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Our Community Is Thriving!



Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City held its gala on June 11 at the Woodbine Banquet Hall, where Ontario's Premier Doug Ford received the Citizen of the Year Award. In photo, Premier Ford (at centre) with Rotary's past presidents Dhaman Kissoon (left) and Ashni Ramsammy (right). *Photo by Ramesh Ramkalawan. More on Page 14.*



ICCA's community food drive, *Share YUH RICE*, is collecting Caribbean staples for food banks via donation boxes across the GTA. In photo, ICCA's Ryan Singh (left) and Shivana Ramkissoon (right), with Navin Rampersad from Indar's Roti and Doubles in Etobicoke. *More on Page 7.*

Carnival 2025 brings home mas, music, and memory

— Toronto Caribbean Carnival 2025 launched with a vibrant burst of colour, culture, and gratitude on June 14 at Scarborough Town Centre, as Executive Chair Jennifer Hirlehey honoured community support and government partners while unveiling a season themed, 'Take Me Home', rooted in heritage, memory, belonging, and continuity.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Scarborough – With music pounding, the crowd swaying to the rhythm, and sequined feathers glittering in the sun-drenched Scarborough Town Centre, the 2025 **Toronto Caribbean Carnival** officially launched on June 14, promising an unforgettable season ahead while celebrating our people, creativity, and passion that have made it all possible.

Toronto Caribbean Carnival Executive Chair Jennifer Hirlehey delivered a stirring welcome address that paid tribute to our Carnival's legacy, its vibrant volunteer force, artistic community, and the government officials whose advocacy helped secure crucial new funding.

Echoing the year's theme, *Take Me Home*, Hirlehey spoke of a shared cultural embrace that honours our Caribbean-Canadian community's roots while showcasing its future.

At the heart of Hirlehey's address was a series of acknowledgments to the Toronto Caribbean Carnival Board of Directors, to staff, and most emphatically, to the 400-plus volunteers of all ages who return year after year.

"They are young and old, young at heart, old at heart... but we just are so grateful to the many, many years of service," she said. Their labour of love, she emphasised, is what brings the Carnival to life.

Hirlehey also celebrated the artistes and performers who infuse the event with colour and rhythm: the mas bands, the calypsonians, and the steel pan musicians.

"Go take a look at their beautiful costumes. Buy a costume, because the Toronto Caribbean Carnival depends on the beauty of the parade, on the beauty of the pan and the beauty of the calypsonians," she urged.

Staff members were also genuinely praised, particularly the contributions of Adrian Charles and Mischka Crichton, two key and indefatigable figures working behind the scenes.

Said Hirlehey: "We do some work, but it is love work. And Mischka and Adrian are so important for what it is that we do here."

Hirlehey made clear that her leadership is grounded not only in the present but in reverence for the past.

"I stand on the shoulders of the people who were here 58 years ago," she said, linking the Carnival's origin in 1967 to its modern evolution.

Take Me Home is more than a nostalgic phrase. It is a rallying call to honour both our Caribbean heritage and Canada's multiculturalism.

Hirlehey described the theme as one that "speaks of the love and the togetherness of our community. It speaks of the beauty of the Caribbean and the beauty of Canada".

Canada, she told the enthused audience, is a "beacon of the world", a place

See Page 18: Music, sparkling feathers



Jennifer Hirlehey (centre) at the Carnival 2025 launch; at left is Adrian Charles, with Mischka Crichton at right. *Photo by Russell Lutchman*

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Panelists at *The Law & You Conference* at Triveni Mandir, from left to right, are Savena Bhargal, defense lawyer; Justice Sonia Khemani, Family Court Judge; Dhaman Kissoon, lawyer, university lecturer, and moderator; Justice Shauna Pemberton, Criminal Court Judge; and Vic Aujla, Head Crown in Orangeville.

Legal panel holds domestic violence conference

- A powerful fictional case of domestic violence was at the heart of the June 7 *The Law & You Conference* at Triveni Mandir in Brampton, where legal experts and community members came together for a penetrating discussion on criminal justice, immigration, and family law. With its mix of realism, relevance, and relatability, the conference continues to serve as a vital forum for legal literacy in our community.

Brampton - An unfolding narrative about domestic violence and its significant consequences anchored yet another elucidating installment of *The Law & You Conference*, which was held at **Brampton Triveni Mandir** on June 7. As with the ongoing legal-literacy series that first took flight at Vishnu Mandir three years ago, this community-centred event drew an inter-generational gathering of legal professionals, students, and everyday participants seeking to better understand the intersections among law, immigration, and community safety.

In a simulated courtroom scenario, the panel took up the fictional case of Roger (Raja), an international student turned family man, whose journey through a turbulent relationship revealed the devastating interplay between legal processes and personal crises.

The scenario was detailed, emotional, and legally complex: Raja arrived in Canada on a student permit in early 2020, just before the Covid-19 pandemic upended employment opportunities. Amid financial hardship and social isolation, he met and married Renee (Rani), a permanent resident from his home country. Their first child was born in December 2023, followed by a second in February 2025. By then, immigration delays, job insecurity, and marital strain had intensified.

What then followed was a birthday evening that was marred by alcohol, disappointment, and a violent outburst, which led to a 911 call. The fallout led to Raja's arrest and charges of assault, assault with a weapon, and threatening.

Subsequent intervention by the judicial system saw unpacking of the different and intersecting layers with clarity and nuance by a panel of seasoned legal minds: Criminal Court

Judge Justice Shauna Pemberton; Family Court Judge Justice Sonia Khemani; defence lawyer Savena Bhargal; Head Crown in Orangeville, Vic Aujla; and Queen's University law lecturer and lawyer, Dhaman Kissoon, who also moderated the session. Together, the panel guided attendees through the legal implications of Raja's fictional case, responding to the following: the role of the Crown Attorney; the role of the defence lawyer; will the charges be dropped; next steps in Raja's case; variation of bail; preparation for Crown pre-trial; possible resolution; preparation for possible resolution; and trial.

Kissoon later shared his reflections on the event's broader impact with *Indo-Caribbean World*.

As he stated, "It was the largest attendance we have had so far for one of these events, with over 100 persons in attendance. Also, the presentation by the panel followed the format of the previous events at Vishnu Mandir."

He added, "What was notable at Triveni was the range in the ages of participants. Especially notable were the interactions by two young participants. Here we had young boys putting specific questions to the panel. The panel was impressed by their engagement, social awareness, and depth of empathy, which were noted in their concern for community safety."

He also highlighted the warm hospitality from the Triveni community, and extended gratitude to the mandir for hosting the event.

"Triveni Mandir, and its leader, Pandit Yudhishtir Dhanrajh, were supportive and uplifting. The mandir provided snacks and lunch for everyone who attended. The panel also had a tour of the sacred mandir," he stated.

The event's second segment focused on demystifying the path to a legal career. Aspiring law students heard first-hand how the panelists navigated their own professional journeys, with insights into legal education, career planning, and community engagement.

This second component continues to be a hallmark of *The Law & You Conference* series, ensuring that education and inspiration are delivered alongside legal understanding.

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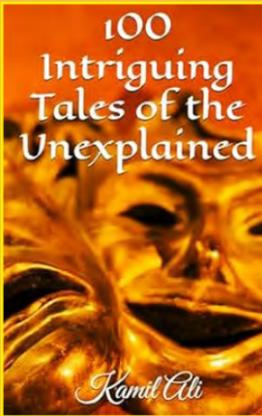
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Dr. Gervan Fearon (left) and Anthony Henry (third from left) with participants from Toronto Metropolitan University



Brampton South MP Sonia Sidhu (left) and Brampton North MP Ruby Sahota



Former Ajax MPP Patrice Barnes (left to right), Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, Linden King with a Walkathon participant, Brampton City Councillor Rod Power, and Dr Gervan Fearon, Walkathon Honorary Chair



Walk the Path participants warm up before the event on June 7



Linden King (left to right), Anthony Henry, and Ken Noel

Community walks in sync with TWF's goal

– Over 200 participants gathered in Brampton for The Walnut Foundation's annual Walk the Path Walkathon on June 7 in a call to action for Black men's health. With the event raising over \$76,000, it was an invigorating fusion of urgency, community spirit, and purpose targeting prostate cancer disparities through advocacy, education, and early detection.

statement, had delivered a poignant message about the lifesaving power of routine screening.

"I know firsthand how vital early detection is," he stated, adding, "When I was diagnosed, I had little to no symptoms and maybe worst – I was unaware of what the actual symptoms were, so it was just a routine screening that likely saved my life."

Additionally, "That is why I am passionate about raising awareness, especially for Black men who are at greater risk. If sharing my story encourages even one person to get checked, it's worth it. Let's walk this path together and take charge of our health."

Over 200 community members gathered at the Paul Palleschi Recreation Centre in Brampton on June 7 for The Walnut Foundation's 11th annual Walk the Path Walkathon in a powerful display of unity and purpose, the event a call to challenge the disproportionate impact of prostate cancer on Black men.

"This isn't just a walk – it's a movement," said Anthony Henry, TWF's President, in a post-walk release.

He added, "We're walking for our fathers, brothers, sons, and friends – raising awareness and empowering our community to take charge of their health."

TWF, through this annual initiative, continues to champion health equity by providing education, support groups, outreach programs, and access to PSA blood tests that promote early detection and informed choices around prostate health.

Yet again, the event saw a strong showing of civic leadership and community advocacy. This year's attendees included Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, MP Sonia Sidhu, MP Ruby Sahota, Brampton Councillor Rod Power, and United Progressive Party Leader Carlton Darby.

Healthcare professionals and grassroots supporters also walked in solidarity alongside Dr Gervan Fearon, the Walkathon's Honorary Chair.

Fearon, President of George Brown College and a prostate cancer survivor, in an earlier

According to the data, Black men are statistically 76 percent more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and twice as likely to die from the disease compared to other groups, a disparity that drives TWF's advocacy work and underscores the importance of early detection campaigns.

"To date, the event has raised over \$76,000 in support of early prostate cancer detection, community awareness, and advocacy programs led by [TWF]," the group reported last week.

Also, "But we're not done yet – the campaign continues through September 30, and every dollar makes a difference."

Now in its 11th year, the Walk the Path Walkathon has grown into a vital platform not just for fund-raising, but for community mobilisation. TWF uses proceeds to fund PSA testing clinics, facilitate monthly support groups, and provide scholarships at Toronto Metropolitan University and the University of Toronto to support the next generation of healthcare leaders.

Donations to support this year's campaign are open until September 30. Community members are encouraged to contribute and help expand access to life-saving resources and education. As TWF affirmed in its release: "Every dollar makes a difference."

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Editorial

Pooran's surprise exit

The departure of a star from the cricketing firmament, at the apex of his brilliance, resembles a celestial event, one that is brief, awe-inspiring, yet tinged profoundly with loss.

Nicholas Pooran's unexpected retirement from international cricket is such an event. The announcement on June 9 sent tremors through the region and our diaspora.

His poignant message on *Instagram* marked the end of an era. As West Indies' most capped T20 player with a staggering 106 matches and a record 2,275 runs at 29 years old, he was more than a cricketer.

For the region, and our diaspora, he symbolised hope, tenacity, and brilliance. His resilience, epitomised by a comeback from a near career-ending accident in 2015, made him a reference point for resilience and fortitude.

Yet, his decision arrives at a troubling juncture for West Indies cricket, which is also struggling against the tides of global franchise opportunities that lure talent away from regional commitment. This retirement, significant for its timing and symbolism, underscores the broader existential crisis facing our region's cricket, which is now being forced to grapple with retaining its brightest stars.

Pooran's retirement, though deeply personal, reveals a profound structural fault line within West Indies cricket. His exit, primarily driven by the demands of lucrative franchise cricket, highlights the stark realities confronting players: a difficult balance between national and regional loyalty, and financial security.

Omar Khan, former West Indies and Trinidad and Tobago team manager, noted that Pooran's departure should prompt Cricket West Indies (CWI) to initiate urgent dialogue with players around franchise commitments.

CWI's own acknowledgment of Pooran's stature as a "world-class player and a game changer" only amplifies the void his retirement creates, especially with the T20 World Cup looming.

Former pacer Tony Gray also poignantly captured this sentiment, noting that Pooran's absence is not merely the loss of talent, but an erosion of leadership and experience precisely when West Indies cricket most needs its heroes.

Pooran's decision thus speaks to a broader narrative of loss and vulnerability in contemporary cricket, where personal financial stability often eclipses national pride.

Yet, as Gray eloquently argues, players must also recognise the systems that shaped their ascent, striking a nuanced balance between securing their family's future and honouring their origins.

Gray's insight illuminates the dilemma players like Pooran face, torn between gratitude for formative experiences and the enticing prospect of financial independence.

Some might argue Pooran's choice represents a purely personal, justified decision, one dictated by family priorities and individual choice. Indeed, Pooran's own reflections on fatigue from intense franchise commitments and a young family resonate deeply.

Yet, the broader implications cannot be dismissed lightly. The accelerated retirement of elite players like Pooran and South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen points to a worrying global trend where regional and national cricket suffers collateral damage from the booming franchise circuit. This trend risks hollowing out national teams, diminishing the pride and passion traditionally associated with representing a homeland.

The counterargument, while valid in recognising personal agency, neglects the collective costs in the gradual erosion of a region's sporting heritage and communal pride.

Pooran's retirement at the height of his prowess offers both a lamentation and a lesson. It is a clarion call to CWI and cricket administrators globally: safeguarding the national soul of cricket requires innovative strategies to reconcile personal ambition with patriotic duty.

While Pooran's maroon jersey has been folded away far too soon, his legacy with its resilience, brilliance, and passionate commitment, must inspire a re-evaluation of priorities within West Indies cricket. The custodians of our regional game must now act decisively to prevent these stars in our Caribbean skies from departing too soon.

Get ready for summer festivals showcasing our diversity

Summer has arrived. In cities across the country, a multitude of festivals and community gatherings will be taking place. It is a time when people come together to enjoy the good weather, and most importantly, to demonstrate the diversity of Canada.

