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Our Community Is Thriving!

Diaspora eyes regional general elections

– Our diaspora in the GTA remains sharply focused on the Caribbean's unfolding electoral landscape. With elections already concluded in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Anguilla, attention now turns to upcoming polls in Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; and most significantly, Guyana's general elections on September 1.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Toronto – As the Caribbean region navigates a year of consequential elections, diaspora communities in the GTA, notably from Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Saint Vincent, continue to closely follow the political developments back in the homelands. With shifts already happening in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Anguilla, the announcement by Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali of forthcoming general and regional elections has now taken centre stage.



Irfaan Ali

In Suriname, while its Electoral Bureau is yet to declare a final result for its May 25 polls, reports are indicating a narrow win for the opposition National Democratic Party, led by Dr Jennifer Geerlings-Simons. The NDP secured 18 of the 51 National Assembly seats, edging out the ruling Progressive Reform Party of President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, which obtained 17.

To meet Suriname's constitutional requirement of a two-thirds supermajority of 34 seats for electing a president, the NDP appears to have formed a coalition with the General Liberation and Development Party, the National Party of Suriname, Pertjajah Luhur, Alternative 2020, and Brotherhood and Unity in Politics.

This alliance appears to have given the opposition bloc the votes necessary to elect Dr Geerlings-Simons as Suriname's first female president.

Meanwhile, in Trinidad and Tobago, the April
See Page 10: Diaspora in Toronto



TT 50 Plus Association welcomed the Consulate General of Trinidad and Tobago in Toronto's newly-appointed Consul General, Simone Young (right), and Consul Tracey Ramsubagh-Mannette as guests during its celebration of Indian Arrival Day, which took place last month. See Page 5.

Cricket unites community in fight against cancer

– Over 400 players, supporters, and celebrities gathered at Mississauga's Celebration Square on May 31 for the inaugural Cricket to Conquer Cancer fund-raiser. Raising \$1.16 million, the high-energy street cricket event combined community spirit, celebrity power, and cultural celebration to benefit The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation's drive to conquer cancer.

Mississauga – The inaugural Cricket to Conquer Cancer tournament brought over 400 participants to Celebration Square on May 31, raising \$1.16 million for The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation.

Framed around a dynamic T5 cricket format and a celebrity draft, the event marked the largest street cricket fund-raiser in Canada, uniting cricket enthusiasts, cancer survivors, and local communities in a powerful display of solidarity.

Played in a fast-paced five-over format, the tournament mirrored the urgency of its mission: funding life-saving cancer research. The top fund-raising teams earned first picks in a celebrity draft that brought household names onto the pitch, including West Indies cricket legend Carlos Brathwaite, NBA All-Star Jamaal Magloire, soccer icon Dwayne De Rosario, and Jully Black, Canadian singer-songwriter and artist.

Off the pitch, it was a day filled with family-friendly events, live music performances, food trucks, cultural cuisine, and interactive cricket experiences.

As noted on the [Cricket to Conquer Cancer](#) website, the highest fund-raising

team, The Gupta Titans, led the drive with \$202,242.93. Other standout teams included the Rowtie Wicketeers (\$25,540.58), Rotary Flower City (\$21,021.15), Securian Canada (\$20,273.99), and the Ablation Avengers (\$17,472.60).

Among individual fund-raisers were Sara Mazhar, who rose to the top with \$15,437.50, followed by Robin Ramsammy (\$11,406), Nydia Khargie (\$9,379.73), Kateri Corr (\$7,535.60), and Kaimraj Dookie (\$6,250).

Their contributions played a pivotal role in propelling the drive into the million-dollar range, and securing critical resources for cancer research.

Brathwaite, known for his match-winning heroics in the 2016 T20 World Cup, flew in from Barbados to serve as a celebrity ambassador.

"I felt powerless when my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer and when my close friend, Kenroy, passed away from this disease. I thought it was a death sentence... really and truly, because of the research... cancer is not a death sentence," he said.

Brathwaite emphasised that while his mother was not treated in Canada, the global impact of PMCF's research contributed to her survival.

Dr Miyo Yamashita, President and CEO of the PMCF, noted that the event was designed to meet the unique health needs of Canada's South Asian and Caribbean populations, both of which face elevated cancer risks.

As she stated, Southeast Asian Canadians tend to have higher incidences of certain types of cancers such as oral cancers, esophageal cancers, and head and

See Page 22: Cricket fund-raiser



Pitching in to conquer cancer were West Indies' legends Carlos Brathwaite (left) and Jason Holder (right); at centre is international commentator and the event's co-host, Nikhil Uttamchandani. Photo by Russell Lutchman

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Panel discussion, exhibition in TO mark Indian Arrival

A group of six people are seated in a circle on a stage, participating in a discussion. From left to right: a woman with curly hair in a black top and orange skirt; a woman with glasses and a colorful patterned jacket speaking into a microphone; a woman with dark curly hair in a patterned blazer; a woman with grey hair in a bright orange patterned top; a man in a blue shirt seen from the back; and a woman with long dark hair in a black jacket. The setting is a stage with a wooden floor and a dark backdrop.



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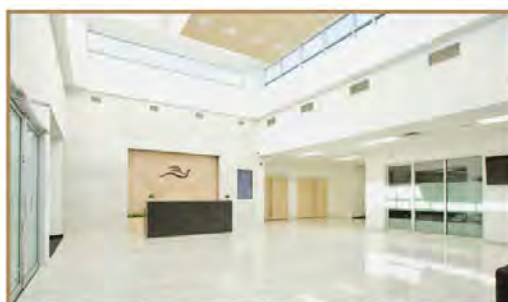
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TT 50 Plus marks Indian Arrival Day

Scarborough — The Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus and Seniors Association of Canada (Ontario Chapter) hosted a vibrant celebration of Indian Arrival Day on May 25 in Scarborough, showcasing a rich tapestry of culture, spirituality, and generational reflection.

The event began with the singing of the national anthems of Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and India, followed by interfaith prayers representing the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities. This inclusive opening underscored the celebration's focus on unity, diversity, and shared values that bind our Caribbean diaspora in Canada.

Newly-appointed Consul General Simone Young of the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate General in Toronto extended formal greetings to the gathering.

Greetings were also extended by the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Guildwood-Rouge Park, affirming the occasion's significance within the local and national community.

A key highlight of the afternoon was the feature talk delivered by Shivani and Aneal

Mahadeo, titled *From the Cane Fields to Canada: A Generational Reflection*.

Entertainment featured dynamic dance performances by Vanusha Jaikaran and Ryan Ramsahoye. Their first piece paid tribute to Lord Krishna, while the second, entitled *ISHQ*, was a celebration of love. Both dances were met with enthusiastic applause from attendees.

Anil Singh added a musical dimension to the event, performing beloved Bollywood songs that prompted attendees to take to the floor. The cultural vibrancy reached a crescendo with the Royal Tassa Group's high-energy closing performance, during which members danced along to the rhythmic beats.

Guests were treated to traditional Caribbean-Indian fare, including aloo and channa rotis, kurma, and a soft drink, the meal offering a tasty reflection of our community's roots and our culinary legacy.

Host for the proceedings was Shane Suepaul, group president. Suepaul welcomed and thanked participants for contributing to an event that honoured history while celebrating community bonds in the present.



In photo above, members and the executive of the Trinidad and Tobago 50 Plus Association; in photos, 50 Plus members, guests, and performers having a good time during the group's celebration of Indian Arrival Day on May 25.



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Editorial

Equitable climate action

Our beautiful Caribbean shores have always stood as gateways: places of arrival and departure, where its tides tell stories of trade, migration, and cultural blending. However, swimming with these tides today are foreboding and ominous truths.

Just as rising waves are steadily washing further up on familiar beaches in Jamaica's Montego Bay, Maracas Bay in Trinidad and Tobago, and pounding against the seawall in Georgetown, Guyana, so too is global warming impacting our chances for a sustainable, livable future. And it is happening one fraction of a degree at a time.

The latest forecasts from the World Meteorological Organisation recently added more brush strokes to an already stark portrait: that global temperatures will remain at or near record-breaking levels over the next five years, propelling our planet toward increasingly severe and deleterious climate disruptions.

For our Caribbean diaspora in the GTA, these findings resonate deeply. Our community remains intimately linked to our homelands through family ties, culture, and memory, even as we are now anchored in Canada. We understand that climate change respects no borders; that its impacts weave seamlessly across both our worlds.

The WMO's report, issued on May 28, underscores the immediacy of this threat. According to its analysis, there is an 80 percent chance that at least one year between now and 2029 will surpass the record heat of 2024. In 2024, the WMO recorded that the global temperature hit 1.55 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Even more alarmingly, there is an 86 percent likelihood that at least one of the next five years will be more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900, pre-industrial average. Also, long-term warming continues to accelerate, with Arctic temperatures predicted to rise three and a half times faster than the global average.

These numbers, while abstract on paper, translate into tangible, often catastrophic, realities. Every incremental rise in global temperature brings intensified hurricanes, devastating floods, crippling droughts, unprecedented heatwaves, and extensive wildfires.

For our Caribbean homelands, already vulnerable due to their geographic position and economic reliance on tourism and agriculture, these extremes threaten economic collapse and social instability. Hurricanes in recent years, such as *Maria* in Dominica and *Dorian* in The Bahamas, continue to remind us how swiftly extreme weather can dismantle entire communities.

Canada is far from immune. Last summer's wildfires, and the latest, ongoing conflagrations, continue to highlight local vulnerabilities. Canada's responsibilities extend beyond coping with consequences; as an influential nation, we must lead in climate action, supporting international cooperation and resilience projects, particularly for our vulnerable Caribbean homelands.

While some argue climate patterns have historically fluctuated, experts continue to emphasise that each fractional rise in temperature directly intensifies these disasters. The Paris Agreement's 1.5 degrees Celsius target explicitly addresses this reality. Even temporary breaches significantly escalate extreme climate events.

Our Caribbean homelands, though small, wield considerable moral and diplomatic influence as frontline witnesses to ongoing climate change devastation. Our diaspora can amplify Caribbean voices, urging Canada towards aggressive climate action at the upcoming COP30.

Addressing climate change is also a matter of social justice. Caribbean nations, among the least responsible for global emissions, are bearing disproportionate burdens. Positioned between two worlds, our diaspora holds both moral authority and practical capacity to advocate for equitable climate action, urging Canada to fulfill its commitments and support Caribbean adaptation initiatives.

Our future hinges upon recognising these intertwined responsibilities. The rising tide, both a metaphor and an existential surge, underscores the urgency for collective action. We must choose wisely and act decisively now. Our homelands, beaches, and collective heritage, depend on it.

Carney, the Crown, and Canada's colonial contradictions

The month of May was disorienting, prompting me to ask myself: "Where am I? What century is this?"

Last month, Prime Minister Mark Carney visited US President Donald Trump, a trip hailed as a success for deflecting threats of Canada becoming the 51st State (before Puerto Rico). PM Carney reportedly achieved this by asserting he met with the "owners of Canada over the course of [his] campaign" who told him Canada is not for sale.

However, the concept of land ownership is deeply political, a colonial tool in which Canada asserted dominance over Indigenous peoples whose own world view sees them as stewards, not owners, of land. Given this context, PM Carney's use of "owners" likely did not refer to Indigenous peoples, prompting a necessary reflection on Canadian history.

Canada's origins as a mercantilist project are rooted in a 1670 grant by King Charles II giving the Hudson Bay Company exclusive trading rights. Following centuries of Anglo-French conflict, culminating in the French defeat in 1759, the Dominion of Canada was formed in 1867. This white Dominion gained self-governance, a privilege denied to colonies like British India or the West Indies. Shortly thereafter, the North West mounted police (forerunner to the RCMP), was established as a colonial force tasked with controlling Indigenous populations, and facilitating Canadian expansion over Indigenous lands.

Just weeks later, at the close of May, another spectacle unfolded on my television: all the pomp and circumstance of a royal visit to Canada. PM Carney had invited King Charles III to open Parliament. On May 27, King Charles III and Queen Camilla processed to the Senate building in a horse-drawn carriage escorted by 28 horses; crowds cheered and waved British and Canadian flags.

The King inspected a 100-person honour guard and received a 21-gun salute before delivering the speech from the throne. Ottawa was awash in a celebration of the British crown, leaving me to wonder: Was I alone in feeling as though I had travelled back in time?

My mother's ironic recollection of royal visits to Trinidad: "When I was a kid, you would see the royal family visit. You would have to have your uniform all pressed and ironed and line up in the hot sun just to wave a flag", starkly contrasts with the spectacle in Ottawa.

Life Magazine in 1955 described Princess Margaret's tour of the British West Indies as a radiant performance designed to strengthen "the warm, heartening little sentimentalities on



Nalini Mohabir

which the empire rests".

Yet, immediately following her visit, the *Port of Spain Gazette* reported on a British Conservative MPs' committee studying the "Indian problem" in Trinidad, noting that Indo-Trinidadian children greeted Princess Margaret by singing the Indian national anthem, not *God Save the Queen*.

Similarly, in 1953, after British Guiana's first democratic elections granted a degree of self-governance, Dr Cheddi Jagan refused to send a representative to greet Queen Elizabeth II in Jamaica, arguing funds "could be better spent".

These instances clearly demonstrate a powerful rejection of imperial ties by our community.

