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Our Community Is Thriving!



At Triveni Mandir's March 24 Holi celebrations were Dr Yudhishtir Dhanraj (left to right), Honorary Consul Mani Singh, Mayor Patrick Brown, and Indo Canada Chamber of Commerce head Murarilal Thapliyal. *More on Page 5.*



Superintendent Mandeep Mann (left) and IMO President Omar Farouk at the One Guyana Forum-sponsored Iftaar in Rexdale on March 29. *More on Page 14.*



In an enlightening moment, fans at RKM's stellar fund-raiser last year show appreciation for a great event

'It takes a community to raise a mandir'

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Cambridge – The construction of Cambridge's new Radha Krishna Mandir and Cultural Centre is turning out to be a rewarding exercise as the ongoing and collective efforts by the community continue to support the structure from foundation to roof, the mandir's President Dwarka Persaud said last week.

And yet again the community is showing its hearty support, with Persaud indicating last week that RKMCC's latest fund-raiser, *Vasant Ki Raat*, is 90 percent sold. The dinner and concert will take place at the Pearson Convention Centre on April 7. *See display on Page 5.*

The new mandir and cultural centre is presently being built at 85 Boxwood Drive in Cambridge.

Last week Persaud gave an update on the progress of the construction. At the same time, he expressed his profound gratitude for the community's support, encouragement, and for the continuing enthusiasm that are being channeled towards the project, all of this com-

ing together to fuel the sacred commitment by the mandir's membership to complete the mandir.

Addressing the community with gratitude and humility, Persaud stated, "The support we have received... has been instrumental in bringing us to [where our construction is today]. It is truly heartening to witness the impact of your generosity, and we sincerely appreciate the role you've played in advancing our mission."

In his update on the mandir's construction last week, Persaud stated that the first two steps were completed in installing the steel studs, and the outside enclosures.

"Soon, some necessary plumbing, electrical, and mechanical work will be awarded, along with the entire roof to be completed by the end of April to mid-May 2024, depending on weather," he said.

Additionally, "Looking ahead, to obtain 'Occupancy' from the City of Cambridge in 2024, we need to raise funds to install the elevator, complete the grading, hook

See Page 5: Vasant Ki Raat



Dwarka Persaud

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Shrimati Latchmin, mother of lawyer and community stalwart Dhaman Kissoon marked her 87th birthday at the Vishnu Mandir on March 24. The event saw Dhaman announcing that the golf tournament, named after his mom, is on again this year, with the funds raised going to VM's dialysis efforts in Guyana; last year the effort raised over \$70,000. Dhaman also announced that another *You and the Law* seminar will take place this year at VM on May 4, with the focus on elder abuse, as well as with experts on hand to guide those interested in the profession - more information to come in our next edition. In photo are Dhaman (l-r), VM's Pandit Bhoj, sister Janie, mom, and VM's leader, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, at right, with a VM priest in the back row.

It's a wrap: 'Doubles' wins 3 Canadian Film Fest awards

Toronto – The critically acclaimed film *Doubles* won three awards at the recently concluded Canadian Film Fest in Toronto, Canada. It took the *Reel Canadian Indie Award*, *People's Pick For Best Flick*, and the *Jury Award for Best Supporting Actor*, Errol Sitahal.

Doubles was financed through Telefilm Canada's Talent to Watch program, and also received grants from the distinguished Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council.

Joining director Ian Harnarine was fellow Trinidadian-Canadian producer Mark Sirju, who worked tirelessly to bring the authentic portrayal of immigrant life to the screen.

The film was shot entirely on location in Toronto's Caribbean community and in Trinidad & Tobago. The cast includes esteemed Trinidadian actor, Errol Sitahal (Ragbir) and Sanjiv Boodhu (Dhani) playing the lead role, as well as Rashaana Cumberbatch (Anita) and Leela Sitahal (Sumitra).

Local legends Patti-Anne Ali (Judy) and Penelope Spencer (Linda) are among the Trinidad and Tobago talent on screen.

Doubles is a poignant story that explores the changing relationship between a father and son. It has enjoyed sold-out screenings in Trinidad, New York City, and Toronto; it has also screened to enthusiastic audiences in Halifax and New Orleans.

Harnarine remarked, "It is an incredible honour for our entire team to be recognised for the hard work we all put into making this film. The awards we won speak to how the industry, critics, and audiences have embraced *Doubles* for the talent in front of and behind the camera both in Canada and Trinidad

& Tobago."

Speaking to the film, Harnarine noted, "*Doubles* is not an autobiographical story, but it was conceived during the experience of my father's terminal illness. In the latter days of his life, he became a person that was completely different from the man that I knew. It was like meeting a stranger for the first time."

He added, "I began to wonder what it would have been like to have never known a father until his final days. Is there an intrinsic affinity between a father and son that cannot be destroyed? What could test this fundamentally human relationship?"

Harnarine said these questions "inspired me as I investigated the dynamic between father and son".

And as he noted, "I also wanted to challenge the clichés of the standard immigrant story, by having a character that has failed in his new country and returned home. The film is set between the Caribbean island of Trinidad – my familial home, and my hometown of Toronto. Even though our culture boasts a distinctive food, language and music, it is my hope that the emotions of the

film resonate with a universal audience. Above all, the movie is a tribute to my father, who passed away before he could see it."

Speaking to his award, Sitahal said, "Thanks to the Canadian film fraternity for acknowledging my performance. The character I play is an attempt to articulate the deep disturbances experienced by most diasporic members of (in this case) the Indo-Trinidadian in Canada. I hope that this acknowledgment will encourage a continuation of what Harnarine's groundbreaking feature represents for all of us."



Actors David Fraser (left to right), Rashaana Cumberbatch, Leela Sitahal, Errol Sitahal, and writer/director Ian Harnarine at the Canadian Film Fest in Toronto on March 18



The Caribbean Consular Corp met with the Chiefs of Protocol for the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario, and the government of Canada on March 28. The meeting was mutually interactive and informative, and saw the Caribbean officials asking questions and raising concerns with the three levels of government. The CCC is a group of Consuls General and Representatives, which, among other things, promotes preservation of Caribbean culture and heritage among Caribbean nationals and their descendants.

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Devi Mandir in Pickering celebrated Holi in a grand manner with a live program in its auditorium that included contributions from members of its Kirtan Mandali, Bal Vikaas class, and Chowtaal group. There were also performances by the dance classes that operate out of the mandir. Approximately 350 guests were in attendance, including the Mayor of The City



of Pickering, Ken Ashe, and the Chair of the Region of Durham. In photos, (top left) MCs Taniska Sharma and Aneal Mahadeo with the Mayor of Pickering, Kevin Ashe; (top right and bottom right) dancers from Shobha Talent and Cultural Centre, and from West Indian Fusion Dance Centre; and guest performers, Brian Raghabir and Vedant Pawnwar (bottom left).



Holi celebrations took place on March 31 at the Lakshmi Narayan Temple in Scarborough. The celebratory event saw participants enjoying good food, dancing, and engaging with the many resplendent colours of Holi. This year's performance theme was Braj Holi, and was sponsored by the Indian Canadian Organisation. In photos, temple members having a wonderful Holi. FB photos, Hinano Beekhoo.



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From Page 1

As Persaud noted, “Beyond catering to our immediate community, this project represents a symbol of cultural diversity and historical significance, poised to become the largest mandir outside of the GTA and Peel Region.”

“There will be fantastic food, entertainment by Pandits Rajin Balgobind and Munelal Maharaj, and many others. Also, among the participant will be presentations by our youth, so people can see that we are investing in our future generation,” he said.



On March 24, Triveni held a grand outdoor Holi Mela. Over 3,000 people from across the GTA filled the tents and parking lot, playing Holi, singing and dancing. The event saw performances by the mandir's Chowtaal group,

The sun warmed up the attendees despite the cold, and many kept warm by dancing and rubbing powder on family, friends, and on strangers. It was a wonderful celebration that demonstrated the unity of the Hindu community in the GTA, as well as the beauty and joy of our Hindu festivals. A good time was had by all.



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Editorial
President Ali’s response

The video of Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali’s response to *BBC* journalist Stephen Sackur lecturing him on climate change is illustrative as it is reassuring.

In an interview last February during the Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo 2024, Ali rejected Sackur’s insinuation that Guyana will be contributing to climate change with its ongoing oil extraction.

Sackur implied Guyana was in the wrong for doing so, and asked President Ali if he had “the right” to extract oil.

The following editorial, published in the *Trinidad Guardian* on April 1, is a considered response to Sackur’s unschooled provocation. We reproduce it below.

“A Caribbean leader, conscious of the historical domination of developing countries of the south by the industrial world, recently took on the responsibility of defending his country and the Southern Hemisphere against a *BBC* journalist with an agenda.

“Guyana’s President Irfaan Ali did so with capacity, determined intention and distinction, when the *BBC*’s *Hard Talk* host Stephen Sackur attempted to make Guyana feel guilty of advancing world environmental pollution through the production and use of its offshore hydrocarbon resources.

“None should be persuaded to think that the interview, circulated on a number of internet platforms, was mere journalistic pursuit of a story by an aggressive interviewer. It amounted to no less than Sackur’s effort to transfer responsibility for the overheating of the world’s atmosphere to a developing country.

“In a very no-nonsense manner, President Ali asserted himself on the interviewer, and reminded Sackur that it is the civilisation of the north, starting during the 18th century Industrial Revolution, and spanning the world thereafter, which has brought the predicted environmental disaster on the world of today.

“Already, a number of low-lying islands and countries are being inundated by rising tides; wildfires are burning up millions of hectares of land, and placing in serious danger the attempt to limit the heating of the world environment to no higher than the 1.5-degree level since the Industrial Revolution.

“In rebuffing the attempt, President Ali showed his understanding of the threats and the responsibility of all nations to keep their expulsion of dangerous gasses into the atmosphere within limits. To do so, he let Sackur’s audience know that his country has left thousands of miles of its vast interior free from intrusion, thus contributing significantly to the production of oxygen, and assisting in the expansion of biodiversity. For his part, Sackur had no response, and in any case, the Guyanese President made it known that his country is a net producer of clean air and oxygen to the world.

“What was displayed in the interview, which must have a worldwide circulation on the famous *BBC*, is a major problem facing the development of countries of the South: why should these countries not pursue their people’s modernisation and advance through the same methods used by the industrial world? More so, those making objections should consider that dispersion of the hazardous materials is being done mainly by the multinational corporations of the north.

“Those from the north should also consider, before seeking to indict countries such as Guyana, now utilising their resources for human advancement, that the UK is digging deep in its North Sea hydrocarbons exploration at jet speed, while the US extracted a record-breaking 13.3 million barrels of crude per day during 2023, and is now the producer of the largest quantity of natural gas in the world.

“To compound the development bias against the countries of the south, the major polluters have been seeking to institute a system that the greatest offenders will be judged not on the basis of the quantity of noxious gas projected into the atmosphere, but by the size of the population, so that countries such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago will be deemed, with their small populations, the major polluters.”

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
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Alignment of faiths works to bring us together

With delayed sunsets, warmer temperatures, and budding greenery, it appears that spring has arrived. The darkness of winter is ending, and with its cessation comes the additional light of spring, which is bringing with it optimism, joy, and hope.

Around the world, communities are rejoicing with the change of the season, and are commemorating the advent of new life.

Spring is an absolutely busy period for the Indo-Caribbean community. We are a community that is linked to an agricultural life; one that thrives on the successes that come from bountiful cultivation, and a community that is energised with the harvest.

However, as important as this time is to the pragmatism of cultivating foods for our survival, the advent of spring is also recognised for its several religious events that involve many in our community.

Being Indo-Caribbean, celebrations, observances, and gatherings all signal the change in the season. And the collectivity of these ensures that the arrival of spring does not go unnoticed.

Recently, an *Instagram* post by Djamil Ninsoo, known as “doughlabwoy_”, captured my attention. It was a post that summed up the true spirit of being Indo-Caribbean.

The photo was a plate of dhal and rice covered with an array of seven curries. I could smell and taste that plate through the phone. We are all familiar with the sight and the flavours.

The caption Djamil wrote, “But the Indo-Caribbean experience is getting your Ramadan iftari at a [Phagwa] on Palm Sunday.”

Indeed, Djamil captured what makes the Indo-Caribbean so special and unique to many other cultures. Despite our varying religious affiliations, there is a sense of understanding and respect for each other.

More importantly, the three major religions in our Indo-Caribbean community, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, all align in recognition of the spiritual and holy time of the year.

It is no coincidence that observances like Phagwa (Holi), Easter, and Ramadan all occur around the same time. These



Ryan Singh

all stem from traditions that represent renewal, and a period to rejoice in new beginnings.

The importance of spring remains representative to us all.

This convergence of religious activities marks the importance of recognising that despite sharing many similarities, the Indo-Caribbean is still not homogenous. Our complex history, our integration into new lands, and our ever-evolving diaspora demography establish a vibrant and detailed community.

Households gather, and family members from different faith groups come together. Neighbours play Phagwa (throwing powder and water), while convening afterwards for Iftaar, with all these events occurring during the Easter weekend.

Here the dynamic nature of the Indo-Caribbean community is on true display; not merely in the coincidental confluence of major religious observances, but in the fact that these can all be celebrated in harmony.

A proud attribute of being Indo-Caribbean is an awareness of the diversity of faith we uphold. Where respect, love, and connectivity are shared over what could divide.

Learning from each other is fundamental, and in many Indo-Caribbean households, this is instilled at a young age. We are not those who become aware of other faiths and traditions, but there is a broader understanding of each other’s practices.

This is how we build community: through communication, sharing, and learning.

Through the series of religious observances during this period, it is an opportunity for all of us to extend our understanding of each other, and come to reason that we have more in common than what could divide us.

Whether someone may say “Bhagwan”, or “God”, or “Allah” – there should be an appreciation for the differences, and a drive to uphold what keeps us in common.

Our faiths may be different, but our humanity remains the same. Being Indo-Caribbean teaches us that we can hold different beliefs, and still cherish and respect each other.

To everyone in the Indo-Caribbean community: Holi Hai! Ramadan Mubarak! Happy Easter!

Recalling those down-to-earth days digging a hole

I continue to re-visit my decades old columns with a view to reconstituting and revitalising, removing a cobweb here, patching a frayed edge in its trim there. Here is one that was published in July 2005. Needless to say, despite the decades and these silver-spun years, the sentiment therein remains the same.

Tasks like yard work, where brain activity slows down due to misfires in its electrical pulses, are not among my favourite summer chores.

Take edge trimming, for example. Now this takes an effort that begins where cerebral output ceases, and to do so leaves me gasping with breathlessness and searching for shade. How to hold this machine level as it hums like an angry wasp, and simultaneously trim the undergrowth that the lawnmower’s chomp! chomp! champing did not reach is beyond my overwrought brain.

I did not master a cocoyea broom in my youth back in the homeland, so how am I to sweep with an edge trimmer, while keeping the entangle of trailing electrical cord beyond my feet?

Add to this the nervousness of being constantly surveiled by that spousal panopticon, which has me constantly looking over my shoulder for incoming missiles of reproach.

Her monitoring presence is painfully discernible through the large panes of the back window, gesticulating at times to weedy trouble spots that I have missed, while she sips on a cool drink.

Many are the times when I was startled awake out of a surreptitious snooze under the eaves, the harsh scrape of the sliding screen door a harbinger to the alliteration that is part of the corrosive language of our homeland.

“But what it this at all,” she would say, shaking her head. “I thought the man manhandling the mangy grass. Instead, he leaning in la-la land on the edge trimmer as if it is a post!”

