoid using the garage for overflow storage. Consider renting a unit if needed. You're not just selling a home; you're selling a possibility, and possibility needs room to breathe.

3. Let the Light In

Natural light is one of a home's most significant assets. Replace heavy drapes with sheer panels, clean the windows until they sparkle, and make sure those stunning views – especially if you're fortunate enough to back onto a ravine – are visible and unobstructed.

Don't forget interior lighting, either. Replace tired fixtures with modern designs, and opt for soft, warm bulbs. A fresh coat of paint and beautiful lights can turn any tired space into a showstopper.

4. Win Over the Heart of the Home

Buyers shop with their hearts, and often, the kitchen seals the deal. Clear the counters, polish the appliances, and add simple, homey touches like a coffee station, a curated cookbook display, or a bowl of fresh fruit. If your appliances are outdated, consider upgrading – the ROI can be significant, providing you with a positive outlook on the selling process.

Remember, if a potential buyer can see themselves living there, they are already halfway to making an offer.

5. Revive the Bathroom

Bathrooms can be deal-makers or deal-breakers. Keep them sparkling. Remove old mats, brighten the lighting, refresh the grout, and hang new shower curtains. Less is more here: keep surfaces clean and cabinets nearly empty to showcase ample storage. Remember to keep the toilet lid down and add a fresh pot of potpourri. A simple piece of calming, natural art can complete the look.

6. Neutralise and Depersonalise

Your family photos and vacation magnets may hold great significance for you, but to potential buyers, they can be distractions. Remove personal items to create a clean slate. Organising closets with doors slightly ajar and placing mirrors in smaller rooms can enhance the illusion of more space. Additionally, avoid using artificial fragrances.

7. Set the Stage for an Emotional Connection

Before each show, turn on all the lights and let in some fresh air. Bake cookies, light a gentle candle, or display fresh flowers. Encourage buyers to explore the home freely – allow them to linger. The longer they stay, the more they can envision themselves living there. We want the buyers to feel an emotional connection, which we can achieve by appealing to their sight, smell, and taste.

8. Stand Out with Strategy

In this more competitive market, presentation is only half the battle. The picture is complete with a skilled realtor, savvy online marketing, and a realistic asking price. When combined with a beautifully prepared home, these elements will attract serious buyers and reduce your time on the market, giving you the confidence to navigate the selling process.

Today's real estate market may change, but a well-styled home still stands out. Your spring sale can flourish with the right touches and a strategic approach, empowering you to take charge of your selling journey.

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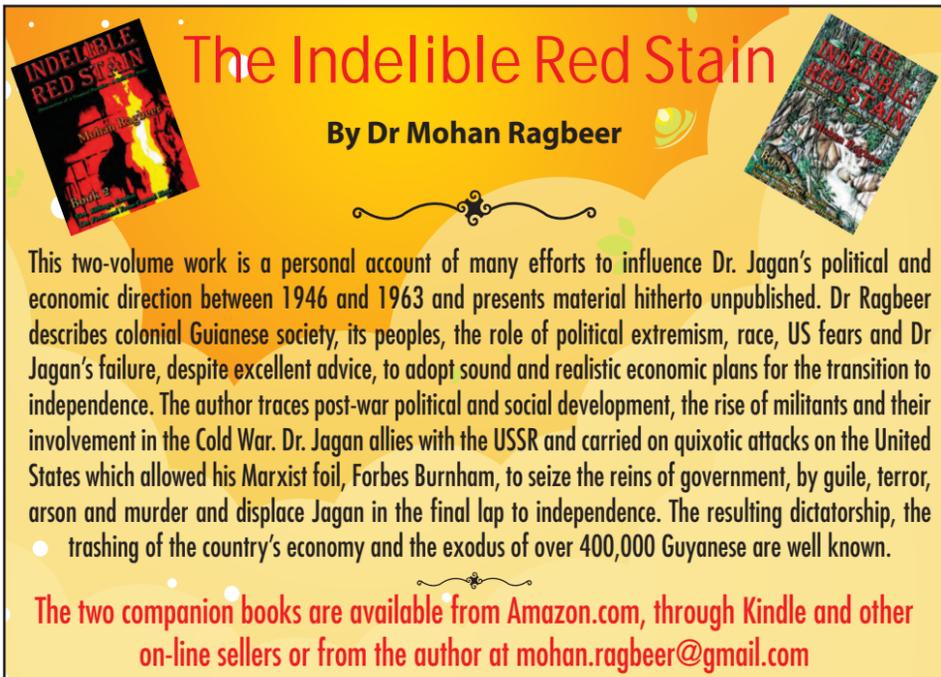


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The Indelible Red Stain

By Dr Mohan Ragbeer

This two-volume work is a personal account of many efforts to influence Dr. Jagan's political and economic direction between 1946 and 1963 and presents material hitherto unpublished. Dr Ragbeer describes colonial Guianese society, its peoples, the role of political extremism, race, US fears and Dr Jagan's failure, despite excellent advice, to adopt sound and realistic economic plans for the transition to independence. The author traces post-war political and social development, the rise of militants and their involvement in the Cold War. Dr. Jagan allies with the USSR and carried on quixotic attacks on the United States which allowed his Marxist foil, Forbes Burnham, to seize the reins of government, by guile, terror, arson and murder and displace Jagan in the final lap to independence. The resulting dictatorship, the trashing of the country's economy and the exodus of over 400,000 Guyanese are well known.

The two companion books are available from Amazon.com, through Kindle and other on-line sellers or from the author at mohan.ragbeer@gmail.com



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Imdadul Islamic Center pays special tribute, gratitude to mothers

– A vibrant celebration of mothers brought families together for Mother's Day at the Imdadul Islamic Center on May 11, as the community gathered to honour maternal love and sacrifice. With music, heartfelt tributes, and intergenerational togetherness, the event highlighted the mosque's dynamism, its continued commitment to family-oriented traditions, and was a reminder of the strength of community, and the central place of mothers in family and faith.

...

By Sayem Khan

Special to Indo-Caribbean World

Toronto – The Imdadul Islamic Center hosted a packed Mother's Day celebration on May 11, drawing members of all ages to our sacred mosque for a special tribute to motherhood. The event marked a significant moment in Imdadul's calendar, as mothers, daughters, and granddaughters gathered under one roof in recognition of their shared legacy.

The well-known proverb, "Life does not come with a manual; life comes with a mother", set the tone for the celebration, underscoring the enduring role of mothers and the daily sacrifices

they make in our lives.

As the organisers noted, the gathering provided an opportunity to express gratitude, and to spend quality time with loved ones in the spirit of Mother's Day.

The celebration reflected the broader ethos of Imdadul, where community is often defined by one word: family. As referenced in public reviews of our mosque, the word 'family' recurs frequently in descriptions of its core values.

In keeping with this tradition, Imdadul welcomed families across generations, with the events that day designed for all ages.

The morning saw a strong turnout under bright spring skies. With the Annex at capacity, attendees were welcomed with a variety of gourmet dishes, including a special "Welcome Soup" prepared by Haji Zafarullah Khan and his team.

Notably, in a reversal of roles, the brothers at Imdadul served brunch to the sisters in attendance, reinforcing the celebratory and respectful tone of the event.

Brother Qaiyum Khan opened the proceedings with a Welcome Speech, including a special *dua* dedicated to mothers.

The event was further marked by the eminent presence of the Guyana Consulate's Honorary Consul Mani Singh, who presented roses to each mother in attendance.

Brother Osman Khan, Imdadul's Secretary, urged attendees to remain mindful of their responsibilities to their parents. As he noted, we often get busy with our daily lives, and perhaps end up neglecting the needs of our parents, for which we are bound to regret at a later stage in our lives.

He also invited members to participate in the upcoming Father's Day Annual Picnic, which will take place on June 15 at G. Ross Lord Park, in the weekend following *Eid-ul-Adha*.

The afternoon was further enriched by a special musical segment led by Ravi Rampersaud, an instrumental member at Imdadul. His rendition of 1990s Bollywood songs created a nostalgic atmosphere that resonated with the emotional depth of the occasion.

In closing remarks, Haji Zafarullah Khan expressed appreciation to the dedicated volunteers, and commended Executive Chef Zaman Khan and his team for their professional preparation and service to the nearly 500 guests in attendance.





Mothers at the Arya Samaj event



Conducting the sacred hawan



Mothers are garlanded by the youths

Toronto Arya Samaj honours mothers with special Mother's Day celebration

In a morning marked by reverence and unity, Toronto Arya Samaj hosted a special Mother's Day celebration on May 11, bringing together members of the community for a programme of devotion, appreciation, and cultural observance.

Vedic Cultural Centre President Adit Kumar joined the women of the congregation on stage to participate in *hawan*, which was conducted by Pandit Devanand Ramoutar.

During the sacred ceremony, Pandit Ramoutar offered reflections honouring the selfless love and sacrifices of mothers, while

underscoring the importance of instilling moral values in children as our foundation for the future.

Complementing the ceremony, the *kirtan* group led the gathering in devotional singing, their uplifting, melodious voices creating a sense of peace and communal reverence throughout the hall.

As a gesture of appreciation, each mother in attendance received a gift and a catered lunch, served by the men of the congregation.

Organisers described putting the men to work as an act of respect and gratitude for the often-unseen labour and grace that mothers contribute to family and society.

The morning's programme was described as joyful, well-organised, and concluded early, allowing families to continue their observances in their own homes.

The VCC extended special thanks to Indra Ross and Kay Kumar, whose detailed planning and execution ensured a memorable and seamless experience for all attendees.



Angie Pitamber and performer Elsa from the Shavajali Arts Dance School

ICGAA hosts Mother's Day event

The Indo Caribbean Golden Age Association hosted its annual Mother's Day celebration on May 4, honouring the love, sacrifice, and enduring presence of mothers and mother-figures within the community.