Why, then, in this modern era, does a country like Canada, continue to fete the Crown with military parades, cultural performances, and flag-waving children? This history compels us to question: What does this 2025 royal visit truly represent for Canada?

The prevailing narrative suggests King Charles III's visit is a vital assertion of Canadian sovereignty to our southern neighbours. Yet, as *CBC* noted, it is remarkably rare for the monarchy to open Parliament. Queen Elizabeth II did so only twice: in Canada in 1957, amidst Cold War democratic threats; and in Grenada in 1985, after a US invasion occurred (of Grenada) without consulting the Queen – a seemingly ineffectual defense of Grenadian sovereignty, if you ask me.

The British Crown represents 14 Commonwealth realms, including Grenada, Belize, the Bahamas, Grenada, Antigua, St Kitts, and Jamaica – all actively planning to sever ties with the monarchy.

Charles Roach, the Trinidadian civil rights lawyer, tirelessly challenged Canada's oath of citizenship requirement to pledge allegiance to the Queen, striving for a national reckoning with the British monarchy's legacy of colonialism, oppression, and racism. He died before seeing his dream realised.

Is it not deeply ironic that Canada now relies on King Charles III to underscore its sovereignty? Why does Canada cling to the Crown, especially given its profound entanglement with a violent, genocidal history of settler colonialism? As Indo-Caribbean peoples who have migrated to Canada, often as a direct result of (neo-) colonialism and dispossession in the Caribbean, what is our responsibility in this moment?

Must we passively accept colonial hierarchies, or simply adopt settler colonial values to "fit in"? If this spectacle offers any lesson, let it be to critically examine how we can be allies to the true "owners" of Canada, rather than passive beneficiaries of their colonisation.

When rumshop fantasies collide with boyhood warnings

My grandmother's warning forefinger swept sideways rapidly like a windshield wiper during a sudden squall, warning me not to stray beyond the threshold that was our front "gap", that liminal space between the safety of our adobe hut, and the dangers waiting to leap out from the cane fields to take away her precious grandson.

Each arc of the wiper blade carried with it a kind of febricity, a heated fervour distilled from ancestral injustices that our generations had refined into an overarching command of vigilance.

"Little boy, you over harden! It have plenty bad people out there. You must keep your two eyes open all the time."

Ma truly believed there were dangers concealed in the sugar canes, and submerged beneath the mossy scum on the surface of the ponds that quenched the sugar factory's insatiable thirst, waiting to snatch me away from under her sheltering wings.

Her warnings read like texts from Gothic literature. In her anthology of anxieties were narratives about "harden" boys who did not "listen", and who came to an untimely end minus vital organs, their livers being much sought-after, which the foreign elite in the distant capital city fed to their prized racehorses.

Yet, despite Ma's protective wings, I was driven to explore the darkening world she was so desperately shielding me against.

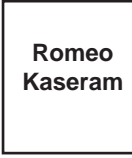
If there is a mantra that still resonates from my childhood, it was Ma's exasperation, "Boy-child, why you turning out so harden? Why your two little foot so hot?"

It was my incipient curiosity about the world that took me away from the mother hen's clutching embrace. Always attracted to a narrative, it was the stories told in the village rumshop by its seasoned drinkers that fired up my awakening imagination.

If Ma's warnings drained her sun-burnt face of colour even as it shaped my fears, it was the faces of the drinkers in the rumshop, flushed red with hard drink, the tips of their noses peeled from exposure, that heated up my imagination to a slow boil.

Here was a drinking establishment that leapt out, not with foreboding and danger, but more with a scent wherein mingled a ferment of rum, perspiration, a waft from the urinary, and passive rebellion. Mix all these ingredients among pieces of crackling chipped ice using an unhygienic forefinger, and the cocktail was a heady concoction that smelled like yesterday's misfortunes, today's turmoil, and indubitably, tomorrow's hangover.

Here, camaraderie blossomed among the drinkers amidst bravado made saccharine with inebriation; and from unsteady manifestations of accuracy that saw emergence of a remarkable art



form: tossing damp labels peeled from beer bottles to the ceiling so it stuck, which over time grew to become a Sistine Chapel mosaic of eclectic alcohol brand names.

The drinkers were cane-cutters freshly emerged from a thousand cuts in the sugar cane fields, and who had taken to drink to numb realities and rigours they could neither escape nor confront with sobriety.

Their laughter was loud, raucous, and as they imbibed deeply, their eyes glazed over, their efforts to navigate the humidity like flies entangled in molasses. Venting their frustrations at the grinding pace of daily lives feeding the sugar mills, their coarse language saw corollary punctuation to exclamations via fists pounding on the wooden tables, and blobs of flying spittle.

Yet amidst this world-weary cohort was a visionary, one whose melodramatic pronouncements found quick derision.

"One day, it will have a man walking on the moon!" this wizened man declared with fervent sincerity, the pronouncement finalised with the action of the back of an absorbent, hirsute arm wiping away the stinging alcohol from his sun-corroded lips.

His statements invariably ignited a predictable volley of skeptical insults and incredulous laughter. But for me, wearing a young boy's cloak of invisibility, I intuited beneath their ridicule a quiet recognition of hope, fleeting seconds when their eyes softened at the possibility that the bigger world beyond had come into their reach in an oblique, but barely tangible way.

"One day, it will have a radio for you to find fish in the sea."

Here was another possibility, a baffling prophecy that has since emerged as a fish-finder, to which another drinker, incredulous and indignant, slammed down his shot glass and exclaimed, "How you expect to catch fish carrying a big, heavy radiogram in the boat? You feel you could just spin the dial and the fish will talk over the radio station and say, 'Look we here; come and hold we?'"

I listened to the laughter from my corner, where light glinted off the silver edges on a platoon of cutlasses leaning against the wall.

Here between Ma's prognostications of inexorable danger and the rumshop prophet was an improbable equilibrium. While she exhorted me to look inwards with her dire warnings about the empire's malevolence, the rumshop prophet was pushing outward to a future that was elegant and enticing with possibility.

Here was an early boyhood dilemma between caution and courage, fear and freedom, dread and dreaming; in finding common ground between two pathologies, one protective, the other escapist; and then, a few years later, a man walked on the moon.

Views expressed are not necessarily those of this publication.
Letters to be published will be edited where necessary.
Publisher: Harry Ramkhelawan
Editor: Romeo Kaseram
Columnists/Writers/Photographers: Vidur Dindayal, Kamil Ali, Dwarka Laxhan, Dhanpaul Narine, Ryan Singh, Nalini Mohabir, Ramesh Ramkalawan, Russell Lutchman.
Contact Information: Indo Caribbean World Inc.
312 Brownridge Drive, Thornhill, Ontario. L4J 5X1
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INDO CARIBBEAN WORLD

Prashad Nagar legacy sparks debate over memory, national unity

Dear Editor,

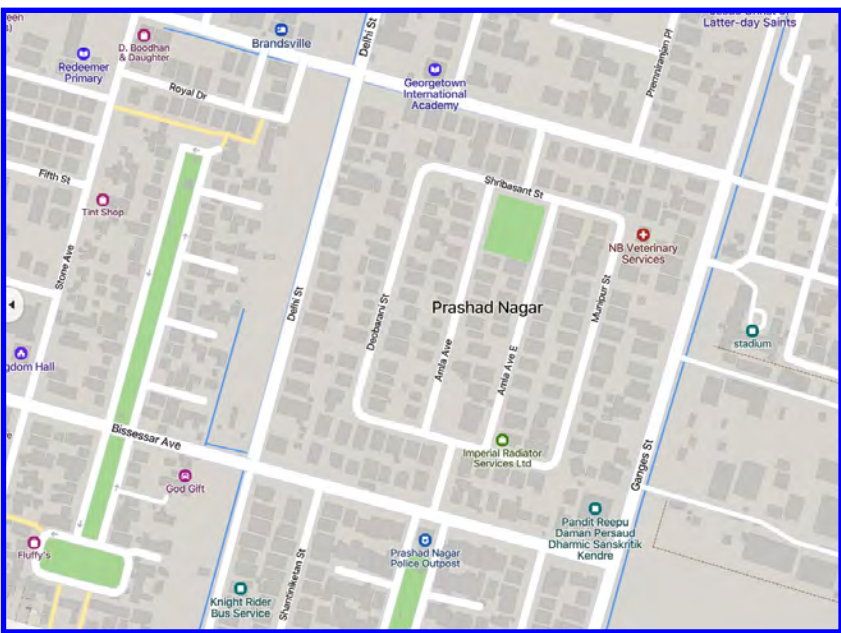
Gilbert Carrington, who lobbied to have a street in Campbellville, Guyana, named in honour of his father, Winslow G. Carrington (1923-1991), a former Minister of Labour, complains that efforts to do so is stymied because the proposed area adjacent to Campbellville, namely, Prashad Nagar, **“is distinguished by street names that predominantly reflect Indian heritage and geography”**.

He is “deeply troubled” and feels “disrespected” because names like “Delhi Street” remind him of “places in India or of Indian Guyanese descent”, leading him to question how such a situation can foster “a sense of unity in a nation proclaiming One People, One Nation, One Destiny”.

Though his comments reflect a worrying misunderstanding of Guyana’s historical development regarding street odonyms, or his obvious prejudice, his attempt to erase a part of Indian Guyanese history should not go unattended. I know a little about Prashad Nagar because on May 25, 2024, Saraswati Vidya Niketan facilitated the launching of the book *One, One Dutty Build a Village in Guyana: The Story of Hari Prashad and Prashad Nagar* at Texila American University in Providence.

Following is an abridged letter that *Stabroek News* carried on December 1, 2023, on the occasion of the passing of Hari Prashad’s son-in-law (Justice Prem Persaud); then I wrote:

“...Prashad Nagar was a post-World War II private housing scheme, built on land previously owned by the Bookers conglomerate in a geographical location referred to as ‘area H.’ It was a built environment developed primarily from rice land, a virtual mud field. The builder of the scheme, Hari Prashad, Prem’s father-in-law, had the foresight and “animal spirit” (to borrow a phrase from Lord Keynes) to embark on a risky venture that eventually proved to be successful. The plot of land Hari purchased comprised almost 77 acres, which would eventually be converted into 404 house lots of varying sizes. Residents, past and present of Prashad Nagar include David Chanderballi, Justice Rishi Persaud, Justice Clifford Baburam, Vincent Teekah, Dr George Walcott, Reepu Daman Persaud, Dr Vindhya Vasini Persaud, Pat Dial, Feroze Mohammed, and Justice Prem Persaud.



Map showing Prashad Nagar street names. Map courtesy Mapcarta

“Hari owned lots 9 and 10 on Delhi Street, opposite those of his son-in-law, Justice Prem Persaud, who owned lots 11 and 12. As Prem Persaud observed, Prashad Nagar is one of, if not “the best housing scheme” within the Greater Georgetown area. Being a proud Indian, following its construction, Hari named all the streets in Prashad Nagar after members of his immediate family and friends. He included the following names of the streets in his village: Delhi Street, Shantiniketan Street, Amla Avenue East, Amla Avenue West, Rohintal Street, Bombay Terrace, Damanbir Terrace, Jasmatbina Terrace, Sachibazaar Street, Kaka Street, Bissessar Avenue, Purshottam Street, Santram Street, Deobirana Street, Agra Street, Munipur Street, Cheddi Street, Shribasant Street, Chandranagar Street, Premniranjan Place, Rampersaud Street, Puna Street, Ganges Street, and Amla Avenue.


“Between 1970 and 1971, when John Meredith Ford (1923-1995) was the Mayor of Georgetown in a country firmly in the grips of the PNC, he ‘hosted Independence celebrations in the nation’s capital’ and ‘renamed streets to celebrate the country’s freedom’ from British rule. As Mayor of Georgetown, Ford had collaborated with the City Council to change the name of

part of High Street, which leads from Church Street to the Parliament Building, to its new name, ‘Avenue of the Republic’. During the ceremonial event, performed on February 21, 1970 (merely hours before Forbes Burnham declared Guyana a ‘Cooperative Republic!’), Ford explained that the renaming of some of the streets in Guyana was ‘a necessary exercise’ to preserve historically significant occasions ‘such as Independence and the birth of the Republic’. He initiated a campaign to have the name of Prashad Nagar removed from the suburb.

“It was an act wholly dismissive of the fact that the evolution of Prashad Nagar captured in some ways the historical contributions of Indian Guyanese. By the time the issue of the name change regarding Prashad Nagar came to light, Hari Prashad had already left Guyana, and he entrusted Prem Persaud as caretaker regarding all matters relating to Prashad Nagar. Prem Persaud, deeply concerned about the Mayor’s decision to change the name of Prashad Nagar, paid a visit to Prime Minister Burnham’s office to lodge his complaint. He reminded Burnham that Prashad Nagar was a privately owned developed housing estate, insisting that no public official had the authority to dictate the name of the housing scheme, and the Mayor of Georgetown and the City Council possessed no authority to do so. According to Prem Persaud, in his presence, Burnham immediately made a phone call to Mayor Ford and issued a clear directive: ‘They got a place named Prashad Nagar. I would like to know that during my lifetime, I have left instructions that not a single piece of that land should be changed or renamed. Let those lands remain as they are.’ Prem Persaud had saved the day.”

