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Guyana's 60th Independence Anniversary was marked in Toronto with a gala that saw dignitaries, guests, and the diaspora in attendance; in photo, left to right, are Bibi Shariman Ali, Guyana MP Madanlall Ramraj, Cindy Maria Sauers, Mani Singh, and Gerry Hopkin. See story on Page 11



Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow and Deputy Consul at the Consulate General of TT, Toronto, Tracey Ramsubaghamannette, were guests at the TT 50-Plus' 30th Anniversary celebration. Story on Page 15. Photo by Hinano Beekhoo

## Family with a vision sets its sights on Guyana

— A Guyana-Canada family humanitarian effort turned into a lasting gift on April 21 when the Doobay Medical and Research Centre commissioned a new eye clinic in Annandale, expanding access to affordable vision care while addressing a growing national health focus on diabetes and hypertension.

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Special Report

Toronto — What unfolded on April 21 at the Doobay Medical and Research Centre in Annandale, East Coast Demerara, was not just the commissioning of a new medical facility. It was, in equal measure, a homecoming, a gesture of gratitude, and a quiet, committed intervention into one of Guyana's most pressing public health challenges.

The newly-opened Latchmin Kissoon and Family Eye Clinic stands as both infrastructure and inheritance, and is named for a mother whose life journey now finds renewed meaning in service to others. For the Kissoon family, gathered in Guyana together for the first time in decades, the moment carried the weight of time, distance, and return.

Speaking on behalf of his mother and her seven children, Toronto lawyer and university lecturer Dhaman Kissoon reflected on a journey that began with migration to Canada in the early 1980s and matured into a shared sense of responsibility.

"After spending years and having achieved our goals in studies or work, we decided that it's time to give back to the community," he said.

That sense of giving found its expression in both symbolism and circumstance. His mother's name, Latchmin, he noted, signifies light and vision, an alignment that became all the more poignant when the family learned that a previous effort to fund critical equipment for the facility had not materialised.

In stepping forward, they transformed intention into action, and tribute into tangible care.

For the beloved Kissoon matriarch herself, the moment was one of humility and gratitude. Having lived in Canada for 47 years, she described the opportunity as an honour.

"I thank Dr [Budhendranauth] Doobay for choosing me and my family for this occasion," she said, adding simply that "the goal is to help people achieve good health."

That goal sits at the core of the Centre's work. Dr Doobay, acknowledging the contribution of the Kissoon family alongside a network of donors and supporters, positioned the new clinic within a broader mission as one shaped by need, but sustained by commitment.

In Guyana, diabetes and high blood pressure remain the leading causes of eye disease and blindness. For many, access to private eye care is financially out of reach, and the consequences of delayed diagnosis are often irreversible. The burden is particularly acute for families already navigating the daily costs of chronic illness, where specialised care becomes an added strain, rather than a feasible option.

The Latchmin Kissoon and Family Eye Clinic responds



Latchmin Kissoon at the commissioning of the clinic

See Page 5: Family looks ahead

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Chief Superintendent Mann and IMO's brother Omar



Chief Superintendent Mann at the ceremony

## IMO's Omar Farouk honoured for years of service

— Longtime community leader Brother Omar Farouk was honoured during Volunteer Recognition Month last month for more than 15 years of service, highlighting his role in strengthening ties between Toronto's Muslim community and law enforcement through sustained dialogue, outreach, and crisis-time leadership.

By Romeo Kaseram

### An LJI Community Report

Toronto – In a city where trust is often tested in quiet ways, the recognition of steady, behind-the-scenes work can carry uncommon weight. Last month, during Volunteer Recognition Month, Brother Omar Farouk, President of the International Muslim Organisation (IMO) Mosque and Co-Chair of the Muslim Consultative Committee (MCC), was honoured for more than 15 years of dedicated community service.

The recognition came at a well-attended event that brought together veteran officers, unit commanders from across divisions, and recipients of community service awards from throughout the city. It was both a moment of acknowledgement and a reflection of a longer arc of work, one that has been shaped by consistency, collaboration, and a belief in dialogue as a foundation for safer communities.

As Co-Chair of the MCC, an advisory body within the Toronto Police Service, Brother Omar has played a central role in bridging relationships between law enforcement and Toronto's diverse Muslim communities. The committee brings together religious leaders and community voices to foster understanding, address concerns, and create pathways for engagement, particularly among youth.

His work has often unfolded in practical, community-specific initiatives such as organising events, facilitating conversations, and helping to ensure that interactions between officers and residents move beyond formality toward familiarity. In these spaces, dialogue becomes less about policy and more about presence through who is seen, who is heard, and who feels included.

That role took on added urgency during the Covid-19 pan-

dem. As communities grappled with isolation and uncertainty, Brother Omar helped lead mental health initiatives through the MCC, ensuring that support systems remained accessible at a time when physical distancing threatened to deepen social disconnection.

Earlier, in 2021, he also helped guide the IMO's involvement in the London Family Vigil, which was held in memory of the Afzaal family. The event, attended by then Toronto Police Chief James Ramer and senior officers from across the Greater Toronto Area, became a moment of collective mourning and solidarity. It also underscored the importance of visible unity between institutions and communities during periods of trauma and vulnerability.

Reflecting on his journey, Brother Omar described himself as "deeply honoured and humbled" to receive the recognition, noting that his involvement with the Toronto Police Service began more than 15 years ago with a simple conviction that "safer communities are built by communities".

He affirmed that conviction has been reinforced through years of collaboration with police leadership and fellow volunteers. He expressed gratitude to Chief of Police Myron Demkiw for prioritising community partnerships, and acknowledged the leadership of Chief Superintendent Mandeep Mann, particularly in fostering open and respectful roundtable discussions.

He also noted that in these fora, volunteers have been able not only to contribute ideas but also to raise concerns, and feel genuinely heard for an outcome that has helped strengthen both trust and accountability.

He also paid tribute to past collaborators within the MCC, including Brother Osman and Sister Rukhsana, recognising their contributions to building a framework that continues to guide the committee's work today.

While the award marked a milestone, it did not signal a conclusion. Brother Omar affirmed that he looks forward to continuing his work alongside the Toronto Police Service, emphasising that community-building was not a fixed achievement but an ongoing and shared endeavour.



The Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto placed culture, history, and reflection at the centre of community life on April 16 when it launched a festival initiative designed to celebrate the homeland's heritage while marking key milestones, including Independence, Republic status, and the anniversary of Carnival in Toronto. The inaugural event opened with a fireside chat featuring Caneisha Edwards in conversation with mas' band leader Louis Saldenha. In photos (left), Saldenha (at centre) with guests; and in photo at right, members of the audience listen attentively to the discussion. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*



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Dr Sonia Anand (left) and Dr Budhendranauth Doobay at the commissioning of the Latchmin Kisson and Family Eye Clinic. *DGRMC Facebook photos*

## Family looks ahead to eye care in Guyana

From Page 1

directly to this reality. Offering comprehensive services at approximately 70 percent below private sector costs, the facility provides cataract surgery, retinal care for diabetic and hypertensive patients, full eye examinations, and vision restoration treatments.

Crucially, patients who are unable to pay are not turned away, a continuation of the Centre's longstanding non-profit model. And that model has already demonstrated its reach.

What began as a modest dialysis programme with six machines has grown into a national lifeline, now serving more than 250 patients across Guyana. Many of those individuals would otherwise have no access to life-saving care, yet the principle has remained unchanged: those who cannot afford treatment are still treated.

The expansion into eye care is, therefore, less an addition than an extension; instead, it is a widening of a philosophy that places access at the centre of healthcare delivery.

Supporting that philosophy is a cadre of ophthalmologists who have volunteered their expertise, bringing with them the assurance that quality is not compromised by cost. Their commitment is rooted in a shared under-

standing that proper eye care should not be a privilege reserved for those with means, but a standard available to all.

The clinic also strengthens the Centre's integrated approach to chronic disease management, linking eye care with existing dialysis and stroke rehabilitation services. For patients living with diabetes and hypertension, this continuum offers not only treatment, but coordination, which is an often overlooked dimension of effective healthcare.

Looking ahead, the initiative is further anchored by a research partnership with McMaster University, which will examine the effects of diabetes and hypertension on eye health. The findings are expected to inform improved treatment protocols and prevention strategies tailored to Guyanese communities, adding a forward-looking dimension to the clinic's immediate impact.

The April 21 commissioning ceremony drew a cross-section of donors, supporters, and observers, among them Dr Sonia Anand, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology at McMaster University, and Canadian High Commissioner to Guyana, Sébastien Sigouin, evidencing the intersection of local initiative and international collaboration shaping the Centre's evolution.



The clinic is now officially open



Latchmin Kisson cuts the ribbon to officially open the facility



The Kisson siblings, from left, back row, are Indra, Danny, Mitra, Krish, Dhaman, Janie, and Nan; in front row, Dr Budhendranauth Doobay, and Latchmin Kisson



Applause from Dr Doobay (right) and family members following the unveiling

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Editorial

Indian Arrival Day

Our journey did not end when the *Hesperus* docked in British Guiana in 1838, but was merely a change of address.

On that first crossing, 225 Indentured labourers stepped onto the shores of what was then British Guiana, coerced, at times deceived into a system designed to replace one form of enslavement with another. The chains of slavery had been struck off in 1834, but the logic of extraction remained intact. Labour was still needed since Empire does not pause, but recalibrates.

Indian Arrival Day, then, is not simply a marker of beginnings. It is a reminder of continuities, how movement, under unequal terms, shaped not only Guyana but the wider Caribbean; and today, in quieter but no less profound ways, communities far beyond the region's shores.

In his recent message, Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali called on Guyanese to treat Arrival Day as both reflection and responsibility. It is a framing that travels well. For those of us here in the GTA, Indian Arrival Day is not an imported observance, but a lived inheritance.

The first passage from India to the Caribbean was marked by rupture. Recruiters presented promises of wealth and an easy life, obscuring the harsher truths. What followed was not migration in the modern sense, but managed displacement in labour engineered to sustain plantation economies after emancipation.

Yet from that rupture emerged something enduring. Across Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Suriname, the descendants of Indentured labourers built communities, preserved language and ritual, and fashioned new identities from available materials. Alongside Africans, Indigenous peoples, Portuguese, Chinese, and others, our ancestors contributed to a complex, plural society, one forged as much by necessity as by resilience.

If the Caribbean was the crucible, then Canada became our next horizon.

From the late 20th century onwards, waves of Indo-Caribbeans made their way to Canadian cities seeking stability, opportunity, and a life less tethered to the uncertainties of post-colonial economies. We arrived carrying memory in portable forms in Bhojpuri-inflected speech, with the aroma of roti and curry, the rhythms of tassa and chutney, the rituals of mandirs, mosques, and mas.

Today, neighbourhoods in Brampton, Scarborough, and Mississauga stand as living archives, as sites where history is not displayed but enacted. A cricket match in a public field, *Phagwah* celebrations awash in colour, quiet *pujas* where suburban homes display religious flags outdoors. Such evidence of migration is not merely cultural expressions, but acts of continuity.

And yet, continuity is never seamless. Second- and third-generation descendants navigate a different terrain of hybridity and negotiation. Language softens or disappears; traditions adapt, and identity becomes layered, sometimes uncertain, but always evolving.

The question is no longer where one has come from, but what does it mean to belong in multiple places at once.

In this sense, Indian Arrival Day is less an event than a condition; it remains ongoing and unfinished.

As Guyana approaches its 60th year of Independence, it does so at a moment of unprecedented economic promise, driven by oil and renewed investment. As descendants of those who arrived, we now find ourselves as stakeholders in a new national story, one that demands vigilance as much as celebration.

Certainly, for our diaspora, distance does not diminish our connection to the homeland. If anything, it sharpens our perspective. From the suburbs of the GTA, Indian Arrival Day offers a vantage point from which to reflect not only on our past, but on the responsibilities of the present toward equity, inclusion, and the fair distribution of opportunity and wealth.

Those wooden ships have long crumbled. But our journey continues: in classrooms, community halls, mandirs, mosques – in acts of remembrance and reinvention.

For us, descendants of the Indentured, arrival did not happen and become static, but remains fluid and ongoing.

We celebrate, not with forgetfulness, but with gratitude

On April 18, the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA) hosted our third annual Fete Gala, our premier fundraising event and a true celebration of community, culture, and progress.

This was not an ordinary West Indian fundraiser.

We invited our guests to embrace the theme, Caribbean Royalty (and quite a few did), nearly 500 attendees arrived dressed in elegant gowns, suits and ties, even crowns and tiaras, all vibrant attire.

The evening sparkled with energy as celebrated performers Terry Gajraj, Hunter, and K.I. kept the audience thoroughly entertained.

Beneath glittering chandeliers in a grand banquet hall, guests enjoyed a curated menu of appetisers, a plated dinner featuring chicken and salmon, and an impressive array of desserts that brought the night to a sweet close.

The purpose of the evening was to raise funds for ICCA's ongoing community work; and but we did so in style, with pride, and joy.

When I rose to deliver an address as Chair of ICCA, however, I could not help but reflect on the profound contrast between our lavish celebration and the events that occurred 109 years earlier on that very date.

On April 18, 1917, the SS Ganges docked in Georgetown, British Guiana (now Guyana), carrying the final group of South Asian Indentured labourers to arrive in the Caribbean.

The 3,475-ton steamship, launched on March 9, 1906, and built by Charles Connell and Company of Glasgow for the Nourse Line, made multiple voyages across the globe. It transported Indentured labourers to Fiji seven times, to Trinidad on ten voyages, and twice to Suriname.