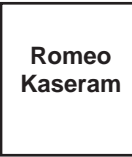
Times like these my mind seeks comfort back in the homeland, where impenetrable undergrowth was the norm in a landscape that was mostly unruly, untrimmed tropical rainforest.

I recall as a much younger man that to go to a friend’s house to dig a small hole was not much of an effort among friends, since it meant having a good time before getting down to work.

Typically, it took two hours to round up six pairs of hands. However, before setting out for the work site, we gathered outside the nearest rumshop, where a couple rounds were consumed to get the courage up.

It was then followed a fortifying input of doubles with red hot peppers to get the strength up; then more drinks to wash the hot pepper down.

When we arrived at the work site, someone asked about the tools for the job. Of course, we then realised no one had thought



of bringing a fork for digging; neither a shovel; nor a spoon.

So it came down to delegating tasks, which took a bit of cerebral input that was well within my capability. Someone was dispatched to fetch the tools; another went to buy food; and two more headed out to get a few rounds of drinks.

Meanwhile, at the friend’s work site, not a blade of grass had moved all day. The wife stared with open hostility at us from the back window, arms folded, with lips pursed and impatient.

She would say, “Steups!”, and stamping a foot, would add, “All they know to do is ‘skylark!’”

It meant we were nothing less than vagabonds who were slacking off and having a good time.

Notably, since we were vagabonds, instead of being goaded to work after this spousal reproach, we commiserated with our friend over the troubles his wife had brought into his life.

“Boy, she making you come round,” we said in sympathy, shaking our heads at the marital injustices in this world.

We sympathised with him even more following her outspoken annoyance after we had dug the hole in the wrong place, at the wrong depth. Not a word of thanks escaped her lips to commend us that at least we had dug in the right direction.

But to be called a chronic bunch of “skylarkers”? How insulting after we put up with being treated like a hive of worker bees!

Use the word ‘skylark’ around me today and my memory runs down that rabbit hole we dug so many decades ago.

Consequently, I avoid tools that make holes in the ground, and which take the labour of hands and days.

So, instructed by the sipper of cool drinks to start a flower bed meant renting a rototiller. Convinced that a bigger machine would mean getting it done faster, I took the behemoth into the backyard and pulled the cord. It was as if I had poked a bucking wild horse in the behind with a large pin.

With a startled roar the machine stampeded off, with me desperately clinging to a small handful of mane. I turned it at the fence just in time in a whirl of flying clods, my feet barely touching the ripped-up earth.

The rototiller took me back up the row with the snorting energy in the quickest rhumba I have ever danced, my legs unhappily keeping time with its inexorable two-stroke beat, my head thrown back with the G-Force of its momentum.

The theatrics in the garden saw a cool drink approaching.

“Let her just tell me I ‘skylarking’ out here,” I grumbled malevolently. Instead, she stepped out onto the deck and handed me the refreshing drink.

“Man, you really not made for this kind of work. You prancing like ants in your pants! Look, come inside and read a book.”

Guyana needs a military base in Essequibo

Dear Editor,

Following the “Barbados Agreement” signed last October by the Venezuelan Opposition and government representatives to facilitate “free and fair elections”, and the US easing sanctions on oil, gas, and gold, I noted that “[Nicolás] Maduro has raised the ante on their border controversy (with Guyana) to counter the political challenge he faces next year after the economic and social implosions”.

I then developed the thesis that Maduro was caught in a dilemma between trying to satisfy American pressures for elections that he knew would most likely remove him from office, and the improvement in the economic sphere that their carrot of removing sanctions on oil, gas, and gold could bring.

Towards us, Maduro was following the very well-known “diversionary theory of war”: generating a foreign policy crisis to divert the public’s attention away from social and economic implosions, while simultaneously bolstering his political fortunes through a “rally around the flag” effect.

The Venezuelan people had been socialised since the mid-20th century to accept that they were robbed of Essequibo by Britain, and he expected their emotional support. But unlike the 1960s when the controversy was first raised by the Betancourt government, the US now not only wanted Maduro out, but had strong interests in Guyana because of the massive Exxon oil find.

Maduro decided to “gamble for resurrection”: seeing defeat staring him in the face of elections, he was willing to take high-risk actions that would be considered “irrational” in normal circumstances because the high costs of defeat “objectively” outweighed the low probability of victory.

He decided to raise the ante on our border controversy and simultaneously take on the Americans by gaming the Barbados Agreement.

In early December, he truculently dismissed the ICJ’s jurisdiction over the Border controversy – where we had placed it through the Geneva Agreement – and raised the ante further by defying the ruling of the International Court of Justice with a referendum purporting to give him “authority” to annex our Essequibo.

In mid-December, he met with Guyana’s President Dr Irfaan Ali, and they issued the Argyle Declaration that “reiterated their commitment to Latin America and the Caribbean remaining a Zone of Peace”.

But we reiterated that Maduro was simply lulling us into a sense of false security, and his over-the-top reaction to the visit of the British



Nicolás Maduro



Irfaan Ali

patrol boat *HMS Trent* proved us right.

In January, the Venezuelan Supreme Court allied to Maduro ruled that Maria Corina Machado was ineligible to run in the elections because of “anti-national activities”.

The US then revoked its waiver of the sanctions tied to the Barbados Agreement. However, this applied only to transactions involving Venezuelan gold mining, and not to the critical oil sector, where Chevron continued operating and shipping oil to the US.

The US said that waiver would continue until April 18 as per the original terms, and that Venezuela’s actions towards democratic elections would be monitored. Maduro clearly read this disparate treatment by the US as waffling to satisfy their oil interests.

Venezuelan Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez snorted derisively, “The Barbados agreement is part of the policy of blackmail and extortion against Venezuela. The truth is that we are prepared to live without licenses from the United States and to continue defeating the criminal blockade.”

Not surprisingly, the Maduro government continued violating the Barbados Agreement and threatening our sovereignty. They issued arrests warrants for 11 allies of Opposition Leader Machado, and four were arrested immediately.

Up to then, the US had not asked her to step aside for a replacement candidate to meet the March 25 nomination date. Machado had insisted she would not do so, since her ban was contrived, and she was not afforded her due process. The US publicly supported her stance.

However, last month, she suddenly reversed her stance and announced that she had nominated historian Corina Yoris Villasana as her successor. This will be interpreted by Maduro as another sign that the US is more concerned about their oil supplies in the face of imposed sanctions on Russia.

We will have to see what they do on April 18 on oil sanctions. Then, clearly dismissing our military capabilities, came the bombshell of Maduro enacting legislation to annex Essequibo.

We have proposed that to counter the war being waged by Venezuela in the grey zone – economic, diplomatic, threats, and so on – we establish a military base in Essequibo to which the US forces would have access. The US will have to step up to the plate: there is the demonstrator effect on other possible allies in this new Cold War.

Ravi Dev, Guyana, via email.

successful in defending our territorial integrity. This can be accomplished with the help and increased presence of the US, the UK, the European Union, and other trusted allies.

Nicolás Maduro and his administration have now crossed a line that further divides the world along Russian or US interests, and that escalates global tensions. He has also made it extremely clear that Venezuela and those supporting Venezuela’s efforts to take Essequibo cannot, and must not, be trusted.

Given the seriousness of this new legislation, we must prepare for the worst as we hope for the best. May this season of religious reflection strengthen our will and resolve, as we face the threat of military invasion and occupation by Venezuela. We must, as a nation, act quickly to ensure that our borders are fully protected and secured. May the Creator protect us all.

Jamil Changlee, Guyana, via email.

‘Flagrant violation of Argyle Agreement’



A serious road accident on Guyana’s roads
Growing toll of road accidents a major concern

Dear Editor,

Last month saw another holiday weekend in Guyana marred with several deaths, particularly young people following road accidents, a number that involved motorcycles.

Then there were fires, two which claimed lives; and vehicle accidents among other incidents, that resulted in deaths, or injuries, and damage to, and a loss of property.

The continuing trend of accidents on a daily basis must be of major concern, as is the

Dear Editor,

Our hearts are moved by the recent tragedy in Guyana where three young children drowned in Region 9. It is so difficult for parents to lose a child, especially in such a tragic manner.

I love Guyana’s interior, and I have visited many of its locations over the years. One of my takeaways is how fast a child has to grow up in those areas. Learning to swim is a must, and I am left wondering whether these children knew how to do so.

Whatever the circumstances are, as par-

high incidence of road deaths involving young motorcyclists. The cause more often is being speeding and losing control of the vehicle.

It seems as soon as youths meet the age for a driver’s licence, the acquisition of a motorcycle or car becomes a priority. When will they learn? The answer is blowing in the wind.

My condolences and sympathies to all affected in one way or the other by these sad events. All are urged to be safe.


Shamshun Mohamed, Guyana, via email.

ents we need to be more responsible with our children. We all navigate through life’s tough circumstances, but our children should be our first priority. They must be protected from all dangers, known and unknown.

This must be so because when something tragic occurs, we are unable to replace them. Those youngsters that perished were still babies.

It is my hope that as parents we revisit our responsibilities, and take care of our children. My condolences to the bereaved families.

Yannason Duncan, Guyana, via email.



GUYANA PROPERTY MATTERS

Does paying the Land Tax guarantee possession of your Property... Perhaps not!

By Maj Khan

It has been generally understood that one of the best ways to protect your property anywhere in the world is to pay the land taxes. The fact is land taxes must be paid, and in Guyana there is an annual filing requirement with a two percent penalty for failure to do so. The government arm responsible for land taxes is the Guyana Regulatory Authority.

The optics are quite straightforward; however there is caveat with far-reaching consequences, of which owners should be aware. Those who are familiar with land disputes strongly advise that taxes must be paid in person. Why? The receipts for paying land taxes are often handwritten on a carbon-copy book.

In fact, property transactions in Guyana including title, valuation, mortgage, and tax compliance receipts are all done on paper. In the age of the Internet, those living abroad are well-versed with the digital world, where access to home ownership is at their fingertips. In Guyana, the government has just implemented an e-service platform that will take time to develop. In the meantime, most land records are written or typed and housed in local offices. It means that remote property owners have to invest a great deal of time and funds to ensure their paperwork is in order.

Currently, most owners living abroad have a ‘trusted’ family member they rely on to ensure the daily upkeep of their property, including paying the land tax. If that receipt is written in the name of anyone else other than the registered owner, it can create conditions that are favourable for that individual whose name is on the receipt. Translation: that individual is in a position to file for possession of that property. This is especially viable if the owner has not visited the property for years.

Unfortunately, today property disputes are common, with siblings pitted against each other, parents against children, and families at war with each other. The stakes are high, and the price paid heavy – often with a bitter experience fraught with a gamut of emotions, with substantial time and monies invested over decades. And the question is always asked, “What could they have done differently to ensure none of this would come to bear in the first place?”

RE/Guyana is a property services company dedicated to making it easier for overseas property owners to administer, divest, acquire, and develop their real estate assets in Guyana. [Click here to visit RE/Guyana’s website.](#)

So TT begins paying property tax: What do nationals get in return?

Dear Editor,
It is clear the issue of property tax in Trinidad and Tobago is not going away any time soon. Two senior representatives of the government tried to justify the tax, suggesting three reasons. One was the need to generate revenue; two was about equity and fairness. The third was some mumbo-jumbo about “democracy”.

Their need to generate revenue was misleading. No amount of revenue would satisfy “government spending” – a misnomer which should accurately be called “government wastage”.

With annual budgets greater than (TT) \$50 billion, there is always the need to come mid-year and borrow more.

More money in the government’s coffers is not the solution. Some of us might even recall when “money was no problem”. And we went from money being no problem to being pressured to pay as much as the cost of “a dinner mint per day” to keep a callous and incompetent regime in office.

If the regime were so concerned with equity and fairness, perhaps they could explain why commercial property owners, like the current Minister of Finance Colm Imbert, and the former Attorney General Faris Al Rawi, are exempt from paying taxes on their own commercial buildings?

One would think equity would include taxes on commercial buildings, given the vast amount the government spends in rent annually. When questioned about any issue, the PNM’s narrative is: “Well, it happens all over the world”.

Many have been able to get away with that narrative, specifically as it relates to taxes and crime. Few people take the time to read. Many simply acquire their information from the many

social media fora, radio programmes, and a couple television shows, but few people ascertain their accuracy.

These narratives take on a life of their own, especially when the person making the statements carries some weight that correlates with the office they occupy.

When we speak of equity, are we to understand that people living in noted “hotspots” – many, dare I say, most of which are in PNM strongholds – will be paying their dinner-mint taxes?

One may recall under the late Patrick Manning regime, the same individual pushing the “dinner mint taxes” today was against it then.

I specifically recall him saying then: “I know a lot of people for who (sic) \$100 is a lot of money. A lot are struggling to make ends meet.”

It should be noted that this was when the country was in a much better financial position than we are today. The engine room, Petrotrin, was still “jamming”.

Citing property taxes in other parts of the world and using Singapore and Barbados as examples, Imbert failed to mention that the people of Singapore do not have to play dodge-the-pothole. Also, they neither face a crime rate like ours, nor have to spend 20 working weeks (800 hours) annually stuck in traffic. Also, out of a population of about six million, Singapore had six murders in 2021.

The largest contention that people like epistolarians ‘G Elias of Cascade’, *et al*, who evidently have no problem with the property tax fail to recognise is not so much that we are being taxed more; but what do we get in return?

As a society, we rank lowest in the world for trust. Among the least trusted are politicians. There is the running joke about PNM being the acronym for “Promises Never Materialise”.



Colm Imbert



Gary Griffith



Kamla Persad-Bissessar



Jack Warner

Elections on the horizon as soap operas begin

Dear Editor,
Trinidad and Tobago is witnessing the latest political soap operas taking shape a year before the general election.

The actors are well-known, and the plots seem to be familiar, but are thickening with every new episode. Opposition forces are attempting to orchestrate an alternative option to the PNM for the electorate.

Let us face it – many people are weary of the silly season, particularly if it involves “old wine in new bottles”. Our system is set to allow these scenarios to take place. Party politics is the vehicle that drives the campaign in national elections as parties seek to win government. There is a call for unity by the UNC, but some of the other parties that may be interested have their own dramas, either individually or collectively, in one way or another.

We have seen the bitter fallout among leaders during the Peoples Partnership administration, and after that it lost the 2015 general elections. It is interesting to note that leaders of some of the parties seeking new alliances with the UNC were at one point aligned to that party and then left.

Gary Griffith, Jack Warner, and Phillip Alexander were all members of the UNC – they all left, and are now working their way back in.

It appeared that they buried their differences for the local government elections. UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar called these differences “minor matters”.

For some citizens who have grown accustomed to these expedited alliances, the approach is, “Let’s see how long it lasts.”

The NTA joined the UNC in the last local government elections, and although their respective leaders stood side by side

then, a couple weeks afterwards and they were throwing words at each other.

Persad-Bissessar said small parties must earn their place at the negotiating table by having their own meetings, membership, and resources. Griffith’s response was that she was being disrespectful to the third constituency, and should understand the politics of how new parties are formed and structured.

Drama continued when PEP’s Alexander said he would support the UNC, but not Griffith and his NTA. What the status of the alliance is now, at this point, remains a mystery. All parties attempting to form a coalition have announced that they are each screening for all 41 seats for the general election.

The NTA has already announced Griffith as its candidate for St Joseph, which could be a major battleground that could pivot the election results one way or the other. The UNC has its own internal drama brewing with members calling for internal elections that are constitutionally due this year.

The leadership seems to be ignoring the calls as it asks members to focus on the general election, which they believe will be called earlier than constitutionally due.

If there is a change in the UNC’s leadership, other parties attempting a coalition will need to have fresh discussions with the new leadership.