Burnham too, had saved the day, as he understood the significance of the Indian entrepreneurial spirit that led to the creation of the urban village of Prashad Nagar. Gilbert’s desire to preserve the memory of his father, as Ralph Ramkarran’s, is meaningful, but not at the expense of the legacy of another neighbour, more so, because of that person’s Indian heritage. It is doubtful that Carrington’s father, who served along with Hari Prashad as members of the National Assembly in the First Session of the First Parliament of Guyana in 1966, would have approved.

Baytoram Ramharack, via email, New York.



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Why TT must consider Stand Your Ground law

Dear Editor,

How much longer should we retreat is the question every law-abiding citizen in Trinidad and Tobago is silently asking. For over a decade, we have been forced to live in fear, prisoners in our own homes, while criminals roam the streets with confidence, brazenness, and impunity.

In 2024, our nation hit its highest murder rate in recorded history: 625 lives stolen. That is more than one family shattered every single day of the year. And if we trace this trend over the last ten years, the total number of murders exceeds 4,800. What is worse is that these are not just numbers, they are names, faces, mothers, brothers, children, neighbours.

The People's National Movement government had ten years to act. They promised crime plans, tech-driven policing, border security, and justice reform. But instead, we got more funerals, more headlines, and more empty promises. Their failure to manage crime didn't just put us behind – it put us in reverse. They left citizens to fend for themselves, stripped of trust in the police and without the legal means to protect our homes, our families, and our lives.

So, how much longer should we retreat?

The truth is, criminals are not retreating. They're emboldened. Almost every day, there are home invasions, robberies, and murder, often in broad daylight. This is why the Stand Your Ground law must be seriously considered. It is not a call to vigilantism. It is a call to restore balance. Right now, the scale is tipped completely in favour of the criminal. Law-abiding citizens should have the legal right to defend themselves and their loved ones without fear of prosecution, once that force is reasonable and necessary.



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

In some US states like Georgia and Texas, reports showed reductions in repeat home invasion crimes after residents lawfully defended their homes. In the Czech Republic, where citizens are allowed to stand their ground, violent crime levels have remained stable under the principle of proportional self-defence.

Trinidad and Tobago must craft its own version of this law, one that protects the innocent, deters the guilty, and is guided by careful legal safeguards. It must be developed through consultation with the judiciary, police service, and civil society. We must also accompany this with public education, increased police training, and strong oversight.

For the first time in a long time, we are seeing a leader with the courage to face reality. Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has done what no leader before her has dared to do. She has placed the safety and dignity of law-abiding citizens first. Her bold and visionary call for Stand Your Ground legislation is not just timely, it is necessary.

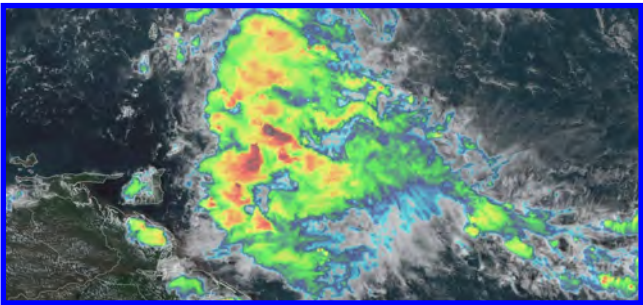
While others have tiptoed around crime, afraid of backlash or controversy, she has stood up with clarity and conviction, saying what every citizen has been thinking: enough is enough.

It takes true leadership to challenge the *status quo*, to say what is unpopular to a few, but right for the many, and to act not out of fear but out of love for country and people.

We can't wait for bureaucracy to fix what common sense can start solving. While broader institutional reforms are underway, we need an immediate, practical solution, and that starts with giving citizens the legal means to stand up, not back down.

Enough is enough. We retreat no more.

Afzal Khan, via email, Trinidad and Tobago.



Satellite image shows bad weather approaching TT
Get ready for hurricane season

Dear Editor,

As the rainy season transitions into the hurricane season, concerns are growing about the increasing frequency and strength of storms approaching Trinidad and Tobago. Historically, hurricanes have caused extensive destruction in the Caribbean, and last year's hurricane that devastated the Grenadines serves as a stark reminder of nature's raw power.

With climate change fuelling more intense and unpredictable storms, the risk of death and severe damage to infrastructure, homes and livelihoods is rising. The threat of hurricanes coming closer to our shores underscores the urgent need for enhanced preparedness and resilience strategies.

Local authorities must prioritise strengthening infrastructure, ensuring drainage systems are capable of handling heavy rainfall, and securing emergency facilities to assist affected communities. Public awareness campaigns are vital to educate residents about safety protocols, evacuation plans, and the importance of securing property ahead of storms.

Additionally, the government should work closely with regional and international agencies to acquire updated weather forecasting technology and disaster response resources. Developing comprehensive evacuation plans, stockpiling supplies, and reinforcing vulnerable structures can mitigate the impact when storms strike.

While no one can control nature's fury, proactive planning and community engagement can reduce loss of life and property. As hurricanes become increasingly frequent and fierce, Trinidad and Tobago must act decisively to safeguard its people, economy, and future. Preparing now is vital to face the stormy seasons ahead and protect our islands from the destructive power of nature.

Gordon Laughlin, via email, Trinidad and Tobago.

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PPP/Civic favoured but election road may not run smooth

With Guyana's general elections scheduled for September 1, it is widely anticipated that the PPP/Civic will retain power. However, the course to victory will not necessarily be smooth if the tribulations of past elections, especially those of 2020, are considered.

The potential for Opposition disruptions, ethnic violence, questions about the voters' list and their identification parameters, among other related issues, could also prove disruptive to the electoral process.

The elections' announcement, which was made May 25 at an occasion to mark Guyana's 59th Independence Anniversary, has come at a time when undercurrents of racism are quite high, in spite of confidence within the ruling PPP/Civic party that racial divisions in the country are diminishing.

Recently, there has also been growing discontent about the government's management of the oil sector, abuse of power, its inability to control the police, allegations of corruption and nepotism, and marginalisation of Blacks.

And from a bigger picture, Venezuela's on-going aggression in seeking to annex Essequibo has added to an already tense domestic environment, with the Opposition APNU failing to openly defend Guyana's sovereignty.

So far, no new party has announced that it will be participating in the elections. APNU (PNC), the leading Opposition party, has agreed to form a coalition with the WPA, leaving the AFC out of the picture – although the scope for the AFC to become a coalition partner continues to exist.

The APNU/WPA coalition has declared its readiness and confidence to contest the elections, even as uncertainty continues to surround ongoing discussions with the AFC about the possibility of a renewed partnership.

Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton has declared that the PNC has "not closed the door on any partnerships", but has not provided any clarity on the likelihood of an official alliance with the AFC.

Meantime, AFC's leader, Nigel Hughes, has claimed that his party made efforts toward a combined opposition with APNU, but they did not bear fruit.

"The Alliance for Change has gone above and beyond to try and find a resolution that would result in a combined Opposition. We are at a stage where we have decided that we are going to compete in the elections, and that is where we are. We are always committed to whatever is in the best interest of Guyana," said Hughes.

However, AFC Chairman David Patterson noted that while a formal coalition has not been reached, the possibility of a joinder list remains open.

In the meantime, the AFC has made overtures to newcomer to political scene, Azruddin Mohamed, who recently announced his intention to run for President, although he does not yet belong to a formal party.

"I welcome Mohamed into this elections cycle; it gives Guyanese a wider range of choices and anything that offers the electorate a wider range of choices is good. I think for a long time we have had limited choices," stated Hughes, adding, "Mohamed clearly has had an impact on the electorate, and we welcome him."

Incidentally, any association with Mohamed, who is sanctioned by the US for smuggling gold

and evading taxes, will come under intense scrutiny by the US.

As the parties figure out their electoral alliances, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) has announced that nomination day for the upcoming polls is July 14.

"In keeping with statutory provisions, political parties desirous of contesting the upcoming elections will be required to submit their respective Lists of Candidates on the 14th July, 2025, i.e., nomination day," GECOM said in a statement.

In addition, political parties must submit applications for the allocation of symbols for approval by GECOM by June 22. The elections management authority said the GECOM Secretariat has been authorised to proceed with implementation of the relevant tasks in the work plan to "ensure that the elections are conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner".

However, although GECOM is proceeding with its plans to hold elections, Opposition-based Commissioners of the electoral body contend that holding elections on September 1, is premature.

They claim that the selected date was apparently based on unilateral advice by the Chairman of GECOM because that timeframe was not in keeping with a work plan that was last discussed on May 20. "While recognising that it's the President's prerogative to determine the election date, it is crass for him to have done so based on the purported Chairman's guidance, which clearly misrepresented the Chief Elections Officer projected date of September 22, and the fact that even the proposed date was still under consideration and not yet agreed."

One of the three Opposition Commissioners, Vincent Alexander, claimed that he and fellow commissioners Desmond Trotman and Charles Corbin were unaware of the election date until it was announced by Guyana's President Dr Irfaan Ali. Corbin contended that there was still room for GECOM to discuss the new work plan, engage stakeholders, and for the Chairman to re-engage the President about a new timeline by which GECOM would be ready to conduct general and regional elections.

He said the reduced timeframe will be short-changing the public, which reduces the impact, efficiency, and the delivery of an election that could be classified as free and fair. For instance, Alexander said a cursory review of the plan shows that timelines have been reduced by 21 days. Among the timelines that would be affected are claims and objections, now down from 21 to three days, submission of the lists of candidates, as well as statutory deadlines such as those for appeals by parties in relation to the list of nominees.

In addition, the new work plan would affect matters such as allowing mainly remanded prisoners to vote, and the deletion of names of deceased voters from the list based on reports submitted by the police and the Chief Medical Officer in keeping with the Representation of the People Act. The discretionary time would also impact on the extent to which parties can verify the voters list to ensure their candidates are eligible voters. He said the process usually took 30 days, but now four days were being proposed. Although the three Opposition Commissioners have subsequently agreed



Dwarka Lakhan



Irfaan Ali



Voters line up to cast their ballots during Guyana's 2020 elections

to accept the September 1 election date, the underlying issues of the timeliness of making objections and verifying the voters list could raise their ugly heads if the PPP/Civic emerges victorious and there is contention that the elections were not free and clear.

Concerns about a bloated voters list and the failure to implement biometric verification, which is on the list of Opposition demands, could also result in Opposition protests should the PPP/Civic win at the polls.

In a statement by the Opposition, the APNU/WPA coalition expressed deep concerns about the vulnerabilities in the current electoral process, including what it sees as a bloated and unverified voters' list and the absence of fingerprint biometrics at polling stations.

As the battle for votes takes shape, the PPP/Civic has been the beneficiary of increasing support from former Opposition members. The party has apparently made inroads into

traditional Opposition strongholds.

But when it comes to voting, there is no guarantee that voters would not cast their votes along racial lines. Although the PPP/Civic believes that racial divisions are disappearing, the recent protests following the drowning of Adrianna Younge demonstrate that racial tension continues to persist.

However, weak leadership of APNU, an AFC on life support, and the WPA, which is inclined to voting along racial lines, do not offer better alternative to the PPP/Civic, which is currently in the driver's seat.

...

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

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Diaspora in Toronto following unfolding general elections in Guyana

From Page 1

28 polls saw a change in leadership, with the UNC capturing 26 out of 41 seats in the House of Representatives. UNC leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar returned as Prime Minister, becoming the first woman in this nation's history to serve two non-consecutive terms. The defeated People's National Movement secured 13 seats, while the Tobago People's Party won two.

Anguilla also held its general elections on February 26, 2025. The Anguilla United Front, under the leadership of Cora Richardson-Hodge, won eight of the 11 contested seats in the House of Assembly, signaling another significant political shift led by a woman in the region.

With more polls due later this year, Jamaica has started preparations for a closely watched general election. The incumbent Jamaica Labour Party is seeking a third consecutive term in office against the opposition People's National Party.

And in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, voters will head to the polls in November 2025. The ruling Unity Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves, will face off against the New Democratic Party, headed by Godwin Friday.

As election activity intensifies across the region, all eyes are now turning to Guyana.

Ali made the announcement on May 25, during this nation's 59th Independence Anniversary celebrations, that Guyana's next Regional and General Elections will be held on Monday, September 1.

The last elections were held on March 2, 2020. In accordance with Section 61 of the Constitution of Guyana, elections must be called within three months after the dissolution of Parliament.

Ali confirmed that discussions with the Chairwoman of the Guyana Elections Commission, Justice (Retired) Claudette Singh, had assured him of the body's readiness.

"I've decided to name the first of September 2025 as the date



Jennifer Geerlings-Simons



Cora Richardson-Hodge



Kamla Persad-Bissessar

for national and regional elections," Ali said.

He also used the occasion to reaffirm his government's commitment to democratic processes, calling on Guyanese to uphold values of unity, civility, and performance.

"Let us reject the voices that divide, the lies that deceive, and any attempt to silence the will of the people. We must show, through our words, our actions, and our votes that the democratic spirit of Guyana is not only alive, but strong, unshakable and irreversible," he said.

He continued: "[Elections] must not be about hate, division, and indignity; it must be about performance, competition of ideas, and vision. It must be about track record; not empty rhetoric."

Ali concluded by expressing hope that the 2025 elections would be a reflection of unity.

"It must be about one government governing for one Guyana. It is about a parliamentary democracy debating with purpose, and representing their constituents; it is about healing in love, and moving forward in peace and fulfilment," he declared.