Departing Calcutta on March 8, 1917, the Ganges carried 124 passengers, only one third of its intended capacity, before picking up additional passengers in Madras, and then setting sail directly for the Caribbean.

When it arrived in British Guiana on April 18, hundreds of South Asian labourers disembarked and were dispersed to plantations.

Only 109 years separate that moment from ours today.

The arrival of that ship marked the beginning of the end of Indentureship, a brutal system widely regarded as an amended form of slavery.

By that time, over half a million individuals had been deceived, coerced, or forcibly recruited and transported across oceans into lives of harsh labour and limited freedom.

These were our ancestors. Many were impoverished and struggling to survive. They crossed the Kala Pani, the "dark waters", with little more than hope. Hope for opportunity; hope

Small change and early lessons in tight-fisted accounting

If she were here, Ma would not argue, but jump to a conclusion. A single shake of her head, slow and final, as if tightening a knot no one else could see, and that would be that: our world, through her short-sighted estimation, had come loose.

Loose, for instance, like with the disappearance of the one-cent piece, vanished now into drawers, into memory, into the soft archaeology of backyard soil, where, if you dig long enough, you might still find its ghost among rusted crown corks, blue caps from Bic ball point pens, the coins faded into anonymity, copper-green with rust, eroded and with even less value than its depleted weight.

The one-cent piece, for Ma, was never small. It was Alpha and Omega, seed and sum, the atom from which all transactions grew, and to which all accounts must return.

However, such enormous value was never left exposed. Ma kept her coins tied, literally, at the end of her *orhini* – that embroidered headpiece woven from a lineage older than the coins themselves. At its end sat 'The Knot': dense, layered, and impenetrable. Not tied so much as engineered into a fortress disguised as fabric.

And like all fortresses, it required a keeper. Ma's fingers, index and thumb, left, right, left, right, marched in unison, in precision, working at the knot with the concentration of a safecracker listening for the music of the spheres in the tumblers.

At times, her two remaining incisors joined the effort, gripping, testing, negotiating entry into this private treasury. Watching her was to witness ritual: breath held, head tilted, silk yielding in increments, the knot layered like a *paratha roti*.

Then came the release, the last of the layers untied, and a coin would emerge.

Ma would inspect it, not casually, but with the scrutiny of suspicion borne out of short-sightedness. Never casually, she turned each copper face to the light, the Queen of England's profile glinting faintly, as though still overseeing even this smallest of exchanges.

That imperial stamp was distant, but not absent, an early lesson for me that authority had a way of lingering, even when reduced to the granularity of a one-cent piece.

Satisfied, but rarely quickly, Ma would press a single coin into my palm, then another, counting, "One cent..."; then reluctantly,

for dignity; with hope for a better future for their children.

Their sacrifice is why we are here today; their resilience lives within us; their determination to endure ensured not only survival, but cultural flourishing.

They carried their traditions, languages, faiths, and customs into a new world, and built a community from nothing.

Today, we are living the dreams they scarcely could have imagined.

A lavish evening in a grand banquet hall. Endless food and music; joyful celebration; pride in identity. These moments would have seemed unimaginable to those stepping off the SS Ganges.

Yet it is precisely their endurance that made such evenings possible.

On May 1, ICCA celebrated its fifth anniversary, an organisation established to connect, serve, and amplify Canada's Indo-Caribbean community.

Our ethos is rooted in the spirit of our ancestors: strangers bound together by circumstance who forged unity, strength, and belonging.

In that same spirit of camaraderie, ICCA continues its work through our programs. Star Bhai and Star Gyal provide space for youth to connect and learn with culturally associated mentors.

Equality and Pride for Indo-Caribbeans (EPIC) continues to combat homophobia and ensure that, regardless of who a person loves, there is a place for them in the Indo-Caribbean community.

Voter Organisation for Indo-Caribbean Engagement (VOICE) educates our community on civic engagement, and the importance of being involved, and we advocate for our community with all levels of government.

Single Parent Indo-Caribbean Exchanges (SPICE), our newest program, has established space for single parents and their children to come together, have meaningful experiences and find supportive connections.

And Share Yuh RICE – Raising Indo-Caribbean Essentials – Food Drive, continues to promote the donation of culturally appropriate food so clients of food banks can still enjoy our amazing traditional foods.

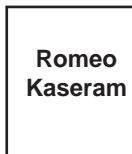
Five years, so much achieved, but much more to do.

We connect our community from coast to coast, fostering engagement grounded in pride and remembrance. We serve by delivering programming that ensures no one is left behind. And we amplify our collective voice so that our contributions are recognized and our history honoured.

As we celebrate in splendour, we do so not in forgetfulness, but in gratitude.



Ryan Singh



Romeo Kaseram

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# 'Symbolic aggression' by Rodríguez

Dear Editor,

Before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) heard oral arguments in the Guyana-Venezuela border controversy on May 4, the international community witnessed a disturbing escalation of "symbolic aggression" by Venezuela's Acting President, Delcy Rodríguez.

Guyana's Private Sector Commission (PSC) and Aviation Operators Association of Guyana (AOAG) vehemently condemned the act, calling it "theatrical aggression". Furthermore, Guyana's Minister of Local Government, Priya Manickchand, publicly rebuked Caricom leaders for entertaining



Delcy Rodríguez

During recent official visits to Caricom member states, first Grenada on April 9, and then Barbados on April 27, Rodríguez wore a brooch depicting a map of Venezuela that fraudulently includes Guyana's Essequibo region. This was not an accident – it was a diplomatic provocation designed to normalise an illegal annexation claim while the matter was *sub judice* before the World Court.

Rodríguez while she wore the pin, stating it makes her "question our friendships". Thank you, Minister Manickchand for highlighting this deliberate provocation.

Publicly, Caricom has not issued a specific protest against this specific visit. While its heads reiterated "unwavering support" for Guyana at their July 2025 summit, the failure to immediately denounce a guest wear-

Rodríguez was testing the region's resolve. By wearing this pin in front of Grenada's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell and Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley, she was asking Caricom to tolerate an attack on a founding member's territorial integrity. Since Guyana is a Full Member of Caricom, while Caracas is merely an observer with "acceding status", Rodríguez appears to be attempting to coax Caricom into silence, implying Venezuelan aggression can be normalised within our community without consequence.



Dickon Mitchell



Mia Mottley

ing an annexation map on official pins is a dangerous silence. As the PSC warned, "Silence or inaction in the face of such deliberate provocation risks emboldening further escalation".

This pin is not decorative jewelry, but a claim to 160,000 square kilometres of Guyanese land, and violated the ICJ's order for Venezuela to maintain the *status quo*.

If Caricom hopes to remain relevant in defending the rule of law, it must speak with one voice to reject this farce.

Jonathan Subrian, Guyana, via email.



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# Guyana/Venezuela border dispute enters pivotal stage at The Hague

The long-running territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela, one rooted in colonial cartography but sharpened by modern oil wealth, has entered a pivotal phase this week, as both countries face off before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

For Guyana, the stakes are existential. For Venezuela, the hearings represent a renewed attempt to overturn a boundary it has contested for more than half a century. And for the wider Caribbean and South America, the outcome could shape geopolitical stability in a region newly transformed by energy discoveries.

At the heart of the case lies the Essequibo region, a vast, resource-rich territory covering roughly 160,000 square kilometres, more than two-thirds of Guyana's landmass.

The origins of the dispute date to the 1899 *Paris Arbitral Award*, which established the boundary between Venezuela and what was then British Guiana, granting the territory to the British colony.

For decades, the ruling was treated as final. But in 1962, Venezuela declared the award null and void, arguing it was the product of fraud, an assertion later embedded in the 1966 Geneva Agreement, which set out a framework for resolving the disagreement.

After years of failed diplomatic efforts, the United Nations referred the matter to the ICJ, where Guyana formally filed its case in 2018 seeking legal confirmation of the 1899 boundary.

Incidentally, tensions have been building between the two countries in recent years, although they agreed to a peaceful resolution in December 2023. Tensions mounted two years ago after a Venezuelan referendum in which voters assented to creating a Venezuelan state within the disputed region. Guyana then called the move a step towards annexation and an "existential" threat as the spectre of armed conflict loomed over the region.

However, last year, tensions took a dramatic turn following the incursion of a Venezuelan Coast Guard vessel into Guyanese waters on March 1. Evidently, the vessel approached an offshore oil facility operated by ExxonMobil and cautioned workers that they are operating in disputed waters.

Prior to this incident in late February 2025, six Guyanese soldiers were injured, two critically, when armed individuals from Venezuela opened fire on a Guyanese military patrol along the Cuyuni River. The soldiers were on a resupply mission when they were attacked from the Venezuelan side of the river.

Last year, satellite images posted by the US Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) showed that Venezuela was extending its military base on Ankoko Island, half of which Venezuela seized from Guyana in the mid-1960s, and nearby Punta Barima, less than 50 miles from the Guyana border. The images, according to the CSIS, showed significant infrastructure improvement of roads and other facilities near the two areas.

The island's airfield was expanded to include a small control tower, according to the CSIS. Satellite imagery showed an area next to the airfield with more than 75 field tents, "enough for a battalion-sized unit of several hundred personnel". At least two Iranian-built Peykaap III (Zolfaghar) fast missile boats were also seen at Venezuela's small coast guard station at Punta Barima.

It was also reported in May 2024 that Venezuela's armed forces have moved "substantial quantities" of personnel and equipment near the disputed region that is controlled by Guyana.

In an effort to prevent escalation of the conflict, Brazil, Caricom and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)

arranged a meeting between Guyana's president Dr Irfaan Ali and Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro on December 14, 2023 in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The meeting resulted in the signing of the *Argyle Declaration*, which contemplated a peaceful resolution of the dispute, followed by Maduro and Ali issuing a joint declaration

pledging to "not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances".

This declaration was reinforced following a January 25, 2024 meeting between the Venezuelan and Guyanese foreign ministers, Yván Gil and Hugh Hilton Todd, which concluded with a statement indicating that negotiations would continue.

However, tensions escalated following Venezuela's elections in which Maduro declared himself winner.

Then, the arrival of a British warship in Guyana's waters led to a further escalation of tensions. On December 28, 2023, Venezuela ordered its armed forces to hold military drills after the UK sent its warship *HMS Trent* to Guyana. The ship had initially been deployed to search for drug smugglers in the Caribbean, but the UK confirmed that the ship would take part in joint exercises with Guyana amidst the ongoing dispute over the oil-rich Essequibo region of Guyana.

Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro referred to the exercises being launched "in response to the provocation and threat of the United Kingdom against peace and the sovereignty of our country" in a television address on December 28. He claimed the move was "practically a military threat from London", breaking the "spirit" of recent agreements not to use force.

Venezuela also claimed that the US oil giant ExxonMobil is collaborating with the government and the US military to exploit oil and gas resources in waters claimed by Venezuela. It accused Guyana of granting illegal oil exploration concessions in territory the two nations are disputing, and said it would reserve the right to take any diplomatic actions necessary.

Amidst the tensions, several top American administration and military officials visited Guyana in a show of support. The US also supplied military overflights monitoring Venezuelan troops and other activities at the height of tensions in December. In addition, the US agreed to bolster Guyana's defence with new aircraft, helicopters, military drones, and radar technology.

In the meantime, Guyana commenced spending money on its military. It has allocated over US \$200 million to update its military equipment, including helicopters, maritime surveillance vessels, and at least one drone. President Ali said the government would focus on technology items for the Guyana Defense Force, and on cooperation with allied countries, and noted that Guyana was "not in an arms war" with Venezuela.

With the risk of confrontation increasing, several countries and organisations, including the US, the Organisation of American States, Caricom, and the Commonwealth Secretary general, among others, have expressed support for Guyana, condemning Venezuela's actions, and emphasising the importance of respecting sovereign borders.

The US Department of State's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs also expressed support for Guyana. A post on X (formerly *Twitter*) said: "Venezuelan naval vessels threatening ExxonMobil's floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) unit is unacceptable and a clear violation of Guyana's internationally recognised maritime territory."

It added, "Further provocation will result in consequences for the Maduro regime. The United States reaffirms its support for Guyana's territorial integrity and the 1899 Arbitral

Award." The post was shared by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Since Maduro was arrested by the US early this year and taken to New York, it was widely anticipated that the border dispute would be laid to rest. However, the position of Vice President Delcy Rodríguez on Essequibo has remained largely unchanged.

Her government has sought to project continuity, insisting that Maduro remains the country's legitimate leader even while exercising executive authority in his absence.

At the same time, Rodríguez has moved quickly to assert control, promising stability, limited reforms, and the gradual normalisation of international relations.

Officials under Rodríguez continue to reject the ICJ's jurisdiction, arguing that Guyana's case violates the Geneva Agreement. Caracas has made clear that its participation in the hearings does not signal recognition of the court's authority.

Symbolism has reinforced that stance. Rodríguez, who is now serving as acting president, has publicly worn a map pin depicting Essequibo as Venezuelan territory, underscoring the claim as a matter of national identity.

But analysts note a subtle shift: while Maduro's rhetoric often veered toward confrontation, including a 2023 referendum backing annexation, Rodríguez's interim administration has so far emphasised legal argument and international engagement, even as it maintains the core claim.

This week's ICJ hearings mark the first time the dispute is being argued on its legal merits. Guyana is asking the court to affirm that the 1899 boundary is "final and binding", while Venezuela maintains that the court lacks jurisdiction, and that the matter must be settled through bilateral negotiations.

Yet the most striking new variable is

Venezuela's political leadership.