Held in a spirit of gratitude and festivity, the event featured heartfelt tributes from children to their mothers and special recognition of mothers from four-generation families, as well as those leading single-parent households.

The program highlighted the richness of Indian classical arts, with graceful performances by Aleena and Aleeya of Footsteps Dance School, and Elsa from Shivanjali Arts Dance School. Participants also engaged in colouring drawings for their loved ones, which added a personal touch to the day's meaning.

A communal lunch and dessert were shared and enjoyed by all, generously sponsored by ICGAA Board Member Radheeka Davie and her family.

ICGAA extended appreciation to all mothers, grandmothers, aunts, single fathers, and other nurturing figures for the care and guidance they continue to offer.

Looking ahead, the group also announced its upcoming event, the Father's Day Celebration, which will take place on June 8. The organisation has extended a warm invitation to the community to join in honouring fathers and father-figures.

For information on program sponsorship or membership, ICGAA's contact is President Lalita Sanicharan, who can be reached at [416-291-9439](tel:416-291-9439).



Enjoying a generous helping of birthday cake are Halina Akbar, Sarita Sanasie, and Leila Daljit



Footsteps Dance School Princess Aleena, Aleeya, Zaleena Khan, and Angie Pitamber



Musical performance by the great grandchildren of Chan Sukdeo



Lalita Sanicharan, President; Sonia Singh, daughter; granddaughters; and Chan Sukdeo, grandmother



Mother's Day sponsor Radheeka (Deeka) Davie, Vice-President, volunteers, family members of Indra Bhairo



Aleen & Aleya from Footsteps Dance School, with Zaleena Khan, and Leila Daljit, Chair



Lalita Sanicharan, President (centre) with her fourth generation family members; Zaleena Khan, member, with daughters Aleena & Aleeya; and Leila Daljit, Chair



ICGAA mothers were also honoured with a well-illuminated cake to mark birthdays that were celebrated in April, and in the month of May

Freedom Riders reminded US of core values, redrew the moral map

— They rode not for comfort, but for justice, into hostile towns, on segregated buses, and into the heart of America's conscience. Beaten, arrested, and firebombed, the Freedom Riders faced hate with courage, lawlessness with dignity, and the violence and stitches with resolve. This is their story, one that still echoes through every seat that is freely taken in the US today. The Freedom Riders risked their lives to awaken America's conscience, and to accelerate the Civil Rights movement through acts of defiance, dignity, and hope.

By Dhanpaul Narine

The next time you sit in a train or ride the buses in America, or even enjoy a walk in the park, you should think of a group of brave persons called the Freedom Riders. They helped to hasten the Civil Rights movement in the US, and to make it possible for all races to sit and eat together, and to use public transportation without discrimination.

The Freedom Riders movement had its genesis in 1947. It was in that year that the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) conducted a Journey of Reconciliation, the purpose of which was to direct attention to racial segregation in public transportation.

Segregation was practiced in the Southern states despite a ruling by the Supreme Court that it was unconstitutional. The object of CORE was to highlight the injustice that was associated with segregation, and to get President John F. Kennedy to enforce the civil rights of African Americans.

The idea was simple. Riders would sit in buses, and other public places, and they would do so in multi-racial groups. The riders knew that their action would be met with resistance, but they were prepared to risk their lives to challenge the racism of the South. Their strategy was to practice Gandhian methods of passive resistance and non-violence. They rehearsed scenes in which they would be humiliated, but these could not prepare them for the real attacks.

A member of the Freedom Riders said, "One of the things we learned was how to hold ourselves in case we got beaten. You had to curl up in a fetal position because you didn't want your insides to be clubbed. And you put your heads down with your arms over your head so that your arms might be broken but your head won't split open."

Why do the Freedom Riders still inspire Americans and those that long for freedom?

The answer to this question lies in the decision of the Supreme Court (*Boydton versus Virginia*, 1960), which ruled that segregation in interstate traveling was illegal. This meant that separate toilets and dining rooms only for white travelers were no longer allowed.

According to the law, people were free to sit wherever they wanted, and to make use of the facilities in public places. But the white establishment did not recognise the ruling of the Supreme Court. There were sit-ins by Black students at lunch counters; mass meetings were held to fight segregation.

The Freedom Riders rode buses into the segregated South to make the point that everyone was free to choose where they should sit, in keeping with a Supreme Court ruling in 1960. The Supreme Court had ruled in that year that segregated public buses were unconstitutional.

The first Freedom Ride took place from Washington to New Orleans in 1961. The buses comprised young people, most of whom were students. The interracial group was arrested on numerous occasions for trespassing or unlawful assembly.

On one occasion, the Riders were stopped and beaten and the bus was firebombed. It was a harrowing experience.

Catherine Burks recalls the attacks on a fellow Rider. She says, "Some men held him while white women clawed his face with their nails. And they held up their little children, who couldn't have been more than a couple years old to claw his face. I had to turn my head back because I just couldn't watch it."

In Birmingham, Alabama, the Klansmen were waiting for the Freedom Riders with pipes, baseball bats, and other weapons. The riders were beaten, and one of them required 53 stitches. No arrests were made.

Despite their personal injuries, the Riders continued, and in Alabama there was a meeting in the Baptist Church. Dr Martin Luther King spoke in support of the Riders.

There was great tension as outside of the church a crowd of 3,000 whites was shouting obscenities. According to a witness, "The crowds grew thicker and converged to the church. The police did nothing to stop them and the incidents became ugly."

The response of Alabama's Governor John Patterson was most instructive. He said without emotion, "When you go somewhere looking for trouble, you usually find it... You just can't guarantee the safety of a fool, and that's what these folks are, just fools."

But the events were beginning to get national attention. The Attorney General Robert Kennedy decided to put pressure on the Greyhound Company, and the head of the Alabama

State Patrol said that he would give the Riders protection from Alabama to Montgomery. This was a distance of about 90 miles.

The truce turned out to be uneasy. As the bus pulled into Montgomery there was violence. The personal representative of Robert Kennedy, John Seigenthaler, was beaten unconscious by the mob. The Federal Marshals were called to restore order.

However, by this time, there were a number of factors that were playing out at the national level. The first was the adverse publicity that the government was getting. The images of the beatings, tear-gas clouds, and dogs attacking the riders were beamed across the world. It was publicity that the government did not want.

What was the significance of the freedom rides, and why do we need to include it in the school curriculum?

As we can see, the riders risked enormous personal danger to carry out their mission. What was remarkable at the time was the fact that both Blacks and whites called on President Kennedy and Congress to make life better for Blacks. The recommendations included equal access to public facilities, decent housing, better education facilities, and employment, among others.

These were articulated in a coherent and dramatic fashion on the march in Washington in August 1963, where Martin Luther King spoke stirring of his "dream".

The Freedom Riders may not have known it at the time, but the Voting Rights Act of 1965 made it possible for the status of Blacks to be changed. Literacy and other tests were prohibited as a means to vote, and the power of the Black vote began to determine the outcome of elections.

Robert Kennedy said in 1968 that things "are moving so fast in race relations. A Negro could be President in 40 years. There is no question about it."

Forty years later, in 2008, Barack Obama took the oath of office in Washington and became the 44th President of the US.



Barack Obama

Nature, spirit, and soul merge in Persaud's *The River Crossing*

In *The River Crossing*, Dr. Harry Persaud invites readers on a soul-deep journey into self-discovery, nature's pulse, and Eastern wisdom. Reviewed by Dr. Kennard Ramphal, this book merges poetry, philosophy, and prose in a profound meditation on the interconnectedness of life.

...

**Persaud, Harry: *The River Crossing*:
A path to Self-Discovery**
A review by Dr Kennard Ramphal

The *River Crossing: A Path to Self-Discovery*, by Dr Harry Persaud, was published by Middle Road Publishers in 2025, and is a compilation of prose and poetry, in which the poet/author deals with some pertinent questions, including the meaning of life.

In his Introduction, Persaud describes his experiences as a young man growing up in Guyana. He was motivated by his deep and soul-searching journeys, which he clearly emphasises in his book: "As a young man growing up in rural Guyana amidst nature, I enjoyed an enriched life. I felt the pulse of nature as my heartbeat, intertwining everything into a dynamic web of interrelations, spinning meaningfulness in my world... we are in fact harmonising with the greater freedom of life all around us."



Harry Persaud

The reader is encouraged to go deep within himself, examine his beliefs, and to empathise with all people and living things on our beautiful planet. In my personal conversations with Persaud, I frequently commented to him that, "You see the world differently from most people."

In his poem, *Just Plant Flowers*, Persaud illustrates the need to live in the present. When he asked his mother intricate questions as they worked in the garden, she promptly replied, "Just Plant Flowers", thereby teaching a valuable lesson to the writer, which was to concentrate on one thing at a time.

In a lovely but intricate story, the writer describes his experiences with a hawk as he grazed his father's cows in an open field. When the hawk came within range of his sling shot, Persaud refrained from pulling back the rubber band to shoot it, realising that he would be eliminating the freedom "to be embodied in my feathered companion".

Persaud attempted to get into the mind of the hawk, realising that they shared a common ancestry: "I was a minuscule microbe in antiquity falling into the ocean, bobbing and weaving only to be marooned upon an unknown shore to continue my journey onto the world of land and then air... The hawk I felt, represented that common gene pool for millions of years of biologic evolution, inseparable in our identities."

The themes of connectedness and the search for identity continue throughout *The River Crossing*. In the passage, *Create Your Space*, Persaud describes his admiration for the "Eastern mind" as he attempts to distinguish between the inner and the outer worlds.

At the end of the passage, the writer explains: "My aspiration is to explore and to rediscover the magic of life. In my encounter with nature, I am but an infinitesimal part. I know that I am part of the mountain, the sea, the stars and the earth but they are also parts of me. As the poet sings, 'a drop on the ocean, the ocean in a drop'."