Following Ali's announcement, GECOM confirmed that Nomination Day will be held on July 14. Political parties must submit their lists of candidates on this day. In addition, GECOM has stipulated that applications for the allocation of party symbols must be submitted by June 22.

In a public statement, the elections body said it had been authorised to proceed with the implementation of its election work plan "to ensure that the elections are conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner". Statutory forms for candidate submissions were also made available on GECOM's website.

General Secretary of the People's Progressive Party/Civic, Dr Bharrat Jagdeo, affirmed the party's preparedness, and emphasised a campaign grounded in achievement and vision.

"We're not afraid of these elections. In fact, we welcome them," Jagdeo declared, adding, "We're ready because we have led with vision, substance, and accountability. Our track record speaks for itself – not just in words but in tangible achievements."

Jagdeo praised Ali's global stature, noting, "[He] has grown in stature internationally. He is now recognised as an international statesman. He represents this country with distinction on the global stage, whether it's climate diplomacy, economic forums, or regional integration."

Highlighting the government's early response to the Covid-19 pandemic and economic recovery, Jagdeo remarked, "Since returning to Office in August 2020, our government hit the ground running, and we have not looked back."

He added that the PPP/Civic's campaign will focus on delivering beyond its 2020 manifesto by listening to citizens' needs and acting decisively.

"These elections are not about jokes or taking chances. This is about securing the future of Guyana," he said.

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MP Shafqat Ali (left) and MP Ruby Sahota (third, right) attended TWF's 2024 event



TWF's executive and members at the 2024 Walkathon

Caribbean diaspora urged to join TWF Walkathon for men's health

– Black men face the highest risk of prostate cancer, yet early detection saves lives. The Walnut Foundation's 2025 Walk the Path Walkathon urges our Caribbean diaspora to step forward – raising funds and awareness, supporting screenings, and walking together toward better health outcomes for our community.

Brampton – Members of our Caribbean diaspora are being called to join the 2025 Walk the Path Walkathon hosted by The Walnut Foundation (TWF), an annual initiative aimed at raising awareness and funds for prostate cancer prevention and Black men's health.

The event takes place on June 7 at the Paul Palleschi Recreation Centre in Brampton, uniting families, advocates, and survivors in a powerful show of support for early detection, education, and community care.

Prostate cancer continues to disproportionately affect Black men, who are 76 percent more likely to be diagnosed and twice as likely to die from the disease compared to other groups. The Walkathon brings together individuals across the GTA to confront these alarming statistics and advocate for a culture of proactive health management.

"The statistics are alarming, but knowledge and early action can save lives," said Anthony Henry, President of TWF.

Henry added, "Through this campaign, we're calling on the community to walk with us figuratively and literally in the fight against prostate cancer."

Now in its 11th year, the Walk the Path Walkathon has become a vital event for our diaspora and wider community, supporting everything from pop-up PSA testing clinics and monthly support groups, to scholarships for future healthcare leaders at Toronto Metropolitan University and the University of Toronto. Last year's walk raised \$100,000.

Dr Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown College,



Anthony Henry

is serving as the Honorary Chair for the 2025 Walkathon. A prostate cancer survivor himself, Fearon has lent his voice and experience to the cause.

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

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

A respected economist, educator, and community leader, Fearon has held senior academic and administrative roles at institutions including Brock University, Brandon University, Toronto Metropolitan University, and York University. He also served in the Ontario public service, and co-founded the Canada Caribbean Institute.

Currently, he chairs the federal External Reference Group



Dr Gervan Fearon

for the Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative, and serves on numerous national boards.

"Too many men ignore the warning signs or avoid routine check-ups, but knowledge is the key to survival – awareness saves lives," said Fearon, adding, "That is why I am proud to support the Walk the Path Walkathon – because when we talk openly about prostate cancer and encourage each other to take charge of our health, together we save lives."

Henry is President of TWF and Managing Partner at Manulife Wealth Inc, and brings over three decades of financial expertise and a personal journey with prostate cancer to TWF's mission. One of four family members diagnosed with prostate cancer, Henry is also a certified Prostate Cancer Peer Navigator with the True North Program at Princess Margaret Hospital.

"Prostate cancer changed my life, but early detection saved it. As men, we often put our health last, but we can't afford to stay silent," said Henry.

He added, "Through TWF and events like the Walk the Path Walkathon, we're breaking the stigma, spreading awareness, and making sure more men get the information and support they need. Together, we can change the statistics – one conversation, one step, and one life at a time."

The 2025 Walk the Path Walkathon will be held on June 7 at the Paul Palleschi Recreation Centre, located at 30 Loafer's Lake Lane, Brampton. The event welcomes walkers of all ages and backgrounds.

Our diaspora members are encouraged to [register](#), [donate](#), or [sponsor walkers](#) to help fund health initiatives that are changing lives across the Caribbean and wider Canadian community.

As TWF's website emphasises: "More than just a walk, the Walk the Path Walkathon raises critical funds to support men's health initiatives... Together, we can empower, educate, and ensure no one walks this journey alone."

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Wayne Sturge



Andrew Holness

Jamaica, TT prepare for US deportees

— The US returned over 120 deportees to Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in separate operations last month, prompting coordinated national responses. In the light of ongoing deportations, both Caribbean governments underscored structured reintegration and security oversight, with security officials moving swiftly to manage the arrivals and reassure the public.

Coordinated national protocols were activated by the governments of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in response to separate deportation exercises conducted by the US last month, as over 120 deportees – 107 to Jamaica and 17 to Trinidad and Tobago – were returned to their respective countries.

In Jamaica, the government received a US deportee flight carrying 107 nationals on May 29, according to the *Caribbean Media Corporation*. In a statement issued afterward, the administration of Prime Minister Andrew Holness stressed that the return of deportees from overseas territories was neither unexpected nor unmanaged.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security Dr Horace Chang and Foreign Minister Senator Kamina Johnson-Smith both affirmed that deportation exercises were being closely monitored, and gave the reassurance that appropriate systems were in place to manage increased returns.

“The government continues to monitor the matter carefully,” Chang stated, noting that Jamaica remains in direct communication with US authorities and other jurisdictions. He added that the country is obligated under international law to accept the return of its citizens who are subject to deportation.

Johnson-Smith announced that a coordinated deportation response action plan had been approved by Cabinet. She said a multi-agency working group was established to ensure “an orderly, secure and humane process for any mass returns”.

The government reported that approximately 2,500 Jamaicans have been confirmed for removal from the US, with deportations expected over the next two years. Statistics show 655 Jamaican nationals were deported from the US in 2023, with the number rising to 814 in 2024. Between January and April this year alone, 331 nationals were removed.

Chang said arrangements were already in place to accommodate the incoming migrants with a clear focus on public safety, reintegration,

tion, and security.

In Trinidad and Tobago, police confirmed that 17 nationals deported from the US, 15 men and two women, arrived on May 24. Defence Minister Wayne Sturge said preparations had been made at the airport to facilitate a catchment and assistance system for the arriving deportees.

Among the 17 were three sex offenders, one individual with a homicide case, and another involved in a human trafficking matter. Sturge disclosed that these individuals would be subject to monitoring, with the sex offenders placed on the national sex offenders’ registry.

Not all the returnees had criminal histories. Sturge stated that three of the deportees had violated US immigration laws, but held no criminal record. These individuals were not subjected to the full intake process, which included swabbing and fingerprinting.

Out of the group, 15 were allowed to exit the airport, while two were taken into custody due to outstanding warrants related to “decades-old” crimes committed in Trinidad and Tobago prior to their emigration.

The deportees were received by officers of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and personnel from the NGO Vision on Mission (VOM). While specific monitoring procedures were not detailed, a senior police officer said, “The Senior Superintendent of the SIU, together with other commanders, will be monitoring their movements.”

Oluyemi Mashama, programme manager for VOM, said the deportees were in “good spirits” and appreciated the dignified reception they received.

“They were really impressed by the way it was done. The CEO started by welcoming them back home, and they started to cheer and clap because they didn’t expect to have that kind of treatment,” Mashama disclosed.

Three of the 15 deportees will be housed at VOM’s Wallerfield centre, while the remaining 12 were received by relatives. However, Mashama noted the organisation remains prepared to provide accommodation if needed in the future.

“Sometimes the family might not be able to facilitate them for the entirety of the time. We have had experiences where they came and went with the families, and they came in after a few days,” he explained.

VOM also distributed care packages and offered enrolment in vocational training programmes to assist with reintegration.



Returning deportees on arrival in Jamaica on May 29. *Jamaica Gleaner* photos



Ask Jay...

Please send your questions to
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THE COTTAGE DREAM: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE BUYING INTO LAKE LIFE

There’s something magical about escaping to the lake – loons echo across the water, coffee on the dock, and evenings spent around a crackling fire. For many, buying a cottage is a dream. But before you chase that sunset, there’s much to consider beyond the perfect view.

Cottages: More Than Just a Getaway

Cottages are often classified as investment or secondary properties, meaning you’ll need a minimum down payment of 20 percent. That’s not pocket change. Lenders will also evaluate your income before approving a mortgage, so your financial picture must be solid.

A mortgage is only the beginning. Consider the ongoing costs, such as utilities, property taxes, septic maintenance, fuel, garbage fees, and repairs. Careful planning is essential because this isn’t a decision to make on a whim.

Try Before You Buy

Before committing, rent in the area you’re considering. Spend a week or two during peak summer, then return in the quieter shoulder season. You’ll notice the boat traffic, how loud your neighbours are, and how persistent the mosquitoes can be. These details shape your experience more than you might think. You’ll also get a feel for your weekend commute.

Start With a Plan

Obtain pre-approval for a mortgage. Establish a realistic budget – not just for the mortgage but also for taxes, maintenance, and travel expenses. Will these costs affect other financial goals, such as travel, education, or retirement? If your down payment originates from your primary home, be ready for the increased pressure on that loan – and always set aside a buffer for unexpected repairs.

Location, Location... Logistics

A two- to three-hour drive from your main residence is manageable. Not all cottages are accessible year-round, which is important if you wish to use them in winter or rent them out. Additionally, check the proximity to essentials – grocery stores, hospitals, and hardware stores – ideally within a 30-minute radius.

Waterfront 101

Not all waterfronts are created equal. Looking for a sandy beach for the kids? Or a rocky drop-off for your boat? Know what you’re buying. Check the water source: is it from the lake, a well, or rain barrels? Test it for safety. Ensure the septic system is functional and situated far from the water source. Don’t skip the inspection. Hire someone knowledgeable about cottage properties. Be present in person. Insist on checking the attic. You’d be surprised at how many raccoons and bats consider it prime real estate.

Know the Rules

How about renting it out? Or engaging in hunting and fishing? Some municipalities have strict by-laws that could limit your plans. Visit city hall to check local zoning regulations, road access rights, and whether you’re in a flood zone or near conservation lands. These factors influence how you can use – and eventually sell – the property.

What’s Your Endgame?

Are you seeking a weekend retreat, a rental property, or a future retirement home? Your decision will direct your search. A cottage suitable for retirement should be situated near healthcare services. For rental income, target year-round access in a desirable location. Higher-end cottages generally attract better rental rates and resale value.

Offset Costs with Rentals

Renting out the cottage can help cover expenses if you won’t be there full-time. A property manager usually takes ten to 20 percent of the rental income, but saves you the hassle. Both renters and banks prefer winterised, four-season properties, so keep that in mind when you’re shopping.

Timing Is Everything

The best deals usually arise in the off-season – from late fall to early spring. Sellers are often more motivated, and competition is typically lower. When making an offer, always include conditions for financing and inspection. Additionally, keep in mind that maintenance can be time-consuming and expensive. If you’re not inclined to clear brush or repair docks, consider hiring professional assistance.

Find the Right Agent

Choose a realtor familiar with cottage country – or, even better, one who owns a cottage themselves. They will offer insights that no spreadsheet can provide.

The Cottage Dream, Realised

Buying a cottage isn’t just about real estate – it’s about lifestyle. When managed well, it offers fresh air, family memories, and a sense of peace that one can’t find in the city. When handled poorly, it results in financial strain and maintenance stress.

Plan carefully. Budget wisely. Be realistic. When you’re ready, take a deep breath, listen to the loons, and cast your line confidently.

Owning a cottage should feel like a dream, not a burden.

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Kamal Bhardwaj (l-r), Pandit Laikram, and Pandit Deo; in photos are celebrants at the new location's grand opening. *Photos by Hinano Beekhoo*



Grand Scarborough opening marks new chapter for Shiva Mandir

– Shiva Mandir and Cultural Organisation marked a milestone with the opening of its new location in Scarborough on May 28. Through a reverent ceremony and moving speeches, the celebration honoured years of selfless community effort and spiritual devotion. Anchored in faith and generosity, and guided by its visionary leadership, Shiva Mandir represents a living legacy for future generations, a site where spiritual commitment continues to shape and elevate our community's shared path.

By Romeo Kaseram
LJI Reporter

Scarborough – Shiva Mandir and Cultural Organisation officially opened its new location at 3001 Markham Road, Unit 22, in Scarborough on May 28, celebrating a significant milestone in our community's spiritual and cultural journey. The event featured sacred ceremonies, heartfelt tributes, and a resounding affirmation of collective dedication and service.

The grand opening was officiated by Pandit Laikram Tiwari, whose presence alongside Pandit Deo Pemesurdin and other spiritual heads symbolised continuity in leadership.