Here in Toronto, summer is defined by a series of community and cultural events. The list is long, but many communities will gather on the city's streets in a burst of pride, celebrating their culture and place in Canada.

Salsa on St Clair will deliver the vibes of Latin culture. *Taste of the Danforth* serves up amazing foods from Greece. *Taste of the Middle East* will showcase Arabic art, music, and culture. *Desi Fest* will bring the sounds of India to the city.

Portuguese, Italian, Filipino, Polish, Tamil, African, and so many other communities will gather throughout the summer, celebrating community and culture.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the largest cultural street festival in the city – the *Toronto Caribbean Carnival* (formerly known as *Caribana*) – the largest Caribbean festival outside of the Caribbean.

Summer in Toronto is defined by its multicultural composition. Appropriately, as summer begins, Canadian Multiculturalism Day is celebrated on June 27. It is a day to acknowledge and celebrate the diverse cultures that make up Canadian society.

The day was officially designated in 2002 by the Government of Canada to recognise the contributions of all cultural communities to Canada.

Canadian Multiculturalism Day encourages Canadians to celebrate the richness of their cultural diversity, and to reaffirm their commitment to equity, inclusion, and mutual respect.

Multiculturalism has long been a cornerstone of Canadian identity, enshrined in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1971. This is clearly reflected in the list above of festivals and community gatherings.

Despite this burst of culture, recent developments suggest that the foundational principle of multiculturalism continues to face challenges.

Public opinion has shifted notably in recent years. A 2024 survey revealed that 58 percent of Canadians believe the country accepts too many immigrants, marking the first time in a quarter-century that a majority holds this view.

This sentiment is particularly pronounced in the Prairies,

When empire gave us a booster shot in how to be obedient

We knew the universe was shifting yet again when Sir entered the classroom and performed the preparatory clearing of his throat, making three baritone attempts before locating his special announcement voice.

What emerged was an imperial edict, the no-nonsense, dictatorial tone that once before had commanded us to immediately vacate our classrooms. We were then marched military-style down to the main road to stand in the hot midday sun, where for less than the time it took for a single breath, we waved tiny national flags at the rear bumpers of a speeding entourage of air-conditioned vehicles, one in which was ensconced our benevolent Queen.

"All-you children, uncork your ears and listen. In a few days, foreign people coming to give all-you injection. I don't want anybody staying home, all-you hear mih!?"

Sir waxed eloquent, his words not only flushing out our corked ears, but also landing with a resounding thud in the pit of our stomachs. The announcement changed our entire week, transforming recess talk into war-room strategies.

Pitching marbles and the markers for hopscotch aside, our schoolyard was soon filled with prophets of doom and self-proclaimed veterans of the job.

One classmate claimed without proof he took two injections in an arm one afternoon, and forgot half the alphabet for three days. Confronted for evidence, he claimed to have forgotten which half.

Another insisted the nurses had a special syringe with the length and capacity of a bicycle pump used for mules and more muscular boys. And just before the end-of-recess bell rang, a story rapidly made the rounds that a schoolboy in another school was jabbed so hard that the needle remained behind.

"They say he can't ever sit down again, and he 'fraid to sneeze." Imagination was rampant in that time before *Google*. We filled-in the gaps with make-believe and storytelling, a syrupy fear taking us to assembly with shaky knees and finger-nail biting unease.

Come the dreaded morning, our schoolyard was unusually deserted. Breaking news soon emerged that a marathon "belly wuk" epidemic was sweeping through half our households.

The more successful runners were fortunate to be absent. They did not have to clear Customs policed by my wily grandmother. In my doomed case, Ma assessed her prevaricating grandson like she did her *eddoes* before roasting. A squeeze here, tap there, a pinch in the mid-section to an accompaniment of unrelenting, suspicious squinting. Her final judgement provided no relief for the putatively stricken sufferer.

with 52 percent of respondents in Alberta expressing concerns about immigration levels.

The increasing skepticism towards multiculturalism is also reflected in concerns about integration and cultural cohesion.

A significant portion of the population believes that many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, with 57 percent agreeing with this statement in 2024, a notable increase from previous years.

Responding to these trends, the federal government has implemented measures to manage immigration more effectively. This included capping the number of temporary foreign workers and international students, aiming to alleviate pressures on housing and public services in major cities.

Despite these challenges, multiculturalism remains a significant aspect of Canadian identity. A 2024 study found that almost two-thirds of Canadians view multiculturalism as an important symbol of national identity, with support even higher among younger Canadians.

Additionally, the Federal government's Canadian Anti-Racism Strategy continues to promote inclusion and combat discrimination, reflecting an ongoing commitment to multicultural principles.

While multiculturalism in Canada faces increasing scrutiny and evolving public opinion, it is far from "dying". However, the nation continues to grapple with balancing its multicultural ideals with the practicalities of integration and social cohesion.

The future of multiculturalism in Canada will likely depend on how effectively these challenges are addressed, ensuring that diversity remains a strength rather than a source of division.

The important lesson is that even foundational principles of our modern values are constantly at risk. Even as we progressed as a nation, there have been constant sentiments against that progress.

The nation we cherish can be more, but it is subject to regression by racism. To uphold multiculturalism is an opportunity to ensure that we continue to define the country we want Canada to be. So, this means that we, the beneficiaries of multiculturalism, must ensure that we practice it every day.

Yes, we should enjoy, celebrate, and share our culture, but we **must** accept, partake, and enjoy the cultural demonstrations of the many communities around us.

The survival of multiculturalism is not an act of 'We', but is a collectivity of 'Us'.



Ryan Singh



Romeo Kaseram

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

**DROP-OFF LOCATIONS
ACROSS THE GTA
COLLECTING NON-PERISHABLE CARIBBEAN
FOOD ITEMS FOR LOCAL FOOD BANKS**

ICCA launches 'Share Yuh RICE' food drive

Toronto – In response to growing food insecurity, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association has revived its culturally-focused food drive, “Share Yuh RICE” (Raising Indo-Caribbean Essentials), to help food bank clients in need across the Greater Toronto Area.

The campaign calls on members of the Indo-Caribbean and wider community to contribute non-perishable Caribbean food items.

These donations will be distributed to local food banks that serve Caribbean clients, ensuring that culturally familiar and nutritious staples remain accessible to those who rely on community support during difficult times.

“We encourage our community to give back and contribute by donating non-perishable Caribbean food products,” stated ICCA in a news release, adding, “As a community, we should be ready to support each other.”

To support ease of participation, the ICCA has set up five permanent drop-off

locations across the GTA: Crys-Lee West Indian Market – 20 Harwood Ave South, Ajax; Shereen’s Guyanese Bakery – 1063 Midland Ave, Scarborough; Indar’s Roti & Doubles – 1152 Albion Road, Etobicoke; Jas Supermarket – 9025 Torbram Road, Brampton; and, FH Multi Foods – 3061 Hurontario Street, Mississauga.

For those unable to donate items in person, the initiative offers a monetary option. Supporters can send e-transfers with a note indicating that the donation is for the food drive to finance@indocaribcdn.com.

“Our volunteers will purchase products on your behalf, and we will deliver them to a local food bank,” the ICCA added.

It also issued a reminder regarding donation standards, stating, “We ask that you do not put expired food items in the donation boxes. If you would not consume a product, then it is also not acceptable for another person.”

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Ignore critics and lead on, PM Kamla

Dear Editor,

Congratulations to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and her UNC government on the overwhelming landslide victory at the last general election and the most devastating and humiliating defeat of the PNM.

It is in times like this "when the rubber hits the road" that challenges surface – opposition, criticism, rejection, wanton disrespect and aggression from our neighbours to test her charisma and political material. Her intended use of "deadly force" reminds us of "attack with full force" in the 1990 attempted *coup d'etat*.

It is also in this circumstance that she and her experienced government ministers need our support, encouragement and prayers to



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

"stand her ground".

It is high time that she demonstrates woman power, exceptional leadership qualities, and fortitude to deliver Trinidad and Tobago from racial discrimination, crime, corruption, reckless *squandermania* of taxpayers' money, the neglect of the least vulnerable, and return to our beautiful rainbow republic.

Ride on, Queen Kamla, and remember that "no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises up against you in judgement, thou shall condemn".

Please ignore your critics who claim you are performing "madness" when they themselves are the quintessence of "madness".

Dr Gabriel Henderson, Trinidad and Tobago, via email.

Unified mining rules needed to deter smuggling

Dear Editor,

Given the rise in gold prices, the proliferation of gold smuggling in Guyana and the increasing loss of government revenue due to our porous borders with Brazil and Suriname, it is becoming increasingly urgent for a solution to be put in place.

The tax and royalty differential with our neighbours increase the attractiveness and incentivises gold miners to smuggle their gold out of the country. The government should consider establishing an agreement with our neighbours that creates a normalised agreement with miners that ensures that miners face the same cost when selling their gold. This will help remove the incentive to smuggle.

In addition, the penalties for smuggling

should be substantial so as to discourage further avoidance of in-country declarations. The establishment of government gold board services/offices within the key mining locations will also allow for immediate declarations and ongoing inspections of mining operations.

The use of the Guyana Defence Force will be necessary to support such operations and the transport of the gold to the authorised export locations. Many countries have also established gold traceability processes that allow for the source of the gold to be identified.

If the onsite locations of the gold board are equipped with this capability, then the smuggling will also be reduced and when smuggling does occur, then it will be easier to investigate.

Jamil Changlee, Guyana, via email.

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US sanctions continue to target Guyana's narcotics trade

Part 1 of 2

For several decades now, Guyana has been struggling to control the narcotics and gold smuggling trades, both of which have reached crisis proportions.

Despite repeated government efforts to put measures in place to curtail these illegal activities, they have continued to flourish. However, thanks to the government's cooperation with the US' Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), some progress has been made in both the cocaine and gold smuggling fronts – with the US taking unilateral action against individuals involved in narcotics trafficking and smuggling gold.

Earlier this month, US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned four Guyanese nationals for trafficking tons of cocaine from South America to the US, Europe, and the Caribbean.

The Guyanese nationals include Paul Daby Jr, Randolph Duncan, Mark Cromwell and Himnauth Sawh. OFAC contends that Daby and Duncan allegedly operate the largest drug trafficking organisations in Guyana. As reported, these individuals rely on maritime vessels and aircraft to conceal and traffic cocaine, while also allegedly bribing Guyanese officials to facilitate their drug trafficking operations.

According to OFAC, Daby allegedly trafficks tons of cocaine, coordinating the shipment of loads from Colombia and Venezuela via aircraft, and utilising illegal airstrips in Guyana. He also relies on a network of individuals to conceal and transport cocaine in shipping containers from ports in Guyana and Suriname.

OFAC claims that Daby is also allegedly involved in transporting illegal gold from Guyana using maritime vessels, while Duncan allegedly trafficks cocaine from Guyana to Africa and the Caribbean, with Europe and the US as the ultimate destinations.

Another sanctioned individual, Mark Cromwell, a former Guyana Police Force (GPF) officer, is recognised as a violent drug trafficker and an associate of Daby. He is wanted by the GPF for his connection to the 2024 alleged abduction of a former Guyanese police officer.

The fourth individual, Himnauth Sawh, a senior superintendent of police, allegedly ensured the safe passage to Colombian and Venezuelan traffickers through Region One. In September 2024, following the discovery of 4.4 tons of cocaine in Region One by Guyanese officials, Sawh was removed as Divisional Commander of Region One and assigned to the GPF's Transport Workshop.

Arguably, there are many official reasons for the flourishing narcotics trade, which is inextricably linked to money laundering and gold smuggling. In fact, the US State Department labelled Guyana as a major transshipment port for narcotics more than two decades ago.

A US Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Country Database report stated that Guyana "continues to be a transshipment route for South American cocaine and heroin destined for the US and for cash returning to South America".

The report noted that "historically weak law enforcement and judiciary systems coupled with endemic corruption and increasing organised crime activity contribute to a favourable climate for significant money laundering in Guyana". Narcotics trafficking and corruption are alleged to be the primary sources of laundered funds, the report stated.

In addition, the country's porous borders and lack of resources to monitor drug trafficking added to its inability to stem the problem.

However, there are also other unofficial reasons for these illegal activities. According to unconfirmed sources there are "too many foxes in the hen house" and "you can't put a cat to watch over milk". The reality is, there appears to be some credibility in these assertions.

For instance, when OFAC sanctioned two

members of one of Guyana's wealthiest families, Nazar Mohamed and his son, Azruddin Mohamed, together with Mae Thomas, former Permanent Secretary in both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Labour, for their alleged roles in smuggling gold, it did not forewarn the government of Guyana of its actions, nor did it provide details of the case. It can, therefore, be concluded that it was a matter



Dwarka Lakhan

of trust for the US government. Apparently, it simply did not want to alert the foxes in the hen house.

In similar vein, the government of Guyana was unaware of the recent sanctions on its nationals for narcotics trafficking. The US contends that certain public officials are complicit with those involved in illegal activities.

Historically, while large quantities of cocaine originating in Guyana have been seized overseas, there have been relatively few domestic drugs busts of significance within the country. Rather, arrests have been limited to individuals with small amounts of marijuana, crack cocaine or powder cocaine, usually on charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking. The failure to make any significant drug-related arrests or seizures in recent years at the domestic level is apparently directly related to corrupt foxes.

There are numerous cases of foreign seizures of drugs originating from Guyana or associated with Guyana.

More recently, the DEA has been directly involved in large cocaine seizures. On August 31, 2024, Guyanese authorities, working with information from the DEA, discovered an illegal airstrip where they seized 4.4 tons hidden in camouflaged pits in the Barima-Waini region.

This record discovery dwarfs the total 85 kilograms of cocaine seized in 2023 and the 1.6 tons seized in total since the beginning of 2020. However, with increased involvement of the DEA and other law enforcement agencies, 2024 has been remarkably successful in seizing illicit drugs. It is worth noting that Guyana had officially requested the DEA's assistance, which is a positive indication of its willingness to curb drug trafficking.