Persaud's understanding of Eastern philosophy is also evident in the passage, *Emancipate the Soul*, when he confides, "My strength comes from the Sakya Prince, Lord Buddha. He was influenced by the critical thinking of the *Upanishads*, the brainchild of the lofty and sophisticated thinking of the Indus-Saraswati and later Gangetic civilisations".

The influence of Eastern philosophy is again emphasised in *In Pursuit of Self*, when the writer quotes the *Upanishad*: "Truth is one; the sages speak of it by different names".

He uses the metaphor of climbing a mountain in the search for his identity: "The highest point I thought, was the deepest place in my intellect. Many battles were fought on the way throughout the night". Also evident here is the metaphor of the night for ignorance and the light for enlightenment.

This review would not be complete without the mention of the vibrant and relevant photographs that complement the text.

In his first poem, *Just Plant Flowers*, the reader will find that just looking at and admiring flowers makes for a meditative experience. The same holds true for the other photos in the book. The *Ode to a Red Hibiscus* would not be complete with-

out the photo of a bright red hibiscus, which tempts the reader to touch and taste the dewdrops on its petals. And the picture of a butterfly hovering above a leaf accentuates the meaning of the passage, *The Perilous Journey in Between*, which ends with, "I am a reed floating on the sea of causation going nowhere, a cocoon in death, a butterfly in birth."

I was transported to a whole new world as I read this deep and intriguing book, which encouraged me to self-examine, and to recognise the fact that I am a speck in the universe. I was enthralled by the world around me, since I share the same ancestry with all living things.

As a retired education officer and consultant whose goal was to promote anti-racism and equity for all people, I wish that I had come across Persaud's writing earlier in my life. To do so would mean I would have been able to encourage people to see that every person on earth not only shares the same humanity, but shares the identical spirit with other living things.

I would have liked to share Persaud's statement in his *Epilogue*: "As humans, however, we often lay big claims for ethnicity and 'racial superiority' as if we were descended from disparate species. Racism has no place in humanity..."

I advise you to not read this book unless you are prepared to do some serious soul-searching, and are prepared to accept two facts. One, in the larger scheme of things, you are a very small part of a larger picture; and two, you are connected to all living things on earth.

If you are prepared to accept these facts, then *The River Crossing* is a "must-read". I rate this book five out of a five-star rating.

The River Crossing is available [here](#); or send an email to middleroadpublishers@gmail.com.

...

Kennard Ramphal is a retired education officer from the Ontario Ministry of Education. He also served as the anti-racist consultant in the East York Board of Education, and is the author of seven books, including *Slippery Ochro*, which won the third prize in the Guyana Prize for Literature - Fiction. His latest book is *Ramlall's Strange Courtship and Wedding*, (2024, Middleroad Publishers).

After a terrifying nightmare in the middle of the night, Lily awoke in a cold sweat, clutching her throat and panting for air. She dreamt that she was being dragged by her feet toward a rabbit hole. A loud voice emanating from the hole encouraged her, screaming the words, "You can do it, Lily... just put your mind to it...!"

The dream haunted her for the rest of the day but she mentioned it to no one. That evening, after completing her homework, she sat alone in her room and stared at the curtains, commanding them to move. She gasped when they seemed to obey her instruction, even though the window was closed and there was no wind. It seemed like the dream had empowered her to move objects with her mind. At first, it was small things: a pencil rolling off the table or the ability to move sideways a leaf drifting through the air. She practiced in secret, honing her skills, and before long, she could lift heavier objects, like books and chairs, with a mere thought. But her powers did not stop there. Lily soon realised she could hear the thoughts of those around her, a cacophony of voices buzzing in her head.



The ability to read minds was both exhilarating and overwhelming. Lily could sense the unspoken feelings of her classmates, the hidden worries of her parents, and the secrets everyone kept buried deep within. She learned to control the influx of thoughts, to tune in and out of minds as though she were adjusting the volume on a radio. Her powers grew stronger with each passing day, yet Lily felt a gnawing unease, a sense that something dark lurked beneath the surface of her extraordinary abilities.

One evening, as twilight bathed the town in a soft, golden glow, Lily sat alone in her room, practicing her telekinesis. She focused on a small porcelain figurine on her nightstand, willing it to rise into the air. The figurine floated gracefully, spinning slowly, but suddenly, Lily felt a sharp pang in her head. The figurine started spinning at a high velocity and suddenly plummeted, shattering

The Supernatural Demonic Deceit

on the floor with great force, as Lily clutched her temples in agony.

Visions flooded her mind - revelations of darkness, chaos, and a sinister presence that sent shivers down her spine. She saw herself standing in a desolate landscape, shadows swirling around her, whispering malevolent secrets. In the vision, she felt an overwhelming sense of dread, as though unseen eyes were watching her, forcing her to do things against her will, like light fires on occupied buildings, such as schools and churches.

Lily awoke from the vision with a start, her heart pounding in her chest. She knew then that something had gone wrong. The next few days were a blur of fear and confusion. She continued to hear thoughts, but they were tainted with a malevolent undertone. Objects moved without her willing them to; her once-controlled powers now ran amok.

As the days turned into weeks, the dark presence with-

in her grew stronger. It whispered to her in the dead of night, filling her mind with thoughts of despair and destruction. Lily tried to resist, to fight against the evil force that had invaded her body, but it was relentless. It seemed to feed on her fear, growing more powerful with each passing moment.

One fateful night, as a storm raged outside, Lily stood before her bedroom mirror, staring at her reflection. Her once bright blue eyes now held a glint of darkness, a shadow that hinted at the battle raging within her. She knew she had to do something, anything, to rid herself of the evil that had taken hold.

Summoning all her strength, Lily reached out with her mind, searching for the source of the darkness. She delved deep into the recesses of her consciousness, navigating the labyrinth of her

thoughts and memories. And there, in the darkest corner of her mind, she found it - a twisted entity, a malevolent force that had been lying in wait, feeding on her powers.

With a surge of determination, Lily confronted the entity, her mind a battleground of light and dark. She fought with every ounce of her being, wielding her telepathic abilities like a weapon. The entity writhed and screamed, but Lily held firm, refusing to let it consume her.

As the battle raged on, Lily felt herself growing weaker, her strength waning. But she could not give up, not when so much was at stake. In a final, desperate push, she unleashed a torrent of energy, channeling all her power into one last attack. The entity let out a piercing shriek, and with a burst of light, it dissipated, vanishing into the nether world through the rabbit hole where it was trying to drag her.

Lily collapsed to the floor, her body trembling with exhaustion. She had won, but the victory had come at a great cost. Her powers were diminished, the once vibrant energy now a faint flicker. Yet, she felt a profound sense of peace, knowing that the darkness had been vanquished.

In the days that followed, Lily began to rebuild her life. Her telekinetic abilities never fully returned, and the voices in her head grew quieter, but she was grateful for the silence. She had faced the darkness within and emerged stronger, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

Years later, as she sat alone on a park bench, Lily would often reflect on her journey. She had learned that true strength lay not in her extraordinary abilities, but in her courage to confront the darkness, and her unwavering determination to find the demon within. And while the evil force had left its mark, it had also taught her the power of hope and the unyielding strength of the human soul.

Lily's resilience had won over the evil threatening to manipulate her into destroying all that existed. The unsung hero smiled. She had saved humanity.

Kamil
Ali





An extensive and thick deposit of Sargassum at Hope Bay, Tobago

Businesses call on govt in wake of Sargassum impact

— A worsening Sargassum seaweed crisis is threatening Tobago's tourism and fishing sectors, prompting appeals for intervention from local industry leaders to the Tobago House of Assembly and the central government.

...

Scarborough – President of the Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association, Reginald MacLean, has issued a pressing call for help from the Tobago House of Assembly and Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, citing escalating damage from Sargassum seaweed that continues to choke Tobago's shorelines and negatively impact on key economic sectors.

Despite spending over a quarter-million dollars on mitigation, MacLean said the crisis has only intensified. The unsightly and odorous seaweed has narrowed beaches, repelled visitors, and strained local businesses, many of which are bearing mounting costs just to keep their premises accessible.

"This is a threat to the island's reputation," MacLean warned, adding, "We need partnership before Tobago's tourism image is damaged beyond repair."

The THTA has now joined forces with a United Nations Development Programme initiative, backed by (US) \$25 mil-

TT govt prepares for arrival of 21 US deportees

— Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Homeland Security is preparing to receive 21 nationals being deported from the US. The returnees will be closely monitored amid renewed legal protocols and ongoing reintegration efforts led by non-governmental organisations.

...

Port-of-Spain – The Ministry of Homeland Security has confirmed that 21 Trinidad and Tobago nationals will be repatriated from the US following a formal request from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The deportees comprise 17 men and four women, and is scheduled to arrive at Piarco International Airport on May 23.

ICE has requested a single charter flight to Port-of-Spain to facilitate the repatriation, citing logistical efficiency over the use of multiple commercial flights. The deportations follow increased immigration enforcement under the policies of US President Donald Trump.

Homeland Security Minister Roger Alexander told the media last week that the Trinidad and Tobago government is adopting a more structured and legally grounded approach to managing incoming deportees.

"We have engaged a new situation involving the records of these particular individuals," Alexander said.

He added, "Not just that we know that they're coming back to Trinidad, but we want to know where they are housed, by whom, where they are kept, their last phone (number), address ...

because we realise that a lot of persons bring in their culture that they may be familiar with back to this country, and we must now monitor."

He also underscored the need for more robust legislative mechanisms to support this oversight.

"On arriving, we need somewhere in the law to take your prints, your photograph... we cannot take things for granted anymore," Alexander said.

Additionally, "National security is a nation's business. Homeland security is a nation's business. So we must find laws, and we have a bunch of attorneys working together with the AG to ensure that we stand on legal footing on every occasion.