They were joined by special guest Kamal Bhardwaj, owner and funeral director of Lotus Funeral and Cremation Centre, whose generous support for our community has been long-standing and meaningful.

The ceremony not only marked the official opening of the mandir, but also stood as a testament to over a decade of steadfast commitment and collaborative spirit. Addressing the gathering, Pandit Laikram reflected on the long journey that led to the achievement, noting that a "lot of wonderful people in every field of endeavour" contributed to the sacred acquisition.

"Today, it is not only an honour and a pleasure, but also it makes me very humble to know that there are such good people

in our community, in our society, such wonderful souls who can put their wealth, their knowledge, their expertise in various fields to make this work," Pandit Laikram stated.

He also took a moment to emphasise the inclusive nature of the mandir's mission, declaring, "We want everyone who come to be part of the team... So if you can come and support us in whatever way you can, just by attending this mandir, we will greatly welcome you."

He revealed the new location, which includes renovations such as an extended mezzanine, was completed entirely through voluntary labour.

"[We] are blessed to have people who dedicated their time, who dedicated their energy to make this happen. [The] construction of this mandir, whether it was building, extending the mezzanine, whether it was painting, whether it was electrical, whether it was plumbing, all the labour – we did not pay one dime to get it," said Pandit Laikram.

"We only had to buy the material and the supplies... Other than that, we could not do it the way we have it today... [The] Lord had a plan. He sent the people with the expertise, volunteers with their labour for months on end. Late nights, weekends, when they could have taken time off to go with their family for relaxation, to spend their time here."

Stated Pandit Laikram: "We were fortunate – from the Murtis to the clothing, the rug, the glasses, the fridge, the stove, the food that came every day for the people working – everything was donated. And I want to thank you all for that. ...Everybody played a role. I'm humbled"

Additionally, "Whether you are a corporate big sponsor, whether you are a person who could afford a dollar or a \$5 in the altar, you all made it happen. And we respect each and every one of you for your support. Had it not been for you, we would

have not reached this far."

Pandit Deo Pemesurdin also addressed the gathering, his words carrying the emotional weight of a journey marked by perseverance and faith.

"I don't normally cry," he admitted, as he reflected on the long road travelled to establish the new home for Shiva Mandir. "But the Lord does things for a reason," he said, having acknowledged the setbacks and refusals encountered along the way. Yet he affirmed our community's resilience, remarking, "Whatever you want to do, if you persist in your endeavours, you will end up being successful."

He noted the mandir's new home was consecrated not only through prayer, but also through sacrifice, volunteerism, and spiritual steadfastness.

Standing on the holy ground, his emotional mien spoke to the mandir being a sacred site where hardship had fashioned tribulation into community triumph.

Pandit Deo also took a moment to extend Shiva Mandir's sacred site well beyond its present congregation.

"It's not for my generation, but for the generation to come, your children, your grandchildren," he remarked.

It was a statement that anchored the moment within a wider and larger unfolding philosophy of futurity, placing the contemporary achievement in the service of tomorrow's faith seekers.

He then offered a poetic reflection on the spiritual purpose of the mandir, likening it to an ocean rich with sacred treasures: "And the ocean is full of many, many different pearls, and beautiful things, and we are taking a dive into that ocean."

In doing so, he framed the mandir not only as a sanctuary, but as a living centre of sacred learning and collective discovery – a space where the treasures of devotion, knowledge, and community are continually unearthed and passed forward.





Niagara Falls illuminated on May 26 with the colours of the Golden Arrowhead; in photos are flag-raisings and celebrations that took place in Toronto and Brampton



Golden Arrowhead raised in Toronto and Brampton, and lights up Niagara Falls

— Members of the diaspora in Ontario celebrated Guyana’s 59th Independence anniversary last month with cultural vibrancy, community pride, and national symbolism, reaffirming the strong and eternal ties between Guyanese living abroad and the homeland.



The 59th anniversary of Guyana’s Independence was marked by major celebrations in Ontario, which took place in Toronto, Brampton, and Niagara Falls, where members of the diaspora gathered in large numbers to honour our homeland’s achievements, express patriotism, and reaffirm cultural identity through ceremonial flag-raisings and rich cultural showcases.

On a rainy May 22, the Golden Arrowhead was hoisted by members of the Guyana Ex-Soldiers Association of Canada during a formal ceremony held at Ontario’s National Assembly, Queen’s Park.



The event was organised by the Guyana Consulate in Toronto, and was attended by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Ontario, Members of Provincial Parliament, and members of the Caribbean diplomatic corps from Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, and The Bahamas. The Consul General of Angola also joined the occasion, alongside many members of the Guyanese diasporic community.



Despite the inclement weather, the ceremony would be remembered for the water-resistant dedication of its participants, many of whom were ensconced under wide umbrellas.

Following the event, the Consulate General extended its gratitude to attendees and participants for supporting the observance of the patriotic, nationalistic milestone.



Then in Brampton, hundreds gathered at City Hall on May 26 for the City’s inaugural Guyana Independence Day celebration, held under the patronage of Mayor Patrick Brown and City Councillors. The event paid tribute to Guyana’s diverse heritage, and the vital contributions the Guyanese diaspora has made to Brampton’s development.

Cultural performances included drumming, traditional dances, and a fashion show featuring ethnic attire reflecting Guyana’s multicultural population. Caribbean music, blended with Afro and Indo rhythms echoed through Ken Whillans Square, creating a festive atmosphere for all the attendees.



A joint hoisting of the Golden Arrowhead was conducted by Mayor Patrick Brown and Honorary Consul Mani Singh at the Square. In his address, Singh lauded Guyana’s President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali’s administration for its robust development agenda, citing Guyana’s rapidly growing economy, driven by both oil resources and non-oil sectors, and underpinned by a firm environmental commitment.

Singh also addressed ongoing geopolitical concerns, assuring the diaspora that the government of Guyana is prepared to defend the country against Venezuela’s current territorial aggression. He also commended the diaspora’s patriotic solidarity during this period of tension and uncertainty.



In his address, Mayor Brown expressed appreciation for the many Guyanese employees who serve within the City of Brampton, many of whom hold key leadership roles.

And in a fitting gesture of friendship, Singh and the Guyanese community joined in celebrating Mayor Brown’s birthday, which coincides with Guyana’s Independence Day.

Late last month, another celebration was held at Niagara Falls, the event taking place on May 26 where the colours of the Golden Arrowhead illuminated the falls in observance of the Independence anniversary.

This spectacular and uplifting event was organised by the Guyana High Commission in Ottawa, in collaboration with the Niagara Falls Illumination Board.

Smart devices and scrolling narcissism making us live, like, and loathe

By Dhanpaul Narine

Click on 'like' and share the 'live'. Communication, these days, is done mostly on a device. The more outrageous the content the greater is the viewership. One out of every seven persons is on social media.

It's a new world with a jumbled vocabulary. It causes mayhem and confusion and feels like Babel. We are surrounded by screens, but the reality is that we are disconnected and unglamorous.

Our fingers are busy surfing the online world as we get dumb on smart devices. We have a front seat in an auditorium that is baying for blood, and we rip reputations to shreds to build platforms on social media.

We get more daring to secure the 'likes' and 'shares' to meet quotas for money, and couldn't care less who we hurt in the process. It appears we are more interested in sharing the 'live' rather than in sharing things that would lift each other.

There are social influencers who peddle hate for ratings, but with hate comes irreparable damage where nobody wins. How about the Jekyll and Hyde persons that use fake names to trash others and then pretend to be their friends? We are living in a selfish society.

Nostalgia is not so long ago. There was a time when families had dinner at the table, and with intelligent conversations. Life was beautiful, things were fresh, and furniture was made to last.

We borrowed books from the library and read them. We could pass the math and reading tests, and we knew the capital of Wyoming. Intimacy had depth, a meaning, and a purpose.

But in a world of chatbots, Metaverse, and artificial intelligence, they are becoming a thing of the past. Face-to-face is replaced by face-to-phones, or screens.

Have we become selfish and robotic? What does it take to move from 'care-less' to caring? How do we 'go placidly amid the noise and hate' to a peaceful existence? When can we leave this cauldron of confusion, and enter into the cathedral of love and empathy?

Selfishness, or the pre-occupation with oneself, is as old as society. There is no doubt that a level of individualism is necessary for survival.

Some philosophers have argued that selfishness is not as bad as every person 'seeks good unto himself'.

Thomas Hobbes sees self-interest as a human motivation. There is nothing wrong with wanting to stay alive, be healthy, and to eat well.

Adam Smith's views of self-interest, and Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection have been the sweeping currents that influenced our thinking about individualism.

Richard Dawkins, and others, have expanded on the ideas of gene theory, but there is disagreement as to the evolutionary logic between selfishness and 'groupishness'.

Depression has often been attributed to selfishness, but many studies have shown that depression is more related to chemistry than character. Nobel-prize winning economist Paul Krugman argues that people care first about themselves, and may not want to act in the interest of the greater good.

It has been suggested that the selfish society is as a result of inequality. The global evidence shows that many believe the rich are getting richer because they have been more selfish in life. The thinking is that selfish people are more likely to exploit legal and illegal ways to get ahead. Redistribution from rich to the poor is not usually the norm, nor is the selfish rich seen as promoting the interests of the poor.

In recent years, the world has shrunk. The global village is flooded with information. Memes, hashtags, and avatars, Drop Box, and miles of sockets, have brought the world under a canopy of curated and filtered infographics. The advantage is that staying connected has created change.

The *Arab Spring*, *Me Too Movement*, and *Black Lives Matter*, are all part of social media activism with a purpose, giving a voice to the voiceless. But social media is also driving us bonkers.

We spend an average of four hours a day on smart devices, mostly alone, but are we feeding



ourselves with quality information?

Recently, in an effort to report the news first, *Meta* inadvertently labeled a group as 'terrorists'. The post was removed hours later, but the damage was already done.

In 2014, researchers at Oxford University found that online users do not see themselves as part of a community, and that people are more interested in buying rather than in sharing things.

Another 2014 study at the University of North Florida found that there has been a rise in narcissism, as opposed to empathy, in certain groups.

It is argued that mindless and mechanical use of social media does not extend the frontier of knowledge. It is consumption without creation. It is insipid and anti-social. It is virtual distance, the purposeless use of technology.

We become addicted to scrolling but do not produce captivating or absorbing content of our own. Checking our phones constantly is addictive, especially if we feel that we are miss-

ing out on the latest trends.

Are teenagers growing up too fast? The plethora of social media platforms would tend to support this view. A 2019 survey found that over 36 percent of high school students have been cyber-bullied.

In many instances, individual privacy is a lost cause. One's entire life is played out on social media, from the good to the ridiculous. The impersonal messages are in the form of posts, texts, memes, and emojis, minus the human touch.

Care, thoughtfulness, and quality time are neglected in the impulsive world to constantly check messages. There are countless cases of broken relationships and marriages because of social media.

But does it have to be that way? The idea is not to discard social media, but to use it to foster well-being. Is it possible to build a community of empathy online?

One suggestion is to use tools such as *Zoom*, and other video platforms, for uplifting conversations, as opposed to interactions that promote rudeness.

Reading and sharing stories in online book clubs can also be a good way. [Click here for an excellent site to view material.](#)

At this site you will find unique and inspiring stories of people from different countries that are about culture and survival, and far from Babylonia. Posting messages that would enhance kindness and well-being is a good start, and active usage is to be encouraged.

Success should be about helping others. The great moral questions that deal with the purpose of life, and the role of technology, should be taught in schools and colleges.

The message should be: the 'likes' and 'shares' do not matter. Let us use the Internet platforms for affirmations that would allow us to grow, walk in the park, breathe freely, and listen to the birds.

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Firebrand Ngũgĩ remained unflinching with language, sovereignty

– A luminous firebrand in world literature, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o died at age 87 on May 28, leaving behind a legacy forged in resistance, language, and love for Africa’s cultural soul. From a Gikuyu village to global literary prominence, he redefined post-colonial consciousness — writing not only in his mother tongue, but from it.

By Romeo Kaseram
A Local Journalism Initiative Feature

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, the towering Kenyan novelist, playwright, and decolonial theorist whose life spanned imprisonment, exile, acclaim, and indelible resistance, died on May 28 in Atlanta, Georgia. He was 87.

The news was confirmed by his daughter, novelist Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ, who wrote in a Facebook post: “It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of our dad... He lived a full life, fought a good fight.”

The announcement sent waves of mourning and acclaim across the literary world and throughout Africa. His son, Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ, a writer and academic, also wrote on Facebook: “I am me because of him in so many ways, as his child, scholar and writer... I love him – I am not sure what tomorrow will bring without him here.”

Born James Ngũgĩ on January 5, 1938, in Kamiriithu, near Limuru in Kenya’s Kiambu County, Ngũgĩ rose from the detritus of British colonialism to become one of Africa’s most revered writers.

Colonial trauma ran deep in the formative years of the young writer. One of 28 children born to a father with four wives, Ngũgĩ witnessed the upheaval of the Mau Mau uprising firsthand. His father was dispossessed, and two brothers were killed during the anti-colonial struggle. As BBC News reported, his deaf brother Gitogo was fatally shot in the back after failing to hear a British soldier’s command.