The dispute's renewed urgency is inseparable from oil. Guyana's rapid emergence as a major offshore producer has heightened the economic stakes, while Venezuela, which is home to vast but underdeveloped reserves, faces continued economic strain. Control, or even partial recognition, of Essequibo could significantly alter that balance.

For Venezuela's interim leadership, the issue also carries domestic weight. With political authority in flux after Maduro's removal, defending the Essequibo claim offers a unifying nationalist cause at a moment of uncertainty.

Indeed, even as Caracas navigates internal restructuring, it has doubled down on the territorial issue, framing it as both a historical grievance and a sovereign right.

The ICJ is expected to deliver a final judgment in the coming months. Its decision will be legally binding, but enforcement remains a separate question, particularly given Venezuela's longstanding rejection of the court's authority.

For Guyana, a favourable ruling would solidify internationally recognised borders and safeguard its economic future.

For Venezuela, the implications are more complex. An adverse decision would test the credibility of its interim leadership: whether it chooses confrontation, compliance, or a negotiated recalibration.

What is clear is that the case now transcends law. It sits at the intersection of history, energy, and regime change, where the legacy of empire meets the instability of modern geopolitics.

And as proceedings continue in The Hague, the outcome may determine not only the fate of a disputed territory, but the trajectory of a region navigating both newfound wealth and renewed uncertainty.



Dwarka Lakhan

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# Indentureship story one about promise to peril

By Jerome Teelucksingh

In the British West Indies, slavery was abolished in 1834 but enslaved Africans continued to work on the sugar estates until the Apprenticeship system was eventually abolished on August 1, 1838. Even before 1838, the planters frequently complained of labour shortages and appealed to Britain for the approval of imported labour.

Thus, there were attempts by the planters in colonies such as Trinidad to introduce Chinese labour on the plantations. As early as 1806, there was the importation of 192 Chinese from Macao and Penang into Trinidad.

However, this experiment soon failed. Subsequently, in 1834 and 1839, labourers from Portugal were imported into Trinidad. This soon ended as Portuguese workers could not withstand the rigorous conditions of the contract labour system.

During 1839 and 1840, two immigrants groups comprising 866 French and Germans were brought to Trinidad in an effort to fill the labour void. Again, this proved to be a disaster, and was abruptly curtailed due to a high death rate as a result of their inability to withstand tropical diseases and harsh climatic conditions.

However, the workers in these labour experiments could not cope with the arduous working conditions. Also many died due to a lack of immunity from tropical diseases. Some of the survivors headed for the US.

In 1843, licenses were granted for the importation of 2,850 Chinese into the British West Indies in which British Guiana (Guyana) received 2,150, Trinidad received 300, and Jamaica obtained 400 workers.

Furthermore, Chinese immigrant workers were also sent to Cuba. The work scheme, like previous efforts, soon collapsed due to the exorbitant cost of immigration, high mortality rates, and the demands of the Chinese government that a free return passage was accorded to immigrants.

After almost a decade of unsuccessful labour experiments, in 1844, the British government agreed to allow the immigration of 2,500 workers from India to Trinidad. This was a continuation of India's contribution to the modern world economy.

The *arkatias* were hired by recruiters to assist in recruiting persons from the various villages in India. Thousands of Indians from small towns and villages from Bihar, Central Provinces, Orissa and Oudh were encouraged, tricked and forced by the *arkatias* to make the trip to a land of "wealth and ease".

The main areas of recruiting women in India included bazaars, railways stations, markets, temples, and at religious festivals. A significant percentage of women were widows and abandoned wives. The females were included as part of adding a 'moral' dimension to the immigration system.

Unfortunately, many of these women were abused in the recruitment process, and these incidents were unreported and thus absent from the historical records.

The trip to the depot in India was the first leg of those caught in the cursed Indentureship scheme. Men were the main targets, but women and children were also included. For instance in 1910 there was a report from a Sub-Divisional Magistrate that teenaged girls and boys were at the depot of Malaya, at Negapatam. These minors were transported there without permission from their parents.

The three ports of Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta were the final destinations for emigrants heading for the British colonies. More than a million of these Indentured Indian labourers were forced to labour in horrible conditions throughout the British Empire's colonies. These included Natal, Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, Jamaica, Grenada, St. Lucia, British Honduras (Belize) and British Guiana (Guyana).

The first batch of 225 Indians arrived in Trinidad on May 30, 1845. Likewise, during 1838-1917, a total of 239,149 Indians were imported into British Guiana. This colony received the most Indentured labourers in the British West Indies.

During 1845-1920, approximately 144,000 Indians were imported into Trinidad, and 37,000 in Jamaica. These Indentured labourers were also employed on the cocoa, coconut, and coffee estates.

Other smaller colonies that received Indians to supplement their labour were Grenada, St Vincent, and St Lucia. By 1884, when Indian immigration was abolished, the French West Indian colonies had a considerable number of Indians. Approximately 41,800 Indians had been introduced in Guadeloupe, and 25,500 in Martinique.

By 1920, the Indentureship system had ended, and Indians were no longer imported from India as labourers for overseas colonies. This search for a reliable labour force had created an evil network of profits, trickery, exploitation, suffering and death.

*Dr Jerome Teelucksingh is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the West Indies' St Augustine Campus in Trinidad.*



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The event takes place on May 9 from 1:00-3:00 p.m. at the Alif Academy, 4-505 Ellesmere Road in Scarborough. Tickets are \$25; the event is in aid of Mothers of Gaza. Contact, registration, and e-transfer email: [onelovetable@gmail.com](mailto:onelovetable@gmail.com). Call Ali Shaw at 416-702-7429, or Habeeb at 416-823-1738 for info.

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In photos above, at left, Dhaman Kissoon with his award; at right, Caribbean Airways' Nazie Mohammed (left) with winners of tickets to Guyana; in photo at right, top photo, Minister Ramraj is third from right with guests and attendees

## Guyana ascending 60 years later with independence, influence, and affluence

— Guyana's 60th Independence Anniversary was marked in Toronto with a gala that blended remembrance and renewal, as government officials, community leaders, and members of the diaspora gathered to celebrate national progress while reaffirming their shared role in shaping the homeland's future.

By Romeo Kaseram

### An LJI Community Report

Toronto – Beneath the warm glow of chandeliers and the soft hum of reunion, the Grand Cinnamon Banquet Hall in Scarborough was transformed, for an evening, into a microcosmic and spirited extension of Georgetown.

Guyana's national flag, a multitude of dialogic voices, and long memories converged on May 2 as members of the Guyanese diaspora, and many friends, gathered to commemorate the 60th Independence Anniversary, an occasion that carried both the weight of history and the lift of possibility.

At the centre of the celebration was Minister Madanlall Ramraj, Minister within the Ministry of Public Works, who delivered the feature address on behalf of the Government of Guyana.

Bringing greetings from President Dr Irfaan Ali, Minister Ramraj positioned the Diamond Jubilee not merely as a ceremonial milestone, but as a living testament to a country growing in momentum, still shaped by its past, yet increasingly defined by its forward stride.

Recalling the historic moment when the British Union Jack was lowered and the Golden Arrowhead raised in 1966, Minister Ramraj invited the audience into a shared memory that stretched across oceans and generations.

That symbolic transition, he suggested, continues to echo today, not only in Guyana's sovereignty, but in its expanding confidence on the global stage.

"Today, Guyana can stand tall among giants because of the astute leadership of His Excellency, President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, who has made strides economically, politically and on foreign policy, which has led to progressive national development," Minister Ramraj declared.

That sense of emergence of a nation stepping into its moment was finely embroidered throughout his address. He spoke of sweeping infrastructural transformation underway across Guyana, from new roads and bridges to hinterland airstrips, alongside advancements in housing, information technology, education, healthcare, and governance.

Together, these developments were presented not as isolated achievements, but as part of a broader and inclusive national reimagining.

Yet, if the past offered grounding and the present signalled momentum, it was the future that drew Minister Ramraj's most pointed appeal. Turning his attention to our dias-

pora, he issued a call that was both practical and deeply personal, calling on us to remain engaged, invested, and connected.

Skills, knowledge, and capital, he noted, are not bound by geography, and that our diaspora's role in Guyana's development remains both vital and evolving.

It was a message that found resonance in the remarks made by Honorary Consul at the Consulate General in Toronto, Mani Singh.

In his address, Singh anchored the evening in a longer arc of Guyana's struggle and survival. He urged attendees to remember the forefathers who endured imprisonment, hardship, and sacrifice in the fight for Independence, reminding the gathering that the freedoms now celebrated were neither accidental nor easily won.

"Notwithstanding Guyana's dark past of slavery and indentureship, underdevelopment, indebtedness, and poverty, we are now living in one of the most interesting, fascinating, and exciting times in the country's history," Singh affirmed.

And in a phrase that lingered in the room, Singh added that Guyana is no longer simply "the talk of the town", but "the talk of the world", highlighting a shift in nation-building that speaks not only to economic transformation, but to a reorientation of global attention.

The evening also turned its gaze toward those who have carried Guyana's spirit into new landscapes. Awards were presented to several members of our diaspora in recognition of their contributions to Canadian society across fields such as community service, philanthropy, education, business, entertainment, and sports.

Among the honourees was Toronto-based lawyer and university lecturer Dhaman Kissoon, whose commitment to community-building stands as a reflection of our diaspora's ongoing imprint beyond Guyana's borders.

The presence of political and diplomatic representatives added further depth to the occasion, underscoring its civic and international dimensions.

Among those in attendance at the gala were Councillor Neethan Shan, Councillor for Scarborough-Rouge Park in the City of Toronto; Raymond Cho, Member of Provincial Parliament for Scarborough North and Minister for Seniors and Accessibility; Vijay Thanigasalam, Member of Provincial Parliament for Scarborough-Rouge Park and Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Also among attending were Grenada's Consul General Gerry Hopkin, and Cindy Maria Sauers, Minister-Counsellor and Acting High Commissioner at the High Commission of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in Ottawa, Canada.

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## Caricom backs Guyana sovereignty

— Caricom has reaffirmed strong support for Guyana’s sovereignty while warning that its regional platforms must not be used to advance Venezuela’s Essequibo claim, as tensions escalated ahead of key International Court of Justice hearings.

**Georgetown** – Caricom has drawn a firm line around Guyana’s sovereignty, warning that its regional platforms must not be used directly or otherwise to advance territorial claims now before the International Court of Justice.

The warning follows concerns raised by Guyana’s President, Dr Irfaan Ali, who wrote to Caricom Chairman and Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis, Dr Terrance Drew, on April 28. In his correspondence, Ali objected to what he described as a “provocative” display by Venezuela’s acting President Delcy Rodríguez, who wore a brooch depicting the Essequibo region as part of Venezuela during recent visits to Barbados and Grenada.

Caricom, responding to Ali’s letter, said it had taken note of recent official engagements within the region where material asserting Venezuela’s claim to the Essequibo was publicly displayed. While acknowledging that member States retain the sovereign right to conduct bilateral relations, the regional bloc stressed that such engagements must remain consistent with the obligations set out in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

“At the centre of those commitments stands the Revised Treaty,” Caricom said, underscoring that member states are expected to uphold international law, respect judicial processes, and maintain good neighbourly relations.

Caricom further cautioned that its forums cannot be used, directly or indirectly, to legitimise claims currently before the ICJ. It reaffirmed its “longstanding and unequivocal support” for Guyana’s territorial integrity, and for the peaceful resolution of the controversy through the Court, noting that this position “remains firm and unchanged”.

In his letter, Ali argued that Caricom’s support must be reflected not only in declarations, but also in the conduct of official engagements.

“The use of Caricom engagements to project or promote a territorial claim against a Member State risks being interpreted as acquiescence or tolerance,” Ali stated.

He added that the display was not incidental, stating, “This is not a matter of symbol-

ism alone, but a calculated and provocative assertion of a claim that Guyana has consistently and lawfully rejected, and which is before the International Court of Justice for final adjudication.”

Guyana maintains that the boundary between the two countries was settled by the 1899 Arbitral Award, which it regards as a full and final determination. Ali said Venezuela’s more recent actions through symbols, maps, legislation and appointments, form part of a pattern of conduct inconsistent with international law.

He also referenced the ICJ’s Order of December 1, 2023, which directed Venezuela not to take any action that would alter the *status quo* in the disputed territory, where Guyana administers and exercises control, and to refrain from actions that could aggravate or extend the dispute.

The latest developments came ahead of oral hearings at the ICJ, which began on May 4, where Guyana is seeking a final and binding confirmation of the 1899 ruling.

The dispute involves more than two-thirds of Guyana’s landmass, including the resource-rich Essequibo region and a portion of its Exclusive Economic Zone, where over 11 billion barrels of oil equivalent have been identified and where offshore production and exploration activities are ongoing.

Tensions have escalated in recent years. On March 1, 2025, Venezuelan naval vessels entered Guyana’s waters and threatened several oil vessels operating there, prompting condemnation from the international community.

More recently, Venezuela objected to Guyana’s decision to advance three-dimensional seismic exploration across a 25,000-square-kilometre offshore area within its Exclusive Economic Zone, leading Guyana to reaffirm its sovereignty over its maritime jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley did not directly address Ali’s correspondence or Caricom’s statement following her meeting with Rodríguez. Instead, she emphasised the importance of cooperation in a message shared publicly.

“Barbados and Venezuela are bound by more than geography,” Mottley wrote, adding, “We must not let history or language prevent us from finding the best possible cooperation for our two countries and our two peoples.”



Delcy Rodriguez



Irfaan Ali



# Ask Jay...

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**W**hen the Thompsons received a Notice of Sale, they feared the worst. Here’s what every Ontario homeowner needs to know before panic turns into costly mistakes.

“Power of sale is serious – but silence is what costs families their homes.”