Last year, Guyana's Customs Anti Narcotic Unit (CANU) and its coast guard seized another large load of 536 kilograms on March 29, after stopping a go-fast boat by the north-central region of Essequibo Islands-West Demerara. In addition, the US Navy seized 2.4 tons aboard a narco submarine 150 miles from Guyana that was headed toward Spain on March 21, 2024.

In March 2025, a cargo vessel originating in Guyana was discovered by police in the waters of Trinidad and Tobago with approximately 182 kilograms of cocaine. Cocaine packages stamped with the Toyota logo, a known trademark of the Sinaloa Cartel, were found on-board the cargo vessel. The Mexican drug cartels are known for having a presence in Guyana, according to OFAC.

As well, foreign authorities have also seized significant amounts of cocaine from vessels that had departed Guyana in recent years. Spanish police discovered a ton of cocaine aboard a Guyanese-registered fishing boat off the coast of Cape Verde in September 2023. And Belgian officials in Antwerp found 11.5 tons of cocaine in a scrap metal shipment sent from Guyana in November 2020. In this case, it was alleged that either the scanning equipment in Guyana did not work properly, or that documentation was altered through corrupt practices.

In this case, Bob Van Den Berghe, coordinator at the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) and World Customs Organisation's Container Control Programme is reported saying that while the country has access to scanning equipment, such machines have not always been used in an optimal way to detect illicit loads. He added "in this case, the vast quantity of cocaine exported would have likely been detected prior to its departure from Guyana".

In late June 2020, German authorities discovered 1.5 tons of cocaine hidden among sacks of rice in a container that had arrived at the city's port from Guyana.

And *Diálogo*, a digital US military magazine, reported that at the end of 2012, Malaysian authorities intercepted \$7.1 million worth of cocaine in sealed tins of coconut milk shipped from Guyana.

At a more international level, a billion-dollar drug smuggling operation linked to the Italian mafia and dismantled by authorities in the US and Italy had established a route between Guyana and the US via Italy, underlining continued criminal innovation in developing new trafficking routes.

The simultaneous raids in both Italy and the US saw members of New York's notorious Gambino Mafia family and southern Italy's 'Ndrangheta among 24 people arrested, as reported by the *New York Times*.

The bust happened as the network entered advanced stages of planning to smuggle half a ton of pure cocaine from Guyana to a port in Calabria, where the 'Ndrangheta is based. The shipment would then have been moved to the US. Italian investigators estimated the drugs had street retail value of \$1 billion after cutting.

According to *EFE*, the Spanish international news agency, a Mexican criminal group with a presence in Guyana facilitated the trade between the two criminal groups. The operation involved a corrupt Guyanese shipping company transporting cocaine and heroin in consignments of tropical fruits and frozen fish.

Guyana does not produce cocaine, but it remains a major transshipment port. According to the US State Department's narcotics control report, Colombian cocaine is typically smuggled to Venezuela and onward to Guyana by sea or air. The drug may also transit land borders and the river network shared by Brazil,

Venezuela, and Suriname before it reaches Guyana. Drugs are then transhipped to various parts of the world.

Given its utility as a transit hub, the nation has attracted large-scale criminal organisations in past years, including the Italian mafia.

In addition, corruption at various levels of government and among law enforcement officials facilitate the movement of drugs. Following the most recent large-scale seizure on August 31, it was alleged that the local police might have colluded with the traffickers. When questioned about those reports, CANU's unit director James Singh is reported saying, "From all indications, most of the persons involved in this are foreign nationals. There is some speculation that there was some local assistance."

According to a report published by *News Source Guyana*, when a probe of illegal airstrips and the movement of drugs in the region was launched, the police in the area were left in the dark: "The move by the unit may have been triggered by allegations of police collusion in the movement of illegal aircraft and drugs in the Region One area." Effectively to keep the foxes in the hen house from leaking sensitive information that would have disrupted the cocaine discovery.

More importantly, the US claims that the sanctioned individuals were enabled by Guyanese officials, which is why it has been so difficult to control the trafficking operations.

Part 2 will deal with smuggling gold.

...

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

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Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown (third, right) with Brampton Councillor Rod Power (left), BGSC head Ravin Kalu (third, left), and inauguration attendees



Ravin Kalu with Brampton Councillor Rod Power



Ravin Kalu (l-r), Rozeena Karim, and Hafizan Ayube

Brampton's Guyanese community launches seniors' club

– The city of Brampton marked a milestone in community building on June 7 with the launch of its first-ever Guyanese Seniors Club. Held at Gore Meadows Community Centre, the event celebrated cultural heritage, unity, and a commitment to fostering connection among Guyanese elders living in the Flower City.

•••

Brampton – Our Guyanese diaspora in Brampton achieved an historic milestone on June 7 with the inaugural gathering of the Brampton Guyanese Seniors Club, the city's first organised space dedicated specifically to seniors from Guyana.

Hosted at the Gore Meadows Community Centre, the launch event marked a new chapter for cultural camaraderie, inclusion, and senior engagement in the thriving Flower City.

Organisers described the gathering as a joyful and purposeful step forward, offering Guyanese elders an inclusive and lively forum to build friendships, share experiences, and deepen community ties. The event was widely attended and warmly received, signaling a strong appetite for continued activities and regular meetings.

Ravin Kalu, President of the BGSC, extended heartfelt gratitude in a statement issued after the event.

"On behalf of the Brampton Guyanese Seniors Club, I just wanted to say a heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who came out... to support the inauguration of the Brampton Guyanese Seniors Club," he said.

"Your presence, energy, and generosity, especially those who contributed food and other essentials, made the event successful," Kalu added, underlining the role of communal spirit in making the gathering possible.

Notable public officials were also present to show their support, including Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, Member of Provincial Parliament Amarjot Sandhu, and Brampton Councillor Rod Power.

Kalu highlighted their contribution, saying, "Thank you to Mayor Patrick Brown, MPP Amarjot Sandhu, and Superstar Councillor Rod Power for [your] incredible support and presence. Your commitment to our community truly means the world to us!"

The gathering also included retired lawyer, Ram Sahadeo, and Hafizan Ayube, maternal grandmother of Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali. Her eminent presence added symbolic depth to the occasion, linking our diasporic experience in Canada to Guyana's ongoing national journey.

Reflecting on the positive momentum that emerged from the launch, Kalu said, "From all the positive feedback, it's clear this is just the beginning. The Brampton Guyanese Seniors Club is here to stay – and it will only grow stronger with your continued support."

He concluded with a message of solidarity and hope: "Let's keep building together with unity, love, and community spirit."



MPP Amarjot Sandhu (second, left), Councillor Rod Power (left) and BGSC President Ravin Kalu (third from right), with guests at the inauguration



Attentive and engaged attendees at the BGSC launch

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ICCA unites community via pride, healing

– Two strong and unifying events hosted by ICCA, one centred on single parent empowerment and the other on LGBTQIA+ pride and visibility, brought community voices together to challenge stigma, redefine family, and celebrate authenticity, culture, and connection. Together, both events represent the multifaceted strength of the community, one that is intrepid, confronting inherited silences and stigmas, the other uplifting through cultural joy and mutual support.

...

Toronto – In a vibrant show of community solidarity and cultural pride, the **Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA)** recently hosted two impactful events that placed authenticity and resilience at the forefront: the inaugural Single Parent Indo-Caribbean Exchange (SPICE) virtual workshop for single parents, and the fourth annual Indo-Caribbean Pride Fete – *Wotless*.

“SPICE is a new program by ICCA to create a support system and self-awareness for Indo-Caribbean single parent homes,” wrote Vashtie Doorga, Chair of SPICE, in a reflective summary of the initiative.

Doorga added, “As single parent homes, by choice or otherwise should not be as stigmatised as it is in our community. We have love, we make beautiful memories, and we live a full life just like any other family.”

The SPICE event was a landmark moment for the ICCA, offering a dedicated space for Indo-Caribbean single parents to feel seen, heard, and supported. Facilitated by Registered Psychotherapist Shanti Persaud of *My Shanti Space*, the workshop emphasised self-compassion, cultural reframing, and practical strategies for navigating stigma.

“This safe space provided them with an opportunity to relax their mind and feel heard,” wrote Doorga, noting how the session encouraged participants to challenge the cultural narratives that often shame or isolate single parents.

Additionally, “Being a single parent can become overwhelming at times and is a journey for the strong.”

The session touched on a wide array of experiences, including single parenting by choice, through bereavement, separation, divorce, and queer family structures.

Persaud addressed the unique scrutiny faced by single fathers in particular, who often encounter immediate suspicion, namely, “What did you do? Were you abusive, neglectful, infidelity?” Doorga emphasised the need to shift from blame to empower-

ment, stating, “Despite the pathway to single parenthood, a good parent protects their peace and that path should be rooted in strength not guilt.”

Participants were asked to bring a *Kindness Journal* to support somatic healing through visualisation and spiritual anchoring. Somatic healing is a body-centred therapy that helps release trauma through physical awareness and movement.

The event concluded with an affirmation activity to inspire ongoing resilience. Wisdom shared among participants included the importance of open communication with children, teaching them to have a voice, and placing self-care at the centre of parenthood.

Doorga underscored SPICE’s long-term goal: “We need to change the narrative, and not make single parents feel isolated. They need support and that is what SPICE aspires to provide for the Indo-Caribbean community.”

While SPICE offered reflection and empowerment, the Indo-Caribbean Pride Fete, *Wotless*, was an explosion of colour, rhythm, and joy. Now in its fourth year, the event marked the beginning of Pride Month for LGBTQIA+ members of the Indo-Caribbean community and their allies.

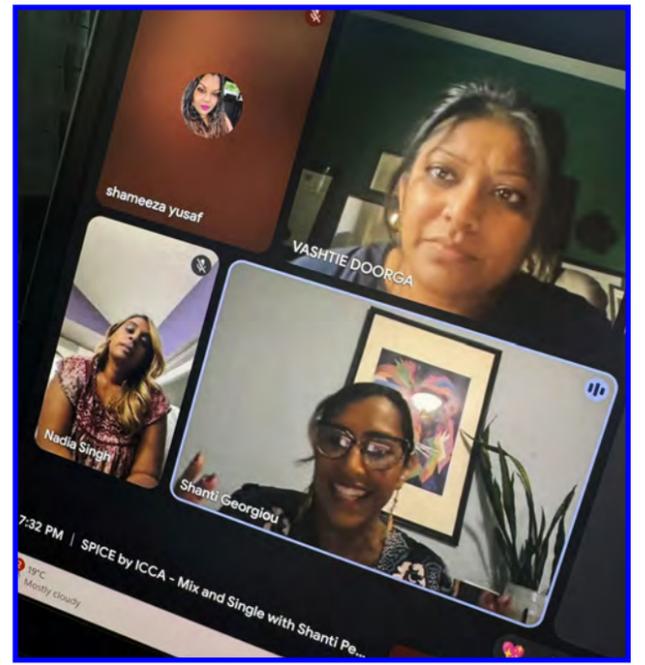
The celebration, in the organisers’ words, was “a statement of our continued fight for human rights and equality for everyone.”

The event created a liberatory space where attendees could embrace their full selves, queer, Indo-Caribbean, joyful, and proud, while immersed in the cultural textures of tassa, chutney, soca, and vibrant dance.

Drag performers were a highlight of the night, including Indo-Guyanese drag king Huck King Filiarius, the radiant Guy Anabella, and Indo-Fijian Bollyhood diva Sanjina DaBish Queen, each bringing expression and representation to the stage. The music and vibes were helmed by LK the DJ, who blended traditional rhythms with contemporary energy.

Food, too, was a cultural unifier, the event serving up Indo-Caribbean fare, grounding the revelry in flavours that echoed across diaspora memory. The ICCA extended its thanks to Indar’s Roti and Doubles and Island Junction.

Through its EPIC initiative, namely Equality and Pride for Indo-Caribbeans, ICCA continues to combat homophobia and establish safe spaces. As the event’s organisers affirmed: “Now more than ever, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to elevate, empower, and celebrate Indo-Caribbean LGBTQ+ voices.”



A screenshot from the SPICE event



Participants having a good time at the PRIDE event



In photos, students, teachers, officials, and attendees mark the milestone moment. Supplied photos.



Peel’s NBSE celebrates milestone expansion

Mississauga – The Network of Black Studies Educators (NBSE) Elementary Community Showcase, held on June 4, welcomed over 350 attendees, and marked a milestone moment in the Network’s journey: the successful expansion of Black Studies into elementary classrooms across Peel District School Board (PDSB).

The event celebrated the work of educators and students from 36 elementary schools that implemented rich, cross-curricular learning rooted in Black histories, identities, and contributions.

“Learning about African history helps you to have an open mind about other people’s cultures,” shared Kayla, a Grade 5 student.

Launched at the secondary level and expanded to elementary schools this year under the leadership of Principal Melissa Francis and the Peel Association of African Canadian Educators (PAACE), the NBSE was co-founded by Superintendent Atheia Grant and a diverse group of educators in the PDSB. The work is currently supported by the Equity Department and Curriculum Departments.

“This year has been transformational,” said Grant, adding, “Our goal is to ensure that every student sees themselves reflected in the curriculum. The NBSE’s expansion into elementary classrooms brings us closer to that goal.”

The showcase featured a vibrant collection of student work, including artwork, technology-infused presentations, and student voice testimonials. Teachers shared how the NBSE’s cur-

riculum resources, which is anchored in Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) and frameworks such as Dr Gholdy Muhammad’s Historically Responsive Literacy, helped foster deep engagement and identity affirmation in their classrooms.

“My students were engaged and inspired throughout,” said a Grade 4/5 teacher, adding, “One moment that truly moved me was when a student turned to me and said, ‘Thank you for teaching me about my family and my culture in school. I have never had that.’”