In his teenage years, returning home from Alliance High School, a prestigious institution run by British missionaries, Ngũgĩ discovered that his entire village had been razed by colonial forces. Many of his relatives had been interned in detention

camps, the BBC News reported. This harrowing backdrop seeded his debut novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964), the first major English-language novel by an East African writer. Introduced to Heinemann Publishers by the literary giant Chinua Achebe following a literary conference at Makerere University, the novel is now lauded as a seminal postcolonial text.

In the decades that followed, Ngũgĩ published a stream of acclaimed novels in English, including *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), and *Petals of Blood* (1977). These works, rich in allegory and critique, charted Kenya’s shift from colonial subjugation to post-independence betrayal.

However, in 1977, he shed his colonial birth name, James Ngũgĩ, and declared allegiance to his Gikuyu heritage, renaming himself Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o.

That same year marked a seismic shift: Ngũgĩ co-authored *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I Will Marry When I Want*), a searing critique of inequality in post-colonial Kenya. The play’s popularity and political sting provoked the wrath of President Jomo Kenyatta’s regime.

Ngũgĩ was detained without trial in Kamiti Maximum Security Prison, an incarceration that Amnesty International condemned, naming him a prisoner of conscience.

From prison, Ngũgĩ penned *Caitani Mutharabaini* (*Devil on the Cross*, 1980), the first modern novel written in Gikuyu. Bereft of notebooks, he wrote it on toilet paper.

“In prison I began to think in a more systematic way about language,” he told *The Guardian* in 2006, adding, “Why was I not detained before, when I wrote in English?”

Following his release in 1978 and a failed assassination attempt in 1982, Ngũgĩ fled into exile, first to Britain, then to the US. There he became Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine, and led the university’s International Centre for Writing and Translation.

Despite exile and trauma, including a brutal 2004 homecoming to Nairobi in which he and his wife, Njeeri, were viciously

attacked by armed intruders, Ngũgĩ refused to forsake Kenya. “I don’t think we were meant to come out alive,” he later said of the assault, which was reported in the *The Guardian* in 2006. Throughout his life, Ngũgĩ remained unflinching in his position on language and cultural sovereignty. His 1986 essay collection *Decolonising the Mind* accused African writers of cultural betrayal when writing in colonial languages.

“What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?” he asked.

Though his literary friendship with Achebe frayed after this criticism over writing in the coloniser’s language, Ngũgĩ never relented. His final book, *Decolonising Language and Other Revolutionary Ideas* (2025), brought together essays and poetry that reaffirmed his belief in the emancipatory power of mother tongues, BBC News noted.

He continued to write in Gikuyu until the end, translating his works himself. His mythological epic *Kenda Muiyuru* (*The Perfect Nine*) was longlisted for the 2021 International Booker Prize. As the Booker Prize Foundation noted in 2021, the nomination was a first that recognised an author writing in an indigenous African language, and for his own translation.

Ngũgĩ fathered nine children, four of whom — Tee Ngũgĩ, Mũkoma wa Ngũgĩ, Nduku wa Ngũgĩ, and Wanjiku wa Ngũgĩ, went on to follow their father’s footsteps as authors.

While his life was marked by personal and political losses, his humour, grace, and intellectual rigor never waned.

“Resistance is the best way of keeping alive,” he told *The Guardian* in 2018, further declaring, “It can take even the smallest form of saying no to injustice.”

Among his admirers were heads of State to young students. “Thank you Mwalimu (teacher) for your freedom writing,” Amnesty International Kenya posted to X, formerly *Twitter*, last week following his death.

Kenyan politician Martha Karua also posted on X: “A renowned literary giant and scholar... a son of the soil and great patriot whose footprints are indelible.”

In his final years, Ngũgĩ battled cancer, underwent heart bypass surgery, and lived with kidney failure. Diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1995 and given three months to live, he lived three more transformative decades. He died in Atlanta, surrounded by family, and in quiet dignity.



Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o

TT Indian Caribbean museum reopens, archiving ancestry, artifacts, and art

— A deeply resonant celebration of endurance and cultural memory has come alive once more in Waterloo, central Trinidad, with the reopening of the Indian Caribbean Museum. Marking Indian Heritage Month and 180 years since Indian Arrival last month, the revitalised museum tells a powerful story through artifact, ancestry, memory, and art.

In the quiet heart of Waterloo, central Trinidad, a gentle awakening of memory has taken place. The Indian Caribbean Museum of Trinidad and Tobago, now housed in a spacious new annex, has re-opened with renewed vision and purpose. A testament to a people’s survival, resilience, and pride, each photograph, each artifact, each echo of ritual offers a bridge to the past and a pathway forward.

Originally established in 2006 by the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha (SDMS), the museum was born out of a cultural need to preserve the fading stories and fragments of the Indian Indentured experience in Trinidad and Tobago.

Housed first in the old Waterloo Hindu Primary School, its walls once whispered with the histories of those who crossed oceans on ships like the *Fatel Razack*. But when the Covid-19 pandemic forced its closure, the institution’s original structure fell into disrepair, prompting a relocation and redesign that now breathes new life into its mission.

Last month’s re-opening marks more than a return; it signals an entire new re-imagining. As part of May’s Indian Heritage Month celebrations and the 180th anniversary of Indian Arrival in Trinidad and Tobago, the museum has emerged with a completely redesigned layout that walks visitors through a vivid, chronological retelling of our Indo-Caribbean journey.

“The mere way in which the museum layout is tells the story from the beginning,” said Donell Jugmohan, executive member of the SDMS, and the newly-appointed chairman of the museum. He also serves as the principal of McBean Hindu School in central Trinidad.

Jugmohan described how the exhibits now unfold like chapters in a lived epic: “From India, then it goes to the journey – the *Fatel Razack*, the immigration documents, the *kala pani*, life in the estates, life in yesteryears... all these are documented in photographs, and so on.”

At the heart of this vision is the conviction that the museum



Musical instruments on display at the museum

must do more than simply store the past; that it must speak it aloud, especially to younger generations.

“It was seen at that time, that there was a need to preserve Indian heritage and the culture of Indians. This was now a space that Maha Sabha had to create – an avenue for the preservation of artifacts, paintings, pictures,” he explained.

For Jugmohan, heritage is not a passive archive – it is a call to understanding.

“We have to understand what our past was like; what our ancestors went through; how we got to this part of the world; what were the situations that led us to be the kind of people that we are today; and what are some of the practices that we continue to hold close to,” he said.

Inside the museum, visitors step into carefully sectioned spaces that evoke the rhythm of ancestral life. The *Vivah Sanskar* exhibit details the Hindu wedding ceremony in all its intricate beauty. Nearby, a re-creation of a traditional Indo-Trinidadian home captures a time when enamel pots lined wooden shelves, and brass utensils shone golden in the light of an oil lamp.

“All of the items here are sectionised – there’s a section for each of the artifacts, and it is well-laid out and easily visible. Our children and the wider community would not have known the origin of these pieces,” Jugmohan stated.

Preserved ritual objects and ceremonial items, once humble and utilitarian, now serve as cultural lodestars for a younger generation unfamiliar with their meanings but deeply tied to their legacy.

Perhaps one of the most striking evolutions in the museum’s scope is its embrace of visual arts. The Isaiah Boodhoo Art Gallery now houses approximately 108 works by the celebrated Trinidad and Tobago artist, further extending the museum’s reach into our contemporary world.

“We also have a section where young artists can now present their work to the community,” Jugmohan noted, adding, “The museum is not just about history, but is also a living space for cultural growth and creative expression.”

Since its reopening earlier this month, hundreds of schoolchildren have walked in its halls, with many more educational visits scheduled.

“This is a place where students and adults can come, look at these artifacts, and get lots of information for help in their studies,” Jugmohan added.

The SDMS’ theme for this 180th year of Indian Arrival was *Resilience to Triumph*, a motif etched into every detail of the museum’s revival.

“The triumph here is we are a resilient people, we keep and preserve our culture, and this has helped us to become a better people,” Jugmohan said.

Additionally, “We came from a different land and after 180 years we have, through the hardship, risen above that to some of the most educated, well-rounded individuals in society.”

To sustain its operations and preserve its growing collection, the museum may soon introduce a modest entrance fee. A digital expansion is also on the horizon, with plans underway to update the website and create interactive online experiences. A Facebook presence is also being developed to broaden access and outreach.

Also, the museum continues to welcome support in the form of donations, whether they are artifacts, funds, or materials.

“If anyone is interested in donating artifacts to the museum, we will really appreciate that,” Jugmohan urged.

With Indian Heritage Month celebrated across Trinidad and Tobago last month, the Indian Caribbean Museum now stands not merely as a keeper of relics, but as a radiant ember of cultural identity. Its revival is a reminder that history is not just remembered, but must be tended, shared, and passed on.

“Museums are very, very important to preserve our rich culture and our past,” Jugmohan said, memorably concluding, “Without the past, we cannot look towards a future.”

US student visa freeze sparks uncertainty in TT

– A recent directive from the US State Department has temporarily halted new student visa appointments, sending anxiety through Trinidad and Tobago’s academic community. The pause, intended to expand social media vetting by the US government, has triggered uncertainty among prospective students and drawn calls to strengthen local tertiary alternatives.

Port-of-Spain – A May 27 directive from the US State Department has instructed embassies and consulates worldwide to temporarily suspend new visa appointments for student and exchange visitors. The decision, aimed at expanding social media screening and vetting, has led to mounting anxiety among students in Trinidad and Tobago, many of whom were preparing to begin their studies in the US later this year.

The policy shift has caused particular concern among student-athletes and other prospective university attendees, who now face the prospect of disrupted plans and uncertain futures.

According to *Open Doors*, a US-based resource on international educational exchange, international students made up 5.9 percent of all students in the US during the 2023-2024 academic year, with 1,126,690 students enrolled. In 2022-2023, that figure stood at 1,057,188, representing 5.6 percent of the student population.

Data from the US Department of Homeland Security’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System indicate that 1,977 students from Trinidad and Tobago were enrolled in US institutions in 2023, up from 1,800 the previous year.

Tertiary Education and Skills Training Minister Prakash Persad responded to the development by suggesting that it presents an opportunity for local institutions.

“They can expand their offerings to encourage more students to study here. This can be facilitated by [having] more linkages with foreign universities,” he stated.

Some students in Trinidad and Tobago, speaking anonymously to local media for fear of jeopardising their US study prospects, shared their unease.

One student, accepted into a university in Florida, said he may now have to consider alternative destinations.

“I’m not very happy about this, as it’s now harder to pursue education in the US,” he said.

Speaking on the issue of social media screening, he added, “I am personally somewhat comfortable, as I don’t really have anything to hide. I still am a bit concerned simply for privacy and people’s right to express their opinions freely.”

He said he is now weighing other options, including The University of the West Indies, and institutions in the UK, Europe, or Canada.

Another student, accepted into a university in Missouri, described his frustration: “I’ve been working hard towards studying in the US, and this just adds more uncertainty to the process. It’s stressful. I’ve already been accepted into the university and I’ve been working on preparing everything for the move. Not knowing when or if I’ll get a visa appointment makes it hard to plan anything. It could delay everything, and I’m worried I might miss out on the chance to start this year.”

On the issue of online vetting, he remarked, “I understand the need for security, but it still feels a bit invasive. I try to be careful about what I post, but knowing someone is digging through your social media adds extra pressure. It’s like you’re being judged beyond your academics. I am not fully comfortable with the idea.”

He also confirmed that he is exploring universities in Canada and the UK as backup options.

Leader of the Movement for Social Justice, David Abdullah, echoed the sentiment that Trinidad and Tobago could turn this development into a strategic advantage by focusing on strengthening domestic institutions.

“So we have an opportunity to first of all, say to Trinidad and Tobago nationals, students, ‘Don’t fight up to go to the US and face all kinds of problems with your visa, and so on, and the high cost of education there given the exchange rate being what it is. Let us utilise our own institutions,’” Abdullah stated.

“Our own institutions are good quality tertiary institutions and let us ramp up our programmes,” he noted.

He added that increased enrolment could also offset the decline seen since the Covid-19 pandemic, and the revision of the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses programme, which now only grants full funding based on a means test.

The visa freeze, part of a broader shift in US policy, was announced as the Donald Trump government moves to enhance its scrutiny of international students’ social media presence.

According to international media reports, the suspension has no set end date and will remain in place “until further guidance is issued”. The decision is unfolding amid a broader clampdown on perceived leniency at US universities regarding anti-Semitism and student-led pro-Palestinian protests.

Reports also indicate that hundreds of international students have had their visas revoked and some were detained. On May 28, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio stated that Chinese students were also under increased scrutiny.

Locally, the US Consulate in Trinidad and Tobago has clarified that the operational pause “does not signify a change in US student visa policy” toward the country. This was confirmed by the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs in a statement that acknowledged ongoing communication with US counterparts.

“It is important to note that US student visa appointment dates are typically generated approximately one month in advance. Therefore, all students who have already secured and received confirmation for their visa interview appointments will have their appointments honoured as scheduled,” the ministry said.

However, it added, “The current pause specifically pertains to the submission of new student visa applications.”

The ministry acknowledged that the situation may raise concerns and anxiety among students and their families, but expressed hope for a swift resolution. Officials anticipate a return to normal processing once the US concludes its internal review.



Prakash Persad



Pennelope Beckles

Penny’s currency climbs with nomination to lead the PNM

Port-of-Spain – The PNM’s nomination day, held earlier this week at Balisier House, was charged with enthusiasm as party members rallied behind Pennelope Beckles, in what emerged as an uncontested leadership bid. Her nomination was met with resounding applause, sealing her status as the party’s next political leader.