Let me tell you about a family I met recently. “Let’s call them the Thompsons. For years, they enjoyed living in a peaceful Ontario suburb, raising their kids, making memories, and never missing a mortgage payment. However, when the economy shifted and property values fluctuated, everything changed.

I remember when the Thompsons called me, their voices tense with worry; they had just received a Notice of Sale in the mail. Like many homeowners, they didn’t initially realise how serious it was, but a Notice of Sale is more than just a warning; it marks the start of Ontario’s legal power of sale process. If you miss payments and are in default for at least 15 days, then your lender can send you that notice. If the payments remain overdue for three months, then the lender can proceed with the power of sale.

When the Thompsons asked if they would lose their house right away, I reassured them that, under a power of sale, the lender doesn’t simply take the home away. Instead, the lender has the legal right to sell the property, and any remaining surplus is returned to the homeowner.

I often need to clarify the difference between power of sale and foreclosure. In a foreclosure, the lender goes through the courts, takes full ownership, and you lose both your home and any future equity. With a power of sale, the lender sells the property, and you might recover some equity. It is usually faster and less costly. Foreclosure means the bank owns your house; power of sale means they have the right to sell it, but it is still technically yours until it is sold.

In Ontario, borrowers usually have at least 35 days to redeem their mortgage. This means that if you can gather the funds to cover missed payments, interest, legal fees, and penalties, you can bring your loan back into good standing and stop the process.

Lenders usually encourage borrowers to contact them early, explore relief options, and provide clear information. None of these protections matter if you don’t answer the phone or open the letter. I always tell my clients, “Silence is your worst enemy in these situations”.

Contact the lender immediately. The sooner you reach out, the more options you will have, such as payment deferrals, temporary interest-only plans, or extending your amortisation period. You can also explore refinancing before the lender lists the property, sometimes that involves obtaining a second mortgage, a private refinance, or using equity to cover arrears. Once the lender lists your home, costs rise, and your options shrink.

For some families I have worked with, a controlled sale is the best option – selling the house on your own terms before the lender gets involved. When you decide to sell, you choose your agent, handle your pricing strategy, lower legal fees, and retain more of your hard-earned equity. When the lender sells, their main goal is to recover what is owed, not to maximise your return. That is a tough truth, but an important one.

If there is one thing many homeowners wish they had done differently, it’s preparing for the unexpected. I always advise homeowners to keep three to six months of mortgage payments in reserve, avoid borrowing to the max, and, most importantly, open every letter from the bank. Buying a home is only half the journey. Managing it, especially during difficult markets, is the other half of the equation.

Power of sale is not an immediate eviction. It is a structured legal process that balances lender efficiency with borrower protection. You have rights: the right to redeem, the right to surplus funds, and the right to fair market value.

In real estate, I have seen delays cause families to lose their homes and peace of mind. If you are falling behind, do not wait – take action today.

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In photo above, left to right, Pt Dave Ramoutar, Pt Heeralall Sharma, Bahen Nanda Ramoutar, and Nadira Raghunandan-Dyal. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo

## Community shines at Sangeet Ki Kahani 4

— An evening of music, devotion, and community purpose unfolded at the Vedic Cultural Centre in Markham on April 18, when *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4* brought together acclaimed performers and supporters for a vibrant celebration that doubled as a fundraiser for a more accessible future for the Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir.

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Community Report

There are evenings that entertain, and there are evenings that endure. On April 18, within the warmly lit hall at the Vedic Cultural Centre, *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4* proved itself firmly to be the latter for its evocation of an evening where melody did not simply fill the air, but settled into memory, shaping a shared architecture of belonging among those gathered.

From the opening notes, the hall at the VCC carried a quiet electricity. Voices rose in unison, instruments found their rhythm, and the appreciative audience leaned in not merely as spectators, but as participants in something larger than performance.

It was an atmosphere that the photographs on this page have captured as energy, colour, and movement, and where the evening itself rendered in feeling the convergence of sound, devotion, and community spirit.

After the event, Shiv Sewa Sangh's President Nadira Raghunandan-Dyal said, "Life gives that which you ask of it. Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center's members have asked, and you have responded with your generosity."

Guiding this convergence was the musical direction of Pandit Dave Ramoutar, whose presence anchored the evening with gravitas, grace, and generosity. Long regarded for his volunteerism and dedication to preserving and elevating Indo-Caribbean musical traditions, Pandit Dave led not a sequence of isolated performances, but a carefully woven tapestry, one in which each artist's contribution flowed seamlessly into the next.

That tapestry unfolded through a dynamic and richly textured lineup. Performances by Anthony Prasad, Nalini Chaitan, Kevin Dhar, Devin Ramoutar, and Devi Singh offered a spectrum of vocal expression, from soulful and meditative to spirited and celebratory.

The dances added visual rhythm and vibrancy, its choreography translating sound into movement, while musical support from Sangeet Vidyalyaya, Akashvani Rhythms, and

Amargeet Music provided a polished and cohesive foundation throughout the evening.

Together, these elements did more than entertain, but also added continuity. Each performance felt less like a standalone act, and more like a thread in a larger narrative, one that spoke to heritage, memory, and the enduring resonance of cultural expression across generations, geographies, and genres.

Yet beneath the music's uplifting cadence lay a deeper note, one that gave the evening its true purpose.

For more than two decades, the Shiv Sewa Sangh Mandir & Cultural Center has served as a spiritual and cultural home for families across the GTA, from Scarborough to Whitby, Brampton to Mississauga.

Established in 2000, the mandir has grown through devotion and volunteerism into a space defined by inclusivity, education, and service. It has nurtured youth, supported families, and extended its reach through charitable initiatives that reflect the values at its core.

But its current location, now in the basement of a commercial building at Midland and Eglinton, continues to increasingly present a challenge that cannot be overlooked. The absence of elevator access has created barriers for seniors and devotees with mobility difficulties, quietly limiting participation in a space that was built on the principles of openness and inclusivity.

It is this tension between aspiration and accessibility that *Sangeet Ki Kahani 4* sought to address.

Framed as a fundraiser, the evening invited the community not only to gather, but to act. Proceeds from the event will support efforts to secure a street-level location for the mandir, one that would allow all devotees, regardless of age or physical ability, to fully participate in worship and cultural life.

In this sense, the music itself became an offering not only as artistes performing and showing their talents, but also one of service.

There was a quiet symmetry in that purpose. Under the guidance of Pandit Dave, whose own life has been defined by service through sound, the evening transformed music into a vehicle for collective care.

And so, a community that had long gathered in shared devotion came together once more, this time to ensure that its future would reflect its values more fully in continuation, in the sacred, and in the enduring ties of community.





TT 50 Plus at 30 years. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo

## Community, culture, connection mark 30 years of TT 50 Plus success

— Against the lingering chill of an April afternoon, the Trinidad and Tobago Fifty Plus and Seniors Association of Canada celebrated its 30th anniversary with warmth and camaraderie at Qssis Banquet Hall in Scarborough, gathering members, dignitaries, and friends in a tribute to three decades of culture, connection, and community leadership.

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Community Report

**Scarborough** – The Trinidad and Tobago Fifty Plus and Seniors Association of Canada celebrated its 30th anniversary on April 19 at Qssis Banquet Hall in Scarborough, bringing together members, community leaders, and dignitaries for an afternoon highlighting three decades of cultural engagement, senior support, and community building.

Inside Qssis Banquet Hall, the mood was unmistakable: laughter, recognition, and a shared sense of arrival. Seniors, not-so-seniors, and what Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow affectionately called the “ultra-seniors”, came together to honour a journey that began modestly, but grew into something enduring.

“It is with pride and heartfelt gratitude that I stand before you today,” said the group’s President June Straker, as she reflected on the milestone. She added, “This is not just a marker of time, it is a testament to the resilience, unity, and enduring spirit of our community.”

That journey traces back to February 25, 1996, when a small group led by the late Rasheed Sultan Khan convened a first membership meeting in a Toronto recreation room. What began as a simple idea to create a space where seniors could feel valued, connected, and empowered, has today evolved into what Straker described as “a dynamic family”.

Over three decades, that family has been built through shared experiences: bus trips and picnics, Christmas gatherings and galas, steelpan workshops and senior cricket matches. The group has also delivered computer literacy and digital training programs, educational and cultural initiatives, and a wide range of health and wellness activities.

Even during the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic, members remained connected through virtual programming, adapting to ensure that community did not give way to distance.

“You are the people of history. You are the keepers of tradition. And you are the guiding light for future generations,” Straker told members, underscoring the role seniors continue to play in shaping both memory and meaning within our diaspora.

While the celebration looked back with pride, it also turned its gaze forward and outward. Mayor Chow, in addressing the gathering, grounded her engaged and attentive audience in the everyday realities facing seniors across the city.

“I feel a sense of family here,” Chow said, before pivoting to the urgency of support systems. She pointed to long-standing concerns around access to homecare services, noting that wait times had stretched to as long as three years.

“If you need help now – if you’re recovering from surgery or using a walker, you can’t wait three years,” she said.

Mayor Chow announced that the City of Toronto had eliminated the waiting list, making these services immediately accessible to those in need. She also highlighted expanded support in response to rising temperatures, including a doubling of free air conditioners available to seniors this summer, with applications currently open.

In addition, the City has broadened property tax relief measures. Seniors with a combined household income of under

\$62,000 annually will not face property tax increases, with additional relief extending to water and garbage fees. Her announcements underscored a central theme of the afternoon: that while organisations like the 50 Plus Association build community, public policy must work in tandem to sustain these structures.

That sense of partnership and recognition was echoed by Deputy Consul at the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto, Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, who attended the occasion as her final official engagement in Toronto before assuming a new posting in Miami.

“Thirty years is no small achievement,” she told the gathering, adding, “It reflects dedication, vision, and a deep commitment to community.”

Ramsubagh-Mannette praised the group’s consistent effort to reflect the full cultural and religious diversity of Trinidad and Tobago, noting that its practice of opening events with multi-faith prayers stands out even among diaspora organisations.

“That is powerful,” she declared, further noting, “It sets a tone of inclusion, respect, and shared identity that stays with everyone in the room.”

She described the group as “one of the most professional and active Trinidad and Tobago diaspora organisations in Canada”, adding that what it has built is “more than an organisation – it is a vibrant, living community”.

Ramsubagh-Mannette added, “You remind us that life after 50 is not about slowing down. It is about showing us how it is done.”

Also attending the event were guests and dignitaries, among them Raymond Cho, Member of Provincial Parliament for Scarborough North, and a representative who brought greetings and congratulations from the office of MP Shaun Chen, Scarborough North.



# Delicate road for Papacy in historical balance of faith and political power

By Dhanpaul Narine

The Pope and politics cannot be separated. The scribes who question the role of politics in religion would do well to realise that two of the most powerful personalities in the Bible were politicians. Moses was regarded as a political leader who looked after the affairs of the Israelites. He was a mediator of disputes, organised courts to keep order, and negotiated the safe passage of his people. In the sixth century BC, another powerful figure emerged. He was Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He too was a politician, but not in the traditional sense. Christ advocated that, "true power comes from love, humility, and sacrificial living".

He aligned himself with the poor. Power came from a life of service, based on God's values, rather than the Caesars of the world. Christ was anti-violence. He healed lepers, forgave prostitutes, and chased out the moneychangers from the temples. This went against the political climate of the time. Christ emphasised that his kingdom "was not of this world" and that peace, not war, was his objective.

In Matthew 16: 18-19, Christ anointed Peter with the "keys of the kingdom", and said to him, "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." The Protestant version has differed on the role of Peter, claiming that he was only a supreme leader of the apostles.

However, it is widely believed that Peter founded the Church in Rome, and became its first Bishop and Pope. It is further believed that the leadership of Peter formed the basis of the Apostolic Succession. Peter was succeeded by St Linus, and the line included St Anacletus, St Clement, and St Evaristus to complete the first five Popes.

These Popes consolidated the role of the church, but it is argued that they also set in motion the instruments for it to become a global institution. The history of Europe, and beyond, has shown that the Church played a great role in almost every facet of life.

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) was perhaps the most influential of the Popes in the medieval age. He was so powerful that he claimed supremacy over the Kings of Europe. This meant that he was able to dictate the everyday affairs of the States.

At the time of his rule, papal authority had waned, and heresy had taken over. He set about dominating Rome by building an imposing fort in the middle of the city. Gradually, the legates secured the loyalty of the outlying cities. By October 1198, Pope Innocent was the most powerful person in Europe. He chose rulers, drove out feudal lords, believing that royal power was derived from papal authority.

He ordered King Philip Augustus to take back his wife that he had abandoned. By 1215, Pope Innocent had secured the loyalty of King John of England. At the request of King John, Pope Innocent declared the Magna Carta annulled that caused widespread disenchantment in England.

Pope Innocent convened in 1215 a landmark ruling that has an impact to this day. He was a canon lawyer and used The Fourth Lateran Council to issue a number of decrees. It held the clergy to a higher standard, created schools, banned the use of the judicial ordeal, ordered the annual confessions of sins, and outlined the mechanisms for the elections of bishops. Canon 68 stated that, "Jews and Muslims shall wear special dress to enable them to be distinguished from Christians so that no Christian shall come to marry them ignorant of who they are."

Pope Clement V reigned from 1305 to 1314. He is associated with the Knights Templar that was made famous in various movies. Pope Clement was under pressure from King Philip of France to get rid of the Templars. In November 1307, the Pope issued a papal bull that ordered the arrest of many Templars across Europe on charges "of sodomy, adultery, and religious and financial corruption".