In addition to student work, the event highlighted the contributions of over 25 Black-owned businesses and community partners, offering attendees opportunities to connect with culturally grounded resources and vendors.

The NBSE Showcase represents more than a celebration. It was a call to action, and a blueprint for systemic curriculum reform. Since its inception in 2018, the NBSE has worked to decolonise curriculum, affirm Black student identity, disrupt dominant historical narratives, and improve student achievement and well-being.

As Ontario moves toward mandating Black history in Grades 7, 8, and 10 starting September 2025, PDSB stands as a provincial leader in demonstrating how schools can meaningfully embed Black histories and excellence across all subject areas and grade levels.



Andrew Holness addresses reporters during the 2020 general elections

Election rhetoric heating up in Jamaica

— As Jamaica heads toward a general election expected by September, the political rhetoric between the ruling Jamaica Labour Party and the Opposition People's National Party is intensifying. Even as both parties sharpen their campaign messages, a majority of Jamaicans have signaled a preference for term limits, an incipient indication that leadership accountability and electoral reform may set the tone for the upcoming polls.

Kingston – Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Deputy Leader Desmond McKenzie has pledged unwavering support for Prime Minister Andrew Holness, declaring that the party “will never surrender Jamaica to the PNP again”, as the island moves closer to general elections expected by September.

Addressing supporters on June 15 at the JLP's constituency conference in St Andrew East Central, McKenzie criticised what he described as political attacks from the Opposition People's National Party (PNP), including their disapproval of Dennis Chung's appointment as head of the Financial Investigations Division.

“The Jamaica Labour Party and its supporters will push back at the PNP when they come at Andrew Holness. We not going to allow you... There is a young man who has proven himself, and yuh want to destroy him,” McKenzie told the partisan crowd.

In a show of party unity, McKenzie repeated his earlier assertion made in February: “We will never surrender Jamaica to the PNP. Never!”

Meanwhile, the PNP is sharpening its policy-driven campaign messaging, focusing on education and social investment. At the campaign launch for Dennis Gordon in East Central St Andrew on June 15, Opposition spokesman on Finance Julian Robinson committed that “after our first term, every single Jamaican child will be literate, numerate, and can do some maths”.

Robinson cited an earlier *Gleaner* article which reported that over 70 percent of 220 Grade 7 students at Pembroke Hall High School are reading below Grade 3 level. He outlined the PNP's plan to redirect resources to early childhood and primary education to tackle the crisis.

“That will ensure that they can perform well in high school so that they can get the skills necessary to function in a modern workforce,”

Robinson said.

The proposed education overhaul is part of the PNP's broader “people first” platform, which includes subsidised meals and bus fare for students, reducing electricity costs, expanding affordable housing, and supporting the creative industries – many of which were introduced during the 2025–2026 Budget debate.

While the two major parties have started to exchange political blows, a new *RJRGLEANER*-commissioned Don Anderson poll has revealed overwhelming public support for term limits at all levels of elected office.

According to the poll, 76 percent of respondents favour term limits for MPs and councilors, while 78 percent support a cap on prime ministerial terms.



Desmond McKenzie

Anderson, CEO of Market Research Services Limited, said, “This was a view held by persons right across the demographic spectrum... very little variation across the various age cohorts.”

The strongest support for limiting a prime minister's tenure came from those aged 25–34 and 55–64, both registering over 83 percent. The lowest, at 63 percent, came from voters aged 65 and older.

However, the issue casts a shadow over Holness himself, who had promised in February 2016 to introduce term limits for the role within his first 100 days in office. The legislation was never tabled.

Now seeking a third consecutive term, Holness has come under fire from PNP General Secretary Dr Dayton Campbell.

“The very individual that said two terms should be the maximum is now campaigning for a third term. It doesn't make sense,” Campbell said at a recently held *Gleaner* Editors' Forum.

While the PNP has not yet formalised its position on term limits, Campbell and Senator Peter Bunting have both publicly supported the policy.

“Two terms would be sufficient for a prime minister to achieve his or her goals and allow someone with a fresh pair of eyes to be at the helm,” Campbell added.

Poll results also show that 83 percent of likely PNP voters support term limits for the prime minister, compared to 65 percent of JLP voters. Support among undecided and unlikely voters also remained strong at 78.5 percent.



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to TheBrij@TheBrij.com or call: 416-418-2745

THE RISE OF SMART REAL ESTATE: HOW AI IS REDEFINING THE HOUSING MARKET

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the housing industry. Data, algorithms, and automation are enhancing real estate by reducing reliance on human intuition and market guesswork. Soon, every aspect of home buying, construction, and urban planning will evolve. The future of real estate is not just promising – it's intelligent. Let's explore the impact of AI in real estate.

Smarter Property Valuations

Real estate valuation is a complex, time-sensitive, subjective, and prone to human error. AI can analyse thousands of data points, including past sale prices, neighbourhood demographics, economic indicators, and even social media sentiments, providing accurate real-time property assessments that minimise pricing inaccuracies, reduce listing times, and empower buyers and sellers to make informed, data-driven decisions.

Predictive Market Trends

Consider the power you would possess if you could anticipate real estate market activity. By analysing historical data and economic trends, AI can forecast where demand will increase, when prices might stabilise, and which types of properties are likely to excel. Anyone aiming to stay ahead of the curve would view this as a game-changer.

Streamlining the Building Process

AI is transforming how we build homes and communities, making the construction process faster, safer, and more cost-effective. Here are a few examples of AI's impact on construction:

Design Optimisation: AI-powered design software can quickly create and improve building blueprints while balancing costs, energy efficiency, and space optimisation.

Construction Scheduling: Machine learning algorithms are capable of predicting delays (due to weather, supply chain issues, or labour shortages) and adjusting timelines to prevent costly setbacks.

Resource Management: AI monitors material usage, reduces waste, ensures just-in-time supply delivery, lowers costs, and lessens environmental impact.

Safety Monitoring: AI-driven sensors and video analytics assist in identifying safety hazards on-site in real-time, enhancing worker safety and lowering liability.

Construct homes more quickly and accurately, minimising human errors.

With AI, builders can deliver high-quality homes more affordably and with greater certainty regarding budgets and timelines. The influence of AI will lead to an increase in factory-built homes. Imagine inputting the blueprint into a computer, and having most of the components manufactured in a factory and assembled on-site. This process will reduce the need for skilled construction workers, as you can program the machinery to adhere to building codes.

Personalised Property Searches

When I started selling homes, there were no computers, and the only way a buyer would know that a home was available was by looking at “For Sale” signs. Buyers would spend their weekends visiting open houses. Now, most buyers browse through listings instead of attending open houses. With AI, we no longer need to scroll endlessly through listings. AI creates customised search experiences by learning a user's preferences, such as price range, style, commute time, and even lifestyle needs, finding highly-tailored matches. AI is like a real estate concierge that understands your taste better than you do.

Fairer Lending Practices

AI is also used to identify bias in mortgage lending, helping lenders adopt more equitable practices and ensuring that credit decisions are based on objective criteria rather than human assumptions.

Eliminate Fraud

AI assists lenders in detecting and preventing fraud by cross-referencing job information, credit reports, and other borrower data. It verifies employment through external databases, examines credit reports for anomalies, and identifies suspicious patterns such as false identities or inflated incomes. AI can confirm the legitimacy of borrower claims by accessing public records, social media, and even geolocation data. Furthermore, it offers real-time risk scoring and alerts for inconsistent or high-risk applications, enhancing accuracy, expediting approvals, and reducing fraud-related losses.

Streamlined Transactions

AI will transform the closing process by automating paperwork, reviewing legal documents, and identifying contract risks. Real estate agents and lawyers encounter fewer errors, while clients benefit from faster, more seamless closings.

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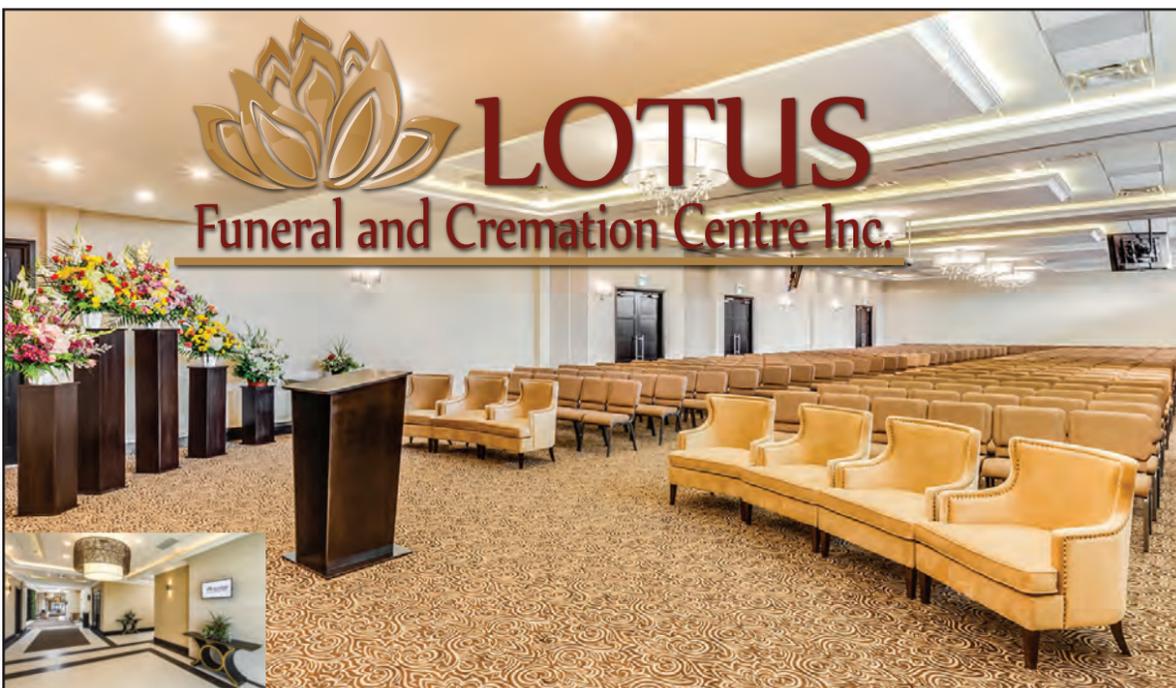
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The Rotary Club of Brampton Flower City hosted its 20th Changeover Gala on June 11 at Woodbine Banquet Hall in Etobicoke. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the prestigious Citizen of the Year award to Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who attended the celebration alongside provincial ministers, Toronto City Councillors, Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown, and other distinguished guests. In these photos, Premier Ford joins fellow dignitaries, Rotary Club executives, and attendees in marking the milestone occasion with camaraderie and celebration. *Photos by Ramesh Ramkalawan.*



Shashi Tharoor's visits bridge diaspora, diplomacy, dissent, and dialogue

By Dhanpaul Narine

Indian Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor was in Guyana in late May 2025 as part of a diplomatic outreach initiative. Tharoor led a delegation that aimed to strengthen relations between India and Guyana. The areas of trade, education, and cultural exchanges were highlighted. The Guyana government pledged its support for India's fight against terrorism. This writer met with Tharoor earlier in New York and had the opportunity to document his views on a number of issues.

After leaving the United Nations, Tharoor entered politics in India and is currently representing Thiruvananthapuram in the *Lok Sabha*. He is well-known for his stirring and passionate call for reparations from Britain in an Oxford Union debate.

He recently took to the media to denounce Winston Churchill's role in India, and other places. He sees Churchill as "a war criminal and an enemy of decency and humanity, a blinkered imperialist untroubled by the oppression of non-white peoples".

Tharoor has written *Inglorious Empire* in which he delved deeper into the subject of Britain's exploitation of India, and for which he has received rave reviews. His other work, *Why I am a Hindu*, speaks of the relevance of Hinduism to contemporary society, but takes issue with the more radical and fringe elements that seep into Hindu theology.

Tharoor visited New York and was a guest of the Indo-American Arts Council. The audience was animated, and he was on top of his game. His interviewer was Tunku Varadarajan, a former editor of *Newsweek International*.

Why was Tharoor so critical of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and those that take a hard line in their practice of Hinduism? Tharoor replied that he has written several books on the Hindu experience, and on his personal experience of being brought up in a Hindu household.

He said he was discussing Hinduism long before the BJP, and he was consistent in his views. However, what irks him is that people of a particular political persuasion have been articulating a view of Hinduism that is extremely difficult to recognise.

According to Tharoor, "the vast majority of Hindus would disavow that the faith in which they were brought up is not one which legitimises human beings in the name of cow protection. It is not one that would lynch somebody on suspicion that the meat he is carrying is beef".

Tharoor continues that Hinduism is not a religion in which young boys would be flogged for skinning the carcass of a dead



Shashi Tharoor (fifth from left) with Guyana's Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo (fifth from right) during the Indian delegation's visit to Georgetown late last month

cow. It is not a religion, "that reduces the soaring majesty of the metaphysics of *Upanishads* and *Vedas* into a team identity of the British football hooligans".

He said that it was high time that someone speaks out for the ordinary Hindus that do not subscribe to those extremist views.

Tharoor took issue with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as well. He said that their views reminded him of the practices and beliefs of the 1920s, and the language used about Hindutwa is similar to that used by Francoism in Spain and Nazism in Germany. Hinduism is not about race, but the language of Hindutwa speaks about Hinduism and racial pride, according to Tharoor.

He said that today "we have a series of RSS thinkers that are profoundly unconvinced about the principles of the Indian constitution. Today, we have a president, a vice-president, a prime minister who are all influenced by the RSS and have grown up in that organisation". They don't have the ability to argue for a change to the Constitution, he said.

If the BJP were to have its way, what could they undo in India? Tharoor believed that the BJP would declare India to be a Hindu State. They would define certain rights for the minority, and they could undermine the provisions that are enshrined in the constitution. Tharoor explained that as a Hindu, he grew up with the rituals that were intrinsic to the religion.