Beckles, visibly moved, remarked, “It is a privilege and an honour to lead a party that was led by Dr Eric Williams, George Chambers, Patrick Manning, Dr Keith Rowley and Stuart Young; and more importantly to be the first female leader.”

She added, “I am a little emotional... having the opportunity to lead the PNM is a privilege and honour, and I am looking forward to it.”

As Beckles arrived, she was greeted with chants of “Penny, Penny, Penny!” from the crowd, reflecting widespread acclaim for her currency and grassroots support for her elevation.

Speaking with the media, Beckles addressed what has been reported as her previously quiet position following the party’s recent electoral defeat, noting the importance of careful observation and consultation.

“One of the important things following the elections on April 28 was recognising the importance of listening. And I have been to several constituencies. I think one of the important things about being a good leader is to listen,” she said.

Her comments signal a shift toward reflective and inclusive leadership, reinforcing her commitment to engage deeply with constituents and party members alike.

Beckles also affirmed the party’s ongoing relationship with former leader and Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley.

“There isn’t anybody around that can give us the sort of institutional memory coming from having served as a senator from 1986... He is knowledgeable in almost every topic,” Beckles said.

Despite some reluctance from nominees to speak openly about their candidacies, the dominant sentiment was one of renewed optimism and clear support for Beckles’ leadership.

Beckles’ unopposed nomination represents a pivotal transformation within the party. Eleven years after unsuccessfully challenging then-opposition leader Rowley for the party’s top post, she now assumes that very mantle, carrying forward a legacy shaped by her predecessors while charting a new course as the PNM’s first woman to lead.

Govt plan at Caroni Green Limited revival targets boosting agricultural exports

– Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Agriculture outlines new strategy to slash (US) \$2.5 billion food import bill by restarting shuttered State Enterprises and boosting agricultural exports.

Port-of-Spain – Trinidad and Tobago’s government has unveiled plans to generate (TT) \$1 billion in agricultural exports, aiming to sharply reduce the country’s (US) \$2.5 billion annual food import bill by revitalising Caroni Green Limited (CGL), a former State Enterprise once heralded for its successful hot pepper exports.

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries Ravi Ratiram revealed the initiative last week, presenting it as part of a broader strategy to reinvigorate agricultural production and foreign exchange earnings. He projected that a restructured CGL could generate up to (TT) \$400 million in export revenues, particularly through high-demand crops like hot peppers.

Ratiram also condemned the previous PNM administration for discontinuing both CGL and the Seafood Industry Development Company Limited, two entities he said were profitably contributing to foreign exchange inflows at the time of their closure.

In his remarks, Ratiram further underscored the urgency of the agriculture drive by pointing to a dramatic decline in local rice production – from 3,000 tonnes annually to just over



Hot peppers are a lucrative cash crop in Trinidad

445 tonnes. He confirmed that consultations with ministry executives and agricultural experts were ongoing to finalise the restructuring framework for CGL.

Former CGL CEO Sharma Lalla offered historical context, stating that between 2013 and 2017, the enterprise exported over one million pounds of hot peppers and earned an estimated \$7 million.

Lalla added that CGL’s financials from 2016 revealed a bank

balance of \$5.6 million, and no dependency on government Treasury funding.

He was also emphatic that the company was not designed to compete in the domestic market, but rather to bolster export-driven growth.

“We were focused on exports,” he noted, underscoring the enterprise’s foreign exchange mission.

Former Couva South MP and current UNC member Rudranath Indarsingh welcomed the move to restart CGL.

“Reviving CGL would make effective use of abandoned Caroni lands and contribute significantly to economic diversification,” he said.

Indarsingh also criticised the PNM for neglecting agricultural development and failing to support ex-Caroni workers.

“Between 2015 and 2025, the only lands distributed were from the previous administration’s efforts. The PNM neither developed new plots nor undertook significant land distribution,” he said.

Supporting the latest objective, former Minister of Agriculture Devant Maharaj, who served under the People’s Partnership administration (2010–2015), said the revival of CGL could provide multiple dividends. He endorsed it as a step forward in strengthening agricultural output and diversifying the national economy.

Analysts praise PM Persad-Bissessar for strong leadership, decisive tone

– One month into her second term, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar has drawn commendation for her assertive leadership and early policy directions, with analysts highlighting urgent economic reforms, trade union negotiations, and legislative priorities as the newly-elected UNC government completed its first month, and now heads into 100 days in office.

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Port-of-Spain – On May 28, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar marked one month since returning to office, with political analysts and former government officials praising her strengthened leadership and decisive tone in the early days of the UNC administration.

Political scientist Dr Indira Rampersad noted a marked contrast between Persad-Bissessar's previous tenure from 2010-2015 and her current return to government. "She's laid her rules down, both for her party and for the nation, in a way of what to expect... She's very strong. Of course, she is older, but now she seems much stronger," Rampersad observed.

She emphasised the significance of PM Persad-Bissessar's resolve, particularly as her administration confronts a projected (TT) \$11 billion deficit this fiscal year.

"She's been trying to trim the fat... She has been identifying places where she thinks there have been excessive spending or wastage, and she is very firm that she is going to deal with that," Rampersad added.

Former PNM finance minister Karen Nunez-Tesheira, and deputy leader of HOPE, offered praise for Persad-Bissessar's political resilience.

"You have to respect [her]. You have to. To come back as a woman, to come back after there was that cabal around her and all the things that were said. I mean, you can't help but say she is resilient," Nunez-Tesheira stated.

She further likened PM Persad-Bissessar's firm governance approach to the 'big stick' diplomacy of former US President Theodore Roosevelt.



Karen Nunez-Tesheira



Bishnu Ragoonath



Indira Rampersad

"I think she really has learned. Let's see what happens, because it's too early, but she did say the right things, and ...she came across as sincere," she said.

The next milestone for the UNC would be its 100th day in office come August 11. Looking forward, political scientist Dr Bishnu Ragoonath pointed out that limited legislative action can occur in the days ahead before Parliament's automatic July recess kicks in.

He recommended focusing on expenditure reduction, and lauded PM Persad-Bissessar's decision to reassess State property rentals, which cost taxpayers (TT) \$493 million last year.

Ragoonath also endorsed ongoing audits at State Enterprises such as the Water and Sewerage Authority, suggesting these efforts be paired with the appointment of new State boards.

However, he tempered expectations, declaring, "I am not one who expected that changing government overnight would have been dropping the murder rate... we would have had a silver bullet to stop crime," he said.

Ragoonath cautioned that public sector wage negotiations may pressure the administration, noting, "Some of them will be looking for the ten percent raise in pay... the government will have to figure out how they're going to deal with that... still living on 2015 salaries."

He similarly emphasised the centrality of labour relations,

given the UNC's election alliance with trade unions.

"Even if they can't pay all now, they will pay some now and some later when the government earns some revenue," he said.

Meanwhile, Rampersad expects early legislative efforts to include home invasion laws, stand-your-ground provisions, and broader crime measures. Both she and Ragoonath noted that initiatives such as restarting the Petrotrin refinery and advancing Tobago autonomy will re-enter parliamentary discussion.

Ragoonath indicated that while the repeal of the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority, property tax, and the demerit points system may be on the government's agenda, they are unlikely to surface within the first three months.

Rampersad added that resolving the foreign exchange shortage and investing in agriculture and energy are essential to stimulating recovery.

"Once they start doing that, the economy will bump back up. You will see the construction industry also becoming more vibrant," she said.

She stressed the need for job creation at multiple educational levels, citing demands from both secondary school and post-graduate job seekers.

"I think they're very anxious to get some legislation in place to meet their mandate, because they know the population will get very agitated and anxious," Rampersad remarked.

Both Rampersad and Ragoonath welcomed the PM Persad-Bissessar's restructuring of ministerial responsibilities.

Rampersad praised the decision to divide the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Education into two separate portfolios each, describing these moves as steps toward improved governance and more focused national problem-solving.

Ragoonath further noted the importance of developing a distinct foreign policy while maintaining international alliances.

Activity at Piparo volcano spurs scientists to reach out to area's residents

– Early warning data from the Piparo Mud Volcano indicates the underground system is evolving and may be holding more pressurised mud than during its 1997 eruption. UWI researchers say continued monitoring, funding for deeper equipment, and community engagement are essential to understanding potential risks.

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Port-of-Spain – Preliminary scientific data from monitoring systems at the Piparo Mud Volcano suggest that the underground system is changing significantly, prompting researchers to engage the local community in an update on potential developments.

The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, has been conducting in-depth research at the site, with instruments placed to measure subsurface changes since 2023. On May 24, villagers attended a meeting convened by UWI's Geoscience Programme and the Department of Chemical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, to learn about the evolving conditions.

PhD candidate Kerneese Ramjarrie, leading the research with Professor Oshaine Blake, explained to residents, and later to media, that while there is currently no immediate cause for alarm, recent data shows increased activity that warrants close attention.

According to Ramjarrie, the data were gathered using resistivity surveys, an imaging technique that functions like an x-ray of the ground, allowing scientists to detect areas with varying electrical resistance. The team collected 34 survey lines, each 165 metres long, between January 2023 and January 2025.

This imaging reached depths of up to 30 metres, revealing one particular zone with low resistivity.

"What that means is it's a fluid-filled area," said Ramjarrie.



Piparo Mud Volcano, above; below, the monitoring system

She added, "And because we're in a mud volcano setting, we knew that it was the mud flow that we had imaged."

This finding was confirmed through borehole sampling, and the data were then used to generate a comprehensive map showing the extent of the system. Comparing the datasets from the start and end of the two-year survey period, the researchers found that the underground pressurised zones had not only changed location, shifting toward the northwest, but had also expanded significantly.

"The body of these zones, from preliminary estimations, is actually four times the amount that was expelled during the 1997 eruption," Ramjarrie reported.

Despite the increased activity, Ramjarrie emphasised that an eruption cannot yet be predicted with certainty.

"We need to continue collecting more data and observation so we can see what correlates to what," she explained.

Currently, the team is monitoring pressure and temperature, but Ramjarrie clarified that pressure alone is not enough to signal an impending eruption.

"There are other things that have to happen at the same time," she said, listing expanding ground cracks, elevated gas emissions, noticeable ground deformation, temperature shifts, and even unusual animal behaviour.

She noted that while the system is "dynamic" and "changing," enhanced monitoring allows for better understanding. However, the current equipment is limited, and more advanced tools are needed to gain deeper insights.

"We are in critical need of funding. We do need more equipment to add depth," she said.

The urgency is underscored by Piparo's history. In February 1997, the mud volcano erupted violently, sending mud over 200 feet into the air and covering homes, vehicles, and roads. Livestock perished, utilities were disrupted, and 300 residents had to be evacuated.

The area was declared a disaster zone, and a permanent alternate road had to be constructed. Some residents were relocated to Buen Intento, Princes Town.

In light of this past event and new data suggesting the underground reservoir now holds potentially four times as much material, the researchers called for sustained monitoring, better funding, and collaboration with disaster preparedness agencies.



Bollywood's Golden Age comedies helped shape our Caribbean laughter

— From garage antics to neighbourhood rivalries, Bollywood's golden-age comedies shaped laughter across Caribbean living rooms and Canadian halls, creating legacies that transcend oceans and generations. Here's why these films remain evocative, timeless, and beloved cultural treasures.

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An Ongoing Series for the Caribbean Diaspora A Local Journalism Initiative

The aroma of freshly cooked *roti* drifted through the wooden slats of Caribbean homes, mingling with bursts of laughter as families huddled around flickering screens or crowded cinema halls.

It was the 1960s and 1970s, and Bollywood's comedic golden age was crafting indelible memories across Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname, before traveling with us as immigrants to Canada's bustling cities.

In these spaces, comedy was not just entertainment – for many of us, it was a balm for displacement, a ritual of belonging, and a space for unfiltered joy.

Bollywood's comedic zenith, roughly from the late 1950s to the early 1980s, aligned with critical periods in Caribbean migration and identity formation. Films like *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi* (1958), *Padosan* (1968), *Chupke Chupke* (1975), *Gol Maal* (1979), and *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983) became cultural anchors, humorous respites from daily struggles, and subtle critiques of power dynamics familiar to Caribbean audiences navigating post-colonial realities.

At the heart of this comedy revolution was the iconic *Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi*. Featuring real-life brothers Kishore, Ashok, and Anoop Kumar, the film turned sibling dynamics into a comedic spectacle.

Kishore Kumar, famed for his frenetic energy, transitioned seamlessly between acting and singing, making songs like *Ek Ladki Bheegi Bhaagi Si* as memorable as his slapstick humour.

As *The Hindu* notes, Kishore's "goofy charm, perfectly timed grimaces, and unscripted improvisations gave the film its anarchic spirit". Madhubala, the enchanting leading lady, offered the perfect counterbalance, her playful elegance enhancing comedic interplay.

Households back in the homeland saw reflections of our familial warmth and quirks mirrored amusingly in these sibling exchanges, making the film deeply resonant and relevant.

The archetype of the overprotective brother mirrored countless Caribbean uncles, warning daughters about suitors with the same exaggerated fervour.

In 1968, *Padosan* charmed audiences with musical duels and romantic misadventures. Mehmood's exaggerated portrayal of a South Indian music teacher sparked our endless laughter, while Kishore Kumar's character provided comedic brilliance through quirky songs.