Pope Clement is credited in moving the papacy from Rome to Avignon in France. This lasted for 67 years. He introduced a papal tax to raise funds for the papacy, and he was criticised for living an extravagant lifestyle.

Pope Benedict XIV ruled from 1740 to 1758. He was credited with making reforms to the Church, including reducing taxes, opening free trade, and having good relations with Spain, Portugal, Sardinia, and Naples. He was a scholar with a doctorate



Pope Leo XIV

in theology, and laid the foundations for the Vatican Museum. It is interesting to note that there were 16 Pope Benedicts, the last one being Pope Benedict X who was elected in 2005.

Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) did not fare too well with Napoleon. The military leader invaded Italy and defeated the troops guarding the Papal States. Pope Pius objected and was transported as a prisoner to the French fortress city of Valence, where he died. His successor Pope Pius VII (1800-1823) made nice with Napoleon and even attended the latter's coronation.

Pope Leo XII was called the people's pope. His papacy lasted from 1878 to 1903. He sympathised with the working class and advocated for the protection of workers by trade unions.

He was succeeded by Pope Pius X whose papacy lasted from 1903 to 1914. He was from humble origins, and was aware of it. He said, "I was born poor. I lived poor. I will die poor."

He was opposed to the pomp and the ceremonial trappings of the papacy. Pope Pius spoke out against the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples on the plantations in Peru. Europe was plunged in the First World War during his papacy. He was vocal in his opposition to the war, saying, "I will gladly give my life to save my poor children from this ghastly scourge."

World War II saw Pope Pius XII at the helm. He was Pope for 19 years, and was seen as a complicated character. He had to navigate the world as a statesman and a religious leader. It is argued that he could have done more to oppose the war. He was accused of being silent and uninvolved.

But according to the Vatican, "About eighty percent of the Jews in Rome survived the Holocaust due to the Pope's efforts - more than anywhere else during Nazi occupation." He was the first Pope to use the media to communicate his views to the public. He delivered about 200 speeches on the radio calling for an end to violence, and wrote 40 Encyclicals on the subject of peace.

The archive on his papacy was opened in 2020, and showed that more than 4,000 Jews were hidden in convents and monasteries in Vatican City during the war.

One of the most formidable Popes in modern times was John Paul II (1978-2005). He reigned for 26 years during which he infused his own brand of moral values on the global stage. He was born Karol Wojtyla in Poland, and became the first non-Italian Pope in 455 years.

He was described as the universal pastor of the Church. He

was one of the most widely traveled Popes in history. Pope John Paul made 146 pastoral visits in Italy, visited 317 Roman parishes and made 104 international tours.

He produced a number of Encyclicals and Exhortations, Apostolic Constitutions and Letters. In addition, he authored five books and convoked 15 assemblies of the Synod of Bishops.

He met with Presidents and Prime Ministers and ordinary believers. One of his crowning achievements was his founding of World Youth Day that attracted millions of young people. An attempt was made on his life in 1981. He forgave the attempted assassin, and upon recovery, he set about his tasks with renewed vigor.

Pope John Paul will be remembered for his political views that helped to create change in a number of places. He opposed communism. The currents of communism in Europe in 1978 were strong. The Iron Curtain was in place. Poland answered to Moscow. Pope John Paul was determined to get his message across to Poland and the rest of the world. He made an historic visit to his homeland in June 1979.

According to a number of observers, "Pope John Paul recognised that the root of the conflict between communism and the rest of the world was not about politics and wasn't about military might; it was a spiritual conflict." It was said that Pope John Paul lit the fuse that led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

There can be no doubt that Pope John Paul's visit to Poland electrified the Solidarity Movement, and helped to bring Lech Walesa to power. The Pope visited Poland again in 1983 and in 1987; the visits were intended to prepare the ground for the victory of the revolution. The changes in Poland were watched closely by other states in Eastern Europe, and in America.

On June 12, 1987, President Ronald Reagan stood at the Brandenburg Gate and proclaimed, "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace... come here to this gate. Mr Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

On November 9, 1979, the Berlin Wall was torn down, leading to the reunification of Germany, an end to the Iron Curtain, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism.

Speaking on CNN in April 2005, Gorbachev said, "The collapse of the Iron Curtain would have been impossible without Pope John Paul II." He added, "I will never forget the Pope's words about Europe. He said Europe should breathe with both lungs."

Like Pope John Paul, the papacy of Pope Francis (2013-2025) captured the attention of the world. It brought to the fore issues such as abortion, the environment, nuclear weapons, and the rights of Indigenous peoples.

Pope Francis was from Argentina having ministered among the poor in the slums. He opposed abortion, denounced capitalism and the money-grabbing elites, upheld celibacy, called for responsible parenthood, and said that the vulnerable should be helped. He wanted the death penalty abolished, and for "divorced and civilly married Catholics to receive communion".

Pope Francis broke new ground by describing global warming as a human-caused problem. He asked world leaders to treat migrants kindly. He saw nuclear weapons as immoral, and he made reforms in the Vatican for women to hold high offices.

When asked about a monsignor who was openly gay, Pope Francis said famously, "Who am I to judge?" But there are critics who believed that he could have done more to investigate bishops who abused or covered up for predator priests.

Pope Leo XIV, an American, succeeded Pope Francis in 2025. In referring to the war in Iran, the Pope declared, "God does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war." US President Donald Trump responded that the Pope was "weak on crime and terrible on foreign policy". US Vice-President J.D. Vance urged the Pope to stick to moral issues only. The current US administration seems to forget the lessons of history. The modern Pope is a politician in disguise.

Pope Leo, in a 2026 visit to Africa, used the pulpit to ask for changes that include the fighting of corruption, prison reforms, equal opportunities for women, more schools and hospitals, and to build bridges of peace. These cannot be separated from the politics of the day.

And yes, war is not only moral, it is political.

# Read, remember, reclaim: researching, re-discovering our Indo-Caribbean past

— The 2026 Bocas Henry Swanzy Award bestowed on Dr Frank Birbalsingh recognises more than a distinguished scholarly career. It affirms the lifelong work of a pioneering Indo-Caribbean intellectual who helped establish Caribbean literary studies, shaping how our histories, identities, and literatures are understood across the homeland and our diaspora.

By Romeo Kaseram

An LJI Literary Feature

**N**amed the 2026 recipient of the Bocas Henry Swanzy Award, Dr Frank Birbalsingh stands among the architects of Caribbean literary thought. His work has not only chronicled the region's experience, but has helped create the very frameworks through which that experience can be read, taught, and remembered.

Awards often arrive with a sense of completion. They gather years into a moment, place a life's work into a recognisable form, and invite us to admire the frame from a distance. Yet this particular recognition feels different in not closing a chapter, but in turning a new page.

What has been honoured in the Caribbean is not a single text, nor even a cluster of publications, but a sustained body of work; one that has quietly shaped how our Caribbean experience is gathered, interpreted, and returned to us in forms we can recognise.

And so, rather than asking who is our venerable York University Professor Emeritus Dr Frank Birbalsingh, we turn our attention to what he has built in his decades-long career as a professor, scholar, and social activist in our diaspora community.

There is a moment, when reading through Birbalsingh's edited volumes, where the page begins to feel less like a text and more like a meeting place.

We note how voices converge in his collections such as *Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience* and *Jahaji Bhai*. Not neatly, not uniformly, but with the unevenness that marks lived history. Scholars, writers, political figures, and observers move across the same terrain, each bringing with them a fragment of a larger story.

One contemporary observation in the *Canadian Book Review Annual* offers a way of understanding this gathering of minds, noting that *Indenture and Exile* reflects the "kaleidoscopic experience of Indo-Caribbean exiles", encompassing the many facets of that history from labour and migration to religion, politics, and literature itself.

The phrasing in *CBRA* is precise, with "kaleidoscopic" suggesting not fragmentation alone, but pattern, a shifting and refracting that reveal new alignments with each turn.

This is what Birbalsingh's work begins doing in how it takes what has often been lived in pieces, assembling them, and then allowing the pieces to interlock and recognise one another.

The same review goes further, observing that the volume mirrors "their courage, creativity, joys, sufferings, achievements, and persecution". It is a line that holds its balance carefully; it does not privilege one dimension over another – instead, it insists on fullness.

It is an insistence that matters, since for much of Caribbean history, our experiences have been unevenly recorded, with certain elements foregrounded, others diminished, many left uncollected.

What Birbalsingh's work offers is not correction in a narrow sense, but assembly. It offers a bringing together that allows a people's experience, our lived lives, to appear in its range, its contradiction, and depth. In doing so, it creates something more than a book, but begins building and inventory and an archive.

There is a quiet discipline in the act of editing that often goes unnoticed. It does not announce itself in the way authorship sometimes does; yet it is here, in this careful gathering of minds, in its crafting and assembly, that Birbalsingh's contribution becomes most visible.

For to edit is to recognise that a conversation already exists; and in doing so, it brings that conversation into a single space, allowing it to inhabit a single site, making its impact to be more eventful with depth and meaning.

So within *Indenture and Exile*, we encounter discussions of the conditions of indentureship, labour movements, political organisation, race relations, religion, education, and the emergence of Caribbean writers such as V.S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon. These are not treated as separate threads, but as interconnected



dimensions of a shared historical experience.

And as the *CBRA* concludes, such experiences "should be time and again shared and expressed in conferences and in publications of this nature".

Such is its summary statement; yet it is one that carries with it a quiet urgency: that our histories are not self-sustaining; that they require an assertion of immanence.

Now in *Jahaji Bhai*, we see the gathering taking on another form, one that is more intimate, perhaps, but no less significant.

The word *Jahaji* itself carries its own antecedent and history. It refers to those of us who crossed the *kala pani* together, bound by the shared experience of the journey from India to the Caribbean. Not kin by blood, but by passage; not family by inheritance, but by circumstance and survival.

Scholarly work has pointed to the emergence of this concept as embodying "a new sense of human togetherness" emerging from the conditions of migration and displacement, which is noted by *Cambridge University Press*.

Here is an assertion of collectivity in a neologism, a newly-minted word with meaning gathered across the liminality that was the passage across the sea, which resonates today beyond its sea-voyage origin, and its later academic framing. And so, in this new meaning, togetherness and kinship are not abstract, but are forged via transition and sea-change.

It is meaning that is shaped by shared hardship, by adaptation, by the necessity of building community in the unfamiliar terrain of arrival after crossing the ocean. And in naming this condition, Birbalsingh's work does something subtle but profound – it gives language to a form of belonging that might otherwise remain felt, but unarticulated.

For our readers here in the diaspora, this recognition may arrive quietly in the cadences of our stories, in the echo of a phrase. It arrives with the sense that something long understood without words has finally been named.

We now speak to movement, which also occupies a central place in Birbalsingh's work. In *From Pillar to Post: The Indo-Caribbean Diaspora*, the journey does not end with arrival. It continues, looping, unsettling, and resettling. The title of the text itself suggests a kind of restless motion, one that resists closure in its shifting between points that can never quite become fixed or stabilised.

And yet, within that restive movement, something holds in how connections persist across distance, and in the patterns that reappear across our generations. Our experience of migration, far from erasing identity, reshapes it, layering it with new contexts, even while retaining the palimpsest of earlier ones.

For many of us in our communities across the Greater Toronto Area, this is not an unfamiliar terrain. It is a place where we inhabit daily, often without formal articulation. What Birbalsingh's work offers is a way of seeing that experience as part of a larger continuum, in one that stretches backward into the Caribbean, and outward into the wider world.

Alongside these explorations of history and movement runs another quieter thread, one concerned with the positioning of Caribbean literature itself.

In volumes such as *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English and Novels and the Nation: Essays in Canadian Literature*, Birbalsingh turns to the question of how Caribbean writing is read, studied, and situated within broader intellectual traditions.

These texts are not merely an academic exercise; in fact, it is grounding, since placing literature within a field is to affirm its legitimacy. To study it rigorously is to insist that it matters, not as an adjunct to other traditions, but as a central part of under-

standing the modern world.

Long before Caribbean literature became a recognised component of university curricula in Canada and elsewhere, this work was already underway.

Quietly, steadily, without spectacle, Birbalsingh and other minds were building the frameworks through which these texts could be engaged with seriousness and depth. If today such study feels natural, it is worth remembering that it was once constructed.

And then, quite expectedly, Birbalsingh's focus shifts to cricket.

In *The Rise of West Indian Cricket*, the game is approached not simply as sport, but as a cultural text. A site where identity is negotiated, where colonial hierarchies are contested, where our Caribbean region speaks to itself and to the world.

Birbalsingh has observed that in the Caribbean, cricket is "debat-

ed in the same breath with politics and religion"; it is a line that captures something immediately recognisable.

For those of us who have listened to these debates, in playgrounds, street corners, in the humidity of Caribbean rum-shops, the dialogues are animated, insistent, rich with memory, so Birbalsingh's statement requires a bit of unpacking.

What his text does is to place those conversations within a broader frame, revealing their deeper significance. Cricket itself becomes a language; it uplifts the dialogue into the realm where belonging, resistance, and aspiration are articulated, and made manifest at the level of the ground.

It becomes another archive in motion, and taken together, these texts begin to reveal an underlying structure in how it gathers, connects, interprets, and makes a return to the centre, like a ball returned from the boundary to the centre of the pitch.

So what emerges is not simply a bibliography, but an intellectual architecture, one that allows Caribbean experience to be approached and centred with coherence, care, and causality.

Perhaps this is what the Swanzy Award recognises most fully; an awarded given not for a single contribution, but for a lifetime spent building the frameworks through which we, as a Caribbean people, may come to better understand ourselves. And so the moment turns, gently, toward us.