In the meantime, we the citizens are looking on as we conduct our own assessments, knowing that at some point in time we will be called upon to dip our fingers in the electoral ink.

Who knows where the drama will take these parties? One thing is for sure: the political clock is ticking.

Ronald Huggins, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

We know that sometimes a joke is just a joke. But a joke is not a joke when the stuff being joked about is a serious matter. We have been promised “water for all” since 1960. We suffer not from a lack of resources, but a lack of proper management that is common in every State institution.

I take issue when people in authority try to convince us that the sky is falling. If memory serves me right, I vaguely recall Imbert saying that he expects to collect about (TT) \$350 million in property taxes.

Recent history will reveal that the Colonial Life Insurance Company cost Trinidad and Tobago \$26 billion. This same history reminds me that some financial guru over at NGC lost over \$600 million in a very short time when he was at the helm.

I did not even factor in the losses over at NIS, CAL, HDC, PTSC, the boats park in Chaguaramas, the collapsed seabridge, the abandoned housing projects, the abandoned schools, the rents paid for unoccupied buildings, the cost overruns...

Even this topic appeals to our tribal instincts. But the ‘dinner mint tax’ would solve our problems, once, and for all.

Rudy Chato Paul Snr, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Guyana heeding ‘wise use’ theory in nation-building

Dear Editor,
“Make do with what you get, and spend it wisely.” Those were the words spoken by former US President Bill Clinton. At the time, he was speaking to an international audience at Guyana’s Arthur Chung Conference Centre.

Clinton’s sound advice to our government is to utilise our sovereign wealth, which should redound to the development and prosperity of Guyana. He further emphasised that the country’s oil deal is just the beginning, and the revenue stream should be spent wisely.

Here, again, the emphasis is on the oil revenue to be “spent wisely”. The government of Guyana is cognisant of the fact that this is sound economic advice.

When one looks at the rise, and in most cases the fall of developing nations, the salient truth of the matter that defines the outcome is the wise use of the resources. The “Wise Use” formula when evenly applied can bring about a rapid transformation in one’s country, as seen in places such as the UAE.

Others that were not keen on investing wisely in their country saw the most dismal of failures. So, the bottom line to all of this is to follow Clinton’s advice. There is no other way.

For its part, Guyana is well on the way to achieving this trajectory in following the “wise use” of what we have.

All across this country, there is a movement upward that augurs well for the future of Guyana. President Dr Irfaan Alli has said it: we would aggressively harvest our sovereign oil wealth to the benefit of our people. And that is exactly what this country needs at this time.

Neil Adams, Guyana, via email.

Questions remain on quality of Health Ministry’s medications

Dear Editor,
I truly regret that Trinidad and Tobago’s Dr Asante Le Blanc withdrew her claim that the Ministry of Health does not have quality healthcare pharmaceuticals. Many nationals will agree.

My own personal experience is that the Dispensary counters of the Mount Hope Hospital, most health centres, and the Port-of-Spain General Hospital never had any of the medications prescribed.

I can tell you for a fact that in relation to a specific Pfizer tablet for mood issues, you have to be running up and down to pick up a couple tablets here, and a couple there. If you have no insurance, a monthly supply of the drug will cost you (TT) \$1,500.

So, you get a prescription from the doctor on the ward clinic and take it to the window. The unpleasant woman there will tell you, “It eh have this... outa stock for months.”

You then face a choice: take some generic drug from India or Pakistan, or shop around. Many people will tell you that this is the same for other key drugs. In so doing, people who have relatives in the hospital have to pay for many things privately, and take them back to the hospital.

So the ministry will escape this time around, but I assure you it is bankrupt when it comes to medications. This is why there are so many satellite businesses offering themselves to the public. The ministry is woefully inadequate.

Linda Capildeo, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.



Asante Le Blanc

In the absence of stringent rules and diligent regulatory oversight, the price of stocks on the Guyana Stock Exchange have apparently been subject to manipulative practices.

The market capitalisation is directly linked to the price of traded securities. Since there were no additions or deletions to the traded securities on the exchange, the fall in total market capitalisation is a direct result of a decline in the price of selected securities.



**Dwarka
Lakhan**

It would be useful to compare two stocks from the same industry to ascertain whether investors are driving stock prices, or where other unknown factors are at play. For example, Banks DIH has an EPS of 10.55, a P/E Ratio of 13.3, and a Dividend Yield of 1.6 percent.

In similar vein, Demerara Bank is way overvalued on the relative basis with a P/E ratio of 39.6, an EPS of 9.03 and a Dividend Yield of 0.6 percent. Yet the stock has maintained its share price in a falling market. Refer to Charts 3 (*Selected Stocks: Dividend Yields*) and 4 (*Selected Stocks: EPS and P/E Ratio*).

“We are able to develop this company with all this capital works without borrowing and selling shares. That means the value of your shares will increase and that’s why we are concerned seriously about what is going at the Stock Exchange with the level on the value of our shares and we’ll have to take action now to solve this problem,” said Banks DIH Chairman and Managing Director, Clifford Reis, while addressing the company’s 68th Annual General Meeting.

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.

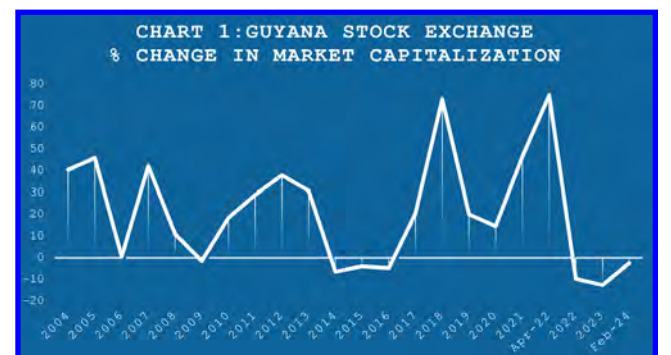


Table 2: Selected Stock Price Movements
Jan 2021 - Feb 2024



Chart 3: Selected Stocks: Dividend Yields (%)
(as at March 18, 2024)

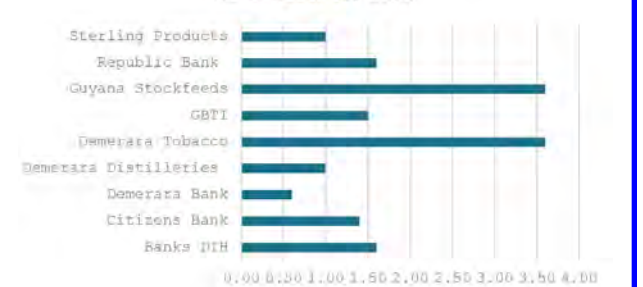
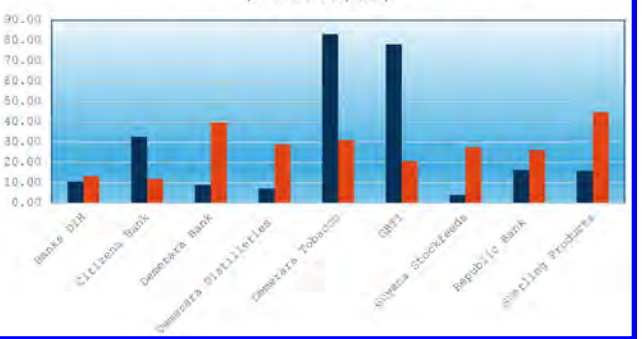


Chart 4: Selected Stocks: EPS and P/E Ratio
(as at March 18, 2024)





Imdadul leads in delivering positive, timely solutions to community needs



Iftar dinners meet the nutritional needs of its members

Celebrating the month of immense blessings, spiritual devotion at Imdadul

By Sayem Khan
Special to Indo-Caribbean World

The month of immense blessings, spiritual devotion, and abundance of reward, Ramadan has graced this universe with its arrival once again! Muslims in Canada and worldwide have embarked upon a month-long spiritual journey of fasting, prayer, and reflection to commemorate the revealing of the Qu'ran to the Prophet Muhammad.

This year, the moon of Ramadan was seen in different parts of GTA without any magnifying device. Members were ecstatic to start the month sighting the moon following the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

The month of Ramadan is a month that requires a schedule consisting of intention, discipline, and spiritual devotion. Imdadul mosque has facilitated several initiatives for its members to achieve that spiritual devotion.

In addition to regular religious activities, there are daily "Iftar" (the evening meal to break one's fasts) programs; Children's talent show event; "Itikaaf" program and nightly Taraweeh prayers, where members ponder upon the mesmerising recitation of the Holy Qu'ran by the young "Hafidhs" (individuals who memorised the Holy Qu'ran).

One of the core values of leading a life that is based on

Sunnah is called "Barakah" (Blessings). Members of the Muslim community dedicate themselves to the act of acquiring Barakah.

One such act is to break one's fasts within a collective, peaceful congregation. When we look back during the pandemic, the community Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan was missed immensely. Now the recently built Imdadul Annex is at full capacity almost every night for the Iftar Dinner program.

As the city of Toronto continues to welcome folks from all over the world, the demographics of the Imdadul community are also becoming quite diverse. As York University and Seneca College are within close proximity of the mosque, many students also attend Imdadul mosque to perform their religious acts. In addition, many of them are celebrating the month of Ramadan in Canada, in a new environment for the first time in their lives.

Furthermore, Imdadul mosque always leads in delivering positive and timely solutions to community needs. It is no secret that food insecurity has been a growing concern here in Toronto. The Imdadul authority tries to follow Canada's Food Guide framework when designing and preparing the Iftar meals. The hot meals include a substantial portion of proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Consequently, the members who attend the Iftar dinners can meet their necessary nutritional needs

and keep themselves healthy throughout the holy month.

Moreover, feeding hundreds of people requires substantial monetary resources, as well as contributions from a significant number of volunteers. The Imdadul community has been blessed with dedicated young volunteers who have been relentlessly demonstrating their energy, high level of patience, and serving with a positive attitude.

The members of the Imdadul mosque also appreciate the generosity of the donors, who sacrifice their resources to serve the needs of the growing number of people that attend the mosque to fulfill their spiritual needs.

Every year the volunteers receive recognition from the mosque authority for their sincere efforts via attendance by dignitaries and civic leaders. The volunteers also build lifelong friendships with other fellow volunteers. Often, as the young volunteers grow old, they move to a different neighbourhood after completing their education. However, they return to Imdadul every Ramadan and cherish their memories. This is the spirit of an "Ummah", where hearts connect due to good characters and morale, rather than material possessions.

The month of Ramadan is flying by rapidly and we are now into the last ten nights. It is never too late for any member to join the congregation, and be a part of all the positive activities.

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Shaw Jaundoo presents an award to the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala



Members of the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala at the event



Jaundoo (at right) with a group of singers



Chowtaal singers recognised for a successful Mela

Top Chowtaal singers feature in OHCA’s traditional Mela event

By Jay Jaggessur
Special to Indo-Caribbean World

The Ontario Hindu Cultural Association held its 7th Annual Holi Chowtaal Mela at the Hindu Heritage Mandir in Mississauga on March 23. The OHCA has taken a strong commitment to serve the Hindu community by reviving the old traditions of Holi. As part of the folklore of Holi, Chowtaal singing stands out as an inevitable component of the tradition. This year six groups participated in the programme, and all of them kept the audience engaged from start to finish.

The first group, the Prakash Ramayan Goal, ignited the atmosphere with an electric ambience as soon as it started the Sumiran. And when they continued with their Chowtaal, the audience was captivated. This group is probably one of the oldest ones in the GTA.

The second group, from Devi Mandir in Pickering, also electrified the hall with Jahan Ram Liye Awtaaraa. Which could not hold back its members from dancing as the Chowtaal progressed.

The Kabir Association of Toronto presented a unique Chowtaal based on the verses of Kabir. This group has members coming from seven different countries, all followers of Satguru Kabir Sahab. Their Chowtaal was followed by an Ulhaaraa and a folk Holi bhajan.

The Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala, composed of young teenagers, amazed everyone with their excellent performance. They proved their proficiency when they concluded with their final retorts. There is no doubt that they have taken the challenge to continue the Holi culture and tradition.

Members of the Debe Penal Group presented Ulhaaraas, bringing back the memories of the olden days. This group has always been active in promoting the Indian culture, and making sure the new generation follows suit.

The Saraswati Prakash Gold came up with several songs to uplift the audience's mood. Rakesh Ramnarine, who led this group was a multi-tasker. He also surprised the audience with a tassa performance to close the programme.

In addition to the Chowtaal performances, the audience was also treated with two dance items – one by Diya Gaur from the Kabir Association of Toronto, and the other by Alyssa Sugrim from the Sanatan Dharma Sangeet Mala. Both dancers were excellent, and the audience was mesmerised by their talents.

The programme was hosted by Jay Jaggessur and Sorojini Jaundoo. They both kept the audience engaged with their fun facts and sense of humour. There was also a raffle draw at the end of the programme, with five attractive prizes.

President of the OHCA conveyed his heartfelt appreciation and thanks to all sponsors, participants, volunteers, supporters, and also to the Hindu Heritage Mandir for providing the venue for this year's event.

The OHCA recognises the need to perpetuate the cultural tradition passed on to the current generation by holding more of these types of events. It stands as a bridge connecting the old generation with the new one to ensure that the legacy is carried on.

Watch out for more cultural programmes by the OHCA as it partners with the Hindu community to revive old traditions.

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Presents Hindu Health Conference

Date: 6th April 2024
Time: 10am-5pm
Venue: Mississauga Ram Mandir[Banquet Hall]

List of speakers:

Dr. Sonia Anand (Chanchlani Research Center, McMaster University, Hamilton)
Dr. Sandi Azab (Chanchlani Research Center, McMaster University, Hamilton)
Dr. Rahul Chanchlani (McMaster Children's Hospital, Hamilton)
Mrs. Dipika Desai (Chanchlani Research Center, McMaster University, Hamilton)
Dr. Sujane Kandasamy (Chanchlani Research Center, McMaster University, Hamilton)
Dr. Russ de Souza (Population Health Research Institute, McMaster University, Hamilton)
Dr. Mohammad Zubairi (Program Director for the McMaster Pediatric Residency Program)

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Region mourns passing of top jurist

Port-of-Spain – The Caribbean Court of Justice last week announced the passing of its first President, Justice Michael de la Bastide. He died on 30 March in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. He was 86 at the time of his death.

Justice de la Bastide steered the CCJ from its inauguration in 2004 until his retirement in 2011.

In its statement, the CCJ described de la Bastide as an exemplary jurist.

“Having received a sterling education in Trinidad and Tobago and the UK in his formative years, he served as an Independent Senator in Trinidad and Tobago’s Parliament. He was an exceptionally successful attorney-at-law, and also President of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago,” the statement noted.

It added, “He was appointed Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago directly from private practice in 1995. The following year, he was awarded the country’s then highest national honour, the Trinity Cross. After demitting office as Chief Justice in 2002, he was appointed as a member of the Privy Council by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2004, and elected as President of the Caribbean Court of Justice on August 18, 2004.”

The statement also noted that Justice de la Bastide published his book *Within the Law, Memoirs of a Caribbean Jurist* in 2021 “to great acclaim”.

It also noted his credo and entreaty: “Be intolerant of incompetence, of inefficiency, and of inertia. Be as intolerant of these as you are or should be of injustice. If intolerance of this kind would spread, who knows what wonders we might perform”.

In his statement, CCJ President, Justice Adrian Saunders said, “It was an extraordinary honour and privilege to have worked alongside President de la Bastide. His razor sharp mind, his prodigious knowledge of the law, and his tremendous experience exerted a profound influence on me. I express deepest condolences to his dear wife and family.”