He called this the Hinduism of practice, of watching his father everyday chanting his mantras. He exemplified the idea

that Hinduism was a personal matter, and one should find his or own truth. He said the Hindus are tolerant and would cheerfully enter other places of worship since God is un-manifest.

But given the state of politics in India, what could be responsible for the rise of the RSS? Tharoor suggested that the rise only took place seriously during the last 25 years. A number of reasons that may be responsible for this includes a competition for scarce resources and caste becoming a part of identity politics.

In view of the comments of Rajiv Malhotra, and others, how does Tharoor see the role of Sanskrit in India? He said that Sanskrit is a language from which most Indian languages are derived.

According to Tharoor, "Sanskrit is not a popular language, even in the ancient days. It was a narrow language spoken by the elites. It's a bit late today to do to Sanskrit what the Israelis did to Hebrew. We can't possibly make Sanskrit a language for everyone. You don't have to master Sanskrit to feel more Indian. You can feel Indian in Bengali, Telugu, Hindi, and in English too!"

International reports have suggested that "India is considered to be the most dangerous place in the world for women in front of Afghanistan and Syria". What was Tharoor's view on the subject? He said that the violence in India against women shames every Indian.

However, "to say that India is the most dangerous place in the world for women is a bit difficult to swallow. There is no question that there are problems, and I have been one of those voices in the forefront arguing for greater gender sensitivity and education and better police patrolling, and for more women in the police force. India is still a place in which women are relatively free. But we must acknowledge that there is a problem and work to solve it".

In turning to the Caribbean, V.S. Naipaul and others have stated that the British left institutions that worked. The argument is that the locals ran them to suit their own ambitions, and in the end, destroyed the institutions that were supposed to make things work. Does Tharoor agree?

He replied that though there may have been progress in education, the British was not interested in promoting development in the colonies. They were keen in extracting the profits and cared little for racial unity or amity.

Tharoor was lively and engaging. He has brought a healthy dose of controversy to Indian politics. His views are sought after as he is lucid and engaging.

From Indentureship to influence: Historic tribute for Ramsaran in US Congress

– US Congresswoman Grace Meng delivered a formal tribute in the House of Representatives honouring Ashook Ramsaran, a distinguished Guyanese-American leader from Queens, New York. Her speech, now part of the Congressional Record, highlighted Ramsaran's ancestral journey, civic contributions, and enduring service to diaspora and community.

...

New York – In a formal address to the US House of Representatives, the Honorable Grace Meng of New York paid tribute to Ashook Ramsaran on June 2 for his enduring legacy of civic engagement, community leadership, and diasporic advocacy. The speech, delivered as part of the *Extensions of Remarks* and now recorded in *Volume 171, No. 93 of the Congressional Record*, chronicles Ramsaran's multi-generational journey from Indentureship in Guyana to distinguished civic service in Queens, New York.

"Mr Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ashook Ramsaran, a distinguished civic and community leader in my Sixth Congressional District," Meng began.

Meng detailed Ramsaran's heritage, noting that he "has been a resident of Queens, New York, since emigrating from Guyana (formerly British Guiana) in 1968". She emphasised his lineage as "the third generation of Indian Indentured labourers who worked on British sugar cane plantations after the emancipation of enslaved people in British colonies in 1834".

Also, Meng named his great grandparents, Pooriye and Radhah, who arrived in Guyana aboard the vessels *Adelaide* (1853) and *Colgrain* (1860) respectively, underscoring the family's perseverance under harsh colonial plantation conditions.

Stated Meng: "Throughout the generations they worked tirelessly to build a better life in Guyana rather than return to poverty in India."

As she noted, Ramsaran was "the first member of his family to attend school, an opportunity he valued greatly". His early

education at Auchlyne Church of Scotland Primary School and Corentyne High School, supported by a Booker Sugar Estates Scholarship, led to academic certifications from the University of Cambridge and the University of London.

He later worked as a teacher, court clerk, and Ministry of Health employee in Guyana before migrating to the US with wife, Camille.

"He embodied the American dream with courage, determination, and a commitment to succeed," said Meng.

While supporting a young family and pursuing higher education, Ramsaran endured personal hardship, including "violent racial attacks against his family and their home". He overcame these challenges to earn advanced engineering degrees from Polytechnic – New York University, excel in corporate roles, and eventually establish his own successful engineering firm in Queens.

Together with Camille, Ramsaran raised two sons, Arnold and the late Gerald, and is now the grandfather of Jaden and Gavin, all of whom reside in Queens.

Meng meticulously listed Ramsaran's many civic roles, including: Executive Vice-President of the Queens Civic Congress (QCC); Chair of the Community Advisory Council for NY Presbyterian Hospital/Queens; President of the Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC); Past President of GOPIO International (2011–2016); Board Member of the Center for Caribbean & Latin American Studies at St John's University; and Elder and Financial Co-Chair at the First Presbyterian Church

of Flushing. He has also been a member of multiple civic advisory panels and borough committees.

Meng praised Ramsaran's advocacy for historical preservation and civic recognition through landmarking and street naming. Among his accomplishments are the preservation of Brinckerhoff Colonial Dutch Cemetery, and the renaming of public spaces including Little Guyana Avenue, Old Towne of Flushing Burial Ground Lane, and Brinckerhoff Memorial Way.

She also noted his work in commemorating Indian Indentureship globally, including the establishment of "the Kolkata Memorial in India and Indian Arrival Monuments in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Martinique, and other locations".

Meng noted that Ramsaran's belief in the American ideal, which remains central to his community work.

Quoting Ramsaran directly, she said he "feels blessed to be an American", and is "dedicated to his moral obligation and duty to give back to society – specifically to Queens, New York, and the Nation – providing him with opportunities and the freedom to progress while helping those who are less fortunate".

Meng closed her remarks by affirming his impact on Queens, declaring, "Queens is the most diverse county in the US, and Ramsaran actively collaborates with many groups and organisations to address common concerns. He deeply engages with community issues of interest and importance, making significant contributions that resonate throughout the community."



Ashook Ramsaran



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Khalil Rahman Ali's *Guyana on the Rise* a story of return and reckoning

– With the publication of *Guyana on the Rise*, Khalil Rahman Ali's storytelling arc comes full circle, returning once more to Guyana, but now through the eyes of characters witnessing a nation on the cusp of transformation with its new oil wealth. Layered with emotional depth, the novel promises to resonate with both Guyanese readers and those seeking to understand the complexities of postcolonial transformation. Published by Hansib Publications, it was launched on June 10 and available here.

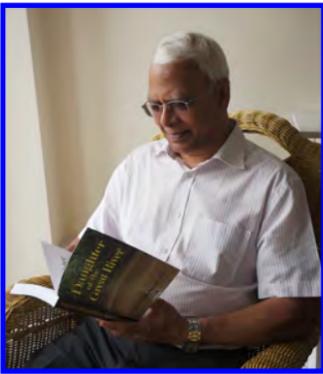
Guyana on the Rise, the latest work by acclaimed author Khalil Rahman Ali, was released on June 10 by Hansib Publications. The novel follows Michael and Vishnu, two long-departed Guyanese who return to their homeland after years abroad, eager to witness the impact of its oil-fuelled economic transformation. Once fierce rivals on the domino tables of their youth, the two men now share a deeper purpose in seeking to reconcile memory with modernity in a nation undergoing dramatic change.

With Michael's meticulously documented notebook serving as a narrative anchor, the book blends historical reflection and personal recollection, offering more than a mere travelogue.

Through the eyes of its characters, *Guyana on the Rise* engages with larger questions of identity, return, and reconciliation. Readers are invited to join a journey that is at once personal and national, a journey through hope, nostalgia, and the shifting tides of development.

Ali is best known for his evocative *The Domino Masters of Demerara*. Now he returns to familiar terrain in this new novel, which is Guyana and its people, even as he navigates fresh ground: the profound consequences of this nation's significant 2015 oil discovery. The novel situates itself at the intersection of past and present, as Michael and Vishnu seek to understand whether the Guyana they left behind still exists, or whether it has been irrevocably transformed.

According to Hansib's advance release, *Guyana on the Rise* is "a deeply personal exploration of identity, heritage and the enduring bonds of friendship". Each character must grapple with both the promise of national renewal and the burdens of history, from colonial legacies to the impact of migration.



Khalil Rahman Ali

In doing so, the novel paints a textured portrait of a nation "navigating its newfound wealth, striving to overcome historical challenges and charting a course towards a brighter tomorrow".

Ali was born in Guyana and moved to London in the 1970s, where he built a career in the British National Health Service as a senior management accountant. He began writing full-time after retiring in 2010, following the discovery of his great-great-grandfather Hussein Ali's story in the journey from India to British Guiana as an indentured labourer.

Ali's debut novel, *Sugar's Sweet Allure* (2013), draws from that legacy. Set in 1843, the story follows Mustafa, an 18-year-old Muslim Indian labourer who flees his village after falling in love with his Hindu childhood sweetheart, Chandini.

Lured by the promise of decent pay and work, Mustafa ends up thousands of miles away on a British Guiana sugar plantation. The novel captures both the romance and hardship of migration, bringing to life a neglected chapter of colonial history.

Two years later, Ali published *The Domino Masters of Demerara* (2015), a novel set in three Guyanese villages – Anna Catherina, Leonora, and Cornelia Ida, during the turbulent political and economic years leading up to 1985.

Framed around a high-stakes domino match, the novel portrays a society grappling with the aftermath of slavery, indentureship, and mass migration, all set against the backdrop of Guyana's struggle for political identity and economic survival.

His third book, *In Pursuit of Betterment* (2017), extended his thematic range, presenting five stories of Indian diaspora families spanning India, Mauritius, the Caribbean, Uganda, and South Africa. These stories share a common thread: the pursuit of education, hard work, and progress across generational and geographic boundaries.

Ali's novel *Daughter of the Great River* marked another significant turn in his storytelling. Set in the fictional rainforest country of Kayana, the story follows Onida, a young Indigenous

woman born in the year 2000 and chosen to lead her people in a fight for environmental justice.

As mining and logging industries threaten their homeland, Onida must balance tradition with survival in a volatile landscape. The novel reflects Ali's concern for ecological preservation and the role of Indigenous peoples in safeguarding fragile ecosystems.

Speaking to the *Romford Recorder* in the UK in 2021 about *Daughter of the Great River*, Ali stated: "The role of Indigenous people in preserving and protecting rainforests against tremendous odds is very important. That is why I created the story of Onida and her mission to save the rainforest in her fictional country."

Although his professional background is in finance, Ali has described himself as a lifelong writer.

In the same interview he noted, "I come from the only English-speaking country in South America, and thankfully they are trying to preserve the rainforests there, with the help and support of the Amerindian people who live there."

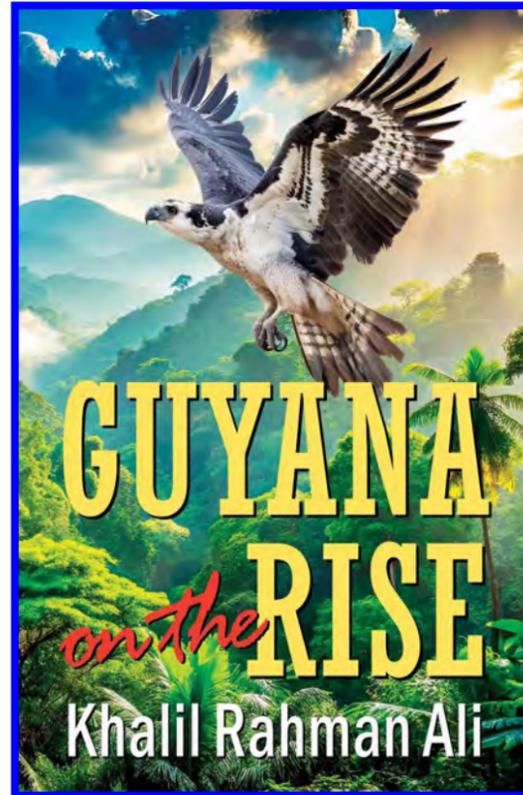
The discovery of his great-great-grandfather's story after retirement gave him the impetus to begin writing fiction.

"I captured the sense of what it was like in the villages of India. It's a powerful story but it never gets heard in this country," he said of *Sugar's Sweet Allure*, adding, "People are trying to find out where we came from, and what makes us who we are."

Following the success of that first novel, which led to speaking invitations at international historical conferences, Ali said he realised he had more stories to tell.

Today, his books are available in libraries and schools, where he hopes younger generations will learn about the histories of Indian indentureship, colonial displacement, and diasporic resilience.

"Through my fiction, I can write about important things that really happened," Ali said.



Under a clear sky, families and friends mingled along the pier. Their anticipated joyful embarkation marked the beginning of a journey that would blur the line between dreams and reality.

The ten-deck *Aurora of the Seas* stood as a gleaming luxury liner with its polished railings reflecting the bright sunshine. Passengers boarded with wide-eyed wonder, entranced by the promise of endless horizons.

On the first evening, the ship's grand ballroom was alive with laughter and music. Couples waltzed under chandeliers that glittered like constellations. Toasts were raised to adventures yet to come as the vessel pulled away from the harbour.

The first few days passed in idyllic splendour. Passengers explored the ship's many delights. Yet, as they sailed farther into the open sea, an inexplicable sense of unease began to creep in, quiet as the tide.

It started subtly. A passenger would misplace an item, only for it to reappear in an entirely different part of the ship, wet and smelling of fish slime. Others reported strange sounds at night, such as the faint echo of footsteps in empty corridors.

On the fifth day, the clear skies took an ominous turn. Dark heavy storm clouds rolled in, casting long shadows across the decks. The calm ocean took

on a restless energy. Waves started slapping against the hull with increasing fervour. Strong winds threatened to push everyone overboard and force the ship off course. The ship's captain used the PA system to assure everyone that the weather posed no threat, but a hint of doubt in his voice betrayed the confidence he tried to portray.