Recognition, after all, does not end with the recipient; it always extends outward, asking something of those who receive it as witness.

Our histories and literatures, once gathered and given form, do not sustain themselves. They require our input in reading, in discussion, in furthering our research, in rediscovering, and revealing, on which this discourse is premised; and they require the kind of engagement that sends them forward into new generations.

It has been stated often in these pages that our success has been measured by distance from our origins, our languages, from the textures of where we began. But Birbalsingh's work suggests another possibility – one in which movement does not sever connection; instead, as a diaspora, we could read it as global engagement that remains anchored in continuity.

If Birbalsingh's body of work feels expansive, and maybe it is, then it need not feel inaccessible to our diaphora's eyes; there are many entry points for us to visit the library, to go online, and seek out his many texts.

*Jahaji Bhai* offers a way in through voice and story. *Indenture and Exile* deepens that engagement, placing those voices within a wider historical frame. *The Rise of West Indian Cricket* meets us in a familiar playing field, revealing its deeper meanings with quiet clarity. And from there, the path widens, not as obligation that binds us to reading because we weed the same rows, but as discovery as we unearth who we are.

The arc of Birbalsingh's work now sits before us, recognised and affirmed. But it must not rest there; it must return, to us as readers, to our community, to our ongoing commitment to understanding who we are, who we are becoming, as a diaspora.

Because the truth that underlies this moment is not newly created, only newly acknowledged with eminent recognition out of the Caribbean, its narrative enunciating clearly that our experiences are not peripheral to the modern world, but part of its foundation. And that we were never on the margins of history; only in its telling by those who presumed to tell. But now, as Birbalsingh, and many others are doing, we are doing the telling.

**Sources for this exploration:** *Canadian Book Review Annual*, *Review of Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience*; and, *Cambridge University Press*, *Caribbean Literature in Transition, 1800-1920*.



In family photo, left to right, are Shalini, Barbara, Vishnu, and Angeli



## Such a sacred journey: A 56-year marriage that continues to inspire

— Vishnu and Barbara Sookar marked their 56th wedding anniversary on April 26, celebrating more than five decades of marriage, family, and shared devotion. The milestone, honoured through a heartfelt tribute, resonated as both a personal celebration and a reflection of enduring values within our diaspora community.

...

On April 26, 1970, Vishnu and Barbara Sookar began what he would later describe as a “sacred journey”, one that has now spanned 56 years, a continuum measured not simply in time, but in devotion, resilience, and a partnership that has deepened with each passing season.

That journey came full circle last month when the couple marked their anniversary, a moment that was made luminous through a tribute delivered by Vishnu to Barbara, through words that carried both the lifelong commitment of a private vow and the resonance of their shared, lived history.

“My Dearest Barbara, our Journey,” he titled his tribute, opening a reflection that moved seamlessly between memory and gratitude: “On April 26, 1970, we began a sacred journey together, hand in hand, heart to heart. Today, as we celebrate 56 years of marriage, I stand in gratitude for a life blessed beyond measure.”

Vishnu’s tribute did not dwell on milestones alone, but on

the texture of those years, in the unseen stitching of a life built together.

“These years have not merely passed... they have blossomed into a lifetime of love, devotion, sacrifice, and unwavering partnership,” he continued, capturing a marriage defined not by ease, but by endurance, adding, “Through every joy and every challenge, you have been my strength, my comfort, and my guiding light.”

From that foundation, a family took shape, one that now stands as a living testament to the couple’s shared values and quiet labour. Daughters, Angeli and Shalini, are described as bearers of Barbara’s “grace, compassion, and loving spirit”, while the next generation, grandchildren Dante and Dasha, and Vinayak and Vivek, extend that legacy further, each, in Vishnu’s words, “a precious blessing”.

The family circle widens with the inclusion of son-in-law Rishi, whose presence Vishnu acknowledges with pride and gratitude.

“The way he cherishes Shalini, treating her as a queen, fills our hearts with gratitude,” he wrote, his words underscoring not only familial affection, but the continuation of values across generations.

At the heart of this narrative stands Barbara herself, not as a figure placed on a pedestal, but as someone revealed through

the steady accumulation of roles fulfilled and bonds nurtured.

“Barbara, you are the heart of our family, the quiet strength behind every success and the love that binds us all together,” Vishnu reflected, distilling the more than five decades of shared life into a portrait defined by commitment, constancy, and care.

Too, there was a spiritual thread woven throughout Vishnu’s tribute, a quiet articulation of faith as both anchor and compass.

“I thank God for the gift of you – your patience, your kindness, and your unwavering faith,” he wrote, before invoking a guiding principle: “Dharma protects those who uphold it.” It is a line that rests gently within the narrative, suggesting a life shaped not only by love, but by an enduring moral, cultural, and religious grounding.

In an era where longevity in marriage is increasingly rare, the Sookars’ 56-year sacred union emerges not as an abstraction, but as a lived example of partnership, one that is defined by mutual respect, shared purpose, and an evolving understanding of what it means to build a life together.

If there is a single line that captures the essence of Vishnu’s tribute, it arrives in his closing cadence: simple, unadorned, yet a quietly profound paean: “My love for you has only deepened with time. If I were given this life again, I would choose you, again and again,” he affirmed.

## Endurance marks legacy from Hesperus to homeland

— The Indian Diaspora Council International has paid tribute to the foreparents who arrived in Guyana on May 5, 1838, marking Arrival Day with reflections on sacrifice, resilience, and enduring contributions to the country’s cultural and national development.

...

By Romeo Kaseram  
An LJI Community Report

The Indian Diaspora Council International (IDC), along with its global affiliates, has commemorated Indian Arrival Day by paying tribute to the pioneers who journeyed from India to Guyana, arriving at Highbury on May 5, 1838, aboard the ships *Hesperus* and *Whitby*.

In its message, the IDC reflected on what it described as the “pioneering spirit, determination, persistence, and endurance under extremely harsh conditions” of those early arrivals. The organisation noted that while survival was their immediate concern, the immigrants “strived and persevered to maintain their sense of origin, traditions, and culture”, laying the foundation for generations who would follow.

The statement emphasised that descendants of those early labourers continue to take pride in what it called a “unique accomplishment”, recognising both the sacrifices made, and the enduring contributions to Guyana’s cultural fabric and economic development.

Guyana’s President, Dr Irfaan Ali, in his 2025 Arrival Day message, underscored the national significance of the occasion, describing it as “a defining aspect of our national journey”. He said the immigrants “came with little but gave us so much,” highlighting their role in shaping the country’s social and economic foundations.

Reflecting on the post-Emancipation period, President Ali noted that many of those who arrived as Indentured labourers remained and made Guyana their home, toiling on plantations, cultivating land, building villages, and founding institutions. He said their legacy is evident in the traditions, foods, languages, and values that continue to enrich Guyana’s national character.



IDC President Ashook Ramsaran described the commemoration as recognition of “the journeys, hardships, and perseverance of a resilient people,” pointing to the historical experience of migration and settlement as a source of contemporary inspiration. He said reflecting on that past encourages new generations “to take bold, pioneering steps” in shaping their futures.

Ramsaran added that the circumstances of migration were complex, noting that ancestors came “partially by choice, many forced” yet demonstrated resolve under “very difficult and harrowing conditions”. He said that shared experience fostered “an unusual kindred spirit of resolve, togetherness and kinship”, creating a legacy defined by perseverance and collective aspiration.

Dr Nicole Bissessar, Director of Community Cultural Affairs, Indian Diaspora Council, pointed to the contemporary significance of that heritage, referencing the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Guyana in November 2024. She described the visit to the Monument Gardens as “validation and testament to the enduring heritage and bonds we share among the Indian Diaspora”.

The IDC also extended congratulations to the Government and people of Guyana on the commemoration of the anniversary, expressing best wishes for “continued peaceful and prosperous co-existence among other ethnic groups” both within Guyana and across the global diaspora.

Guyana’s history reflects a layered colonial past, having been initially settled by the Dutch before coming under British control in the late 18th century. As British Guiana, it maintained a plantation-based economy until the mid-20th century, before achieving Independence in 1966 and becoming a republic in 1970.

Today, the country’s population reflects that history of migration and settlement. According to *World Population Review’s* 2025 estimates, Indo-Guyanese comprise 44 percent of the population, followed by Afro-Guyanese at 30 percent, people of mixed heritage at 17 percent, and Indigenous Amerindians at nine percent.



Aye B

## Aye B joins Caribbean Connection

Rising Caribbean DJ Aye B is set to join CHIN Radio 100.7 FM’s *Caribbean Connection*, which is hosted by Jai Ojah Maharaj.

As of May 2, Aye B is now leading the *Power Mix* every Saturday from 11:00 p.m. to midnight, bringing his high-energy Soca sound to listeners across the GTA and beyond. His addition injects a fresh, contemporary pulse into the iconic and long-running programme, reflecting the evolving rhythms of our Caribbean diaspora.

Known within the community as “the youngest in charge”, Aye B has quickly built a reputation as one of the most promising emerging DJs on the scene. He is the founder and curator of *Soca High*, an event series now entering its fifth year, aimed at engaging younger audiences and promoting Caribbean culture.

Aye B is also a regular contributor to Toronto Revellers Mas, having performed on the road during both Toronto Carnival and Kiddies Carnival for several years. His growing portfolio includes appearances on major stages in Toronto and Miami, along with multiple competition wins that have elevated his profile internationally.

# India to Guyana: How names were reshaped by empire and migration

By Harry Hergash

May 5 is now celebrated annually in Guyana as a national holiday, Arrival Day, to commemorate the arrival of various Indentured immigrant groups in the country. Previously, this date, which is the anniversary of the arrival of the first ship bringing Indian Indentured labourers to the country, was celebrated by the Indo-Guyanese community under the name Indian Arrival Day.

The history books inform us that between 1838 and 1917, around 240,000 emigrants from India were recruited to work as labourers on the sugar plantations of the then colony called British Guiana, now Guyana. Currently, their descendants, referred to as Indo-Guyanese, comprise around 40 percent of the population and constitute the largest ethnic group in the country.

The Indian labourers came with their culture of which personal name is a fundamental component, serving as a clue to ancestry, heritage, religion, and social mores. In this article I look at the sources and evolution of Indo-Guyanese personal names, a subject that as far as I am aware, has not been given much attention by scholars.

In putting together this piece, I have relied on Indentureship literature, review of my own and my wife's ancestral records, information from individuals who have conducted searches for ancestors, and public sources of information.

The major source of the ancestors of Indo-Guyanese was the northern region or Hindi belt of India, mainly present day provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and surrounding areas. This region accounts for around 85 percent of the arrivals.

The remaining 15 percent came from the southern or Tamil-speaking region that now constitutes Tamil Nadu and surrounding areas. In relation to religion, around 85 percent were Hindus, and about 15 percent were Muslims. The percentage of Christians was negligible.

Among the Hindus in Guyana, the regional difference in surnames is clearly discernible. The northerners have surnames based on the Hindi language, with some of the most popular being the original, Prasad (sanctified offering or gracious gift) and its local variations, Persaud and Prashad; Singh (lion, metaphor for lion-hearted); and names with the prefix 'Ram' as in Ramotar, the surname of a former President of Guyana Donald Ramotar, and a name that is a local adaptation of Ramavtar, which translates to an incarnation of Ram.

The southerners have surnames based on the Tamil language with the most popular ending in "Sammy" (lord) as in Veerasammy (brave lord) and Ramsammy (Lord Ram), or in "Mootoo" (a local adaptation of 'muthu' meaning pearl) as in Nagamootoo, a former Prime Minister of Guyana, Moses Nagamootoo, and a name which translates literally to 'serpent's pearl'.

On the other hand, the most popular Muslim surnames are Khan, originally a title of Mongolic origin for a ruler or leader, and brought to India by the Turkish rulers; Baksh (of Persian origin meaning fortune/gift or bestower), which came by way of the Persian rulers, or its anglicised version Bacchus; and Mohamed, as well as Ali, which are names of Arabic/Quranic origin.

Generally in India during the period of Indentureship, the Hindu first name of a child was given by the priest based on astrology and caste. A common practice for the lower castes was to be named after the day on which the child was born. The upper castes were offered more elegant names, or names related to the Hindu deities. A similar practice continued with the early generations of Indo-Guyanese children.

In northern India the two upper caste groups, the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas have last names that are restricted to their castes. To this day in Guyana, individuals with last names such as Doobay, Panday, Sharma, Tiwari, and a few others, are recognised as Brahmins. Individuals with the last name of Singh are recognised as Kshatriyas.

In bygone years in India, Doobey implied a Brahmin who is knowledgeable in two Vedas; Pandey implied a Brahmin who is in charge of temple rituals; Sharma implied a Brahmin who is a religious scholar; Tiwari implied a Brahmin who is

### A NAME, A JOURNEY, A NEW IDENTITY

#### HOW INDIAN NAMES BECAME INDO-GUYANESE

**1. ORIGIN: INDIA**

**NORTH INDIA (HINDI BELT)**  
Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and surrounding areas  
~85% of arrivals

**SOUTH INDIA (TAMIL REGION)**  
Tamil Nadu and surrounding areas  
~15% of arrivals

**RELIGION OF ARRIVALS**  
~85% HINDU  
~15% MUSLIM  
NEGLECTIBLE CHRISTIAN

**TYPICAL NAME SOURCES IN INDIA**

**HINDU (NORTH)**  
Prasad (gracious gift), Singh (lion), Ramavtar (incarnation of Ram)  
Names often linked to caste, astrology, deities, or day of birth

**HINDU (SOUTH)**  
Veerasammy (brave lord), Ramsammy (Lord Ram), Nagamootoo (serpent's pearl)  
Tamil names often end in 'Sammy' or 'Mootoo'

**MUSLIM**  
Khan (ruler, leader), Baksh (gift, bestower), Mohamed, Ali  
Persian and Arabic influences

**2. DISRUPTION: INDENTURESHP & COLONIAL MEDIATION**

**RECRUITMENT 1838-1917**  
~240,000 Indians arrived in British Guiana as indentured labourers

**EMIGRATION PASS (Official Document)**  
Name of Emigrant  
Age Religion Caste  
Village  
District  
Remarks  
Signature of Registering Officer

The British registering agent recorded names as he heard them and as they sounded to his cultural ear. Many names were misheard, abbreviated, or altered.