Justice de la Bastide’s passing was preceded by the death of another member of the inaugural CCJ panel, Justice Desiree Bernard of Guyana. (See page 15.)

Based in Trinidad and Tobago, de la Bastide’s passing saw this nation’s Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley expressing sadness while celebrating his achievements.

“The nation has lost a good citizen. One who dedicated his life to making this nation better,” Rowley stated.

PAHO issues warning over dengue upsurge

THE Pan American Health Organisation has issued the warning over an upsurge in dengue cases in Barbados, the French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, and in the Americas, the *Caribbean Media Corporation* reported late last month.

According to PAHO, as of March 26, over 3.5 million cases, and more than 1,000 deaths were reported in the region.

“This is cause for concern, as it represents three times more cases than those reported for the same period in 2023 – a record year with more than 4.5 million cases reported in the region,” said PAHO Director Jarbas Barbosa.

PAHO said while dengue is on the rise throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the hardest-hit countries are Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, which account for 92 percent of cases and 87 percent of deaths.

This increase is attributed to the higher transmission season in the southern hemisphere, when the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito vector of dengue thrives due to warm and rainy

weather. He added, “It is my hope that as we celebrate his life of accomplishment, other citizens will step into the footprints that he made, and that many more good citizens are born every day. On behalf of the government, myself, my wife Sharon and our family, I extend my sincerest condolences to Simone and her family who were entrusted with the responsibility of providing the love and care that he so richly deserved.”

In her tribute to de la Bastide, High Court

Judge Kathy Ann Waterman-Latchoo said, “He was once called The Bull. But I came to think of him more as a butterfly, for his brilliantly coloured mind and the lightness of his spirit. There was nothing ponderous about him.”

She added, “His wit was legendary. He was funny; so funny, and he chuckled the most at his own foibles. He told the best stories, but his own life story is like a love letter for Trinidad and Tobago.”

Also, former Trinidad and Tobago Attorney General John Jeremie said, “It is impossible to recount a history of the

practice of the law in the Caribbean without a reference to Michael de la Bastide. He was as much of a giant on the bench as he was at the Bar.”

The UNC also declared it was in mourning. In a statement, the Opposition party said, “During his illustrious career, [Justice de la Bastide] made an extensive and conscious contribution to justice and legislative governance in his various tenures.”

The statement also noted, “As Chief Justice and first President of the Caribbean Court of Justice, he dispensed justice with deep insight, knowledge, and experience. He was earlier a voice of reason and expertise as an Independent Senator and as President of the Law Association.”

Additionally, “ [Justice de la Bastide] has made an enduring contribution to the legal profession and the delivery of justice for which he will always be remembered and honoured. The UNC extends its deepest sympathy to his family, friends, and associates.”

In his tribute, government Minister of Energy and Energy Industries Stuart Young credited de la Bastide for encouraging him to become a lawyer.

“I saw the transformation of the Judiciary under his tenure as Chief Justice,” Young recalled.

De la Bastide was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago from 1995-2002.

weather.

However, Barbosa also cautioned that “we are also seeing an uptick in cases in countries such as Barbados, Costa Rica, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Martinique and Mexico, where transmission is usually higher in the second half of the year”.

He also noted the presence of the mosquito vector and cases in new geographical areas, raising concerns that some countries may not be prepared to face an increase in transmission.

Several environmental and social factors contribute to the spread of dengue, including rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and the El Niño phenomenon.

Rapid population growth and unplanned urbanisation also play a crucial role: poor housing conditions, and inadequate water and sanitation services create mosquito breeding sites through discarded objects that can collect water.

PAHO maintains a rigorous surveillance of dengue in the region.



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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BEWARE OF REAL ESTATE FRAUD: PROTECT YOURSELF FROM COMMON SCAMS

Real estate fraud is a pervasive threat in today’s market, with scammers continuously devising new tactics to exploit unsuspecting homeowners and tenants. From identity theft to elaborate schemes promising quick wealth, individuals involved in real estate transactions must remain vigilant and take proactive measures to safeguard against potential fraud.

Here’s a concise overview of common types of real estate fraud, and practical tips on how to protect yourself:

1. **Title Fraud** occurs when a fraudster steals a homeowner’s identity and falsifies documents to transfer the property’s title into their name. Once they gain control, they can secure mortgages, sell the property, or extract cash without the owner’s knowledge. To mitigate the risk of title fraud, consider investing in title insurance, which provides coverage against fraudulent activities.
2. **Power of Sale Rescue Scams** are when fraudsters target homeowners facing imminent power of sale by promising to rescue their properties in exchange for upfront fees or the transfer of title. Be cautious of ads promising easy loans at low rates, and seek assistance from reputable mortgage brokers or lenders referred by trusted sources.
3. **Mortgage Fraud** involves providing false information or omitting crucial details on mortgage applications to secure approval. To prevent this, ensure all information provided on applications is accurate, and work with reputable lenders or mortgage brokers. Additionally, watch out for suspicious practices such as signing blank mortgage applications.
4. **Rental Scams** occur when the scammers pose as landlords and advertise properties they do not own for rent. They often lure tenants with attractive rental rates and demand upfront deposits or personal information. Protect yourself by verifying the ownership of rental properties before making any payments, and avoid sharing personal information with strangers without inspecting the property firsthand.
5. **Get-rich-quick schemes** are typical fraudsters’ schemes that entice individuals with promises of quick wealth through real estate investment schemes. Beware of unrealistic guarantees, and conduct thorough research before committing to investment opportunities. Verify the legitimacy of offers, and seek advice from trusted sources to avoid falling prey to pyramid schemes, or other fraudulent offers.
6. **We buy houses**; scams are common in GTA. They usually advertise that they would buy houses for cash, and when a desperate seller calls the number, the scammer convinces the homeowner to transfer the deed into their name with a promise to pay off the mortgage. Once the deed is signed, the scammer controls the property. The scammers know that the homeowner is facing financial hardships, and in most cases, cannot hire a lawyer. The best way to protect yourself is to delay the process and ask trusted people for advice.
7. **Looking to buy in your neighbourhood** scam is more recent, where the scammer would leave a note, text, or post signs stating that they hope to buy a home soon, and will pay cash. Once a homeowner calls, the scammer offers cash at a considerable discount. Most of these homes are in mature neighbourhoods where the homeowners are the original purchasers, and do not know the current value of their property. The scammer would then sell the contract to an investor for profit. Homeowners can protect themselves by using a realtor to represent them.
8. Another scam is when lenders advertise a low rate and give the borrower a commitment with many conditions, one being that there is a fee requirement to start the process, and that the fee is non-refundable if they choose not to proceed after a specific date. The client must usually read the mortgage commitment and fulfill all the conditions. If the borrower cannot meet the conditions, the lender will offer the client a mortgage at a higher interest rate. If the client declines, they will lose their deposit. If you are shopping for cheaper interest rates, look for reputable lenders.

In today’s fast-paced world, scammers leverage technology and psychological tactics to exploit vulnerabilities and defraud individuals. Seniors and financially distressed homeowners are particularly vulnerable targets. Exercise caution when dealing with unfamiliar parties, and seek advice from trusted contacts or reputable professionals before making decisions. A reputable realtor can provide valuable guidance in navigating the complexities of real estate transactions.

Protecting yourself from real estate fraud requires diligence and awareness of common scams. By staying informed and taking proactive steps, you can minimise the risk of falling victim to fraudulent activities in the real estate market.

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OGF-IMO hold Iftaar

It was an invigorating, well-attended turnout and a nourishing community Iftaar that was held at the International Muslim Organisation in Etobicoke on March 29. The event saw over 1,000 participants attending the One Guyana Forum-sponsored event.

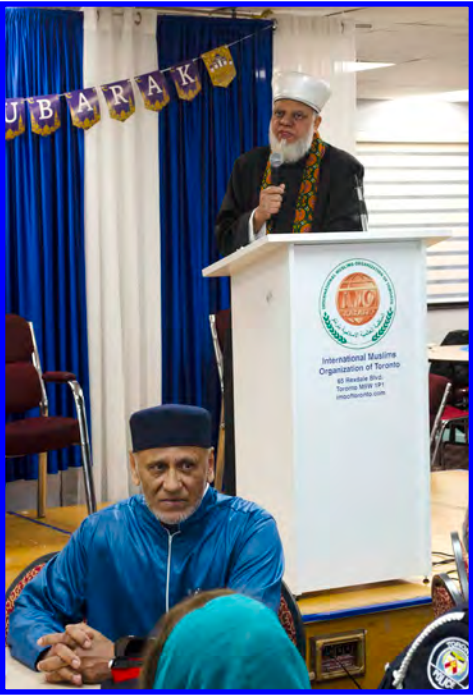
OGF is a thriving group that is building cohesion and togetherness in the community.

Among the guests were senior officers in the Toronto Police Service, including Superintendent Mandeep Mann and Officer Haroon Siddiqui.

Also gracing the evening with her illustrious presence was Hafizan Ayube, maternal grandmother of Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali.

The gathering was addressed by a number of dignitaries, among them Superintendent Mann, and IMO President Brother Omar Farouk, who ensured that the evening ran smoothly, and that all attendees participated in the munificent and bountiful evening meal.

Also speaking was Shaikh Faisal Razack from the Islamic Forum, who delivered the main address. And at the podium was Honorary Consul Mani Singh, who spoke about the solemn observance of Ramadan, and the five pillars of Islam.



Legal luminary and trailblazer Justice Desiree Bernard passes

Justice Desiree Bernard
March 2, 1939 - March 28, 2024
By Dhanpaul Narine

Justice Desiree Bernard passed away on March 28. She has been described as a legal titan whose passing would be sorely felt. This profile was done some time ago, and is repeated in her honour.

Justice Bernard has been described as a lady “of firsts”, and her stellar achievements bear this out. She is the first woman Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Guyana, and the first woman Justice of the Court of Appeal. She was also the first woman Justice of Guyana and the Commonwealth.

In 2001, she became Chancellor and Head of the Judiciary, and in 2005 she joined the Caribbean Court of Justice as the only woman Judge. The CCJ is the highest Court of Appeal in the Caribbean.

Justice Bernard was born in Third Street, Albertain, in Georgetown, Guyana. Her mom was Maude from Buxton, and her dad was William Bernard from Plaisance; he was a former Sergeant of Police. Desiree is the only child. She has a daughter Carol, who practices Law in Trinidad and Tobago.

Justice Bernard attended St Ambrose School in Georgetown, and later went to schools in Suddie and Albion, before settling in Plaisance. She was a bright student who passed the entrance exams, and was awarded a place at Bishops High School. She spent seven happy years there completing her Ordinary and Advanced Level exams.

She wanted to teach, but a friend advised her to do Law. She joined a legal firm that was headed by Fred Wills, where she gained valuable experience.

Justice Bernard discovered she had a talent for the Law, and completed her Bachelor of Laws degree. She then went to England in 1962 and furthered her studies at Grays Inn, London. She returned to Guyana in 1964 as a qualified Solicitor, and joined the firm Cameron and Shepherd, a year later.

One day, while in Court, she met an attorney who was leaving for Canada. He wanted to know whether she would take over his practice. She agreed and continued to distinguish herself in her profession.

Justice Bernard’s talent caught the attention of the then Chancellor of the Judiciary William Crane. In 1980, history was created when she was appointed as the first woman Judge in Guyana.

How did she find it? She said it was quite an event, as many women organisations turned up to give her support. She continued to distinguish herself. In 1992, she was appointed to the Guyana Court of Appeal. When it came time to appoint a Chief Justice of Guyana, Justice Bernard’s name was high on the list.

She was not only the Chief Justice, but later became the Chancellor and Head of the Judiciary of Guyana, which was an amazing achievement.

The CCJ came into being, and it was based in Trinidad. She was offered a position on the Court, and had mixed feelings about leaving Guyana. But she felt that the CCJ was a higher calling. In 2005, she was appointed to the CCJ, and left for Trinidad.

Justice Bernard spent nine years in the CCJ, and enjoyed the experience. How did she see herself as the first woman in such prestigious positions? She said it was good to blaze the trail, despite the challenges. Apart from Law, she was actively involved in women’s affairs. The United Nations had established a committee to eliminate discrimination against women, and she was invited to become a member of the Committee, where 23 experts worldwide would meet and discuss ways and means to eliminate discrimination.

Her tenure in the Caribbean Court of Appeal saw her addressing groups on matters relevant to the Caricom. One such topic



Legal luminary and lady of firsts, Justice Desiree Bernard. Above, she was honoured by the Guyana-Jamaica Friendship Society in 2017 for her contribution to law and community

was the Caribbean Community Single Market. There is no doubt that living in the Caribbean has given her a better appreciation of the diversity of the region.

Justice Bernard is not only a distinguished legal luminary. She has written on matters relating to the rights of women and children, and she is well-respected in the international community on gender issues. The seven judges on the CCJ are from different parts of the region, and this sets a good example for impartiality.

Over the years, she won many awards and prizes. In 2005, she received the Caribbean Community Triennial Award for enhancing the affairs of women. Two years later, she received another prestigious award.

She was honoured by the University of the West Indies with the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. This was a most fitting recognition, and a richly-deserved award to one of the most distinguished women of the Caribbean. In October 2017, she traveled to New York with her daughter Carol, where she was honored by the Guyana-Jamaica Friendship Association.

Justice Bernard has a talent for academia and research too. In 2013, she completed research on the *Compatibility of the Caribbean Court of Justice with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas*. This was done under a fellowship offered by the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in London.

She is optimistic about the future. She sees herself being involved in the Law, and is willing to share her knowledge with young attorneys. She is heartened to see an increase in women attorneys in the region. Her daughter Carol is an attorney.

Justice Bernard says that, “Carol is far brighter than me. She is good at whatever she does. She is an avid reader.”

Carol describes mom as being, “Very stable in her reactions. She is always impartial. She is a deeply religious person, and she respects others and their beliefs.”

Justice Bernard has deep admiration for Fred Wills who started her on the path in Law, and she credits her parents Maude and William Bernard for instilling in her integrity, fair play, and honesty.

She says, “I am very particular about integrity and honesty. All judges should have independence and I will not entertain any person, government or otherwise, interfering in my decisions.”



It was Justice Bernard who ruled that Janet Jagan had the constitutional right to be President after the 1997 elections were challenged in the courts.

Justice Bernard exhorts the leaders of Guyana to spend the oil and gas revenues wisely for the benefit of the nation. Investing

Guyana’s President Dr Irfaan Ali paid tribute to internationally renowned Guyanese and Caribbean jurist, Desiree Bernard, following her death last week.

Justice Bernard was born in Guyana. She died peacefully in her sleep in Trinidad on March 28.

“It is with profound sadness that I have learnt of the passing of a true icon of the legal profession, Justice (rtd.) Desiree Bernard. Her remarkable career as Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, alongside her esteemed tenure as a Justice of the Caribbean Court of Justice, left an indelible mark on our legal landscape, one that all Guyanese should take pride in.

“Justice Bernard was a trailblazer for women in the field of law. Her stellar legal career, personal integrity, and her outstanding legacy, I am confident, will continue to inspire all who seek to serve within our legal system.

“On behalf of the Government and people of Guyana, I extend my deepest condolences to her relatives and the entire legal fraternity. The loss of Justice Bernard is deeply felt, not just within our country but throughout the region.”

in education is a worthwhile venture, and children need to grow up with good and strong moral values, and to read more.

She has led an exemplary life. She is one of the finest legal minds in the Caribbean. She has blazed many trails, and her counsel will continue to enlighten.