That night, the power flickered during the evening gala, plunging the ballroom into darkness. When the lights returned, a collective gasp rippled through the room: one of the passengers, a self-proclaimed author, was missing from her seat near the ship's rail. Her glass lay on its side, the white tablecloth stained with the champagne it once held. Her chair leaned against the rail as though she had risen hastily. A search was conducted, but she was nowhere to be found.



The Supernatural A Voyage of Shadows

When the ship's cameras' night vision buzzed and went blank at the time of the author's disappearance, passengers became alarmed. Whispers of a supernatural entity spread among the passengers. Guests locked themselves in their cabins after dark. All night activities ceased for fear of another power failure that would result in another life lost.

As the nights stretched on, more passengers began to vanish, their belongings left behind as eerie reminders of their presence. The once-bustling dining halls grew sparse. People avoided the shadowy corners of the ship.

On the tenth night, as the ship was engulfed by a severe and persistent thunder and lightning storm that tossed the cruise liner like a toy in a bathtub, the captain instructed passengers and non-essential crew to remain in their cabins. The captain and his pilot crew strapped themselves on the bridge to avoid getting flung overboard into the swells that threatened to flip the ship upside down.

Shock riveted them to their seats when a gigantic stately albatross appeared out of the electric atmosphere, its huge claws clung to the front rail of the ship with its 20-foot wings outstretched, trying to steady the watercraft and keep it from rolling over in the turbulent ocean.

The albatross used its beak to fend off attacks from the similar stately image of a gargantuan sharp-beaked pterodactyl. The earsplitting screams of the fizzy, battling birds rose above the roar of the storm.

A collective gasp of disbelief accompanied the sight of a member of the housekeeping staff risking her life to crawl along the deck toward the fierce combatants with a statically charged oval object in her hands. The pterodactyl's head spun around, sensing the presence of its egg. It abandoned its fight with the albatross and flew toward the crew member. The staff member flung the

egg into the air. The pterodactyl caught it in its claws and flew away into the storm's darkness. The ship lurched one last time. A flash of lightning revealed the identity of the staff member as the ship's side roll made her slide to the edge. A split second before she fell off the edge, she became fizzy and her legs transformed into the wagging tail of a fish.

"Oh my gosh!" The captain's mate covered his gasp with spread fingers. "That's Molly Wall, the head of the house cleaning department!" He clutched his throat. "She has turned into a mermaid." The albatross released its grip on the rail and dived into the ocean where Molly had disappeared.

As suddenly as it had started, the storm passed, leaving the harvest moon's reflection rippling on the calm swells.

"The camera could not capture the vibrations of the prehistoric creatures, that is why there was no recording of their existence." A marine forensic anthropologist and historian explained this to the captain when he undertook extensive research after the captain visited him and reported the outer-worldly phenomena. "The mermaid fed the pterodactyl the human passengers to keep herself from being attacked."

"But why did it want to eat Molly?" The captain's forehead creased.

"Molly had the perfect job." The anthropologist chuckled. "You see, she becomes a mermaid and slips into the prehistoric realm on full moon nights. She needs to eat fish in abundance so she slithers overboard at night without anyone noticing." He took a deep breath. "On this occasion, she snatched the pterodactyl's egg when the bird nested on a piece of wreckage in the middle of the ocean. The pterodactyl chased after her but she outmaneuvered it and hid its egg in a secret compartment on board the ship, intent on eating it as a delicacy but the dinosaur bird was relentless in pursuit of its offspring until Molly was forced to give it up."

"Molly's greed and selfishness resulted in multiple innocent lives being lost." The captain sighed. "I'm sure we will never see any of them again."

Kamil Ali





MPP Charmaine Williams (left to right), Jennifer Hirlehey, MPP Raymond Cho, Mischka Crichton, and MPP Aris Babikian; in photos are performers and attendees. Photos by Russell Lutchman

Music, sparkling feathers as Carnival 2025 takes flight

From Page 1

where diversity is not feared but celebrated.

“We have beautiful people of all hues, of all colours, of all beauties. And together we create this amazing spectacle, this jewel of the Caribbean that is the pride of Canada,” she declared.

In a moment of reflection on global politics, she affirmed that Canada’s embrace of culture and identity remains unique.

She declared, “Compared to other countries, we feel welcome. Come to Canada! Come to Toronto! Come to Toronto Carnival!”

One of the most powerful and moving segments of Hirlehey’s speech, noted in the evocativeness and sincerity in her voice, focused on Toronto Caribbean Carnival’s fight for equitable funding. Our well-known and eminent festival, she reminded the crowd, has been “very underfunded for many, many years.”

Funding came through determined advocacy, she stated, detailing the relentless efforts of her festival management team.

“This team drove in the snow, in the rain, in hail, to Ottawa, to the province, and to the city,” she said, lobbying for recognition of how our festival enriches Canadian society.

“And they listened,” she declared, adding, “All levels of government; they listened.”

But it was not just official advocacy that helped pave the way; it was also grassroots mobilisation, she noted.

Acknowledging the role of our community in helping to make funding a reality, Hirlehey stated, unequivocally, “You stood up; you signed petitions! You stood up; you wrote emails! You stood up; you did editorials!”

The outcome was concrete, with a total of \$3.1 million in federal funding, along with a \$1.3 million provincial investment. The City of Toronto has also pledged continuation of a three-year funding support.

Hirlehey was also unequivocal in naming those who stood with Toronto Caribbean Carnival during its challenging times. At the federal level, she credited MP Michael Coteau and MP Gary Anandasangaree, recognising them for their advocacy, along with the intervention from the Black Caucus.

“I just want to say that our community is so grateful and so lucky to have you as MPs at the federal level,” she said. And addressing Anandasangaree directly, she declared, “We are so proud to have you representing us.”

She also lauded former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for his support, and expressed confidence in the current leadership, saying, “I believe that our current Prime Minister [Mark Carney] will be just as supportive of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival.”

Turning her attention to the provincial level, Hirlehey offered heartfelt thanks to MPP Charmaine Williams for taking up the call for adequate funding.

“She took that challenge up,” Hirlehey said, recalling a conversation they had two years prior. “She was going to make sure that we would get appropriate levels of funding.”

City-level appreciation went to Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow for helping secure the three-year funding. But special praise was reserved for Councillor Michael Thompson.

“There probably is nobody like Councillor Michael Thompson,” she said, recalling countless calls and his steadfast presence.

“We will never forget the work that you’ve done on behalf of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival,” she said.

Also in attendance were federal MPs Salma Zahid, Shaun Chen, and provincial MPPs Aris Babikian and Raymond Cho, underscoring the event’s broad political backing.

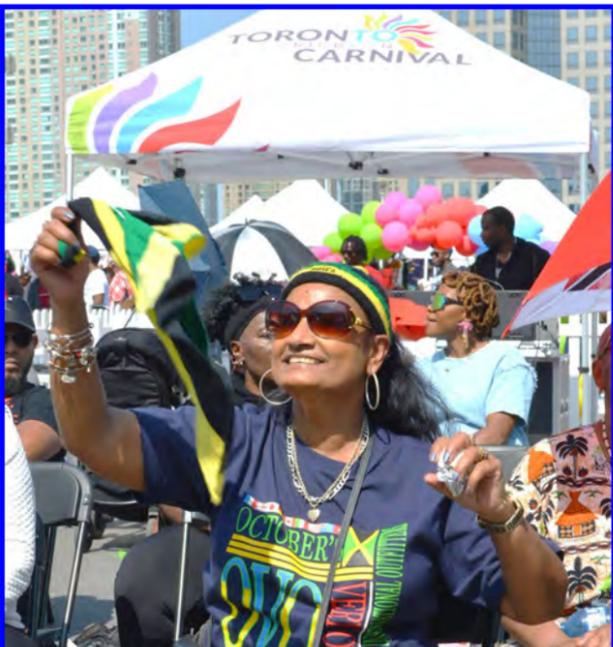
However, the official launch was not just about speeches. Scarborough Town Centre was then transformed into a hub of what constitutes our quintessential Caribbean celebratory spirit. A packed crowd enjoyed performances from Jfyre, Jaxx, Hummingbird Tassa, Dance Caribe, Pan Fantasy, Terry Gajraj, David Rudder, Ossie Gurley, Panatics, and more.

Steelman group Panatics set the tone, sending attendees swaying from the very first beat. Vendors lined the space offering not just delicious Caribbean cuisine but costumes, clothing, crafts, and more, each stall a portal into the vibrancy of our region’s heritage.

Attendees were invited to “dance, eat some food, drink some beverages and have a really good time,” as Hirlehey urged at the conclusion of an address replete with gratitude, passion, and commitment.

The crowd responded with exuberance, their energy palpable, with many later describing the event as the perfect teaser for the festivities yet to come in July and early August.

With files by Russell Lutchman





A taste of our wholesome Caribbean came alive in full colour, rhythm, and flavour at the Island Eats Food & Travel Festival which was held on June 14-June 15 at Mel Lastman Square in Toronto. Produced by the Caribbean Scholarship Foundation (CSF), the festival fused Caribbean food, culture, and community spirit all in one place. Dozens of food and beverage pavilions featured our gourmet island cuisine, including Jamaican jerk chicken, roti from Trinidad and Tobago, and ice-cold fresh coconut water. On the main stage were top-tier local and international DJs, musicians, and costumed dancers. A charitable initiative, proceeds from the event support CSF's mission to promote equity and open opportunities in education, entrepreneurship, employment, and the arts for Caribbean communities in Canada and beyond. The photos reflect not just a celebration of our island flavours and culture, but our shared commitment as a diaspora to empower, uplift, and, of course, savour delicious cuisine. *Photos by Russell Lutchman.*



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Reels, rotis, and remembrance: Bollywood's recipes for resilience

– In Bollywood, food is never merely a backdrop; it is memory, identity, and resilience. From movies like *Bawarchi* to *The Lunchbox*, culinary moments resonate with our Indo-Caribbean diaspora in Trinidad, Guyana, and Toronto, stirring ancestral memory, kitchen rituals, and the complex inheritances of migration.

...

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Series on the Caribbean Diaspora

When Shashi Godbole presses *ladoo* dough between her palms in *English Vinglish* (2012), the clanging of pots in a foreign kitchen fades. What replaces it is not just the rhythm of cooking, but the beat of selfhood restored. In that modest motion, steeped in cardamom and sugar, she reclaims more than culinary competence.

Her shaping hands restore dignity; her *ladoo*s speak where words cannot be found. That gesture crosses oceans, echoing today in our kitchens in Markham, Cunupia in Trinidad, Enmore in Guyana, where women knead with the same quiet resilience and whisper the same incantations beneath worn rolling pins. In Bollywood, food is not filler; it is syntax, identity, and inheritance; and sometimes, with its unique evocation, it trumps the spoken word.

Bollywood has long understood that food on screen does not merely fill space, that it fills silence, expresses desire, and heals wounds. It functions as emotional shorthand. In *Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!* (1994), a dropped dessert triggers romance; in *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), *puris* and *halwa* become rites of reconciliation.

Meals articulate what words cannot. Scholar Rachel Dwyer, in *Bollywood's India*, identifies food as edible signifiers, as cinematic markers of caste, class, morality, and gender. A meal can speak volumes about who belongs, who cooks, who eats, and who is left out.

Our Indo-Caribbean diaspora, shaped by indentureship, migration, and memory, knows this language instinctively. In Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname, meals passed down over generations are cultural heirlooms. As our communities migrated yet again, this time to Toronto and beyond, our foods remain rooted, even as the side of the road we drive on, and our postal codes, have changed. In cinema, our foods found a mirror, and Bollywood's edible metaphors reflected our own private rituals.

In *Bawarchi* (1972), the kitchen becomes an unlikely crucible of healing. The Sharma family, riven by ego, solipsism, and discord, is transformed by Raghu (Rajesh Khanna), who enters not just as a cook, but as a quiet reformer.

His meals of *chai*, vegetarian spreads, and soups, do not dazzle with spectacle. Instead, they combine communication with nourishment. A bowl of soup, offered without fanfare, becomes the first act of familial repair. As Radhu stirs, so he soothes.

In our Indo-Caribbean context, *Bawarchi* offers a deeply familiar tableau. Across Trinidadian kitchens, and in Toronto basement apartments where mothers cook between shifts, food serves the same function, becoming balms, offering up an apology, bridging divides.

Kitchens in our diaspora have always been dual spaces, sites that are representative of battlegrounds and sanctuaries. Generational tensions flare and soften over shared *parathas*; stirring stories of great grandparents labouring in cane fields are sprinkled alongside seasoning tossed into fragrant pots.

Raghu's culinary choreography mirrors these rhythms. His meals mend what is broken; and the metaphor endures, even as it is iterated in our diverse, diasporic spaces.

In *Cheeni Kum* (2007), the contradiction is subtler. Buddhadev, played by Amitabh Bachchan, runs a luxury kitchen in London. He cooks meat for customers, but refuses to eat it himself.

Dwyer's observation positions his action as a moral and caste-coded marker. The irony is notable, where the chef cooks, but does not eat, exposing cultural hierarchies around vegetarianism and purity.

Buddhadev's emotional stiffness, too, is reflected in his culinary rigidity. When love intervenes, through Nina (Tabu), it is food that mediates the thaw. A mistaken *pulav* becomes a moment of shared vulnerability. On-screen, cuisine acquired an emotional vocabulary.

The lesson is familiar to our diasporic audiences; here, identity is negotiated across the stovetop. In Toronto households, where our children request pizza while grandmothers stir a pot of curry, our daily meals are more than just sustenance. Here are sites of negotiation, adaptation, compromise; and indubitably, teenage obstinacy and resistance.

In *English Vinglish* (2012), the narrative pivots on language. Shashi's struggle is not just linguistic; it is quite existential. Ridiculed by her family for her feeble English, especially by her husband, she is diminished.

But her *ladoo*s, handmade, imperfect, full of love, are her first act of resistance. They carry ancestral memory, ritual pride, and unspoken care. Her journey from being a silenced and humiliated homemaker to becoming a confident, articulate woman is



Ila and Saajan in *The Lunchbox*



Raghu (Rajesh Khanna) in *Bawarchi*

catalysed by food, and affirmed in her initiative and learning.