Roger Alexander

lion in funding from Japan, to address the problem. According to MacLean, the assistance includes essential infrastructure for cleanup and maintenance in Speyside in Tobago.

"Speyside... is where part of that funding will be spent, which is where we are located," MacLean stated.

He added, "Part of that is 1,000 meters of Sargassum boom; aluminium barge with a conveyor belt; baskets to put it into trucks; and trucks to dump the stuff. And again, a maintenance program to keep all the equipment running."

While hotels remain on the frontlines of the seaweed's impact, the problem also runs deep in the fishing community.

Curtis Douglas, President of the All Tobago Fishermen's Association, said that fishermen have seen a significant drop in daily earnings with damaged engines and entangled fishing lines.

"It damages your fishing, and it's very difficult to catch fish around it because sometimes your line picks up stuff," Douglas explained.

He added, "[You] can't get as much as you would like to earn during the day. It lessens your profit when the day comes ... It is a high risk when it comes down in large portion like this."

That's how we choose to go about this."

According to Alexander, coordination with US agencies remains a challenge, with the government often being notified of deportations only after individuals are already detained. Efforts are now underway to improve the flow of information.

"What we are trying to do is to work on the relationship where we know long before that the intention is to send back these persons, so that we can put everything in place, not just a piece of paper at the airport, but also to further interview these persons on arrival," he said.

Meanwhile, criminologist Dr Randy Seepersad said the arrivals do not present a major national security concern. He noted that prior to the policy changes under the current US administration, deportation typically required a criminal offence.

However, with the new policy, the majority of deportations are likely to result from administrative immigration violations, such as overstaying a visa, or lacking a work permit.

Said Seepersad: "... [It] certainly does create challenges, but I am not seriously worried that this poses an imminent threat when it comes to the national security aspect of it."

But he warned that the returnees may add pressure to an already strained job market.

"The availability of jobs is far less than ideal, and the unemployment rate is way too high," he said.

Giselle Chance, CEO of the non-governmental organisation, *Vision on Mission*, confirmed that her group will meet with the government ahead of the deportees' arrival.

"We look forward to working with the new administration in providing support to our repatriated citizens, our deportees," Chance stated.

She reported that *Vision on Mission* has supported at least 1,500 deportees over the past two decades, maintaining a no-recidivism success rate of over 90 percent.

The organisation provides a range of services including accommodation, food, clothing, counselling, and job training in areas such as agriculture, barbering, and AC maintenance. For deportees who do not require accommodation, *Vision on Mission* offers counselling and job placement support.

SWRHA drops probe into doctor, columnist

— The South-West Regional Health Authority has concluded its investigation into Dr Joel Teelucksingh without further action, following controversy over his satirical newspaper column. The case, which raised concerns about censorship and free speech, ended with Teelucksingh cleared and reaffirming his commitment to public advocacy and medical integrity.

...

Port-of-Spain – The South-West Regional Health Authority (SWRHA) has formally ended its investigation into Dr Joel Teelucksingh, following controversy over a satirical newspaper column he authored earlier this year.

A letter from SWRHA Chief Executive Officer Brian Armour last week confirmed that the inquiry was complete and that the matter is now "considered closed".

The investigation emerged following Teelucksingh's March 21 column in the *Trinidad Guardian* titled *The Emperor's New Hospital*. In the piece, Teelucksingh described the recently opened Central Block of the Port-of-Spain General Hospital as "a hospital in name only – a grand stage set, built not for healing, but for headlines".

He further characterised it as "a hollow structure", with the additional label of being "an empty promise. A mirage, carefully timed to coincide with the season of votes... The Emperor has built a hospital with no hospital inside!"

At the time, the facility had been commemorated as "practically completed" by then-prime minister Dr Keith Rowley. The article, which employed literary satire, raised questions about the readiness of the hospital's equipment and services.

Shortly after publication of the column, Teelucksingh was placed on administrative leave by the SWRHA, prompting widespread, national criticism and support for the physician. Then Minister of Health Terrence Deyalsingh intervened, affirming his support for free speech and directing that Teelucksingh be reinstated while the investigation continued.

In response to last week's SWRHA's decision to take no further action, Teelucksingh said he was "deeply relieved".

He said, "I have been cleared of any wrongdoing. To those who tried to make an example of me, I hold no bitterness. My purpose remains the same. I will continue to speak up, to ask the hard questions, and to advocate fiercely for the dignity and well-being of every patient, especially the ones who feel forgotten."

Teelucksingh, a consultant in internal medicine, endocrinology, and diabetes at the San Fernando General Hospital, reiterated that the process was less an investigation than an attempt at suppression.

"What was dressed up as an investigation was, in reality, an attempt at censorship. An effort to intimidate, to silence and to discourage honest conversation," he said.

He added, "But I did nothing wrong. I write not out of malice, but out of a duty to my patients, my profession and the public."

He added that he would return to both his television and newspaper columns "humbled and stronger".

Said Teelucksingh: "This was never just about me. It was about freedom of expression, professional responsibility and the right to care deeply and say so out loud. That right must never be taken for granted."

Teelucksingh was represented by Freedom Law Chambers, led by Senior Counsel Anand Ramlogan. In a statement, Ramlogan welcomed the closure of the case.

"The clever use of a satirical piece to convey an important message of political deception is protected by the constitutional right of freedom of expression and speech," he noted.

Although encouraged to pursue legal recourse, Teelucksingh said he chose not to, out of principle.

"I see no reason to burden taxpayers with the consequences of a few individuals' poor judgment. One hopes that whoever attempted this will not be allowed to do so again," he said, thanking God, his family, colleagues, patients, legal team, and the public for their support.



Joel Teelucksingh

Rainy season arrives with businesses calling on new govt for cooperation

– As the wet season begins in Trinidad and Tobago, weekend downpours have already brought pockets of flooding to areas in the south. While major devastation was avoided, officials and business leaders alike are warning that community cooperation, alongside sustainable infrastructure, and urgent government action are critical to mitigating what lies ahead.

Port-of-Spain – Last weekend's downpours brought flooding to some parts of south Trinidad, with many communities spared the onslaught of murky waters invading homes, and roads made impassable. However, the downpours served as a foretaste, a sobering reminder of what potentially lies ahead with the arrival of the rainy season.

Following the rain, local government crews in Penal and Mayaro were deployed as part of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government's Flood Mitigation and Shelter Management 2025 exercise.

In Penal, intermittent rainfall triggered localised flooding. Penal/Debe Regional Corporation Chairman Gowtam Maharaj said disaster response crews kept up with cleaning operations throughout the rain to keep pace with the demand.

"There has been so much deficit in terms of cleaning in the region that we are just cleaning as much as we can," he stated.

Meanwhile, with rainfall increasing and flood-prone areas already taking a hit, business chambers across Trinidad and Tobago voiced concerns about the State's preparedness and response to annual flooding while offering the



A farmer knee-deep in flood waters in south Trinidad

incoming government a limited window to take meaningful action.

The Penal/Debe Chamber of Commerce, one of the groups most affected by persistent flooding, warned that flooding in the area has now become a routine hazard for businesses and residents alike.

"The location does not help because 60 per cent of Penal/Debe is under sea level, so that is the biggest challenge," said Chamber President Motilal Ramsingh.

He added, "When we face heavy floods, we usually get a double whammy because a lot of rain falls and then the tide is high. So, people here, they get flooded out, they try to take precautions and then you just try to get back to your life."

Ramsingh pointed to poorly enforced building codes and unregulated land development as major contributors to the problem.

"What contributes to it is the filling of the land. It's a low-lying area so when you fill it up, the water gets displaced and it has to go somewhere else, and that is basically the problem here," he stated.

He added, "Over the years the lagoons collected the water, people started to fill it and develop and that displaced the water."

He proposed that containment ponds be developed on State lands in the Southern Range to help store runoff.

"We are saying that there is a lot of State land where large ponds can be developed there that could assist in storing that water and releasing it on a slower basis," he said.

In central Trinidad, the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce is seeking direct engagement with government ministries early next month to address its flooding concerns.

CCIC President Baldath Maharaj said spe-

cific trouble spots have already begun showing signs of flash flooding.

"Apart from Endeavour, we have close to the Chaguanas Police Station, you tend to have a lot of flash flooding. In Derrick Road and Orange Field, in that area there is a backup of the river," he said.

While last weekend's rainfall was minimal, Maharaj noted that the wet season had started, and highlighted the need for clearing the Honda River.

Meanwhile, the Downtown Owners and Merchants Association President Gregory Aboud offered a broader perspective on the national flooding crisis, noting that Port-of-Spain, while vulnerable, may not be the worst affected.

"We do have that problem of protecting the city and the tens of thousands of people who live around Port-of-Spain from the overflow of the East Dry River and the Maraval River when too much debris comes down the river and gets stuck under the various bridges," he acknowledged.

However, Aboud added, "I would want to admit that there are other areas of the country, low-lying areas of the country, that suffer far worse than Port-of-Spain, and we don't want to call for too much attention just yet until we feel that other areas, which are more badly affected, will be addressed."

While other business stakeholders were prepared to grant the new administration time to assess the issue, Aboud made it clear that expectations for action remain high.

"We do feel that from the point of view of infrastructure, and from the point of view of quality of life for the citizens, that this is a massive issue that has not received the attention that it deserves," he said.

He also criticised the previous government for failing to heed feedback from those who are directly impacted.



UWI's south campus in Debe

UWI's south campus to open in August

— The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, has confirmed that classes will commence this August at its long-delayed south campus in Debe. The announcement marks a turning point for a facility that has stood largely idle for years, now poised to host a new Global School of Medicine.

Port-of-Spain – After more than a decade of political contention and under-utilisation, the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, has announced that its long-awaited south campus in Debe will officially open its doors to students this August.