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A year later following his passing, writer, poet, and storyteller Ramdath Jagessar is being remembered by family, friends – in the words of his friend, Harry Persaud, for “his funny stories, his boisterous laughter, his cheerful disposition, always lifting the spirit of everyone in his presence”. Jagessar passed away on April 20, 2023. Wife Jiantee and sons Rishi and Arvind, and his many friends, continue to keep his memory alive.

In his obituary, Persaud recalled Jagessar as a founding member of the Carican Writers Group. Also a founder, Narine Datt died in January 2021.

Today, Carican is being nurtured as part of Jagessar's legacy through the commitment and dedication of writers as Persaud, Roop Misir, and Ken Ramphal.

Among Jagessar's many dreams for the diaspora, yet again in Persaud's words, was to bring "together the latent talent and creative abilities of Indo-Caribbean Canadian writers, and to offer them an opportunity to publish their writings". Another of his "greatest causes in life" was the Indian community, which was "reflected in his writings and organisational commitment"

As Persaud noted, Jagessar migrated to Canada in 1989 and continued with his writing and activism that had started its flourish during his youth and early adult life in Trinidad and Tobago. Here in Canada, Jagessar became the secretary of the India Canada Association in Sudbury.

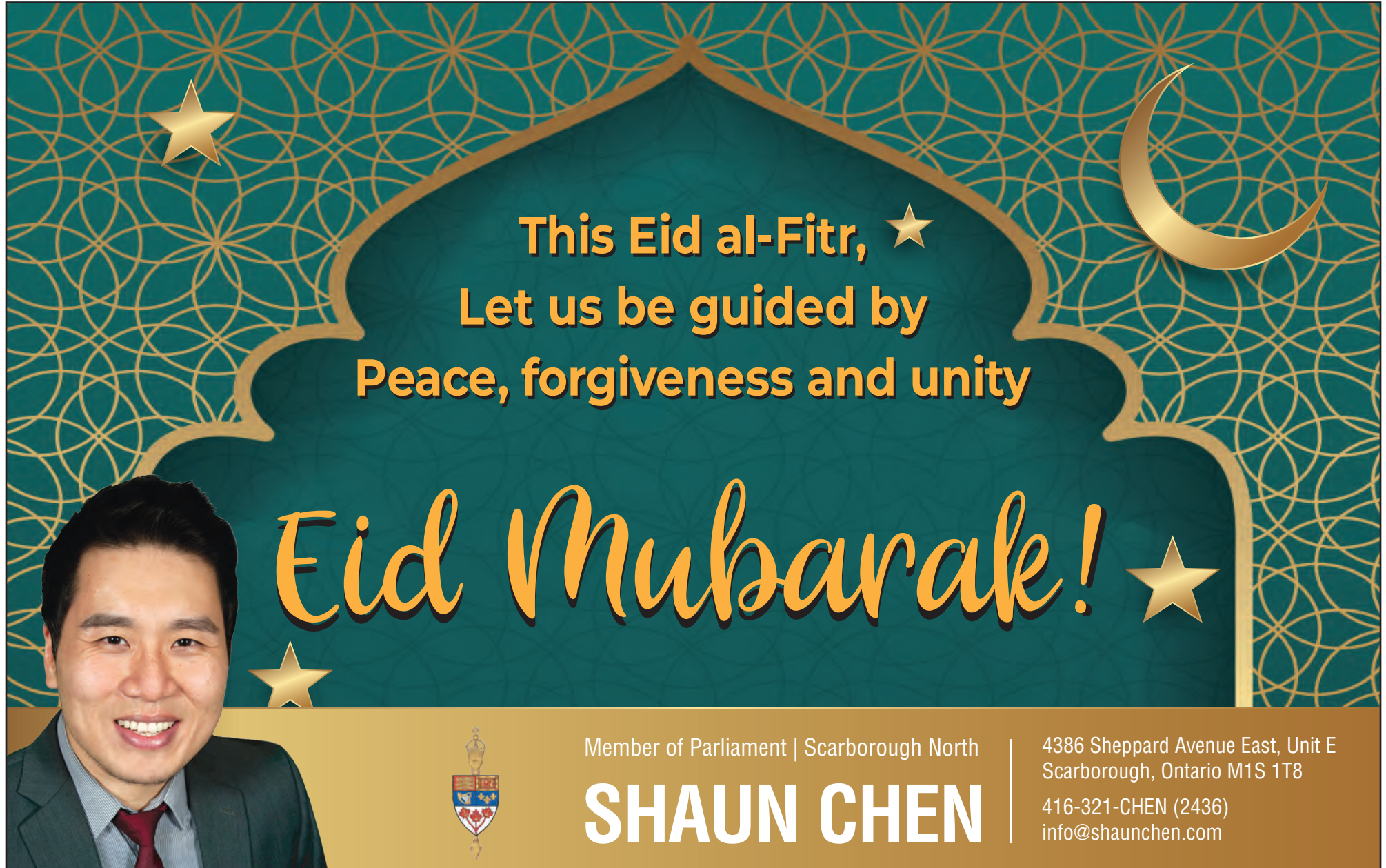
The family moved to Toronto in 1996, where among his other roles, was writing a column for *Indo-Caribbean World*.

Persaud also noted that in Toronto, Jagessar helped found of the Indo-Trinidad Canadian Association. He added that the group's celebration of Indian arrival in Canada grew to the point where it became Indian Arrival and Heritage Month, and then in 2001, grew to become South Asian Heritage Month.

In marking Jagessar's one year death anniversary, *Indo-Caribbean World* presents a montage of a few of his early columns, which were published between 1992-2005.



**Jiantee celebrates
Ramdath (right) at
a book launch in
Scarborough last year**



**This Eid al-Fitr, ★
Let us be guided by
Peace, forgiveness and unity**

Eid Mubarak!

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Hansib’s founder Ali wins top Bocas award

Port-of-Spain – Honouring his role in preserving generations of Caribbean culture, thought, and art in print, founder of Hansib Publications, Arif Ali, has been named the recipient of the 2024 Bocas Henry Swanzy Award for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Letters.

The Bocas Henry Swanzy Award was founded in 2013, and is named for Anglo-Irish BBC producer Henry Swanzy.

Swanzy is renowned for his tenure with the UK’s *Caribbean Voices* radio programme from 1946 to 1954, which was transformative for West Indian writers of the time. Following in the footsteps of the Jamaican poet and writer, Una Marson, who was the first *Caribbean Voices* editor, Swanzy played a crucial role in promoting Caribbean writing to regional and international audiences at the start of the postwar publishing boom.

The award was created by the Bocas Lit Fest in Swanzy’s memory, and it celebrates the contributions of editors, broadcasters, publishers, critics, and others who have devoted their careers to developing Caribbean literature.

These champions of Caribbean letters often worked behind the scenes and without fanfare. Bocas’ Henry Swanzy Awardees are chosen by the festival’s organising committee, and honoured annually at the NGC Bocas Lit Fest.

Ali was born in Guyana, and now lives in the UK. Chosen for this year’s prestigious award, he entered the arena of publishing without any formal training. The world of 1950s England, which Ali faced as a migrant from then-British Guiana, did not predispose itself to the basic circulation, far less adulation, of West Indian stories.

Ali, who sold his greengrocer’s shop in north London to fund the creation of Hansib Publications, stood against the careless and wilful erasure of Caribbean perspectives. At Hansib, he vowed such stories would not only be afforded space, but would

also be allowed to shine. Ali was born in the village of Danielstown in British Guiana in 1935. He journeyed to London in 1957 with plans to launch his studies in economics. However, marriage and other practical pathways presented themselves before the publishing bug bit.

He used a Gestetner printing machine to reproduce articles from the various Caribbean newspapers he brought into his greengrocer’s shop. This hands-on, frugal venture, which he dubbed *The Westindian*, sparked into a success, and spurred him on to found Hansib Publications in 1970.

He named the publishing house for his parents Haniff and Sibby. Ali’s acumen as a newspaper producer grew with his 1971 launch of *The Westindian Digest*, a weekly paper.

Hansib’s first book publication, *Westindians in Britain* (1973), was edited by Ali himself. It functioned as a “Who’s Who” of the migrant communities whose efforts and achievements received little to no fanfare elsewhere.

The publication proved so popular that several editions were issued, up to a fifth collection in 1982.

As the decades progressed, Hansib’s attention turned more and more to full-length book publication in every conceivable genre.

The publishing house’s cadre of authors includes Guyanese and Caribbean luminaries Frank Birbalsingh, Brinsley Samaroo, Patricia Mohammed, Ian McDonald, and Jan Carew, alongside younger accolade-earning talents such as Joanne C. Hillhouse, and Anna Levi.

Now over 50 years old and still going strong, Hansib Publications boasts a catalogue of over 300 titles, and remains open for submissions.

Ali has now retired from the day-to-day business of his publishing house. However, he remains indomitably at the centre



Arif Ali

of its mission: to make publishing accessible, educational, and within reach to Caribbean citizens at home, and in the wider diaspora.

Ali and Hansib Publications will be celebrated on April 27 as part of the 2024 NGC Bocas Lit Fest’s prize ceremony, with the award formally presented at a special event in London later this year. The 2024 NGC Bocas Lit Fest runs from April 25 to 28 in Trinidad.

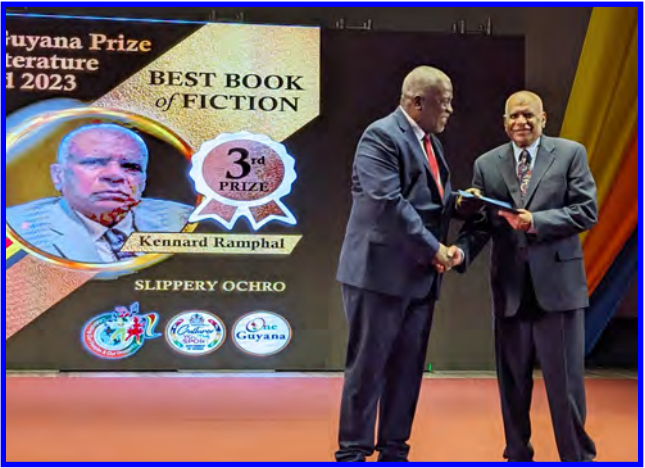
Toronto’s Ramphal wins Guyana Literature prize

Guyana-born and Toronto-based author Kennard Ramphal was recipient of a Guyana Prize for Literature award for his novel *Slippery Ochro*. He took the third prize. And in another win for the diaspora, Guyana-born Baytoram Ramharack’s *Powerful Indian Voice: Alice Bhagwandai Singh* secured second place in the Non-Fiction category. Ramharack lives and teaches in New York.

The event took place in Guyana early last month in a ceremony that highlighted the many works being produced by Guyanese in the homeland and in the diaspora.

The Guyana Prize for Literature is done under the auspices of Guyana’s Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. As the government notes, it is a representation of its commitment to nurturing and preserving Guyana’s creative arts industry and heritage.

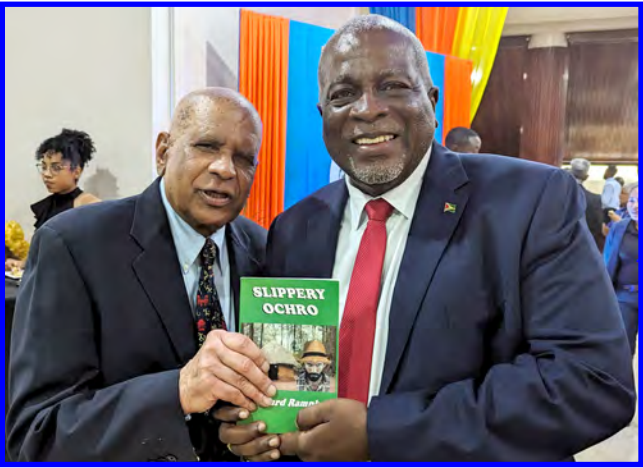
As Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Charles Ramson noted at the March 1 event, “When it comes to the expression of creativity by words, it really is an art, but it is also a space for people, young people... who are attracted, interested, and have a



Ramphal (right) receives his award from Guyana’s Prime Minister Brigadier Mark Phillips

love for the use of language, and a passion for it.”

In the Fiction category, Michael Jordan won first place for his *Girl in the Pink with the Pleated Skirt*. Second place was taken by Somnauth Narine’s *Rage from the Backwaters*, with Toronto’s Ramphal’s *Slippery Ochro* in third place.



Guyana’s Prime Minister Brigadier Mark Phillips with a copy of Ramphal’s *Slippery Ochro*

The Non-Fiction category saw Estherine Adams first with *The Few Among the Many: Women’s Labour in British Guiana’s Jails*; Ramharack’s *A Powerful Indian Voice: Alice Bhagwandai Singh* second; and Nesha Haniff and Joanne Collins Gonsalves sharing the third prize.

From Georgetown to the Mediterranean Sea: Guyana boy walking good

My travels have taken me to Majorca, one of the Balearic islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Located 200 miles off the North African coast, conquered by the Romans in 123 BC, it fell to the Arabs in the eighth century, conquered by James of Aragon in 1229, and remained in Spanish possession since then.

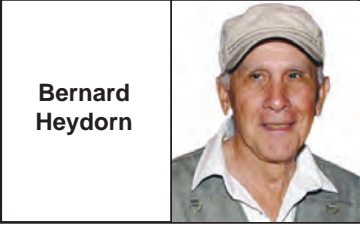
The island has gained the reputation for being a haven for the rich and famous. Eighty private planes reportedly land on the island every day. Continental tourists, many Germans and Brits, investors, and sports personalities seeking anonymity are reportedly retired and living here.

I was alarmed walking to a supermarket to hear a loud blast roar past on the road, and which then pulled in to park at the supermarket. It was a red sports Ferrari. As I entered the store there was an announcement in Spanish that a famous character had entered the building!

I started my holiday with a group day trip by bus into the north to the end of the road. It was a narrow road where oncoming traffic had to stop and pull over to the side, looking over a precipice. We were heading over 2,000 feet high, along hairpin bends, three called three Mary’s! The driver stopped to jerk us around these bends in short jerks and sharp brakes! A couple of mountain goats on a ledge stopped to watch the bus perform.

Deposited at a beach on the north east coast of the island, a tourist boat arrived to take us to a coastal town further south on the Mediterranean. It was a trip that had me shaking and soaking wet.

The Mediterranean was more than choppy, it was downright scary!



Bernard Heydorn

Slammed by the waves, tossed over at a sharp angle, I wondered if my time was up. Not since I fled British Guiana during the riots in 1963 on the *MV Ripon* bound for Barbados, the only way out of the country, did I feel such fear. That night I slept on the one lifeboat on the ship, and had a mouse for company! A sister ship of the *MV Ripon* sank not long after.

My day trip did not end without drama. My wife and I got separated from our group on a tramcar ride to another town. On the way down, two elderly ladies gave up their seats to us, and went to stand outside the carriage of the packed tram. I sat down and saw a notice that had portraits of five quite disabled folks, and a request for passengers to give up their seats to same! It made me feel that our time was probably soon up!

It was a relief to find our party, and get home safely on an old train ride, reminding me of the time I was a child.

Marcel Proust said, “The best journey is that which stays in the memory”. Ernest Hemingway said, “Paris is a moveable feast”. Majorca is both to me!

Majorca is famous for its many beaches, 208, including a nudist one, its good climate, its mountains and caves, its cyclists and tennis sports, (tennis-great Rafael Nadal comes from here), and its expensive accommodations.

When I arrived at the airport, the taxi ride to accommodations took quite a bite out of my cash flow! It was over to credit cards. Its geopolitical stance has kept the refugees from Africa off its shores; so far.