ORIGINAL IN INDIA	RECORDED / ANGLICISED	COMMON IN GUYANA
Prasad (gracious gift)	Persaud / Prashad	Persaud (very common)
Ramavtar (incarnation of Ram)	Ramoutar / Ramotar	Ramotar
Ramsahai (helper of Ram)	Ramsahoye / Ramsahoi	Ramsahoye
Narayana (Lord Vishnu)	Narine / Narain	Narine
Chandravatti (moon-like)	Chandrowti / Chandroutie	Chandrowtie
Murugan (Hindu deity)	Morgan	Morgan
Baksh (gift, bestower)	Bacchus	Bacchus (common Muslim surname)

**3. RECONSTRUCTION: GUYANA**

In Guyana, names were stabilised, adapted, and passed down through generations—creating a new Indo-Guyanese identity.

**FATHER'S FIRST NAME BECOMES FIXED SURNAME**

Persaud, Singh, Ramotar, Narine

**CULTURAL INFLUENCES**  
Bollywood, Indian media and global culture shape modern first names. Examples: Asha, Ravi, Anil, Priya.

**ADAPTATION & ANGLICISATION**  
Spelling and pronunciation evolve; some names become shorter or adopt Western forms.

**MIXED HERITAGE, NEW REALITIES**  
Intermarriage, conversion and migration create diverse, blended identities.

**WHAT REMAINS**  
Heritage and origins, Stories and meanings, Family and memory, A living, evolving identity.

Names carried across oceans were changed by history, but they continue to carry meaning, memory, and belonging.  
*Different in form, connected at heart.*

are adaptations of Ramsahai (helper of Ram); Narine/Narain, which are adaptations of Narayana (referring to Lord Vishnu), Chandrowti/Chandroutie which are adaptations of Chandravatti (moon-like, possessor of beauty).

Changes also occurred by the Indentured labourers themselves or their descendants. Some converted to Christianity, and took on completely new names. These days, without delving into Guyanese history, no one would realise that the name Dr William Hewley Wharton is that of an Indo-Guyanese. He is a pioneer in Guyana's medical history, being the first Indo-Guyanese to study medicine in Britain, and graduating from the University of Edinburgh in 1899. Likewise, according to the website, **the name of the patriarch of the very famous legal family Luckhoo was Lokhoa upon arrival.**



Dr Brinsley Samaroo coined 'Bramhin by Boat'

knowledgeable in three Vedas; and Singh implied a warrior or administrator.

In Guyana, while the caste system existed among the early Tamil speaking southerners, not much is known, as it may have disappeared quickly due to the relatively small size of the community and their adaptation of Christianity and North Indian practices.

The evolution of names commenced in India at the time of issuance of the *Emigration Pass* (official document equivalent to a passport). Indian names were recorded on the *Emigration Pass* based on how the British registering agent felt the name sounded, as well as on his cultural experience.

In Guyana and the West Indies, Bacchus is the Surname of many Muslims. However, a Google search would indicate Bacchus was originally not an Islamic or Arabic name. Instead, it is the name of the Roman god of wine, and is of Greek and Latin origin. The Muslim name would have been Baksh, which came to India with the Persians.

Because Bacchus as a Muslim name is common to Guyana and other countries that received Indentured Indian labourers, it is highly likely some British officials recorded Bacchus as the name of many of the emigrants instead of Baksh.

The same can be said of many Hindu names, such as Murugan, which was recorded as Morgan, or Persaud, which was recorded for Prasad.

In Guyana, anglicisation and similar changes occurred. However, without conducting an adequate sample of ancestral records and local birth registry, it is not possible to be certain which changes took place in India, and which occurred locally.

In any case, it is clear that many Indian names were anglicised. Some obvious examples are Ramsahoye/Ramsahoi, which

During the early 20th century, Indo-Guyanese children were given more traditional names along the lines in India. Later generations became more adventurous. Hindu first names started to cross caste lines and names became more elegant and meaningful. By the early 1950s Indian cinema began to have an impact on Indian first names. Names of Indian actors and actresses, as well as the names of movie characters started to be given to children. This trend now continues with greater frequency.

In Guyana, a couple of very popular female first names seem to be a religious reversal of what occurs in India. Nadira, which is of Arabic origin and a Muslim name in India, is considered a Hindu name in Guyana. Asha, a Hindu name in India, is considered a Muslim name in Guyana.

Also, the last names of two prominent Muslim business families from the 1950s and 1960s in Guyana would be considered Hindu in India. Sankar, as in Sankar Brothers, is another name for the Hindu deity Lord Shiva. Gajraj, as in Gajraj and Sons, literally translates to King of Elephants, and is often linked to the Hindu deity Lord Ganesha.

As the Indian labourers and their children settled in Guyana, they had to be accommodated in a legal system requiring First Name and Last Name, labelled on all legal forms during the colonial days as Christian Name and Surname, respectively.

Since the Emigration Pass of the Indian Indentured labourers only had the person's First Name and his/her Father's First Name, in Guyana the father's First Name often became the Last Name of the children.

In the next generation, when these children became parents, again the father's First Name became the Last Name of the children. From this point forward, the Last Name became fixed for subsequent generations.

Supporting this fact, in his autobiography *Glimpses of a Global Life*, Sir Shridath Ramphal, one of the most famous Indo-Guyanese, states that his last name Ramphal was the first name of his Indentured paternal grandfather.

For this historical reason many brothers who were born during or soon after the end of Indentureship have children with different last names, making it difficult to establish relationships when historical memory is lost.

Despite the preceding, some Brahmins and Kshatriyas were able to maintain their original caste last names, which have been passed down to following generations. It is likely that in the early years of Indentureship, when upper caste individuals were not favoured for recruitment, some claimed lower status to be accepted.

After arrival in Guyana, they reclaimed their former status, and were able to fit in the legal system for themselves and their children.

However, in Trinidad, the late distinguished history professor, Dr Brinsley Samaroo, coined the unflattering phrase "Brahmin by Boat" to describe individuals, who after arrival in Trinidad, claimed to be Brahmins.

The evolution of Indo-Guyanese names commenced from the time the ancestors departed India. Over the years in Guyana, changes continued, and will continue due to increasing anglicisation, christianisation, loss of the Hindu caste system, and racial and religious inter-marriages. However, Indian cultural heritage will persist.



## Royal good time at ICCA gala

— The Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association (ICCA) brought elegance, energy, and purpose together on April 18 as nearly 500 guests gathered in Scarborough for its third annual Fete Gala, a vibrant fundraiser celebrating Caribbean culture, community pride, and collective progress.

...

**By Romeo Kaseram**  
**An LJI Community Report**

**Scarborough** – Beneath a highlights of light and colour, where chandeliers shimmered like constellations and tiaras caught the glow, the ICCA's third annual Fete Gala unfolded as something more than an evening out, instead becoming a living expression of Caribbean identity in motion.

Held at the Sts Peter & Paul Banquet Hall in Scarborough, the April 18 event marked the ICCA's premier fundraising initiative, drawing close to 500 attendees in a striking display of elegance, cultural pride, and community in action.

Following the event, ICCA President, Ryan Singh, said: "Fete Gala isn't just a party, but a powerful expression of community. With 500 guests gathered in celebration, the evening was a clear demonstration of the deep support behind the work of the Indo-Caribbean Canadian Association. The energy in the room reflected more than festivity; it reflected unity, pride, and a shared commitment to uplifting our community."

Singh added, "The outpouring of generosity we witnessed was truly inspiring, and continues to fuel our mission to connect, serve, and amplify Indo-Caribbean voices across Canada. I am deeply grateful to our donors and supporters whose contributions ensure our ongoing success, and to our dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make an event of this scale not only possible, but exceptional."

ICCA's Fete Gala was no ordinary Caribbean fundraiser. With the theme *Caribbean Royalty*, guests answered the call with intention, arriving in gowns, tailored suits, and, in many cases, wearing crowns and tiaras that turned the room into a regal procession of majestic

heritage and style.

The scale of the gathering was matched only by its energised spirit. Across generations, our Indo-Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora came together not just to attend, but to participate, to be seen, celebrate, and reaffirm a shared cultural inheritance shaped across oceans and time.

Filling the banquet hall, the night pulsed with an unmistakable Caribbean rhythm. Performances by Terry Gajraj, Hunter, and K.I. kept the energy high, and the dance floor alive, each act layering the evening with soundtracks that were both nostalgic and contemporary.

Supporting musical elements from DJ selections and live steelpan performance wove seamlessly into the programme, ensuring that the music did not merely accompany the night, but carried it forward.

If the stage provided the rhythm, the laden tables offered their own form of connection. Guests were treated to a thoughtfully curated culinary experience, beginning with appetisers and moving into a plated dinner featuring chicken and salmon, before closing with an array of desserts that brought a sweet, unhurried finish, and finesse, to the evening.

In these shared moments between courses, conversations, and cutlery in action, the gala revealed another dimension, that our community was not just a concept, but was a lived, communal space.

However, at its core, the evening was anchored in purpose. ICCA's Fete Gala serves as a key fundraiser for its ongoing community work, supporting initiatives that continue to uplift, connect, and empower us as Indo-Caribbean Canadians. That mission was never far from the surface, even amid the celebration. Rather, it gave the celebration its deeper meaning.

And so, what unfolded on April 18 was not simply a gala, but a statement of our presence, continuity, and our pride. It was a reminder that culture, when carried collectively, does not stand still; that it moves and adapts.

And that on nights like these, it shines like so many constellations onto our community that continues to honour its past while stepping confidently together into its future.



Terry Gajraj energises the crowd on the dance floor during the ICCA Fete Gala on April 18. Photos courtesy ICCA by Christine R and Prospect Productions



# Music, tears mark farewell for Tracey

— A private evening of music, memory, and quiet emotion unfolded in Toronto as members of the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora gathered to honour departing diplomat Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, blending parang, calypso, and community in a farewell that was as heartfelt as it was celebratory.

On April 24, the gentle strum of parang rhythms and the hum of familiar voices transformed a rehearsal space at Govind's Den in Toronto into an event far more energised and emotive, becoming a room filled with living memory, music, and farewell.

There, the *Crab and Callaloo Kaiso Band* hosted a private tribute to Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette, marking her departure after five years as Acting Consul General at the Consulate General for Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto.

It was not an official send-off, but more intimate and profound, an evening shaped by shared cultural language, where diplomacy gave way to community, and titles blurred the edges into friendships.

The farewell, held during the band's weekly rehearsal, reflected the unique place Ramsubagh-Mannette has come to occupy in our diaspora, not only as a diplomat, but as an active participant in our cultural life. Her next posting takes her to Miami, but on this night, Toronto held her close.

Central to the evening's rhythm was George Maharaj, a Trinidad-born calypso historian, archivist, and musician, who described Ramsubagh-Mannette as a guest singer with his parang group, *Los Ketchos Paranderos*.

And indeed, she performed alongside the band, her voice folding seamlessly into the music and the laughter that have long served as a bridge between the homeland and our diaspora.

Then came the moment that defined the evening. As Maharaj recounted, Ramsubagh-

Mannette was serenaded with a specially composed piece, *Tracey Doh Leave*, a musical farewell that captured both the joy of her presence and the sorrow of her departure.

"From all indications, it was an excellent event," Maharaj said, noting that beneath the celebration ran a quiet, unmistakable current of sadness.

That undercurrent surfaced in small, human gestures. During the more poignant tributes, guests were seen playfully passing around Kleenex in an act that was performative even as it was light-hearted and telling, the moments capturing the emotional tenor of an evening where laughter and tears entered the narrative of departure weaving through the room.

More than 75 attendees filled the room, representing some 20 Trinidad and Tobago organisations across the GTA. Among them were members of Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus, Pan Fantasy, Toronto All Stars Pan Network, Mask K Mas, and other cultural and community groups that collectively form the cultural connective tissue in our diaspora.

The presence of diplomatic and community figures further underscored the significance of the evening. Consul General Simone Young attended, alongside former Consul General Michael Lashley, and Grenada's Consul General Gerry Hopkin, reflecting a wider Caribbean solidarity in celebrating Ramsubagh-Mannette's contributions.

Yet, for all its notable attendees, the evening retained the feel of a family gathering. Food and drinks were supplied by band members and supporters, reinforcing the sense of communal ownership over the tribute.

It was less an event staged and more one shared, one that was built collectively, much like the cultural traditions it honoured, and the gratitude felt for the cohesiveness Ramsubagh-Mannette helped shape during her tenure in Toronto.



Ramsubagh-Mannette (centre) receives a certificate from Brampton City Councillor Rod Power (left); at right is George Maharaj. Photos by Russell Lutchman



Ramsubagh-Mannette (centre) was honoured with a plaque from the charitable group, UNI-TNT; at left is Tony Chankar, with Mahadeo Sankar at right



Top photo, CG Simone Young (seated at right), with guests; below, Diane Ojar (at left) with Deputy Consul General Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette. Photos by Hinano Beekhoo

## Ojar centers reflection

Guided by the reflections of Consul General Simone Young, the book launch at the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto of Diane Ojar's *The Strategic Goal Seeker's Handbook* unfolded as both a celebration and a moment of quiet invitation. In her address, Young positioned Ojar as an author whose work extends beyond instruction into genuine connection.