In a release issued on May 19, UWI confirmed that the campus will serve as the home of its newly established Global School of Medicine, designed to attract international students pursuing a Doctor of Medicine degree.

According to the university, the programme will leverage UWI's internationally recognised Faculty of Medical Sciences, and generate much-needed foreign exchange for Trinidad and Tobago.

The statement noted that the GSM is part of a larger academic vision recalibrated over the past two years.

"The campus will be the home of the newly launched [GSM], leveraging the world-ranked reputation of the UWI and especially the UWI's Faculty of Medicine, to serve primarily international students pursuing the Doctor of Medicine programme," the statement read.

In addition to medical studies, the Debe

campus will also host select programmes in Food & Agriculture, Humanities and Education, and the Faculty of Medical Sciences through blended learning formats.

UWI highlighted that the campus boasts a fully integrated information technology system and state-of-the-art smart classrooms. It noted that one hall of residence has already been completed.

The GSM will also be linked to the Couva Training Facility and Couva Hospital, forming part of what the university described as a "South/Central-North medical artery" for innovation and research.

UWI also recalled the role the Debe campus played during the Covid-19 pandemic as part of the national parallel health care system, offering care and isolation services.

Campus Principal and Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine said UWI is eager to partner with the government to strengthen national education and research development.

"Maximising the capacity of the south campus to ensure that the country's productive resources are put to optimum use is an important facet of these laudable goals," she declared.

The Debe campus, originally envisioned as the new home of UWI's Faculty of Law, was constructed under the former People's Partnership government led by the UNC. Though construction began in 2012 with a projected cost of (TT) \$499 million, the campus never formally opened.

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Lord Shiva Blessings To All

Bowling back to Empire: Lagaan, Ramadhin, and our diaspora at the crease

— We are marking Indian Arrival and Heritage Month with the following narrative that blends Bollywood and cricket. It is a story that arcs across continents and centuries, tracing its line and length not just through time, but via the spin of a cricket ball, the haunting Indian flute in a Bollywood overture, and the valourising of names that remind us of our ongoing journey as a diaspora. Here is a tale similar to a Bollywood epic: a boy with no given first name from Esperance Village in Trinidad who bowls his way into legend, a colonial subject writing back to Empire, where cricket and cinema, the Caribbean and India, memory and motion pictures, and ball and reel, all converge.

...

An Ongoing Series for the Caribbean Diaspora
By Romeo Kaseram

A Local Journalism Initiative

The following delivery is not just a story about cricket; nor is it just about Bollywood.

It is about what happens when the coloniser's tools are appropriated and repurposed; when the grammar of Empire is rewritten in leg breaks, off spin, and evocative movies that vanquish conquerors with the final ball of an uneven match.

It is about Sonny Ramadhin, his home-name 'Boy', who spun his mystery onto English pitches. It is about Bhuvan from the Bollywood movie *Lagaan*, who taught his village to wield resistance with a blade fashioned from willow.

It is about our Indo-Caribbean communities, in Trinidad, Guyana, and here in Scarborough, Mississauga, and Brampton, that continue to bowl their history back onto the scoreboard.

Cricket in the Caribbean is not merely played; it is lived, inhabited, and inherited. For Indo-Caribbean communities, especially given our descent from Indentured labourers, it was the unexpected field on which we flipped the script.

The colonials may have introduced the game as a genteel recreation for their elitist pastime, but for us playing in asphalt schoolyards and on dusty gravel tracks criss-crossing cane-cleared landscapes, it became an act of choreography and quiet revolution. The ball did not just turn; instead, it turned history.

And few turned it better than Sonny Ramadhin. Born in 1929 in rural Trinidad, Sonny's story unfolds like the opening scenes with a timid, indigent hero in a Bollywood classic: without fanfare, without title, in a place long ago and faraway from the centre, on the very edge of the margin.

Officially unnamed at birth, called simply 'Son', and growing into the affectionate 'Sonny', here is a name that became stitched into cricketing folklore.

Sonny's story is a subcontinental breath of fresh air lofted along on our Caribbean's breeze: grandparents brought from India as labourers to toil in Trinidad's cane fields, here was a child raised in rural, marginalised anonymity, who learned to play cricket in patches of stubble, feeling with incipient fingers an emergent bowling style that he naturally honed in obscurity.

Sonny had no initials when he arrived in England in 1950. So the British media decided to assign him arbitrary initials; and so, 'KT' Ramadhin was born, not through family, but through topographical imperialism.

Yet it is precisely in that erasure and imperial imposition where his story acquires its narrative depth. For in toppling English wickets with a wrist so guileful it defied taxonomy, Sonny made a name for himself. His three-step run-up became the opening shots of a new Bollywood epic. With fingers yet to acquire its calluses, and wrapped in pain and purpose, he bowled not just deliveries, but rebuttals.

Each flighted ball was an act of literary revisionism. As the historian Simon Lister would later write, Sonny was not read; instead, he read them.

Sonny's story parallels Bhuvan's (played by Amir Khan) in the movie *Lagaan*, the village lad who leads a cricketing resistance against imperialist British officers.

Lagaan spins its plot on a desperate pitch: taxes, drought, and survival. But its delivery is pure metaphor, an indigenous mastery of the coloniser's own game, played back against them with ironic elegance.

Watching *Lagaan* at a mandir in Brampton, or at cinemas in San Fernando or Georgetown is to identify with Sonny as our homegrown hero, similarly small in stature, yet unreadable, and unleashing a delivery larger than himself.

Bollywood, like cricket, did not arrive in the Caribbean merely as an import. As we have written in this space before, it was adopted, reoriented, and made familial in Caribbean spaces.

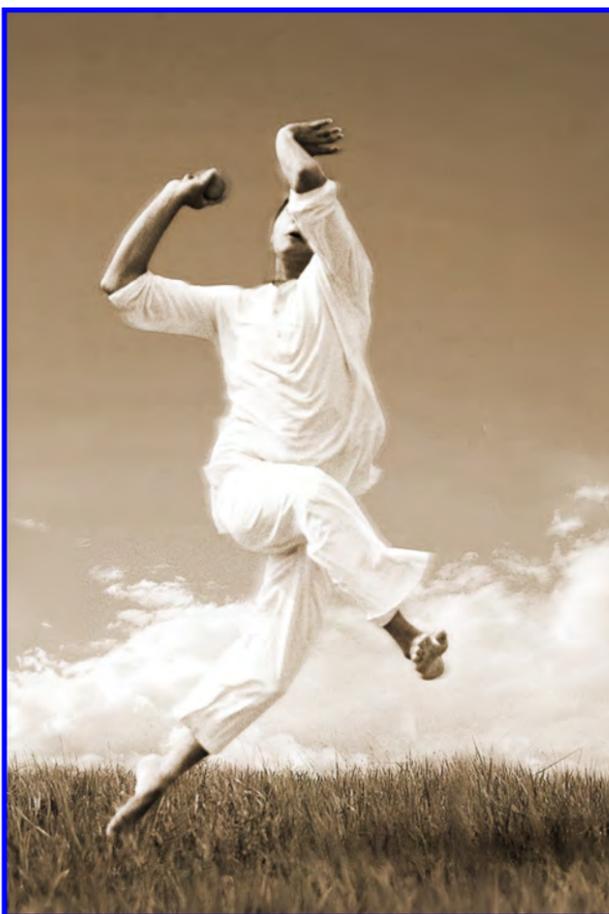
Our Indo-Caribbean communities in the homeland saw in these films a language that they understood to be a weave of longing, dignity, injustice, and song. Films like *Iqbal*, *Patiala House*, and *83* resonate not just for their cricketing drama, but for the unfolding of an emotional innings, where disability turns to triumph, where the pace of cultural tension is defensively defused into harmony, and where history is reversed with the



Sonny Ramadhin delivers; also, dressed for the cooler English weather



Bhuvan prepares for the match in *Lagaan*



Iqbal is a picture of fluidity and grace in delivery

sweeping, masterly stroke of a bat.

In *Iqbal*, a boy who cannot speak listens to the language of cricket communicating with his body. His isolation echoes Sonny's own, where he bowled in his youth in the shadows of Palmiste Club, rarely allowed to bat, his small frame a topography no batsman could map. *Iqbal's* narrative arc is Ramadhin's spin: improbable, ineffable, and ultimately victorious.

Then in *Patiala House*, the movie casts its cricket not in Empire, but in diaspora. Gattu, a British Sikh boy, wants to play for England. His father, scarred by racism and history, forbids it. The son bowls in secret.

The dilemma between filial piety and self-realisation echoes across Indo-Caribbean households in Toronto, where allegiance is a dialectic of conflict emerging out of feet planted both in the West Indies and Indian teams. Caught from an edge in this

dichotomy as a diaspora, are we to be loyal to our ancestral roots, or do we acknowledge the immanent futurity of an evolving Caribbean synthesis?

Then there is *83*, chronicling India's 1983 World Cup triumph over the West Indies. For Indo-Caribbean viewers, here is a film of double exposure in simultaneously cheering for Clive Lloyd and Kapil Dev. We win, we lose; in this play, zero-sum bowls as net-zero sum defends the wicket, and our endgame is a draw.

And yet, even before *83*, before *Lagaan*, before Bhuvan picked up a bat, Ramadhin had already written the first cinematic script. Orphaned young, raised by his grandmother and uncle, he learned cricket on a ground in Esperance Village in deep, rural south Trinidad.

The names surrounding him, Oscar Roach, C.I. Skinner, Jeffrey Stollmeyer, read like characters in a period film. He practiced on matting pitches. He played two first-class matches against Jamaica, and then was on the boat for the English tour in 1950.

He never left the dressing room without pajamas, which he wore under his whites, with sleeves buttoned, and a cap he never removed – all layers of insulation, he said, against the cooler English weather.