Guyana boy continues to walk far with my loving wife, a loyal and trusting companion. It’s off to Porto in Portugal from here,



Vivienne and Bernard on a boat trip in Majorca and then homeward bound. If the creeks don’t rise and the sun still shines, I’ll be talking to you.



Indira Rampersad



Bishnu Ragoonath



Rushton Paray



Anita Haynes



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

Experts: Fallout from Paray’s internal elections call embarrassing UNC

Port-of-Spain – In the analyses by experts following Mayaro MP Rushton Paray’s call for the UNC to set an exact date for internal elections, political scientists are saying fallout from his approach to the issue is now an embarrassment for the party.

Last month Paray called for internal elections, saying it was in the best interest of the UNC. As the situation developed, Paray later stated he would no longer engage in the internal party elections via the media.

At the same time, Paray also reaffirmed his “steadfast loyalty and dedication” to the UNC.

Following this release, Paray was a guest on *CNC3’s The Morning Brew*, where he stated he thought it necessary to clarify his statement regarding engagement in discussion via the media, which he claimed was interpreted as him stepping back from the issue.

Said Paray: “I want to make this clear: I am not in the business of standing down. I am in the business of standing up.”

He said he had taken note of UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and one of her deputy leaders, who were both seeking to assure the party that the internal elections will be held when constitutionally due. However, he said that was not good enough.

“I want to go further. I want the party, the leadership of the party, to call the date. I want participation from the wide selection of our members. So, you need enough time to do that,” he said.

Paray also addressed claims by Persad-Bissessar that he is a PNM operative.

“Let me put this to rest for the 99th time, all of these allegations are political campaign banter in the 2015 elections. During the screening in 2015, the very same Natex committee who screened me identified it was foolishness and approved me in 2015,” he said.

Additionally, “I served five years, I came back in 2020, all of these matters were on the docket, again they identified ‘Paray, it is foolishness and move on, you will continue to serve and be the candidate.’”

He wondered why his loyalty to the UNC was being questioned.

He said, “So, I find it very strange that these things are coming back up to stir in the pot. But that is okay; that is the politics of this country, and we remain steadfast in ensuring an internal election must be called, and we can make the UNC stronger to be a stronger Trinidad and Tobago.”

But political scientist Dr Bishnu Ragoonath did not see it that way, telling the media last week the he believed Paray was doing quite the opposite, and that he was embarrassing the UNC.

Said Ragoonath: “Party politics is party politics business. He decided he is going to come and talk about party politics business in a press conference, which immediately takes it out of the party business, because this should have been handled internally.”

Ragoonath said the PNM would never handle internal issues in such a manner.

“Do you hear the PNM washing their dirty linen in public? They consolidate within the party; they don’t come outside and make their noise. And by coming outside and making your noise, you are in effect putting the party’s name into disrepute in the eyes of the public, who will be called upon to vote,” Ragoonath stated.

He also said those who feel the UNC’s national executive should simply set an internal election date do not understand politics.

“[Persad-Bissessar] goes ahead and names a date, we have a by-election coming for Moruga, so the PNM decides to call that election two weeks, or the week after, when she names the date, and then, of course, the UNC will wash all their dirty linen in public when one slate campaigns against another slate, and how will that win them an election? It’s not as simple as calling a date,” he declared.

Political scientist Dr Indira Rampersad also stated that Paray’s approach was not in the best interest of the UNC.

As she noted, it was a play by Paray to unseat Persad-Bissessar as leader, which then fizzled out to a call for internal elections. Additionally, Rampersad stated this is why Persad-Bissessar had to take a stern position on Paray’s conduct.

“I think basically, she is laying the ground rules for all of them to follow, all of them who think they can be a member

of the party and just carry on. You see it was never just calling for internal elections, because they always do call their internal elections; so he was calling for her to go – that was the movement. Then he toned down and said he is just calling for internal elections,” Rampersad said.

Meanwhile, Tabaquite MP Anita Haynes-Alleyne said there was nothing wrong with Paray’s process.

While saying she is not part of any coalition with Paray, and reiterating her support for Persad-Bissessar as the UNC’s leader, Haynes-Alleyne said there was merit to Paray’s call.

“I do not think anyone mentioned [Persad-Bissessar] at all, and then there was a slew of media releases with people saying they support Kamla. That is why I came out... and said you can support Kamla, and you can support internal elections,” she said.

Also, “Kamla right now, as of today, is the duly elected leader of the UNC, and based on the mandate, she has our support, but that support does not prevent you from saying that internal elections are due by June 2024, and they should be held.”

She said whether the PNM would have handled it the same way was irrelevant.

“The key part of being a member of the UNC is that we always understood it to be a democratic institution, and how that democracy shows itself is really important,” she said.

Additionally, “The question of whether or not you are seeing the PNM doing this, there is a reason I did not join the PNM – because for governance to be proper, and for the wider public, there is no issue with it being ventilated in the public domain, once it is done in a respectful manner. I did not see anything disrespectful about the call at all.”

And she was not concerned about being blacklisted by Persad-Bissessar, she stated.

“I am not worried at all because any position you take inside of politics and outside of politics, what you ought to be able to do is speak up for the right thing. I believe holding internal elections, those things are the right things to do,” she said

Following Paray’s public call for elections there was an outpouring of support for Persad-Bissessar as leader from a majority of MPs in the UNC.

Imbert admits to feeling own property valuation tax ‘much too high’

Port-of-Spain – In a comment made while moving the second reading of The Property Tax (Amendment) Bill 2024 last week, Trinidad and Tobago’s Finance Minister Colm Imbert revealed he also felt that his home had been valued “much too high”.

Imbert’s comment fell into line with ongoing complaints, commentaries, and lamentations by nationals regarding the overvaluation of their houses for the purpose of property taxes.

As Imbert revealed, his house was given a monthly rental value of (TT) \$25,000, which amounts to \$9,000 in property tax per year. He added that while he does not approve of the figure, he had no intention of challenging the assessment.

“[When] I saw it thought it was a little bit on the high side, because my house is 35 years old, and it is not architect designed. I have no intention of objecting. I will pay (TT) \$9,000. It would be bad form for me to object to myself for a valuation that I consider to be much too high, much too high, about 50 percent too high, but that is beside the point,” Imbert said.

He also defended the Valuation Division against critics that have condemned the formula used to value properties.

He said the division consulted with the premier property tax institute in the world – the International Property Tax Institute – which he said is widely recognised globally as the leading organisation on property tax policy and practice.

He explained that in a 57-page document, the experts in



Colm Imbert

property tax made recommendations after looking at Trinidad and Tobago’s legislation – the Valuation of Land Act and the Property Tax Act, reviewed commentary on property tax, combed through Trinidad and Tobago’s database, and other measures.

“They did a lot of scientific analysis. So what I think people should be looking at is the challenge process. But this idea that the valuation division are a set of crazy people, and they didn’t follow any formula, and they did no analysis, and they haven’t followed international best practice is nonsense,” Imbert



Jayanti Lutchmedial-Ramdial

declared.

Meanwhile, Opposition Senator Jayanti Lutchmedial-Ramdial maintained that the Opposition does not support the property tax, and that the system was inequitable.

She also doubled down on the criticism of the formula used to calculate the value of properties, as she demanded the minister reveal the qualifications of the field assessors who conducted the valuations.

“You know what the People’s Partnership government never did and what we will never do, we will never send a host of unqualified people to stand up and conduct curbside valuations,” she said.

Lutchmedial-Ramdial also commented on the logic behind having individuals challenge the valuation of their properties before the Commissioner of Valuations, who approved the initial value in the first place. She said the second step, to go before a Valuation Tribunal that currently does not exist, is also a *faux pas* that is being made by the government.

Nevertheless, she said a time frame within which all objections will be dealt with ought to be established.

“You have a specified period of time in which you must file these objections, but there is no time frame in which they must respond to you. Giving people six months to file the objection, and they have to wait six years for a response, make no sense, and they have to pay the tax,” she added.

She also said people were not opposed to paying property tax, but wanted it to be fair.

TT gun dealer sues Barbadian government over ‘forcible removal’

Port-of-Spain – Legal action against the Barbadian government was initiated late last month by Trinidad and Tobago gun dealer Brent Thomas. He is claiming “forcible removal” from the country by the Barbadian Police Service in 2022.



Brent Thomas

challenge in April 2023.

As Thomas’ lawyers told Barbados Attorney General Dale Marshall, “It is well established that individually or cumulatively, members of the [Barbados Police Service] acted outwith the law and refused to afford our client the protection of the law afforded to him by the Constitution. The laws of Barbados did not authorise any of the acts of the BPS relative to our client which occurred on October 5, 2022.”

Thomas is represented by Trinidad and Tobago attorneys Fyard Hosein, Aadam Hosein, Clay Hackett; and Barbadian attorney Nicholas Jackman.

The owner of Specialist Shooters Training Centre in Trinidad and Tobago, Thomas has been one of the main suppliers of guns, ammunition, and other security equipment to various

According to the action, Thomas is seeking compensation for the “egregious conduct” by the Barbadian authorities, as well as several declarations relating to his “arrest, detention, and forced repatriation” by the BPS.

He is also demanding to know who gave the directive that led to his “unlawful abduction” from a hotel room in Barbados on October 5, 2022. His claim of “unlawful abduction” is taken from a statement made by Trinidad and Tobago’s Justice Devindra Rampersad, who ruled on Thomas’ constitutional

arms of the State for over 20 years,

In his legal action against the State, Thomas also sued over the criminal charges against him. The charges were stayed by Rampersad, who also condemned the police officers, both locally and from Barbados, for their method of apprehending and bringing Thomas back to Trinidad and Tobago.

The State had also admitted that Thomas’ return to Trinidad and Tobago was unlawful. However, the government has since appealed aspects of Rampersad’s ruling. A court decision on compensation for Thomas is yet to be decided.

In an address to the Barbadian Parliament on May 9, 2023,



Trinidad and Tobago observed Easter last weekend with re-enactments of the holy events, as well as with traditional observances. In photos, parishioners in south Trinidad process with crosses (at left), while a reluctant young man (photo at right) receives his first haircut, with an anxious father assisting the stylist

Marshall insisted Thomas was not “abducted” from Barbados. However, he did admit officers of the BPS had “fallen short of the law” during the operation.

He said neither himself nor Prime Minister Mia Mottley were informed, nor were made aware of any matter involving Thomas. But that was not unusual, he noted, adding, “We simply had no knowledge, nor involvement in this matter.”

He added, “This is not unusual as these matters are operational, and such requests for surveillance by another law enforcement arm for arrests of individuals do not fall within our purview.”



Frank Rampersad



Erla Harewood-Christopher



Keith Rowley

Rowley defends top cop over court affidavit

Port-of-Spain – Criticism of Commissioner of Police Erla Harewood-Christopher by Justice Frank Rampersad went “overboard”, Trinidad and Tobago’s Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley said last week.

Rowley was responding to Justice Seepersad chiding Harewood-Christopher when he stated it was simply outrageous that she elected to take a, ‘Well, I have plenty work to do’, position in defence of a seven-year delay in granting a Firearm User’s Licence to an applicant.

Rowley stated that he understood Justice Seepersad’s criticism of the affidavit that contained Harewood-Christopher’s position, and which had “provoked” his reprimand.

He further stated that the Judiciary had to be careful about creating the impression that it made policy.

At the time, Rowley was responding a question at the Conversations with the Prime Minister in Tunapuna. The question sought his views on Harewood-Christopher informing a court she was too busy to deal with the seven-year-old application for a firearm licence.

Stated Rowley: “I don’t think the Commissioner did that.”

According to Rowley, after noting the reprimand in the media, he enquired as to what actually happened, since he could not understand how the Commissioner could have made such a statement to the court.

“What I discovered was the Commissioner herself did not put in an affidavit to the court. So it was not the Commissioner saying that to the court. But a senior member of the Police Service representing the Police Service in the matter, [who] tendered that affidavit to the court,” Rowley revealed.

He said his concern was whether there was legal support for the police in that matter, and enquired as to who were the lawyers.

According to Rowley, it turned out they were in-house lawyers of the police that cleared that affidavit, which “provoked the judge, because anybody would have been provoked by such a foolish statement”.

Rowley said whenever the government is taken to court, there are such serious implications that it should always be represented by high-level and competent lawyers.

As he declared, “... [Some] other lawyers who make it their business to knock the government down and are quite happy when a lawyer could send an affidavit like that.”

Additionally, “So I can’t argue with the judge who received that affidavit. Unfortunately it was ascribed to the Commissioner, and that don’t look good... And of course, the judge, I think, went overboard in excoriating the Commissioner, who incidentally was not personally responsible for that affidavit.”

Suggesting that Harewood-Christopher should have been familiar with the contents of the affidavit, Rowley added he had been taken to court on many occasions, and nobody could go to the court and represent him in any affidavit unless he knows what is being said.

“I must say, though, it is all well and good for the Judiciary to criticise the government. But the Judiciary has to be careful that they do not hold it out that they make policy in Trinidad and Tobago. Under our system of government, police is for the Cabinet, and approved by the Parliament, so activist judges who speak as though they could make the policy and guide public servants [on] what to do, I am saying that the government’s policy ought to be respected,” Rowley stated.

He added, “The government’s policy is not to arm the population like Gary Griffith was doing, and is advocating in the political arena. A PNM government has a different way. We get firearms into the population in a controlled... way.”

Brown played major role during coup d’état in TT

Port-of-Spain – The contribution made to Trinidad and Tobago by Retired Major General Ralph Brown remains incalculable, former Central Bank governor and politician Winston Dookeran said in expressing condolences following the top soldier’s passing.

Brown died at the Port-of-Spain General Hospital on March 29. He was 84 years old.

“...Brown... played a very, very important role in preserving the stability of our nation over his many years in the army and in public service. More specifically, he was the pivot around which the solutions to the 1990 [attempted *coup d’état*] events... He brought to bear all his acumen, all his skills, all his connections, to find the right solution to that moment of immense crisis. We

owe him a debt of gratitude beyond the normal,” Dookeran said.

He added, “I am deeply saddened by his passing.”

A statement from the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment noted that Brown’s love for the military started at St Mary’s College. Here he was a member of the Cadet Force for four years. He later joined the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1962.

At the rank of captain, Brown was training in Canada during the Black Power Movement and the Regiment Mutiny of 1970. He was instrumental in returning one of the conspirators to Trinidad and Tobago from Canada, and was a key contributor to the investigation and collection of evidence that was used in the court martial of the offenders.



Ralph Brown

He was commanding officer of the regiment in 1990, and led the military response to the attempted *coup d’état* by the Jamaat al Muslemeen.

As the statement noted, Brown’s competence as a commissioned officer, his commitment to the Defence Force, and his uncommon dedication to the service of his country saw him appointed as the chief of defence staff to command the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

After his retirement, the government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2019 awarded him the Chaconia Medal (Gold) for long and meritorious service.

“May his legacy of leadership and commitment bring solace during this difficult time. His leadership and dedication to service have inspired generations of soldiers, sailors, and airmen to come. He was known for his exceptional strategic thinking, sound judgement, and unwavering commitment to the welfare of his troops,” the statement declared.

The Golden Years of Indian Cinema

For Cinderella princess Madhubala, midnight came too soon

By Vidur Dindayal

What inspired me about Madhubala? I discovered only the other day that she died quite young; but not before making so many memorable movies.

I recommend anyone curious about Bollywood to read *Wikipedia's* almost 1,000 words about Madhubala.

In a *Movie* magazine poll in 1990, 58 percent placed Madhubala as the most famous Indian actress ever. *Time Out* in 2015 placed her first in the list of The Ten Best Bollywood Actresses.