For many Indo-Caribbean children and grandchildren, this affirmation is deeply personal. The sweets recalled from our childhood – the *jalebi* ensconced in a visiting grandmother's pocket – were more than confections. They were lessons in survival, pride, cultural affirmation, and the soft, enduring strength of our foremothers.

Stanley Ka Dabba (2011) unpacks deprivation with gentle power. Stanley, a boy without a lunchbox, symbolises more than hunger, revealing the fragility of care, and the quiet violence of exclusion.

His teacher, Khadoos, hoards food and inflicts humiliation, weaponising meals as levers of control. But Stanley resists, wordlessly, resiliently. His classmates' small acts of sharing become radical gestures.

In our postcolonial diaspora, this rings hauntingly true. In communities shaped by hardship, every *dhal puri* shared becomes an act of love; each *bara* and its chutney extended is solidarity made visible.

Finally, in *The Lunchbox* (2013), food becomes a vehicle for correspondence traveling along an epistolary path. Ila cooks with care; Saajan eats with growing anticipation. The *dabbawala* system delivers more than tiffin boxes, taking along with its spicy meals notifications of emotional possibility.

When Saajan writes in an epistolary exchange, "The food was salty today. Like the sea. Like tears," he reaches poetic heights in the ongoing exchanges with Ila. The food itself – the *karela*, lentil curry, raw onions become edible signifiers, unfolding chapters in a narrative of grief, longing, and unexpected connection.

For Indo-Caribbean viewers, this story resonates across generations. Recipes, like letters, were carried across the *kala pani* etched in memory. The foods that arrived during indentureship in Leguan, Guyana, and Forbes Park in Trinidad, traveled with these memories from across continents.

And now it is moving again, arriving in the cold geographies of Toronto, Winnipeg, and New York, where doubles are served next to *dosa*, and where our ancestral flavours continue to survive migration's erasures.

Dwyer's typology is clear: food in film are signals of social identity, moral standing, and gendered expectation. Vegetarianism often denotes upper-caste morality. Cooking, almost always feminised, becomes a marker of ritual and devotion. And youth, framed through street snacks like *samosas*, finds favour as fast food. These codes are not static, but are migratory; and in our diaspora spaces, they adapt.

Scholar Ishita Banerjee-Dube, in *Cooking Cultures and Culinary Cultures and Convergent Histories*, situates kitchens as gendered archives of memory. In colonial India, she notes, cookbooks and cooking spaces enabled women to assert domes-

tic agency. The same holds in Indo-Caribbean contexts, where kitchens are often matriarchal realms of authority, preservation, and emotional labour.

Tejaswini Ganti, in *Producing Bollywood*, observes that food-centred films bypass the spectacle of mainstream cinema. Often circumventing the glitz of A-circuit multiplexes, these food-centred narratives find resonance in B- and C-circuits, in smaller towns and rural belts where emotional authenticity, cultural familiarity, and familial themes hold greater sway over spectacle-driven storytelling.

Films like *The Lunchbox* and *English Vinglish* thrive because of their grounded cultural authenticity, where emotional truth is valued over glamour, while uplifting kitchen realism into critical capital.

For our Indo-Caribbean world, Bollywood has always been more than entertainment; in fact, it is more like a hearth. Movies like *Mother India* invoked the values of sacrifice and resilience; but just as vital were those cooking scenes, where families sat on floors, and meals were shared and eaten by hand. Moments like these mirrored life in Barrackpore in Trinidad, Berbice in Guyana, and Brokopondo in Suriname. And still do.

And now to double down on our compelling narrative. *Doubles* is our beloved street food, and which *Wikipedia* tells us emerged in Trinidad in the mid-1930s; however, its psychic hold runs deeper.

In Ian Harnarine's *Doubles With Slight Pepper* (2011) and its feature remake *Doubles* (2023), food is not just sustenance; it is cultural text. It frames identity, rupture, and reconciliation.

Writing in *Exclaim!*, Marie Saadeh praises Harnarine's care: "It's a touching tribute to the immigrant experience and forgiveness," she declared. When *Doubles* premiered at Toronto's *CaribbeanTales Film Festival*, it earned prolonged applause, a testament to how film overlaps onto our palates, and how food continues to tether us as diasporic viewers to our ancestral memory.

Across Toronto's Little India, plazas in North York, and our city's many food festivals – from *Taste of India* to *Island Eats*, Bollywood music echoes from stalls serving mango chow, *samosas* with chutney, and of course, our now ubiquitous *doubles* with slight pepper.

Here *YouTube* videos are paired with *ladoo*-making workshops; *Instagram* accounts are quickly populated with photos of wrapped rotis and oil-stained paperbags of pholouries.

In our community settings, young children assemble and roll *ladoo*s from recipes inspired by *English Vinglish*. Our diaspora's food isn't static; it is being swept along on currents of re-invention, the way identity travels.

Vancouver's Meeru Dhalwala and Toronto's Chef Devan Rajkumar both practice this culinary ethic, infusing Caribbean, Indian, and Canadian sensibilities into their plates, etching new flavours onto our welcoming, appreciative palates. Their cuisine, like the movies that reflect them, tells stories of resilience, hybridity, and home.

Today, Bollywood's food scenes continue to transcend the silver screen. *The Lunchbox* inspired café menus in Mumbai. *English Vinglish* sparked *ladoo* nights among diasporic women's circles. *Stanley Ka Dabba* prompted storytelling sessions in schools, where lunchboxes became prompts for memory. These films do not age, they ferment; their impact matures, and they become vintage.

Here in Toronto, film and food come together in curated community events. Cook-along nights are common: first, a screening; then, the preparation of a featured dish. In this rhythm, our identity is stirred, savoured, and reclaimed.

Banerjee-Dube writes that food enables people "to articulate not just who they are but what they want to be." That articulation is especially urgent in migrant communities, where language, religion, and even surnames shift. However, food retains its wholesomeness; and it remembers.

Through Dwyer's lens, we decode diasporic meals: the vegetarian *chapatti*, heir to caste codes; the peppery *doubles*, born of cultural convergence; the *ladoo*, seasoned with maternal love, defiance, and resolve. And through Ganti's framing, we see how diaspora communities use food films to accrue symbolic capital in summer festivals, workshops, and culinary moments with Chef Dev at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham, where kitchens morph into stages, and dining tables become archives.

From Raghu stirring soups in *Bawarchi* to Ila writing small epistles after packing a meal of *karela*, lentils, and raw onions in *The Lunchbox*, Bollywood has always been delectably seasoned with meaning. Its cinematic kitchens have offered diaspora audiences, especially our Indo-Caribbean families in Trinidad, Guyana, Suriname, and in Toronto, not just nostalgia but sustenance.

We find in these films a reminder that flavour is memory, and memory is our identity. To savour from the screen, or to dip into one's own pot, is to taste a lineage, to inherit care, to belong. And in that act of cooking and watching, stirring and remembering, our diaspora continues to be resilient, fragrant, and full of the spice of life.



In photos, Chakraborty with brother Showik, doing puja in Mumbai



Rhea weaves streetwear into tale of trauma, reclamation

— From Bollywood debutante to the centre of a national storm, Rhea Chakraborty's journey has been one of public vilification, private anguish, and fragile reclamation. Now, alongside her brother, she is writing a bold second act, on her own terms, stitched into streetwear and survival.

When Rhea Chakraborty walked into Byculla jail in September 2020, she left behind more than her freedom. She stepped into a vortex where time moved like molasses and identity dissolved into numbers – where she was no longer a rising Bollywood actor but simply “UT number so-and-so”.

What had begun as a promising career in the Hindi film industry became engulfed in a blaze of accusations, vitriolic media trials, and an unrelenting public eye following the tragic death of her partner, actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

And yet, nearly five years later, she is building again – not just a career, but a statement. Along with her brother Showik, who was also swept up in the controversy, Rhea has launched a streetwear brand called *Chapter 2 Drip*. It is not just a fashion label. It is, as she puts it, “a way of giving people a voice when they feel unseen”.

In this narrative of darkness, depression, and dehumanisation, clothing has become a canvas for rewriting their lives.

Rhea's early Bollywood journey followed a familiar arc: debut in *Tuneega Tuneega* (2012), breakout roles in *Mere Dad Ki Maruti* (2013) and *Jalebi* (2018), and a burgeoning media presence that landed her at the top of *The Times of India's Most Desirable Women* list in 2020.

But all that changed on June 14, 2020, when Rajput was found dead in his Mumbai home. Amid widespread speculation, grief quickly curdled into accusation. What followed was a torrent of legal scrutiny and media spectacle. Rhea was accused of abetment to suicide, linked to drug-related charges, and paraded in headlines as everything from a “witch” to a “black magician”. Her brother, a high-achieving MBA aspirant, was also arrested.

“When we went through the tragedy that we went through, we both lost our careers. I stopped getting any acting work, and Showik, who had scored 96 percentile in CAT and secured admission into a prestigious university, was arrested before he could begin. By the time he came out, he had lost the first trimester – and with it, his MBA plans and future planning.”

She added that finding a job for Showik in the corporate world became next to impossible due to the media storm surrounding them.

“Getting a job for Showik afterwards in any corporate setup was very difficult. No one wanted to hire someone who had so much media scandal around them. For a while, we weren't sure where our lives were going. Like, what's next? We had our healing processes,” Rhea stated in a *CNBC-TV18* interview.

The professional futures of both siblings, once filled with promise, seemed annihilated in an instant.

In an earlier Karishma Mehta's podcast, she revealed prison was not merely punitive; it was also quite erasing.

“There's no society in jail. Everyone is a UT number. You are not a person,” she said, describing the months in Byculla prison as an existence where individuality is stripped bare.

The first two weeks were the hardest. Hope felt like a myth.

“No one ever believes that they are going to jail,” Rhea said, adding “Once you are in there, it takes a long time to understand that this has happened.”

In that darkness, she discovered a ray of light. Rhea began leading yoga sessions, teaching dance, and reciting poems to fellow inmates and children. These small acts helped her hold on to fragments of her former self, while giving others a reason

to momentarily forget their own despair.

“I thought of giving them a bit of me,” she said. “Some of them had no hope in their lives and had given up.”

After their release and a long silence, the Rhea siblings faced another haunting question: What next?

Showik, whose MBA dreams had been upended, found doors shut in corporate corridors. Rhea, blacklisted in casting circles, found the industry she once belonged to now unwilling to offer her a seat at the table.

It was from this void that *Chapter 2 Drip* was born. A streetwear brand; but perhaps more than a brand, it was a project of reclamation. Rhea's decision to channel their story into fashion came from a moment burned into memory: being photographed during her arrest in a T-shirt that read, “Roses are red, violets are blue, let's smash the patriarchy, me and you.”

“It spoke for me when I couldn't,” she said.

That line now reads like a manifesto. The brand was launched online in 2024 with seed support from retail veterans Kishore and Ashni Biyani. In June 2025, its first physical store opened in Bandra, Mumbai. A puja was held at the site, symbolically purging the space and perhaps, the past, while reincarnating hope out of the holy flames.

Chapter 2 Drip sells oversized tees, baggy jeans, raw-edged hoodies, clothes that wear emotion and resistance on their sleeves. Their website invites wearers to “write their sequel”.

For Rhea, healing has meant confronting not just institutions, but the immense shadow of public opinion.

In earlier recall of her trauma while in jail, she noted, “They called me names like *chudail*, *kaala jaadu karne waali*, *naagin*... but I really don't care. It used to upset me earlier.”

The path forward, she said, lay in forgiveness, not to erase what happened, but to untether herself from it.

“While I was angry for the longest time, I eventually decided to let go because fury had taken a toll on my health.”

Forgiveness, it seems, is stitched into the seams of *Chapter 2 Drip*, less as absolution and more as survival.

In May 2024, the Central Bureau of Investigation formally cleared Rhea and Showik of all charges. The closure report may have ended a legal chapter, but the psychological and professional toll remains etched in memory.

Rhea has since tiptoed back into entertainment. She appeared as a gang leader on *MTV's Roadies*, winning one season and returning the next. Yet, the glitz of television seems dimmer, gentler, now refracted through the prism of lived trauma and hard-won resilience.

The woman who once danced through Bollywood frames now speaks in the voice of someone who has survived a furnace. Her face, once the centre of national scorn, is now the symbol of a brand that gives others permission to reclaim identity through fabric, through fashion, through voice.

“You have to survive each day, and each day feels like a year,” Rhea once reflected on her jail time. That elasticity of suffering, where minutes stretch and futures contract, still lingers in her articulation.

And yet, something resilient has emerged. Perhaps not the cinematic comeback headlines crave, but something subtler, more elemental.

A new storefront in Bandra. A puja for peace, blessings, and future success. A line of clothes making a statement of resilience. A brother who believed again. A woman who chose to narrate her story not through press conferences, but through seams, slogans, and second chances.

“I've always been delusionally optimistic,” she once said. That optimism is now hanging on hangers; it is printed in ink, stitched into cotton, ready for others to wear, and to hope again.

Neil Mukesh hits at bias

— Actor Neil Nitin Mukesh has put the spotlight on persistent issues of equity and bias within Bollywood, underscoring how market-driven dynamics can disproportionately impact careers, despite individual talent and contributions.

Actor Neil Nitin Mukesh has publicly voiced his frustration over Bollywood's unequal treatment, asserting that industry insiders have unfairly written off his career following just a few unsuccessful films, while other prominent actors are repeatedly offered high-budget projects despite multiple failures.

Mukesh, who debuted with the critically acclaimed 2007 thriller *Johnny Gaddaar* directed by Sriram Raghavan, quickly rose to prominence with a pivotal role in Kabir Khan's acclaimed film *New York*.

Yet, despite early successes and critical appreciation, Mukesh says he found himself unfairly marginalised after some of his films underperformed commercially.