As *Wisden* put it, Sonny was a mystery. His deliveries spun with "an imperceptible turn of the wrist", his run-up just three steps, his impact monumental. Britannia, which once ruled the seas, could not develop sea-legs in response to his pitch and roll. By the end of the series, he had taken 135 wickets at an average of 14.88. The Empire had been knocked out of its orbit by a boy from the equator.

The metaphor was not lost to observers. The imperial eye, once orbiting over Indo-Caribbean bodies, now focused to a squint to decipher the enigma of an arrival. Ramadhin became the subject of intense study, no longer as a specimen in formaldehyde collected from the equator and pinned under a microscope, but as an eyebrow-creasing puzzle. Up to then, the boy without a name was unmapped and unclassified by the Empire; now he had become the author of England's undoing.

And so, when as a diaspora we watch *Lagaan*, we are watching Ramadhin's spirit bowl through Bhuvan's fingers. When Iqbal trains alone in the field, we see Sonny in the Palmiste nets. When Gattu battles his father's silence, his unforgiving memory of pain and 'Othering', we remember similar silences that Sonny endured: the overt racism in a dismissive, colonial gaze that would not penetrate beneath the epidermis; the golf courses in Trinidad, which he maintained, but could not play on.

Today, the bat is still swinging, and the game remains in play. Here in the GTA, cricket fields in Brampton, Mississauga, King City, and Ajax, come alive with echoes of that history on weekends when winter finally breaks.

Here, Russell from Mississauga massages the small of his back from a day of wicket-keeping, wondering at the stiffness in his legs. Sitting in a mandir's community hall, Rani watches *Patiala House* for the first time, and does not see England, but herself as a teenager in a kitchen-table drama with her father in Penal, south Trinidad. In a living room in Wakenaam, Guyana, a family watches *Lagaan*, cheering for the underdog Indian team.

During Indian Arrival and Heritage Month here in Canada, when as descendants we gather to celebrate our presence, and remember our ancestors' resilience, cricket and Bollywood become not just entertainment but ritual.

Residing within us are inter-generational repositories of memory that retain longing and laughter, trauma and transcendence; and we are holding up our end at the wicket, keeping the innings alive.

In Sonny's three steps that were his run-up were exponential centuries of displacement. In his spin, a redress; in his name, an absence made triumphant. Sonny did not write a script; instead, with his bleeding fingers, he bowled one, and which today is a lasting legacy.

To this day, when Caribbean children bowl on gravel roads with soft tennis balls, or when we study old footage of Ramadhin, or even when Bollywood's legend Shah Rukh Khan congratulates his Kolkata Knight Riders after an IPL victory, a quiet eminence emerges.

It happens in reclamation; in remembering; in how our children today, who are playing in schoolyard cricket fields, are originators and navigators, not mimics; in how our progeny are markers of our ascendancy.

And so we maintain our footing at the crease. The overs continue to be bowled down to us, and a close field is set. But now, even as the ball turns and fingers flick in the follow-through, and even as Bollywood's cinematic scores unfold on *Netflix* and on *Prime Video*, our diaspora lives on, and is thriving.

Not in spite of Empire; well, maybe with a bit of spite and rankle – but certainly with renewal and vigour after they exited their uneven field of play.

From *Aashiqui* to anonymity, Anu Aggarwal now acting on agency

– Anu Aggarwal's story is not just one of stardom and withdrawal, but a complex narrative that threads glamour with danger, success with silence, and public adoration with personal transformation and agency. In the wake of her return to the public eye, on her own terms, in her own voice, Aggarwal's story declares that the most powerful comebacks are those that begin from within.

When *Aashiqui* burst onto the screen in 1990, it did not just launch a hit romance. It catapulted an unknown model named Anu Aggarwal into an overnight national obsession. Her face was on every billboard, her fame rivalled the most seasoned stars, and the film's runaway success made her the poster child for a new kind of Bollywood heroine, one that was fresh, magnetic, and unapologetically modern.

But behind the dazzle was a far darker reality, one Aggarwal now speaks of with the clarity and distance that time, and trauma, can offer.

In a recent candid interview with *Pinkvilla*, she peeled back the layering on the glitterati, and drew back the glittering curtain of 1990s Bollywood to reveal an industry steeped in shadow: one where glamour danced hand-in-glove with the underworld.

Calling the industry of the time “a dirty business”, Aggarwal did not mince her words.

“All the money that was coming into the film industry – it came from the underworld,” she said.

Her remarks lifted the lid on what many insiders have long whispered about but rarely confirmed so bluntly: that Bollywood's most fertile cinematic decade was financed largely through unrecorded transactions, and the long reach of underworld figures like Dawood Ibrahim.

According to public sources including Interpol and Indian intelligence agencies, Ibrahim is wanted in India on charges including murder, extortion, terrorism, and narcotics trafficking. He was designated a global terrorist by both India and the US in 2003.

Aggarwal's statements suggest that Ibrahim's influence was not just political or criminal; that is was also artistic, shaping what films were made, who starred in them, and perhaps even which dreams were allowed to flourish.

“There were under-the-table deals,” she added, describing an ecosystem where the financing of films was brokered in dark rooms, not boardrooms.

“I don't know what it's like now, but back then, nearly all the money had underworld links,” she said.

The tension between visibility and vulnerability was ever-present in Aggarwal's early career. Her sudden ascent came at the price of personal freedom. She described fans gathering by



Anu Aggarwal

the dozens, hundreds beneath her building in Mumbai, a frenzy she compared to what Shah Rukh Khan experiences today.

“I had fans... standing under my building. Luckily, the building I was in was an MLA/MP building, so we had police protection,” she said.

She added, “We had guards coming with guns, standing with guns – eight to ten of them. They would not let people enter the gate. But it was madness.”

However, it was not just the adoration itself that unnerved her. It was the intensity, its constancy, and the invasiveness.

“People were flying from different countries to come and just see my building. I ran away from it,” she said.

Even as she smiled for cameras and ascended the ladder to fame, the business side of Bollywood was no kinder, she claimed.

Reflecting on *Aashiqui*, she revealed that despite the film's blockbuster success, she was never fully paid.

“I got 60 percent of what was promised, and I'm still waiting for the rest,” she revealed.

It stands out as a bitter note in an otherwise iconic tale of rise, retreat, and rejuvenation.

“I didn't leave because I was bitter,” she insisted, adding, “I had already achieved everything I dreamt of. I left to grow personally, to live a fuller life.”

Aggarwal's departure from the public eye was further cemented by a life-altering accident. In 1999, she was involved in a near-fatal car accident that left her in a coma for 29 days. She made a full recovery, but the crash marked a final break from acting. Her last on-screen appearance had already come in the *Return of Jewel Thief*.

Even then, her legacy was quietly growing, not just in the minds of fans who remembered *Aashiqui*'s windswept melodies, but in how she chose to disappear on her own terms. She was never dragged out by scandal, nor faded away from lack of roles. Instead, as she stated, she opted out when she was at the top.

However, she remains attached to Bollywood cinema. Today, Aggarwal finds herself re-engaging with the world she left behind, admiring the evolution of storytelling in Indian films.

“I find today's scene very interesting. I didn't find it so interesting five or ten years before,” she stated.

RRR and *Animal* are standout examples, she noted, stating, “I'll tell you one of the first films that really impressed me was *RRR*. I was blown away by that film. I actually watched the whole film!”

Similarly, she found herself drawn to *Animal*, the 2023 film led by Ranbir Kapoor.

“There are different kinds of films being made. The thought process of people has changed,” she observed, adding that audiences are no longer satisfied with formulaic star-driven content.

In this shift, Aggarwal notes a beat she would consider returning to, saying, “It makes me feel I want to do something.”

If fame was once suffocating, today it seems to sit gently with her. In her reflections, there are neither bitterness, nor bravado; perhaps just clarity.

“I have so much gratitude because I got better roles than I dreamt of, and I played those roles,” she said.

She also indicated that she wants it understood that walking away is not always about failure or disillusionment.

“I didn't leave because of negativity or disappointment. I left it because I had achieved everything already, and I wanted to focus more on personal growth,” she reiterated.

In the decades since, Aggarwal has become a yogi, a writer, and a speaker. Her journey may have begun under the arc lights of Bollywood, but her spotlight today is of a different kind, one that seeks peace over attention, depth over drama.

Aggarwal's story is, in some ways, a cautionary tale. But it is also one of agency. She turned her back on the glamour, as she stated, not because it rejected her, but because she saw through it. In doing so, she rewrote the script of her life.

Where others chased longevity in cinema, she found longevity in silence. Where others sought power through visibility, she found strength in solitude.

Rahul Bhat in Cannes debut

Indian actor Rahul Bhat made his third appearance at the Cannes Film Festival, this time marking his Hollywood debut with *Lost & Found in Kumbh*, a heartfelt comedy-drama that was showcased at the Cannes Film Market last week.

“It feels like a true homecoming,” Bhat said after walking the red carpet. The film, directed by first-time filmmaker Mayur Puri and produced by Los Angeles-based Mulberry Films, signals a major shift for Bhat both in language and genre.

Lost & Found in Kumbh was shot on location during the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj, a massive spiritual gathering that takes place once every 144 years and draws over 500 million pilgrims. Departing from his signature dark and intense roles, Bhat embraced the film's light-hearted tone.

“For a change, somebody offered me a dramedy. I've always been cast in dark, serious, violent roles. So I thought, let me try something different, something in English,” he shared.