Madhubala, star of unforgettable movies *Mahal*, *Phagun*, *Mughal-e-Azam*, and many others, came from a humble background. She was ranked one of the highest paid entertainers in India in the post-Independence era.

In a career spanning some 20 years, Madhubala was active for only a decade, but had appeared in over 72 films by the time of her death. She was married to singer-actor Kishore Kumar.

Born Mumtaz Jehan Begum Dehlavi on February 14, 1933, she died on February 23, 1969, at the age of 36.

She was the fifth of 11 children of Ataullah Khan and Aayesha Begum. Four of Madhubala's siblings died as infants. They were from Peshawar Valley, North-West Frontier Province, India.

At her time, neither Madhubala nor any of her sisters, except Zahida, attended school. But she learnt Urdu, Hindi, as well as her native language, Pashto. Later she learnt English, and was fluent in three months.

An avid movie viewer since childhood, she would perform her favourite scenes in front of her mother, dancing and imitating film characters to entertain herself. She liked becoming a film actor, something her family did not approve. Her father changed his mind after he lost his job. He supported his young daughter's interest.

Soon the seven-year-old got a job to sing compositions of Khurshid Awaz at *All India Radio* station. She worked there for months, and a certain Rai Bahadur Chunnial of *Bombay Talkies* film studio in Bombay took a liking to her. Chunnial recommended to her father that he visit Bombay for better employment opportunities.

In 1941, her father took Madhubala and the family to settle in Bombay. They lived in a cowshed in the Malad suburbs of Bombay.

Chunnial signed Madhubala in a child actor role in the *Bombay Talkies'* film *Basant*. It was released in July 1942. I saw *Basant* on *YouTube*, with Baby Mumtaz (Madhubala) as a child, the daughter of Ulhas and Mumtaz Shanti. It was gripping and touching. She was lovable and so natural in her acting. She sang a song on stage. Movie makers admired her. That set her on her remarkable career in movies.

In 1944, *Bombay Talkies'* head Devika Rani sent for Baby Mumtaz to play a role in *Jwar Bhata* (1944), but she did not get into the film.

Baby Mumtaz was signed to a contract with *Ranjit Movietone*. She played minor roles in *Mumtaz Mahal* (1944), *Dhanna Bhagat* (1945), *Rajputani* (1946), *Phoolwari* (1946), and *Pujari* (1946).

In November 1946, Baby Mumtaz began shooting for *Chittor Vijay*, *Mere Bhagwaan*, and *Dil Ki Rani*, released in 1947; and *Amar Prem* in 1948. These were her introduction to the silver screen in adult roles.

To secure her family financially, Baby Mumtaz quickly signed 24 films. Her debut as a leading lady came in Kidar Sharma's *Neel Kamal*. She starred opposite Raj Kapoor (his first lead role), and Begum Para. Released in 1947, *Neel Kamal* gained wide recognition for Baby Mumtaz.

After Neel Kamal she assumed her screen name Madhubala, suggested by Devika Rani. Madhubala, remembering her lines and never absent from work, highly impressed the director.

Her success continued with *Lal Dupatta*, *Parai Aag* (1948), *Paras*, and *Singaar* (both 1949).

In 1949, Madhubala played a role in *Mahal*. Several actresses, including Suraiya, were considered for the role, but Madhubala was chosen. *Mahal*, released in October 1949, was a very popular film.

Mahal became the third biggest box-office success of the year. Madhubala was signed up to star opposite the leading actors of the time. In 1949 she was only 16.

Madhubala made *Dulari* (1949), *Beqasoor*, and *Hanste Aansoo* (1950), the first Indian film to have Adult Certification. She starred in *Badal* (1951) – the Indian Adventures of Robin Hood – and *Saiyan*, both major successes.

Madhubala then co-starred with Dilip Kumar in *Tarana* (1951), and *Sangdil* (1952). These films did well, widely popularising the on-screen couple.

In April 1953, Madhubala started a production company. The next year, while shooting in Madras for S.S. Vasan's *Bahut Din Huwe* (1954), she suffered a health setback. She completed the



Madhubala

film and took a short medical leave.

Madhubala later starred in *Amar* (1954). Next was her own production, *Naata* (1955), in which she co-starred with real-life sister Chanchal.

In 1955 she starred with Guru Dutt in his *Mr & Mrs '55*, one of the year's highest-grossing films in India.

She and Nargis were approached by Guru Dutt to play in *Pyaasa* (1957). However, they passed over the film to newcomers Mala Sinha and Waheeda Rehman.

In 1956, she appeared in *Raj Hath* and *Shirin Farhad*, then in *Gateway of India* and *Ek Saal* (1957), and *Kala Pani* (1958). In it she co-starred with Dev Anand and Nalini Jaywant. Then followed *Howrah Bridge* (1958). She waived her fees to play an Anglo-Indian cabaret dancer. This was followed with *Phagun* (1958).

Her final release in 1958 was *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi*. In 1959, she starred in *Insan Jaag Utha*, and in *Kal Hamara Hai*, co-starring Bharat Bhushan, then in *Do Ustad* (1959) with Raj Kapoor. The second film of Madhubala Private Ltd was *Mehlon Ke Khwab* (1960).

Mughal-e-Azam (1960) described as the crowning glory of Madhubala's career, co-starred Dilip Kumar and Prithviraj Kapoor. The film is about a court dancer, Anarkali (Madhubala), and her affair with the Mughal prince Salim (Kumar).

Madhubala joined the cast in 1952. The filming period was long and taxing with the weight of iron chains and water continuously flung at her face leaving her exhausted, physically and mentally. She began considering retirement.

At the 1961 National Film Awards, *Mughal-e-Azam* won for Best Feature Film in Hindi, and led the eighth Filmfare Awards ceremony with 11 nominations, including Best Actress for Madhubala.

Her success continued. In 1960, she acted in *Jaali Note*, then *Barsaat Ki Raat*, and in 1961 in *Jhumroo*, *Boy Friend*, and *Passport*; in 1962 in *Half Ticket* and *Sharabi* (1964), her final release.

Half Ticket, her last with husband Kishore Kumar, was a great

success. It was one of her most favourite comedies of all time, with praises for the "fond chemistry" between Madhubala and Kishore.

We know of people, who as they say, "died young"; people who were attractive and inspiring, and their life seemed to end "before its time".

That was Madhubala. She was like a shooting star brightening up the skies, and then she was gone.

She made more than 72 movies, most successful, starting with *Basant* at age eight, and ending, apart from few others, with the spectacular *Mughal-e-Azam*.

Madhubala was deeply religious and practiced Islam since her childhood. After securing her family financially in the late 1940s, she rented a bungalow on Peddar Road in Bombay, and named it Arabian Villa.

She learned to drive at the age of 12, and by adulthood was the owner of five cars. One model was owned by only two people in India then: the Maharaja of Gwalior and Madhubala.

She was active in charitable work, and was called the Queen of Charity. In 1950, she donated 5,000 rupees each to children suffering from poliomyelitis. She gave monthly bonuses to the lower staff of her studios. She gifted a camera crane to the Film and Television Institute of India in 1962.

While a child artist, she was friendly with another child actress, who became Meena Kumari. She was friends with Nargis, Nimmi, Begum Para, Geeta Bali, Nirupa Roy, and Nadira. Madhubala was also close to three of her earliest directors: Kidar Sharma, Mohan Sinha, and Kamal Amrohi.

Her first relationship was with Prem Nath in early 1951. It did not last long; however, Prem Nath remained close to Madhubala and her father for the rest of their lives.

In 1951, Madhubala became friendly with actor Dilip Kumar, whom she had met earlier working on *Jwar Bhata* (1944). Her friends recalled those few years as the happiest of her life.

In the meantime, Madhubala received marriage proposals from three of her co-stars: widower Bharat Bhushan; Pradeep Kumar; and Kishore Kumar.

On the sets of *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1958), Madhubala rekindled a friendship with Kishore Kumar, her childhood playmate. They were married on October 16, 1960.

In the mid-1950s Madhubala was diagnosed with an incurable ventricular septal defect in her heart. The diagnosis was not made public, as it could have jeopardised her career.

She was in her final years. Kishore Kumar's memorable words were, "I brought her home as my wife, even though I knew she was dying... For nine long years, I nursed her. I watched her die before my own eyes... so painfully ... I had to humour her all the time. That is what I did till her very last breath. I would laugh with her. I would cry with her."

In early 1969, she contracted jaundice; then one midnight she suffered a heart attack. After struggling for a few hours, she died at 9:30 a.m. on February 23, nine days after turning 36.

Filmfare characterised her as "a Cinderella whose clock had struck 12 too soon". Premnath wrote a poem dedicated to her. *Mandoubala*, a Greek song dedicated to Madhubala, was performed at the closing ceremony of the 2004 Athens Olympics.

In March 2008, India Post issued a commemorative postage stamp featuring Madhubala. The New Delhi Madame Tussauds unveiled a statue of her. *The New York Times* obituary for Madhubala, compared her life to that of Marilyn Monroe. Director Frank Capra had offered her a break in Hollywood in August 1952. Madhubala avoided parties and interviews, which she saw as superficial.

Theatre Arts Magazine wrote of her: "[The] biggest star in the world – and she's not in the Beverly Hills".

Madhubala's Indian and Pakistani fan base equalled the combined population of the US and Western Europe; popular in the far east, East Africa, and a large fan following in Greece.

Media referred to Madhubala's beauty and physical attractiveness as "The Venus of Indian cinema".

Nirupa Roy, Shammi Kapoor, Nadira, Dev Anand, Ashok Kumar, and many other stars, praised Madhubala's self-assured, cultured, very independent way of life; also, she was a disciplined and professional performer; and remarked that when she was on the set, it often went ahead in the schedule.

Dilip Kumar wrote in his autobiography: "She was a vivacious artiste ...the scenes became riveting even when they were being filmed".

Neel Kamal's director recalled that she worked like a machine, missed a meal, travelled daily in the over-crowded compartments, and was never late or absent from work.

Madhubala was compared with Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner. The *Economic Times* placed her as one of "33 women who made India proud". In a UK poll celebrating 100 years of Indian cinema, Madhubala was sixth among the greatest Indian actresses of all-time.



Vijay Deverakonda

Actor Vijay Deverakonda recently revealed that he does not hold on to his awards, telling *Galatta Plus*, “I am not so much into certificates and awards. Some might be at the office, some my mom has kept somewhere. Some awards I gave away... one award I gave away to Sandeep Reddy Vanga. We auctioned the first Filmfare Best Actor award that I got. We auctioned it and got a good chunk of money that we gave away. I think that’s a nicer memory for me than a piece of stone in my house.”



Sara Ali Khan

Sara Ali Khan recently pleaded with paparazzi following a chase and forced photo-Op that caught her distributing food to the needy outside a temple in Juhu, Mumbai. After offering prayers, she interacted with the needy and handed out food boxes. The interaction was recorded by paparazzi, to whom Ali expressed annoyance, saying, “Please mat karo. Mai aap logo se binti kar kar thak gayi. Aap mat kijiye, please.” [“Please don’t do it. I’m tired of pleading with you all. Please don’t do this.”]



Taapsee Pannu

Taapsee Pannu recently spoke about the challenges she faces in accessing Bollywood’s inner circles, saying, “Bollywood camps are there. The nepotism debate that we talk about is the problem of getting access. If a big budget film is being made, I am sure nobody would disrespect me by saying I am not fit for the role, but I might not get the part because my name will not be brought up as other actors, who are part of camps... The harsh reality is that big films is about access and I don’t have that access to make it into that room.”

Jaya says she ‘silently’ supported husband Amitabh during the bad times

Jaya Bachchan did not intervene directly when her husband, Amitabh Bachchan was navigating through his low phase and enduring very challenging times in the 1990s, she revealed last month on grand-daughter Navya Naveli Nanda’s podcast, *What The Hell Navya*. Instead, Jaya said she stood silently at his side. Said Jaya: “We went through different kinds of failures through different phases of our lives. We went through it together. I don’t know whether I did the right thing or wrong, but it’s also nice when a man is going through this kind of a phase... to just be there, and be quiet. Instead of [constantly complaining]. It’s very annoying.” Also, “If they want your help, if they need your help, [they’ll ask for it]. [Complaining is] another irritation. Maybe it’s nice to be silently standing there and convey to a person, ‘I’m here.’” But daughter Shweta Bachchan disagreed, saying, “I think men have a really tough time. If a friend of yours was in some kind of trouble, but not actively asking for help, would you not offer it anyway? I would.” She added, “If you’ll do it for a girlfriend, why wouldn’t you do it for a guy? Sometimes, I feel all that a man needs is, ‘Hey listen, maybe you should think of it this way’. Or maybe you give them an idea; or maybe you give them a point, which then they can work on. I would like to play a more proactive role, because I’m a problem solver.” On her grand-daughter’s podcast, Jaya recalled when Amitabh was embroiled in the Bofors scam, faced a media ban, delivered consecutive flops at the box office for years, had an



Jaya Bachchan (left to right) with Shweta Bachchan and Navya Naveli Nanda

unsuccessful stint as a producer with AB Corp. Eventually, he had to declare bankruptcy. His career revived when he appeared as the host of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* in 2000. He continues to host this quiz show today. Also in the podcast, Jaya spoke about how she and Amitabh have recognised they must keep up with the times, or else be

left behind. She said, “I feel today, looking at you, looking at Nana, I feel that you are over a certain age, you are adapting to current times, and that’s such a beautiful thing.” She then commented both she and Amitabh had to similarly adapt to the current times, “or else we will be left behind”. Meantime, Amitabh continues to treat his fans on *Instagram* to pictures from his early days in the film industry. Last Sunday he shared a throwback image of himself on social media, while recalling how action sequences were shot in the 1970s. Sharing a picture of himself from the set of his 1979 film *Mr Natwarlal*, he recalled the days when actors did not have safety gear while performing action sequences for movies. Along with the photo, he wrote, “[Taking] off from a 30-foot cliff for an action sequence .. no harness, no face replacement, no VFX ... and landing .. er ... on mattresses ... if you were lucky. ‘Those were the days my friend’.” Commenting on the post, Shilpa Shirodkar wrote, “You were and will always be the best for-ever Amitiji”. Sanjay Dutt’s wife Maanayata Dutt posted a heart emoji.

Amitabh has acted in several action films, among them *Zanjeer*, *Deewar*, *Don*, *Laawaris*, *Kaalaa*, and *Trishul*. He was last seen in a cameo appearance in Tiger Shroff’s *Ganapath*. Among his upcoming films are *Kalki AD 2898*, alongside Deepika Padukone and Prabhas. He will also be seen alongside Rajinikanth in the Tamil film *Vettaiyan*.



Hardik Pandya and wife Natasa Stankovic

Sonu Sood bats for cricketers

Sonu Sood came out batting late last month for Hardik Pandya and his wife Natasa Stankovic after they were trolled online by disappointed and angry fans following the IPL loss. Known for his philanthropy work, Sood is also not hesitant to post his opinions on social media. Recently he spoke out against online harassment and bullying of sportsmen, notably cricketers. This time he took to X, formerly *Twitter*, to express concerns over the online hate cricketers face despite their dedication towards the game and to the nation. In his tweet, Sood stated, “We should respect our players. Players who made us proud, players who made our country proud. One day you cheer for them, next day you boo them. It’s not they, it’s us who fail.” He added, “I love cricket. I love every cricketer who represents my country. Doesn’t matter which franchise he plays for. Doesn’t matter whether he plays as a Captain or he is the 15th man in a team. They are our Heroes.” Hardik faced intense fan criticism after Mumbai Indians lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad in the recent IPL 2024 game. His wife Natasa, a Serbian model and actor, was also the victim of online bullying.