Young noted that *The Strategic Goal Seeker's Handbook* had been received as more than a manual, describing it as a thoughtful companion that encouraged readers to approach their journeys with patience, reflection, and intention.

She also underscored Ojar's generosity in sharing her own experiences, observing that the book placed each reader at the centre of its narrative, offering both guidance and permission to reflect on their own paths.

That sentiment later rippled out into the room, as attendees engaged in conversation and reflection, meeting Ojar to explore the ideas behind her work. And in so doing, the atmosphere at the Consulate General took on



a distinctly communal tone, where strategy met vulnerability, and where ambition was balanced with encouragement, leaving a lasting impression of a gathering that was as much about connection, as it was about generosity, giving, and guidance.

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## Risk to riches as Dhurandhar redefines Bollywood's global box office presence

— Ranveer Singh has staged a commanding comeback as *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* surges to historic box office heights, becoming one of the highest-grossing Indian films ever and cementing a high-stakes collaboration with director Aditya Dhar.

Director Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*, headlined by Ranveer Singh, has scripted box office history, emerging as the second-highest-grossing Indian film of all time globally, trailing only Aamir Khan's *Dangal* while surpassing the long-standing benchmark set by S.S. Rajamouli's *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*.

The film's extraordinary performance marks a decisive resurgence for Singh following a string of underwhelming releases, while validating Dhar's high-risk, high-reward bet on the actor.

What began as an ambitious single project evolved into a two-part cinematic franchise, one that has now redefined commercial success in contemporary Indian cinema.

Originally conceived as a single film, *Dhurandhar* was ultimately split into two

installments to preserve narrative depth and scale.

Both parts were shot simultaneously, reflecting a bold production strategy designed to deliver a cohesive and expansive storyline. The decision proved pivotal, allowing the filmmakers to fully explore the arc of an undercover operative navigating a high-stakes global terror network.

Singh's faith in the project was matched by a substantial financial commitment. He reportedly earned a total remuneration of 50 crore (approximately US \$6 million), double the 25 crore (about US \$3 million) he received for his previous outing in *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani*.

His earnings significantly outpaced those of his co-stars, including Sanjay Dutt (ten crore/US \$1.2 million), R. Madhavan (nine crore/US \$1.1 million), Akshaye Khanna (2.5 crore/US \$300,000), and Arjun Rampal (one crore/US \$120,000).

The disparity underscores Singh's centrality to the franchise, and the scale of the gamble that was undertaken.

It is a gamble that has paid off in emphatic

fashion. The first installment of *Dhurandhar* earned 894.49 crore net in India (approximately US \$107 million), while *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* amassed 1,168.68 crore in the domestic market (around US \$140 million) within 40 days of release.

Combined, the franchise has generated 2063.17 crore in India alone, roughly US \$248 million. Against a reported production budget of 450 crore (US \$54 million), both films have delivered returns of approximately 1613 crore, or US \$194 million, marking one of the most profitable ventures in recent Bollywood history.

Globally, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* has amassed approximately 1,788 crore (about US \$215 million), placing it neck-and-neck with *Baahubali 2's* lifetime worldwide total. Of this, 1362 crore (US \$163 million) has come from the domestic market, while overseas territories have contributed 426 crore (US \$51 million).

Unlike *Dangal*, whose global dominance was heavily bolstered by its exceptional run in China, where it reportedly grossed over 1,300 crore (US \$156 million), *Dhurandhar's* success reflects a more balanced performance across

markets.

A defining feature of the film's success has been its consistency. After opening to massive numbers, *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* maintained strong box office momentum despite competition from new releases.

Continued audience turnout and repeat viewership have underscored the film's broad appeal and cultural resonance.

The franchise centres on a covert Indian operative infiltrating a global terror network, with the second installment tracing the journey of Hamza, also known as Jaskirat Singh Rangi.

Alongside Singh, the film features a strong ensemble cast including Sanjay Dutt, R. Madhavan, and Arjun Rampal, whose performances contribute to the film's layered narrative.

With the franchise achieving historic success, early reports suggest that Singh and Dhar may reunite for another ambitious project, potentially centred on the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. The film is expected to go into production in 2027, signalling that this creative partnership may continue to shape the trajectory of big-budget Indian cinema.

## Veteran actor Bharat Kapoor passes

Bharat Kapoor, whose imposing screen presence and nuanced portrayals of antagonists made him a familiar figure in Hindi films and television, died on April 27 following a cardiac arrest at Sion Hospital in Mumbai. He was 80.

Though he rarely occupied leading roles, Kapoor carved out a distinctive space within the industry, bringing depth and conviction to supporting characters, particularly villains. His performances, often marked by restraint and intensity, ensured that even brief appearances lingered in his audience's memory. In an era defined by star power, Kapoor's craft lay in his ability to inhabit the margins, and elevate them.

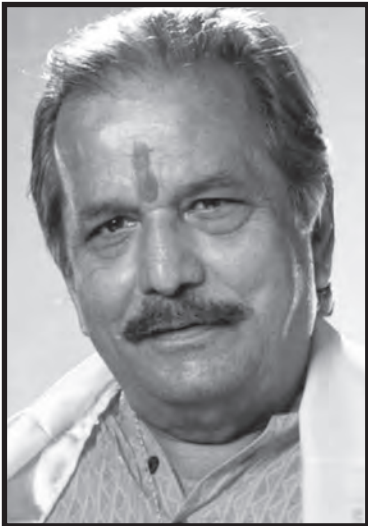
Kapoor began his acting journey in 1972 and went on to sustain a steady presence in films for nearly four decades. His body of work reflects both range and consistency, with appearances across genres and eras of Hindi cinema.

Among his most recognised films are *Noorie* (1979), widely regarded as his most prominent work, alongside *Ram Balram* (1980), *Love Story* (1981), *Bazaar* (1982), *Ghulami* (1985), *Aakhree Raasta* (1986), and *Satyamev Jayate* (1987).

He continued to appear in notable productions such as *Swarg* (1990), *Khuda Gawah* (1992), and *Rang* (1993), before extending his career into later works including *Barsaat*

(1995), *Saajan Chale Sasural* (1996), and *Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities* (2004).

Beyond cinema, Kapoor became a recognisable presence on Indian television, appearing in a range of popular series that brought him into homes across the country. His television credits include *Campus*, *Parampara*, *Rahat*, *Saans*, *Amanat*, *Tara*, *Chunauti*, and *Kahani Chandrakanta Ki*.



**Bharat Kapoor**

veteran theatre and film actor Bharat Kapoor ji. Have great memories working with him in the initial days of my career. A great human being. Om Shanti."

Kapoor leaves behind a body of work that speaks to the enduring importance of character actors in shaping cinematic memory.

In roles often defined by conflict and opposition, he found space for texture and humanity, ensuring that his performances, quietly forceful, consistently reliable, continue to resonate beyond his years.

In his later years, Kapoor stepped away from active work in film and television. Despite his absence from the screen, he remained a familiar figure to audiences who recalled his performances with enduring recognition.

Actor Avtar Gill, a friend and colleague, noted that Kapoor had been unwell in recent times, confirming his passing at the age of 80.

Filmmaker Ashoke Pandit paid tribute on social media, writing: "Sad to know about the demise of

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# Practice turns to purpose as Cricket to Cure Cancer unites community

— The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Cricket Clinic on April 26 at Yashi Sports in North York brought together players of all skill levels for a dynamic, hands-on session that blended preparation with purpose, setting the tone for Match Day on May 30 while strengthening community ties through sport.

There was a rhythm to the afternoon with bat meeting ball, laughter cutting through instruction, and the steady hum of a community finding its stride together. On April 26, at Yashi Sports in North York, the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Cricket Clinic unfolded not simply as a training session, but as a gathering point where preparation met purpose.

Hosted ahead of Season 2, the clinic drew registered participants from across the spectrum with first-time players tentatively gripping a bat, seasoned cricketers refining their touch, and others returning to the game with a renewed sense of intent. It was, in essence, a reminder that PMCF Cricket is built on both competition and connection.

Guiding the session were figures whose presence lent both credibility and inspiration: Saad Bin Zafar, Captain of the Men's National Team; Achini Perera, Vice Captain of the Women's National Team; and Samit Gohil, Coach for the Toronto Nationals Cricket Academy.

Their hands-on coaching transformed fundamentals into shared learning moments as demonstrations evolved into dialogue, and instruction carried an additional layer of encouragement.

Across the playing area, the clinic moved with purposeful energy. Participants rotated through batting, bowling, and fielding drills, each station offering a chance to build confidence



**Helping hands bond at the Clinic.** Supplied photos while sharpening technique. The introduction to the T5 format and match-day rules added structure to the movement, grounding enthusiasm in understanding. For many, it was about learning the game, while for others, it was about rediscovering its cadence.

Yet beyond the drills and walkthroughs, something quieter, and perhaps more enduring took shape. Teams bonded, strangers became teammates, and the atmosphere held a generosity of spirit that made space for every level of ability. Indeed, it was competitive, but never intimidating; and yes, it was instructive, yet always inviting.

In that space, the Clinic revealed its deeper significance. It stood as a reflection of what PMCF Cricket represents at its core: accessibility, inclusion, and a shared commitment to something far greater than the boundary rope. Every swing of the bat, every misfield met with laughter, every word of encouragement carried forward a collective purpose, which was to help drive life-saving cancer research.

For participants, the experience was as much about growth as it was about readiness. They left with a clearer grasp of gameplay, a firmer handle on fundamentals, and, perhaps most importantly, a growing confidence in their place within the game. Just as crucial were the connections forged, linking individuals into a broader cricketing and philanthropic community.

With Match Day now in sight on May 30 at Celebration Square in Mississauga, the clinic achieved more than preparing the teams; in fact, what it also did was set a tone. Now there is readiness, certainly, but add momentum as another takeaway, and a sense that what awaits will be shaped as much by camaraderie as by competition and humanitarianism.

And so, as the echoes of that April afternoon settle, what remains is not just the memory of drills completed or skills refined, but the quiet certainty that this is cricket with a cause; one that is played not only for runs and results, but for a future where the fear of cancer is steadily and collectively, driven forward to a place beyond the boundary.





The Princess Margaret  
Cancer Foundation UHN

# CRICKET

**T**he message shines brightly from the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation: *Carry the Fire*, both a call and a promise. When we step onto the field for Cricket to Conquer Cancer, we are doing more than playing a game. Each team, each run scored, each dollar raised helps carry that fire forward, lighting the path toward brighter tomorrows for cancer patients everywhere.

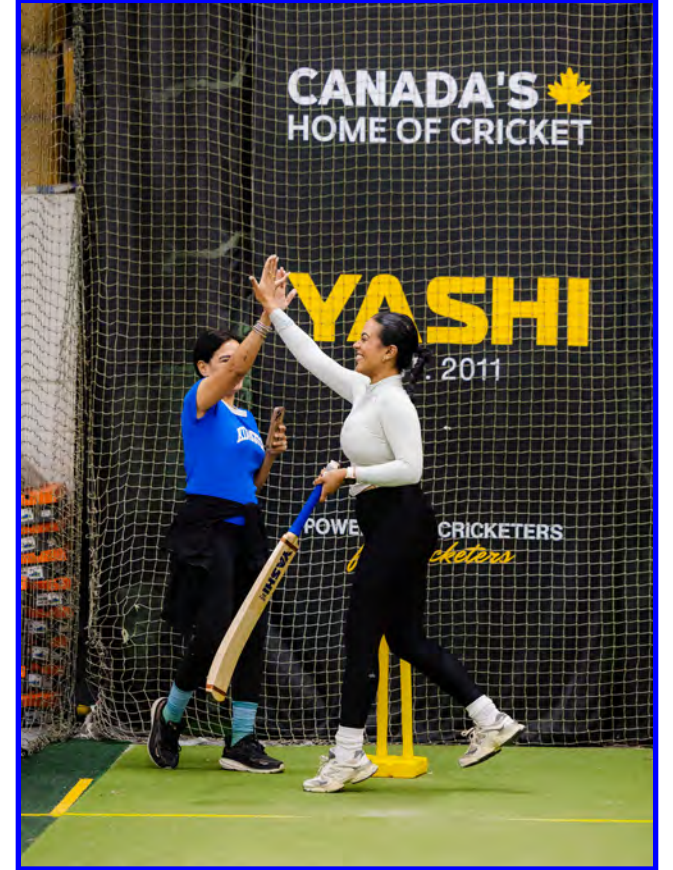
Fundraising efforts through the tournament help *Carry the Fire* for a new generation of patients, supporting the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's trailblazing work to transform what it means to be diagnosed with cancer.

As the PMCF explains, cancer is complex. It is not a single disease, but a group of hundreds, shaped by lifestyle, environment, and genetics. The challenges are immense. Yet the belief guiding the work at PMCF is equally powerful: through collaborative research, intensive training, and engaged philanthropy, those challenges can be overcome together.

Today, the PMCF's world-renowned team of doctors, researchers, and scientists continue to carry that fire forward. Their mission is to advance early detection, develop innovative treatments, and expand comprehensive patient support so that those facing cancer can benefit from the very best outcomes and experiences.

The goal is clear: to help cancer patients everywhere live longer, healthier lives; and ultimately, to build a future where fewer people live in fear of the disease.

And come May 30, as the bat meets the ball at Celebration Square, our diaspora will help keep that fire burning.



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