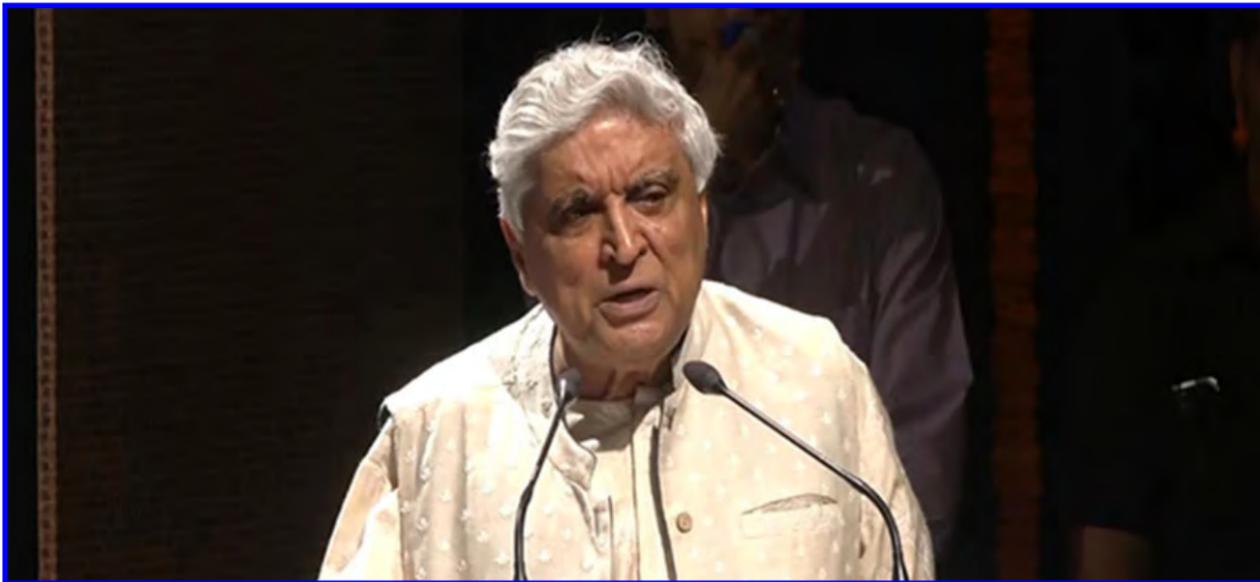
The film's playful narrative unfolds against the chaotic and sacred backdrop of the Kumbh. Recalling the experience, Bhat noted the challenging yet captivating shoot, saying, “We shot at the end of the Kumbh, but it was still intense – so hot, and so many people. It was tough, but also fascinating. This one is not meant to be taken too seriously. It's a cute, engaging film. You could call it a dramedy, or even a children's film in some ways.”

Reflecting on the surrealism of filming amid a living, breathing religious congregation, Bhat said, “As actors, we sometimes forget we're shooting at a real place. You're so immersed in the role, it starts to feel like just another set. But it wasn't. It was the Kumbh. It was real.”

This year's Cannes entry marks a departure from Bhat's previous festival appearances – *Ugly* in 2013, which premiered in the Directors' Fortnight, and *Kennedy* in 2023. Unlike those darker narratives, *Lost & Found in Kumbh* offers audiences a gentler, more accessible story.

After years of critical acclaim, Bhat also expressed satisfaction at finally receiving mainstream recognition.

“I'm finally tasting success after decades. My films have always been critically acclaimed, but this is the first time I'm hearing that word – ‘hit’ – and it feels great,” he said.



Javed Akhtar speaks at the Mumbai book launch

Akhtar abused by extremists on both sides of the divide

Mumbai – In a characteristically candid address at the launch of *Narkatla Swarg (Heaven In The Swamp)*, authored by Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut, Javed Akhtar spoke publicly about the ideological backlash he often receives.

Drawing attention to the vitriol directed at him from multiple sides, Akhtar said, “People from both sides abuse me. One calls me a *kaafir* (infidel), saying that I will go to hell. The other calls me a *jihadi*, asking me to go to Pakistan,” as quoted by *News18*.

Delivering his well-known wit with unwavering composure, Akhtar added, “So, if I only have a choice of going either to hell or to Pakistan, I would rather like to go to hell.”

The remarks drew attention not only for their blunt delivery but for their reflection of Akhtar's long-standing role as a public intellectual unwilling to align himself wholly with any ideological camp.

“People from both sides abuse me. It's not one-sided,” he explained, reinforcing his point.

However, he also declared, “I would be very ungrateful if I don't admit that there are people who also appreciate me. Many support me, praise me, and encourage me.”

Still, Akhtar noted that the volume of abuse from ideological fringes has become a persistent feature of his public life.

“But this is also true that the extremists from this side abuse me so do the extremists from the other side. This is the reality,” he stated, adding, “If even one of them stops abusing me, I will call it an anomaly and think that I must have made a mistake.”

His comments come in the aftermath of heightened tensions between India and Pakistan, following a deadly terrorist attack on April 22 in Pahalgam, Jammu, and Kashmir, which claimed 26 lives.

In retaliation, India launched Operation Sindoor, conducting targeted missile strikes on terror camps in Pakistan. A series of escalating drone and missile strikes from both sides continued until a ceasefire was announced on May 10.



Batting for hope as community spirit powers cancer fund-raiser

— Cricket takes centre stage at Mississauga’s Celebration Square on May 31 in an unprecedented street cricket fund-raiser, Cricket to Conquer Cancer, aiming to raise \$1 million for groundbreaking research at The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation. As our community heeds the call to action, the vibrant energy of Caribbean cricket will fuel the collective drive in a celebration of unity, resilience, and healing, blending sport, science, and hope into one transformative event.

In what would certainly be a day of engagement, fun, and fund-raising, May 31 will see cricket teams from across Canada converging for a high-energy T5 cricket tournament, leveraging our community’s passion for cricket to fuel advancements in cancer treatment and care.

The tournament, played in the dynamic T5 format of five overs per innings, with teams of six to eight players, mirrors the urgency of the cause it supports. Each run and wicket will drive the fund-raiser forward, blending spirited cricket action with deep community impact.

“Cancer doesn’t need awareness, we need impact,” said Brendan Ennis, Senior Director of Corporate & Community Partnerships at The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, adding, “We felt here at [PMCF] that cricket would have the best potential to provide that.”

Beyond the energetic cricket matches, each participating team has committed to raising \$6,000, contributing collectively towards the \$1 million goal.

The excitement of the game will match the intensity of fund-raising efforts, engaging players and the wider community alike in a collective drive towards finding a cure.

“The effects from this fund-raiser will know no bounds,” said Dr Amit Oza, Head of the Division of Medical Oncology & Hematology at The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

Additionally, “Funds raised by our passionate community of participants help lead to the breakthroughs that will help patients here in Canada and around the world. As a cricket enthusiast myself, I am delighted we can celebrate this amazing

sport while creating a global impact on cancer research.”

The urgency behind Cricket to Conquer Cancer arises from alarming global cancer trends. Cases are predicted to increase by 77 percent globally by 2050, with younger populations experiencing a sharp rise. Already, over one million people under 50 die annually from cancer, a number projected to grow by 21 percent by 2030.

Here in Canada, despite the five-year cancer survival rate improving from 50 percent in the 1980s to 63 percent today, early-onset cancers have increased nearly 80 percent since the 1990s.

At the heart of PMCF’s efforts are remarkable scientific innovations from the discovery of stem cells to revolutionary advances in immunotherapy and liquid biopsy testing.

Steve Merker, Vice President of Corporate & Community Partnerships at PMCF, highlighted cricket’s increasing prominence in Canada as instrumental to this initiative, stating, “Cricket is becoming one of Canada’s most popular sports. This inaugural event, a first of its kind in North America, aims to raise substantial funds for the Cancer Centre while inspiring thousands of new supporters to take on our vision to create a world free from the fear of cancer.”

Reflecting the communal and inclusive spirit of the game, Cricket to Conquer Cancer also holds deep cultural resonance for our Caribbean diaspora in Canada.

The spirited game has long served as connective tissue for our cultures, generations, and nations that reach across the region from among the vibrant streets of Port-of-Spain, Georgetown, Bridgetown, and Kingston to our bustling playing fields in Canadian cities such as Brampton, Mississauga, and Scarborough.

For former West Indies captain and T20 World Cup winner Carlos Brathwaite, the event is taking place close to home.

“We all have a personal connection to cancer, me included. One thing that kept my mum going through her cancer treatment was her constant smile and positive outlook. I look forward to making this event a celebration for survivors and an

inspiration for all those during their journey.”

Under the rallying cry *Carry The Fire*, PMCF seeks to embody courage, resilience, and hope through cricket. Every run scored, every wicket taken, and every dollar raised will energise the collective steps towards breakthrough treatments and supportive care for cancer patients and their families.

As our community steps forward on May 31, with teams’ players running decisively between wickets, bowlers delivering with precision, and spectators cheering enthusiastically, the vibrant energy of Caribbean cricket will fuel our collective drive towards conquering cancer.

It is a celebration of unity, resilience, and healing, blending sport, science, and hope into one transformative event.

This tournament is more than a fixture; instead, it is a committed intention. Like a well-set partnership in the middle of an innings, it calls for coordination, concentration, and conviction. From the first delivery to the last, every participant on and off the pitch is part of a much larger team, batting in the battle against one of the world’s most relentless opponents.

Cricket has always been a game of strategy and staying power. It teaches us to read the pitch, adapt to the bounce, and trust our team. These are the same qualities our community will harness on May 31 as we rally against cancer, namely, resilience under pressure, agility in the face of adversity, and an unwavering sense of solidarity.

For spectators, the spirit will be no less engaged. From packed food hampers to colourful team jerseys, from rhythmic drumming to impromptu dances between overs, the air will thrum with the kind of festive camaraderie that turns a match into a movement.

And in every cheer echoing through Celebration Square, one will sense the deep pulse of cultural pride, and the quiet promise that, together, our community will not be bowled over.

Cricket to Conquer Cancer is our community at its finest: fielding together, backing up each other between the wickets, playing through the innings for a future where one day cancer will be uprooted like the stumps at the end of play.