Sonu Sood



An injured Pandya being attended to by medical personnel

Pandya fit to bowl, now Mumbai's captain

All-rounder Hardik Pandya last month declared himself fit to bowl with his return to the captaincy of the Mumbai Indians for IPL 2024.

Pandya told the cricket website, *ESPNcricinfo* late last month he has been fit since the top of the year. He suffered an ankle injury during the 2023 ODI World Cup, and was out of the game since October.

"Yes, I will be bowling. My injury in [the] World Cup was a freak injury. It had nothing to do with my past injuries. It had nothing to do with my fitness. When I got fit, the Afghanistan [T20I] series had just started [in January]. I've been fit since then, but there were no games to play," he told the press in Mumbai late last month.

His ankle was injured during his follow-through while bowling during India's World Cup league match against Bangladesh in Pune. Attempts to recover in time for the knockout stages had aggravated the injury, he revealed.

As he stated, "My injury, from day one, showed that I'm going to be out of the World Cup, but playing for India has always been special, especially in a World Cup. [So] we pushed [for] ten days – we knew that it was an uphill task to be fit for the World Cup semi-finals or finals. When we pushed, I kind of triggered my injury [further], and [recovery] became a little longer."

His return to Mumbai as captain meant replacing Rohit Sharma, who led the team since 2013. The replacement was a talking point in many cricket circles.

"I don't think it will be awkward, or anything different. It will be a nice feeling, because we've been playing [together] for ten years," he said.

He added, "I've played my whole career under him, and I know he's going to have a hand on my shoulder always. He has been traveling, he has been playing. It has been a couple of months since we've seen each other. Once he comes [and joins the MI camp], we'll definitely have a chat."

Commenting on the replacement, Mumbai coach Mark Boucher said with Sharma now being free from the responsibility of captaincy could be key for the team.

"I think Rohit is in fantastic form. I've been watching the games against England and the way that he is hitting the ball, his movements into the ball are fantastic," Boucher said.

He added, "So I'm really looking forward to Rohit going out and really expressing himself, without the captaincy on his shoulders."

Sharma has seen challenging times with the bat in recent IPL seasons, averaging 24.89, and going at a strike rate of 127.54 in 70 innings across the last five years.

"If he has a great season for us, we're going to be in the dying stages of the tournament," Boucher said.

IPL 2023 was Boucher's first season as head coach after replacing Mahela Jayawardene. Mumbai finished fourth in the league stage before crashing out in Qualifier 2 to Pandya's Gujarat Titans.

Meanwhile, the *Hindustan Times* reported late last month it is likely Pandya will be booed loudly by fans in Mumbai.



Rohit Sharma



Mark Boucher

According to the publication, former India batter, Manoj Tiwary said Pandya could be booed the loudest when he takes to the field as captain at Wankhede Stadium.

As he noted, Mumbai fans have indicated on social media they are not pleased with the franchise's decision to remove Sharma as captain and appoint Pandya instead.

Sharma is IPL's most successful captain, along with M.S. Dhoni. Both Sharma and Dhoni have won five titles each.

However, for the last three years, Sharma's performance, and by extension the Mumbai Indians, has not been up to mark.

But despite Sharma's declining performance, no one really imagined he would be replaced as the captain, and by Pandya.

As a precursor to taking to the field for IPL 2024, Pandya was booed at his home ground in Ahmedabad during the Mumbai Indians vs Gujarat Titans encounter.

As Tiwary told *PTI Videos* last month, and reported by the *Hindustan Times*, "[You] have to see how he gets welcomed here in Mumbai, because I think he is going to get booed a bit louder here... Because as a fan, Mumbai fan or a Rohit Sharma fan, nobody expected that [the] captaincy will be given to Hardik."

Tiwary added, "And despite Rohit giving five trophies to Mumbai Indians, he has to lose the captaincy. I don't know what are the reasons, but I think it has not gone down well with the fans. And that is the reaction which you see on the field."

CA willing to host India-Pakistan

Cricket Australia reaffirmed its willingness last month to host a bilateral series between India and Pakistan on the condition that the Board of Control for Cricket for India, and the Pakistan Cricket Board, both agree to their teams together in the future.

As the cricket website *ESPNcricinfo* and other international media reported, both teams from India and Pakistan teams will be in Australia at the same time in November this year. This became known following the announcement by CA of the schedule for Australia's next home summer, with Pakistan playing three ODIs and T20Is ahead of India, who will play a five-Test series just four days later on November 22.

India and Pakistan have not played a bilateral series since 2012-2013, and currently only meet at global ICC events, *ESPNcricinfo* reported.



Nick Hockley

After the success of the 2022 T20 World Cup match between India and Pakistan at the MCG, when 90,293 witnessed a last-ball thriller, CA, Melbourne Cricket Club – which runs the MCG, and the Victorian government all expressed interest in hosting the two teams in bilateral matches at the MCG.

Also, CA chief executive Nick Hockley reiterated that desire when he announced Australia's home schedule at the MCG.

"I think anyone that was here for the India-Pakistan game at the MCG, it will go down as one of the most memorable occasions, not just

sporting occasions, that I've ever been to," he said.

Hockley added, "So people want to see that contest. We would love to host that if the opportunity arose. If we can play a role, we would love to play a role. We're so excited to host Pakistan. We're so excited to host India. If we can help, that is great. But I think in many ways, that is a bilateral series. It is really for others to make that happen."

CA's head of scheduling Peter Roach also acknowledged there would also be some interest in hosting a tri-series, which last happened involving India and Pakistan during the 1999-2000 season.

As he stated, the tri-series would be much better rather than just a neutral bilateral series if possible; however, at the same time, he noted there was no room in the current Future Tours Program.

Said Roach: "We haven't got a tri-series in the FTP. Going forward we're always interested in opportunities for matches and contests that will engage our fans. It is fair to say every country in the world would love to see India and Pakistan compete in their country."

Additionally, "We're on record as saying we're one of those countries that has asked the question. There is no room in the schedules to do that at the moment. We'll keep talking to them in any other opportunities that arise, but in this specific example there are not going to be any changes to the schedule."

CWI makes major gains with revenues

Following its AGM in Antigua on March 23, Cricket West Indies has announced it recorded revenues of [all currency US] \$62.3 million for 2023, with a net income of \$14.25 million.

The announcement was made via a press statement released on March 26 alongside publication of its annual report and audited financial statements for the fiscal year 2022-2023.

CWI president Kishore Shallow noted the "tremendous progress" that had been achieved, adding that he believed the region will reap further financial gains when the 2024 International Cricket Council men's Twenty/20 World Cup is co-hosted by the West Indies and the US from June 1-29.

Said Shallow: "The credit is yours, as through our unified efforts, we have made much progress. I am equally confident that our journey promises even greater rewards if we maintain this path."

He also indicated he is looking forward to a bumper 2024, as the region hosts the showpiece T20 tournament for the second time.

Said Shallow: "The excitement around hosting the ICC men's T20 World Cup 2024 resonates with us at Cricket West Indies. This is a remarkable opportunity for the Caribbean. CWI stands ready and well-positioned to make the region and cricket world proud of a magnificent spectacle in June."

CWI's chief financial officer Kebra Nanton was also pleased with the organisation's progress, and indicated she expects CWI to further strengthen their financial standing in the next few years as it continues on the path to "transformational change".

"Having successfully reversed the deficit of over \$2 million, which was over \$23 million in 2021, we now record a surplus of \$12 million," Nanton said.

She added, "Furthermore, our forecast for

the end of 2024 anticipates our surplus exceeding \$20 million. This achievement lays a solid foundation for our sustainability over the next four years."

Nanton said these returns have improved CWI's ability to deal with future challenges.

On March 26, CWI also issued a release which pointed out Shallow's attempt to implement governance reforms that had been recommended by the 2020 *Wehby Report on Governance Reform of Cricket West Indies*.

According to the release, Shallow tabled a series of resolutions for implementation.

It also noted that "despite extensive consultations and deliberations, some of the resolutions failed to secure the absolute majority threshold required for passage".

The Wehby Report was done by an independent task force following a period of significant consultation within the region, after various stakeholders cried out for change in the governance of West Indies cricket.

The task force was led by Don Wehby, and included University of the West Indies Vice-Chancellor Hilary Beckles, and former West Indies wicket-keeper Deryck Murray.

Among the recommendations were the redefinition of the roles of the CWI president and vice-president to be more board specific and non-executive; a call for comprehensive reform of the CWI governance structure with a view to provide greater accountability and transparency; and for establishment of a Nominations Committee to identify and evaluate potential directors and committee members.

The CWI release did not indicate which recommendations were accepted or rejected at the AGM.

However, Shallow said he remains undeterred by the outcome with the failure of some of the recommendations.



A show of sisterhood by the Afghanistan Women’s team before the Taliban’s cricket ban

CA postpones Afghanistan men’s series again

Australia have postponed its men’s cricket series against Afghanistan two years in a row due to the country’s poor record on human rights for women and girls, *The Guardian* reported out of the UK last week.

Australia had already cancelled an ODI series, which was due to be played in the United Arab Emirates in March 2023. The cancellation was due to “a marked deterioration” in the treatment of females in the country, *The Guardian* reported.

Also, according to international media reports, an improvement in the treatment of women had been anticipated, and thus it was hoped a three-match T20 series would be green-lighted to take place in August this year. As reported, it is expected these games would be played “on neutral ground in the UAE”.

However, last week CA stated that conditions were getting worse rather than better under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, and consequently the decision was made to call off another series. The move came following further consultation with the Australian government, CA further noted.

In a statement issued following the decision, CA said, “The government’s advice is that conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan are getting worse. For this reason, we have main-

tained our previous position, and will postpone the bilateral series against Afghanistan.”

It added, “CA continues its strong commitment to supporting participation by women and girls in cricket around the world, and will continue to actively engage the International Cricket Council and work closely with the Afghanistan Cricket Board to determine what actions could be taken to support the resumption of bilateral matches in the future.”

This is the third time Australia have refused to play Afghanistan since the Taliban regained control of the country in September 2021. Following its ascendancy, the Taliban imposed restrictions on female participation in sport.

CA also cancelled a one-off Test match in Hobart in November 2021, in addition to the two white-ball series.

The decision to call off last year’s ODI series prompted criticism from the Afghan Cricket Board, which labelled the boycott “pathetic” and “extremely disappointing”.

In a response to the cancellation, Afghanistan’s T20 captain, Rashid Khan, threatened to quit playing in the Big Bash League. He eventually signed for the Adelaide Strikers, but was ruled out of the tournament due to injury.



Amy Jones



Richa Ghosh



Ellyse Perry



Beth Mooney

World class women snapped up for The Hundred

The Hundred draft last month for the women’s competition revealed a number of surprise first picks, with Phoenix quickly signing England wicket-keeper Amy Jones ahead of the available international superstars, *The Guardian* reported.

Preceding the selection session had seen an increase in the lineup of top players, the surge a result from the decision to lift the top salary from last year’s £31,250 to £50,000 for women.

Meanwhile, in comparison, the men’s salaries again topped out at £125,000.

Following the surprise pick of Jones, Phoenix’s coach Ben Sawyer took another wicket-keeper, Richa Ghosh, with his second choice. Their selections were followed by spinner Katie Levick, and Seren Smale, yet another wicketkeeper-batter, coming on board.

Jones and Levick were in the Phoenix squad that finished at the bottom of the table last year. However, this year’s squad should be boosted with the belated arrival of Ellyse Perry. She is now among the top Australian all-rounders, and is arriving fresh from winning the Women’s Premier League with Royal Challengers Bangalore.

With Jones joining Phoenix, Manchester Originals had second pick, and signed up Beth Mooney, now the world’s top-ranked T20 batter.

Manchester also took on spinner Sophie Molineux, with Lon-

don Spirit bringing Australian captain Meg Lanning into their fold, followed by her England counterpart, Heather Knight.

Four Australians made up four of the first-round picks, with Trent Rockets picking all-rounder Ash Gardner, along with Anabel Sutherland added to Northern Superchargers’ lineup.

Meanwhile, big-hitting West Indians were first in line for selection during the men’s session, *The Guardian* reported

As was noted, five of the seven men’s first-round picks were used to gather West Indian players.

Last season the Hundred overlapped with the Caribbean Premier League, limiting the number of players who were available for selection.

However, this year the CPL starts on August 28, freeing up the bats of the big hitters coming from the West Indies team.

New coach for Northern Superchargers Andrew Flintoff capitalised on the availability of the West Indians, and with first pick immediately drew Nicholas Pooran into the fold. Northern Superchargers finished at the bottom in the last season.

Meanwhile, London Spirit picked up Andre Russell and Shimron Hetmyer, while Trent Rockets signed Rovman Powell, with Southern Brave giving Kieron Pollard their go-ahead, and later, pulling left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein into the mix.

For their men’s team, runners-up from last year Manchester Originals took in Sikandar Raza, the Zimbabwean spin-bowling all-rounder, and Afghanistan seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi.

Cricket Schedule

(Matches ALL TIMES LOCAL)

Wednesday April 3, 2024

Sri Lanka tour of Bangladesh, 2024
Bangladesh vs SL, 2nd Test, Day 5, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Sta., Chattogram, 9:30 AM

Friday April 12, 2024

ACC Mens T20I Premier Cup, 2024
UAE vs Kuwait, 2nd Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Oman vs Bahrain, 1st Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Nepal vs Malaysia, 3rd Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
Hong Kong vs Qatar, 4th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Saturday April 13, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
Kuwait vs Cambodia, 5th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
UAE vs Bahrain, 6th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Nepal vs Qatar, 7th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
Malaysia vs Saudi Arabia, 8th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Sunday April 14, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
Oman vs Cambodia, 9th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Hong Kong vs Saudi Arabia, 10th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Monday April 15, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
Nepal vs Hong Kong, 11th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Malaysia vs Qatar, 12th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
UAE vs Oman, 13th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
Kuwait vs Bahrain, 14th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Tuesday April 16, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
Qatar vs SA, 15th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Bahrain vs Cambodia, 16th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Wednesday April 17, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
HK vs Malaysia, 17th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
Nepal vs SA, 18th Match, Group A, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
UAE vs Cambodia, 19th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
Oman vs Kuwait, 20th Match, Group B, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Thursday April 18, 2024

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2024
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 1st T20I, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi, 7:00 PM

Friday April 19, 2024

ACC Mens T20I Premier Cup, 2024
TBC vs TBC, 1st Semi Final (A1 v B2), Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 10:00 AM
TBC vs TBC, 2nd Semi Final (B1 v A2), Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM

Saturday April 20, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
TBC vs TBC, 3rd & 4th Place, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2024
Pakistan vs NZ, 2nd T20I, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi, 7:00 PM

Sunday April 21, 2024

ACC Men’s T20I Premier Cup, 2024
TBC vs TBC, Final, Al Amerat Cricket Ground, Al Amerat, 2:30 PM
New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2024
Pakistan vs NZ, 3rd T20I, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi, 7:00 PM

Thursday April 25, 2024

New Zealand tour of Pakistan, 2024
Pakistan vs New Zealand, 4th T20I, Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, 7:00 PM



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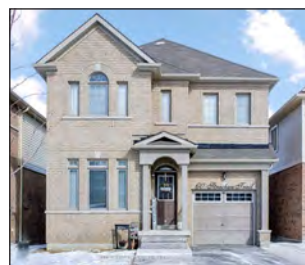
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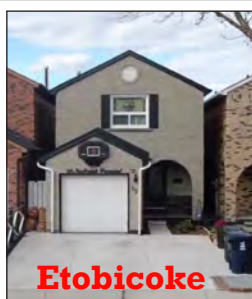
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