In a candid conversation on Varinder Chawla's *YouTube* channel, Mukesh highlighted Bollywood's narrow focus on box office performance.

“Unfortunately, if you are a part of a big film and you are playing a significant part of that film... consider me a part of that success as well. But you will give the credit to someone else. If this film had flopped then it would be a fall for everyone involved. That's unfair,” he explained, referencing his successful role in Salman Khan's blockbuster *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo*, which was directed by Sooraj Barjatya.

Mukesh underscored that film success should be seen as a collaborative achievement, citing *New York*, which starred John Abraham, Katrina Kaif, and himself.

“Like *New York*, it's not just John or mine or Katrina's film. It just doesn't belong to Kabir Khan; it's a collaborative effort. Everyone has put in hard work. All the actors, Irrfan Khan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, it belongs to everyone.”

He added, “The producers, their conviction in us, it's a hit for everyone, but if it's a flop, or it doesn't reach the numbers, the blame comes straight to the actors,” Mukesh stated.

He further illustrated Bollywood's double standards by emphasising that many leading actors continue receiving lucrative offers despite repeated failures.

“I have seen a lot of big actors giving flops but they keep getting opportunities. But for us, if there are two flops in a row, they say you be at home now. This is the only unfair bit. Didn't he just give ten flops? You have given him his 11th Rs 100 crore film to make a comeback but here, two films falter and you say, ‘Career over’. What do you mean ‘Career is over?’” he questioned.

Mukesh also expressed disappointment at how critical acclaim is disregarded when films fail commercially.

“Even if the films didn't do well, and you were praised for your work, people are ready to write you off almost instantly and they get pleasure out of this,” he remarked.

Highlighting recent industry trends, he indirectly referenced actor Akshay Kumar, who has had a series of box office disappointments in recent years, yet continues to headline major film projects.



Neil Nitin Mukesh



Salman Khan



Kabir Khan



Akshay Kumar



Nicholas Pooran

Pooran shocks cricket world with early retirement

— Nicholas Pooran shocked the Caribbean and its diaspora with his retirement from international cricket at age 29. He will be remembered as a left-hander who could dismantle any bowling attack, whose bat told stories of recovery, flair, and heart, and who, even in folding and putting away the maroon, will always remind fans how much he gave to West Indian cricket.

In a move that has sent ripples across global cricket and devastated fans of the maroon, Nicholas Pooran announced his retirement from international cricket on June 9 at the age of 29, citing deep personal reflection and gratitude for the journey.

Describing it as a decision made “after much thought and reflection”, Pooran said that wearing the West Indies maroon and giving everything he had each time he stepped onto the field was something “hard to put into words”.

He acknowledged that international cricket had given him “joy, purpose, unforgettable memories, and a chance to represent the people of the West Indies”, while calling the opportunity to captain the regional side “a privilege I will always hold close to my heart”.

Pooran confirmed the news through an emotional post on Instagram, in which he thanked fans for their “unwavering love”, noting that they “lifted me in the tough moments and celebrated the good ones with unmatched passion”.

He also extended his appreciation to his family, friends, and teammates for “walking this journey with me,” adding: “Your belief and support carried me through it all.”

Pooran’s international journey began in 2016 with a T20I debut against Pakistan, but his breakthrough came in late 2018 with a blistering 24-ball half-century against India in Chennai.

That innings fast-tracked him into the 2019 World Cup squad, where, despite his inexperience in the 50-over format, he made an immediate impact. Batting at No 4, he scored fifties against England and Afghanistan and notched a thrilling 100 against Sri Lanka, finishing the tournament with an average of 52.47 and a strike rate of 100.

Over 106 T20Is, Pooran amassed 2,275 runs at 26.14, with 13 half-centuries. In ODIs, he scored 1,983 runs in 61 matches at an average of 39.66, including three centuries and 11 fifties. His final appearances came in December 2024 against Bangladesh in a T20I and in July 2023 against Sri Lanka in an ODI.

The year 2024 was Pooran’s most prolific. He scored 2,331 runs in T20s, setting a new calendar-year record, eclipsing Mohammad Rizwan’s previous best of 2,036. He also shattered Chris Gayle’s record of 135 sixes in a single year by clearing the boundary 139 times.

Beyond the maroon, Pooran starred in franchise leagues around the world, playing 398 T20 matches overall and scoring 9,166 runs with three centuries and 56 fifties. But it is his legacy with the West Indies that leaves the most lasting impression – and a deeply felt absence.

Cricket West Indies, in an official statement, acknowledged the gravity of the moment, calling him “a world-class player and a game changer”. They extended “sincere gratitude and appreciation” for his service, and noted, “His performances on the field and influence within the team have made a lasting impact on West Indies cricket”.

CWI also thanked him “for the moments he has given fans across the region and beyond”, and wished him “all the very best in the next phase of his journey”.

Pooran’s retirement crystallises the ongoing tensions between international cricket and the allure of global franchise leagues.

His decision follows closely on the heels of South Africa’s Heinrich Klaasen opting out of national duties, a reflection of how saturated the cricketing calendar has become.

Former West Indies and Trinidad and Tobago manager Omar Khan, who managed Pooran from his teenage years, described the move as “surprising”.

As he noted, “He is the premier T20 batsman in the region. He is highly rated all around the world. One of the most sought-off players in terms of franchise cricket... Having established that reputation, it’s a huge loss to West Indies cricket.”

Khan added that the situation underscores a critical need for CWI to engage in “more meaningful dialogue” with its players.

“All of the factors we need to consider in terms of managing our players... we cannot afford something like this to happen,” he warned.

Highlighting the broader implications, he stressed, “Especially in times like these when we need players of the best calibre and especially now when we are struggling in all formats... we have to find ways and means of getting our players to be committed to representing the West Indies.”

Pooran’s rise was far from linear. In 2015, he narrowly survived a car accident that nearly ended his career. His return showcased not just talent, but an extraordinary mental resilience.

“He has overcome a lot in his life, and this shows his mental capacity and willingness to work hard,” said Tony Gray, former West Indies fast bowler and current CWI scout.

Gray acknowledged the deeply personal dimension of Pooran’s decision, noting: “He has a young family to think about and is sad to see him go, but we have to respect his decision.”

However, reflecting on Pooran’s limited recent involvement, Gray added: “He has not played a lot for the West Indies in comparison to what we expect from international operators.”

Addressing possible reasons behind the exit, he said, “I don’t think he was motivated to play for West Indies in recent times. He has not played ODIs for the last two years or so.”

Even so, Gray believes Pooran had more to offer, declaring, “He is obviously financially sound because he has made a lot of money in IPL and leagues around the world, but I still feel that he should have given more of his talent to West Indies cricket.”

He concluded with a pointed reminder: “You have to look back and understand the system that built you... the system that built you to what you are today. You have to show a sense of balance. Not only look for your family’s financial foundation, but a sense of gratitude must be shown.”

Former West Indies leg-spinner and two-time T20 World Cup champion Samuel Badree described the announcement as “very sad news”. And along with many fans, he expressed regret over the timing, with the T20 World Cup less than a year away.

“Fans around the Caribbean would no doubt be disappointed that they won’t see him in maroon again, including myself,” he said, adding, “But I respect his decision, which I am sure was a very considered one.”

Badree also reflected on the changing nature of modern cricket. As he stated, “The cricketing landscape has become so saturated that decisions like these are becoming more frequent, and with a young family, I can understand the decision, which would allow him more time with them.”

Yet even he allowed for the possibility of a return. “The most disappointing thing though is that there is a T20 World Cup early next year, and his absence significantly impacts the West Indies team. Who knows, maybe someday he will come out of retirement.”

SA take WTC trophy as Australian bats fail

— Australia’s reign in ICC finals ended as South Africa seized an historic five-wicket win at Lord’s, exposing top-order fragility and prompting captain Pat Cummins to signal a looming team reset.

Australia’s grip on ICC dominance slipped at Lord’s on June 14, when the Pat Cummins-led side fell to a resurgent South Africa by five wickets in the 2025 World Test Championship (WTC) final. The loss not only cost Australia the title but underscored mounting concerns around its top order, prompting Cummins to suggest a “reset” is imminent ahead of their upcoming three-Test series against the West Indies.

After earning a 74-run first-innings lead, Australia looked poised to defend their WTC crown. But a calamitous batting collapse in their second innings left them floundering at 144-8 when play resumed on day three. Despite a spirited unbeaten half-century from Mitchell Starc and a resilient 43 by wicketkeeper Alex Carey, Australia could only set a target of 213, which South Africa chased down with five wickets to spare.

The pitch flattened out under Lord’s sunshine on day three, neutralising Australia’s pace advantage. Temba Bavuma’s side capitalised, securing a win that marked South Africa’s first ICC final victory in 15 years.

Australia’s top-order collapse was central to the defeat. Openers Usman Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne managed just 0, 7 and 17, 22 respectively, while Cameron Green, returning after back surgery and batting at No 3, could only scrape together just four runs across both innings.

Labuschagne, elevated to opener for the first time in a Test, extended his century drought to nearly two years. Khawaja, 38,



Pat Cummins

was again exposed by express pace, falling cheaply to South Africa’s Kagiso Rabada in both innings. Green’s struggles, including a duck in the second innings, added to the dismal returns as the top three tallied a collective 49 runs in the match.

In contrast, Starc and Carey offered late resistance, salvaging some pride with a 77-run partnership that delayed South Africa’s charge. Steve Smith contributed a composed 66 in the first innings before suffering a dislocated finger, placing him in doubt for the upcoming Caribbean tour.

The game swung dramatically on Day Three. Australia, already under pressure at 144-8, saw conditions improve too late for a meaningful turnaround. South Africa’s bowlers, led by Rabada, exploited the early movement to devastating effect, while their batters thrived as the pitch eased.



Temba Bavuma

Australia’s strategic move to reshuffle the batting order by promoting Labuschagne and testing Green at three, failed to pay dividends. With the retirement of David Warner still reverberating, Australia’s opening conundrum deepened further.

Australia had not lost an ICC final since 2010 and entered the WTC final as defending champions after their 2023 triumph. However, this defeat has amplified scrutiny on their aging batting core and uncertain succession planning.

Since Warner’s retirement 17 months ago, Australia has rotated through five opening combinations. The latest with Labuschagne and Khawaja faltered in the face of quality pace, reopening selection debates ahead of a packed calendar featuring a Caribbean tour and a home Ashes series.

“There’s probably quite a few people in the lineup that wish they could have done a little bit more,” said Cummins post-match, adding, “Obviously, the top three was an obvious one in this game.”

The captain acknowledged the broader implications for team planning, stating, “Maybe it’s an opportunity in the Test matches to do something similar [to the white-ball reset]. But it’s a little bit early to tell... everyone gets thrown back into the conversation, and it’s a little bit of a reset for the first Test against the West Indies.”

Reflecting on the fresh WTC cycle starting with the West Indies tour, Cummins added, “It does feel like a little bit of a fresh start... probably more for the selectors and for me to sit down and map it ahead.”

West Indies women target rebuild

– Following a 6-0 drubbing by England Women, West Indies Women look to reset against South Africa, with head coach Shane Deitz declaring the next eight months critical for revival ahead of a packed 2026.

After a winless UK tour that saw the West Indies Women suffer consecutive 3-0 series defeats in both the ODI and T20I formats against England Women, head coach Shane Deitz has outlined a pivotal rebuild for the regional side ahead of a packed 2026 calendar. As the team now hosts South Africa Women in a dual-format white-ball series at the 3Ws Oval in Barbados, Deitz described the coming eight months as “massive” for team development, skill refinement, and cultural reset off the field.

In their most recent outing, West Indies Women were handed a comprehensive nine-wicket defeat in the third T20I by England Women earlier this month, capping off a tour in which the regional side failed to secure a single win. The team is now engaging in a fresh challenge, facing higher-ranked South Africa Women in a three-match ODI and T20I series on home soil. The series concludes on June 23.

The home side has received a much-needed boost with the return of explosive all-rounder Chinelle Henry and the recovery of captain Hayley Matthews, who missed the latter part of the England tour due to a left shoulder injury. Also back is 29-year-old Qiana Joseph Alleyne, replacing Cherry-Ann Fraser after recovering from injury.

Despite recent setbacks, Deitz sees promise in the emerging crop of players.

“We had five players aged 21 and under in our last ODI against England,” he noted, adding, “It was great to see a young team go out there and mix it up with one of the best teams in the world.”

Deitz also acknowledged the learning curve for the developing squad, stating, “All those younger players learned some valuable lessons during that series, which we hope they will bring into this series to contribute some more

for the team and put in some match-winning performances.”

Welcoming back proven performers was also key, he noted.

“It’s great that Hayley is now available for this series – her home series in her hometown – and she will be really excited to put on a great show in front of her family, friends, and supporters of West Indies cricket. It’s also great to welcome back Chinelle Henry. In the last 12 months she has been a world class player,” Deitz said.

He emphasised that the team’s turnaround hinges less on immediate match results and more on a disciplined and targeted off-field program.

“What we do in the next eight months off the playing field is going to be the key thing for our performance next year,” he stated.

He elaborated on the developmental priorities, pointing to the need for fitness and skill-based training.

Said Deitz: “It’s a skill-based game, cricket, and the team with the best skills generally wins, so our skills, particularly the younger ones, got to improve a lot to be world class. We need world class players to beat a world class team...”

Given the logistical challenges of operating across the Caribbean, Deitz expressed intent to facilitate more one-

on-one coaching

“I’m the head coach but I rarely get much time to work with players one-on-one, so that’s what we’re going to have to try and do.”

West Indies Women currently rank ninth in ODIs and sixth in T20Is, compared to South Africa’s fifth position in both formats. The contrast in depth and consistency was on full display during the England tour, where West Indies struggled in all departments, further hampered by the absence of key players including Deandra Dottin, who remains out due to injury.

However, the Caribbean side is in a transitional phase, ushering in young talent while simultaneously contending with injury recoveries and the need to rebuild a winning culture.



Shane Deitz

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