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Matthews leads Windies as England, India refresh women's squads

— West Indies, England, and India unveiled their white-ball squads for the upcoming women's series this summer, as key players returned, fresh faces earned call-ups, and each team positioned itself for pivotal contests in England across June and July. As all three nations recalibrate ahead of packed international calendars, this upcoming English summer promises intense rivalries, the showcasing of emerging stars, and strategic rebuilding under new leadership and renewed aspirations.

Cricket West Indies has named a 15-member women's squad for the white-ball tour of England from May 21 to June 8, featuring three T20 Internationals and three One-Day Internationals. The tour, seen as a moment of reassertion after a challenging ICC Women's World Cup Qualifier campaign in Pakistan, will be led by captain Hayley Matthews, and features a blend of experience and rising talent.

Two new faces enter the West Indies lineup: 20-year-old Guyanese all-rounder Realeanna Grimmond and Kittitian fast bowler Jahzara Claxton, who replace Jamaicans Rashada Williams and Chinelle Henry, respectively. Both new additions bring energy and potential to a side eager to rebound and inspire confidence across the Caribbean diaspora.

Miles Bascombe, CWI Director of Cricket, remarked on the tour's significance, stating, "This upcoming tour of England offers our women an important opportunity to reassert themselves on the international stage." He noted the timely benefits of the T20 Blaze domestic competition and how it helped the players to remain match-fit.



Hayley Matthews



Harmanpreet Kaur



Sophie Ecclestone

West Indies head coach Shane Deitz echoed Bascombe's optimism, saying, "We're going to put that talk into action and go out against England and play some good cricket... attacking cricket the West Indian way."

He praised the squad's progress since the Pakistan qualifiers, and emphasised the opportunity to reconnect with fans and stake a claim as a world-class unit.

Meanwhile, England has also confirmed its squads, notably omitting star bowler Sophie Ecclestone as she continues her return from a knee injury. Ecclestone recently played her first match of the English season, showing promise with both bat and ball for Lancashire, but will not feature in the upcoming fixtures against West Indies.

New England head coach Charlotte Edwards, taking charge following a disappointing Ashes campaign, has opted for a partially reshaped side.

Veteran Danni Wyatt-Hodge and emerging batter Alice Capsey will sit out the ODIs, while Maia Bouchier misses both formats. In contrast, Emma Lamb, Alice Davidson-Richards, Issy Wong, and uncapped pacer Emily Arlott, have all earned spots in the squad.

The series marks Nat Sciver-Brunt's first foray as England's full-time captain, with action beginning June 21 in Canterbury. The three T20s and three ODIs will be crucial for England's regrouping under new leadership.

In other women's cricket news, India have named its women's squads for their own white-ball series against England, with Shafali Verma returning to the T20 fold after a standout performance in the Women's Premier League, where she amassed 304 runs at a blistering strike-rate of 152.76. Despite this form, Verma remains sidelined from the ODI side.

Harmanpreet Kaur continues as India's captain with Smriti Mandhana, recently honoured as *Wisden's* Leading Women's Cricketer in the World, serving as vice-captain. The ODI squad features rising star Pratika Rawal, who recently became the fastest woman to acquire 500 runs in the format, signaling India's renewed investment in top-order strength.

Pace bowler Renuka Singh Thakur and spinner Shreyanka Patil are both out due to injuries. The five-match T20I series begins at Trent Bridge on June 28, followed by a three-match ODI leg.

India's last tour to England in 2022 saw mixed results, with the team losing the T20 series, but sealing a 3-0 sweep in the ODIs, a bitter-sweet memory both teams will carry into the 2025 contests

Seismic shift for India as Kohli ends distinguished Test innings

— Iconic batter Virat Kohli retired from Test cricket ahead of England's tour, marking the end of an illustrious 14-year career that reshaped India's global cricketing identity. His departure signals a generational shift for Indian cricket as he leaves a legacy that elevated India's international stature and revitalised Test cricket's global relevance. India's upcoming English tour without Kohli, Sharma, and Ashwin, and the upcoming five-Test series, promise a new chapter for Indian cricket, one marked by youth, uncertainty, and the shadow of their legendary predecessors.

In a seismic shift for international cricket, legendary Indian batter Virat Kohli announced his retirement from Test cricket on May 11, just ahead of India's five-match series against England starting June 20.

The decision comes close on the heels of captain Rohit Sharma's retirement, signaling the definitive end of a golden era for Indian Test cricket. Kohli, renowned for his fierce competitiveness and charismatic leadership, leaves behind a legacy underscored by 9,230 runs in 123 matches and 30 centuries.

His journey in whites, stretching from his Test debut against the West Indies in 2011 to his last century, which was an unbeaten 100 against Australia in November, has been studded with remarkable highs.

In 2016, his domination of England with 655 runs in a 4-0 home series victory remains a high-water mark. Equally memorable was the dramatic transformation between his first tour to England in 2014, where he averaged a mere 13, and his 593-run redemption in 2018, successfully "burying his ego" against nemesis Jimmy Anderson.

Kohli's signature performances were often accompanied by iconic visuals, notably his memorable bullet throw from mid-wicket at Edgbaston in 2018 that spectacularly ran out Joe Root.

His tenure was remarkable both individually and as a leader. His 40 Test victories from 68 matches between 2014 and 2022 set a new benchmark for Indian captains, elevating India's stature on foreign soil and instilling a brand of cricket characterised by aggression, resilience, and unyielding competitiveness. With 20 centuries as captain, Kohli holds India's record, standing alongside greats such as Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, and Sunil Gavaskar in terms of total runs and influence.

Despite recent struggles, averaging 30.72 since 2020 with only three centuries in 39 Tests, Kohli remained pivotal to India's success, notably leading the country to its historic first Test series victory in Australia in 2018-2019. On Australian pitches, Kohli compiled seven centuries, thriving amidst hostility and pressure, showcasing his capacity to adapt and excel globally.

Under Kohli's stewardship and Ravi Shastri's coaching, India's tactical acumen evolved significantly. Their collaborative approach emphasised discipline, fitness, and mental toughness, elements previously not prioritised to this extent in Indian cricket.

Kohli's relentless drive elevated the collective standards of Indian cricket, permanently changing the team's global percep-



Virat Kohli

tion. Shastri, who was head coach for part of Kohli's tenure as captain, said, "You are a modern-day GIANT and were a fantastic ambassador for Test match cricket in every way you played and captained. Thank you for the lasting memories you've given to everyone, and to me in particular. It's something I will cherish for life."

Kohli's retirement symbolises more than the departure of a great batsman. As the first of the 'Fab Four', namely, England's Joe Root, Australia's Steve Smith, and New Zealand's Kane Williamson to retire, his exit marks a significant transitional phase in world cricket.

He was often compared with cricketing giants from previous generations, particularly Sachin Tendulkar, whose stature he approached both in influence and popularity. Tendulkar reflected, "Your true legacy, Virat, lies in inspiring countless young cricketers to pick up the sport. What an incredible Test career you have had! You have given Indian cricket so much more than just runs – you have given it a new generation of passionate fans and players."

BCCI President Roger Binny acknowledged Kohli's broader impact, declaring, "Virat Kohli's name will be remembered alongside the finest ever to have graced Test cricket. What set him apart was not just his hunger for runs, but his commitment to excellence in the toughest format of the game."

He added, "His leadership marked a shift in how India competed overseas – with aggression, belief, and a refusal to settle for second best. He inspired a generation to take pride in the whites, and his impact on Indian cricket will be felt for decades

to come."

Kohli himself expressed deep emotion in his farewell statement, which he posted to his 272 million Instagram followers.

"Honestly, I never imagined the journey this format would take me on. It's tested me, shaped me, and taught me lessons I'll carry for life. There's something deeply personal about playing in whites. The quiet grind, the long days, the small moments that no one sees but that stay with you forever. As I step away from this format, it's not easy – but it feels right. I've given it everything I had, and it's given me back so much more than I could've hoped for."

He continued, "I'm walking away with a heart full of gratitude – for the game, for the people I shared the field with, and for every single person who made me feel seen along the way. I'll always look back at my Test career with a smile."

David Warner, Australian opener and long-time rival, remembered their early encounters: "Absolute legend of our game. I'll never forget our first game against each other when we were young. I thought this guy was a serious competitor and going to be great, someone everyone would admire. You had to fill the shoes of some great players to ever play for India and carry the nation. Wow, you did not disappoint."

England's former captain Michael Vaughan emphasised Kohli's importance to the longest format.

"In my time playing and broadcasting, no individual has done as much for Test cricket as Virat Kohli. His passion, energy and commitment to the greatest format has helped so much. I hope the next generation of Indian players take on his mantle," Vaughan declared.

Young Indian star Shubman Gill offered a heartfelt tribute, saying, "Anything I write for you, paji (brother), will never truly capture what I feel or the impact you've had on me. From watching you bat when I was 13 and wondering how someone could bring that kind of energy to the field, to sharing the field with you and realising no one else possibly can. You've not just inspired a generation, you've reshaped the mindset of millions."

Kohli's influence extends beyond the boundary ropes. Married to Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma and father to two young children, he increasingly focused on family life, spending time at their second home in the UK.

Cricket reporter Stephan Shemil captured the magnitude of Kohli's stardom: "It is hard to overstate Kohli's fame, stardom or influence. He is the biggest presence in the most powerful cricketing nation on the planet. Maybe his name does not travel globally like a Ronaldo or Messi, yet even those two titans will have no idea what it feels like to be Virat Kohli in India."

Shemil added, "As a batter, Kohli continued the talismanic lineage of Gavaskar, Azharuddin, and Tendulkar. His cover drive is a work of art. In 2018, a Kohli net session in Adelaide went viral, the ball leaving the bat with sound of a pistol being fired. He is the first of the Fab Four to leave Test cricket, and while his numbers do not stack up to Smith, Root, and Williamson, Kohli is the most pleasing to watch."

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