In a now-legendary sequence, Mehmood as Master Pillai scolds his music pupil with a melodramatic flourish: "*Ek din tum bhi bade singer banoge, agar tumhara gala theek raha toh!*" ("One day you too will become a great singer – if your throat survives!").

The line, widely cited in fan pages and reviews, reflected the performative mentorship familiar in our Indo-Caribbean homes where *sitar* and *dholak* music lessons or rehearsals were often comedy routines in disguise.

Its humour resonated particularly in Caribbean neighbourhoods, where multi-ethnic rivalries and friendships often bloomed humorously over shared fences and backyard banter.

The dynamic between Kishore Kumar and Mehmood, especially the famous *Mere Saamne Wali Khidki Mein* lip-sync gag, resonated with a diaspora whose childhoods were steeped in backyard serenades and exaggerated accents.

It was this blend of slapstick, song, and satire that gave *Padosan* its cult status – echoed even today in Indo-Caribbean wedding skits and talent shows in Brampton, Scarborough, or Markham.

Director Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Chupke Chupke* (1975) layered comedic mastery with linguistic and cultural satire. Dharmendra's mischievous linguistic pranks on Om Prakash's anglophile character humorously exposed colonial-era pretensions.

When Dharmendra's character demands the use of "*shuddh Hindi*" and refuses English terms for 'car' or 'flower', he lampoons India's colonial hangover.

As noted in *Film Companion*, "the film's comedy arises not from loudness but from subtle ironies and clever wordplay".

Caribbean audiences familiar with navigating between Creole *patois* and the Queen's English instantly connected with the film's subtle humour and playful social critique.

This cultural balancing act echoed in Indo-Caribbean families, where code-switching, from Bhojpuri to Standard English, was a daily necessity.

As second-generation immigrants in Canada watched the film decades later, they too recognised their own identity negotiations.

Mukherjee's other gem, *Gol Maal* (1979), took comedic farce

further. Utpal Dutt's portrayal of Bhavani Shankar, a strict, tradition-bound employer who detests modernity and mustaches, hilariously clashing with Amol Palekar's youthful, dual personas, captured the absurdity of social expectations.

"I like men who do not laugh unnecessarily," Dutt thunders in one scene, his straight-faced delivery launching countless guffaws, as *The Quint* has noted.

For Caribbean immigrants later grappling with identities between tradition-bound parents and our emerging Canadian context, the film's comedic exploration of duality became especially meaningful.

Caribbean audiences certainly related to Ramprasad's duplicity: did we not know at least one person back in the homeland, or here in Toronto, in a similar situation? The elaborate charade in *Gol Maal* reflected the reality of living in two cultural timelines, often within the same household.

Finally, *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* (1983) delivered comedic satire with razor-sharp precision.

Naseeruddin Shah and Ravi Baswani portrayed hapless photographers stumbling onto corruption, a storyline resonating deeply with Caribbean audiences accustomed to navigating Kafkaesque bureaucratic absurdities and political disappointments.

Its iconic Mahabharata scene, where Yudhisthira becomes Draupadi and Duryodhana collapses mid-dialogue in disbelief, remains one of the finest comedic commentaries on institutional rot in Indian cinema.

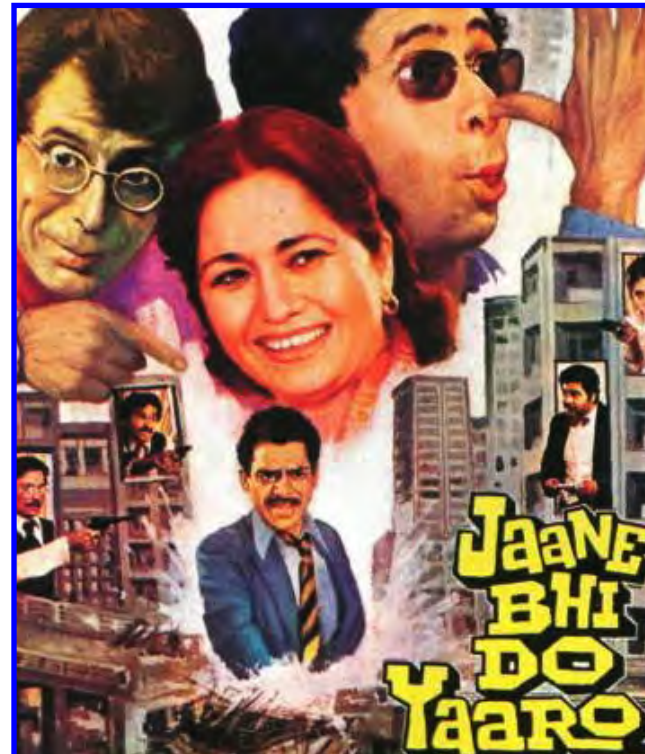
As *Scroll.in* observed, "the chaos of that final scene... was eerily familiar to any citizen who had waited in line at a broken-down post office or contested a bribe".

The legacies in these films extend beyond nostalgia. They informed comedic performances and cultural productions within our Caribbean communities, influencing our humour, local theatre, and even our inter-generational family dynamics.

These comedies continue screening in cultural festivals and diaspora gatherings in Canada, serving both as entertainment and living artifacts of our collective identity.

Today, in an era marked by streaming platforms and digital ubiquity, revisiting these golden-age comedies offers more than a nostalgic trip. They provide enduring lessons in cultural resilience, the power of humour, and the universality of human follies.

As audiences from Scarborough to San Fernando to Stabroek continue to laugh across oceans, these echoes of Bollywood's comedic golden age will remain vibrant, cherished threads weaving together the tapestry of our collective identity. (RK)



Actor Mukul Dev remembered for artistry, spirit, and grace

— A luminous figure in Indian cinema and television, Mukul Dev’s journey was marked by spiritual depth, family devotion, and versatile artistry. With his passing, the actor has left us a legacy not just in the movies, but in the hearts he touched. With his passing, he leaves behind silences filled with memory, laughter that will continue to echo, and roles that will speak to us long after the curtain has closed.

...
A gifted performer, devoted son, and quiet seeker of peace, Mukul Dev’s sudden passing on May 23, 2025, in New Delhi has left the entertainment world and his many admirers in profound sorrow. At just 54, he exits the stage too soon, leaving behind a story both luminous and layered, filled with artistry, longing, and indelible love.

Born in New Delhi into a Punjabi family, Mukul Dev was the younger brother of actor Rahul Dev. He is survived by his daughter, Sia Dev, and mourned by his siblings Rashmi Kaushal and Rahul, as well as nephew Sidhant Dev.

Though known for his roles on-screen, Mukul was at heart a son first, man marked deeply by the emotional currents shared with his parents.

Mukul’s formative years were spent in Patiala, a city that infused his life with the warmth and vibrancy of Punjab. With roots in a village near Jalandhar, he carried that cultural legacy with pride.

His father, Hari Dev, was an Assistant Commissioner of Police fluent in Pashto and Persian, whose life of service shaped Mukul’s values.

Mukul’s early brush with performance came while impersonating Michael Jackson in Class 8 for a Doordarshan event, a moment that earned him his first paycheque and ignited his passion for the arts.

He was also a trained pilot, having studied at the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi, a lesser-known detail that reflects the layered richness of his character.

Mukul made his acting debut with the television serial *Mumkin* in 1996 and was later seen in Doordarshan’s *Ek Se Badh Kar Ek*. He went on to host the first season of *Fear Factor India*.

His film debut came with *Dastak*, where he starred alongside former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen. Notably, he played ACP



Mukul Dev

Rohit Malhotra, setting the tone for a series of impactful roles.

His filmography includes *Son of Sardaar*, *R... Rajkumar*, *Jai Ho*, *Jal*, *Himmatwala*, and *Anth: The End*.

He also flourished on television in popular shows like *Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki*, *Kasshish*, *Kumkum – Ek Pyara Sa Bandhan*, and *Ssshhhh... Phir Koi Hai*.

In his own words: “Punjab is in my blood,” he once said, underscoring his deep connection to his heritage, especially as his career took a celebrated turn in Punjabi cinema.

Though not defined by overt activism, Mukul’s devotion to his parents and his spiritual beliefs spoke volumes. Introduced by his mother to the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Buddhism, Mukul often turned to these for comfort and insight. His personal reflections on peace and emotional growth echoed spiri-

tual seeking rather than celebrity ambition.
Mukul’s relationship with his parents was central to his identity. After his father’s passing in 2019, and later his mother’s, he became visibly more introspective.

“After the death of his parents, Mukul had withdrawn into himself,” recalled actor Vindu Dara Singh.

He added, “He had put on weight and was battling loneliness. Though he had a daughter, she wasn’t staying with him. He was making his comeback with *Son of Sardaar 2*, but the sad part is he won’t be there to see it.”

His father, Hari Dev, once received a bravery medal after calming an angry mob that had surrounded a police station in Daryaganj. Citing that deed, Mukul said: “He saved lives that day. That moment is etched in my memory forever.”

His mother’s legacy endured in her warmth and belief in her son.

“Whatever I do, my mother believes I do it well. She even says I’m better than Shri Amitabh Bachchan,” Mukul once shared with laughter.

In the days following his passing, the outpouring was heart-felt and immense.

Actor Manoj Bajpayee said, “It’s impossible to put into words what I’m feeling. Mukul was a brother in spirit, an artist whose warmth and passion were unmatched. Gone too soon, too young. Miss you meri jaan...until we meet again, Om Shanti.”

Actor Deepshikha Nagpal recalled, “Such an amazing human being. Life is really so unpredictable. I still can’t believe this.”

Rahul Bhat offered a touching memory: “Still remember that flight we took together... That laughter, that moment — it’ll never fade. Goodbye, Mukul Dev. Gone far too soon.”

Vindu Dara Singh added: “We spent 30 days 24/7 together on *Son Of Sardaar 2*. He was such a wonderful guy... Everybody will be clapping and laughing when he speaks, sadly, he won’t be there to enjoy that success.”

Mukul leaves behind a diverse body of work that stretched across languages and genres.

However, beyond the camera, he imparted a quieter lesson about inner struggle, perseverance, and the search for peace. He lived his art truthfully and loved deeply, especially his parents, whose spiritual and moral compass guided him to the end.

Grandson Neil Nitin Mukesh working on Mukesh biopic

A actor Neil Nitin Mukesh has revealed he is working on a script for a biopic chronicling the life and legacy of his grandfather, the legendary Indian playback singer Mukesh. The project, still in the scripting stage, is being developed with contributions from Neil’s father, musician Nitin Mukesh, and supported by a personal collection of family memorabilia and archival photographs.

Speaking in an interview with *News18*, Neil said, “My team and I’ve been writing for quite some time. Not many know that I’m a professional writer and have a production house too.”

He indicated that his research process has involved listening to anecdotes from his father and reviewing archival materials related to Mukesh.

According to Neil, the story of Mukesh’s life offers strong cinematic potential.

“We’ve got a great bank of content and material ready. His life has been so beautiful. There’s a lovely arc in his story. His journey is so inspiring that people need to see it,” he said.

Neil expressed enthusiasm about bringing his grandfather’s story to the screen and confirmed that he has discussed the project with director Abhishek Sharma, who recently directed him in the web series *Hai Junoon*.

“We’re just trying to figure out the right medium, the producers to collaborate with, the actors and the filmmakers to come onboard. I’ve had a word with Abhishek. In fact, he was the one who brought up the conversation. He’s truly excited about the idea. I’m waiting for him to get free. I would love to listen to how he’s envisioning it,” he stated.

When asked who might portray Mukesh on screen, Neil responded, “I don’t think there can be a better Mukesh than me. Neil Nitin Mukesh is Mukesh. I know him better than anyone else. Dad also wants me to play my grandfather for emotional reasons.”

Neil shared that he was only five years old when his grandfather passed away. Nonetheless, his connection to Mukesh has been reinforced over the years through family stories and visual archives shared by his father.

“Every time I would sit with my father we would go through his archives of photographs and memorabilia,” he said.

Neil is currently seen in *Hai Junoon! Dream. Dare. Dominate*, a musical drama television series directed by Abhishek Sharma and produced under Jio Creative Lab. The series, also starring Jacqueline Fernandez, premiered on May 16 on *JioHotstar*.



Pedestrians and automobiles navigate floods in an upscale neighbourhood in south Mumbai late last month

Vivek Agnihotri complains about Mumbai floods

Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri has voiced sharp criticism over Mumbai’s flooding crisis after the city’s first major downpour of the season, calling India’s urban infrastructure “a scam wrapped in a sham”.

His remarks and its frustration, which he made via social media, ignited widespread support and concern online.

Late last month Agnihotri posted a video to *X* (formerly *Twitter*) showing severe flooding at Mumbai’s upscale Nepean Sea Road, an area home to many of India’s top billionaires and senior officials.

Sharing the clip, he wrote, “Nepean Sea Road, home to India’s top billionaires, top ministers & officials chokes in one shower. So do Delhi, Bengaluru and other cities, year after year. India’s pathetic urbanisation is a scam wrapped in a sham. Poor ordinary citizens... but who cares?”

His statement, shared amid reports of flooding and gridlock across the city, quickly resonated with frustrated residents.

Following Agnihotri’s post, several users on *X* echoed his sentiments. Comments ranged from disappointment to calls for reform.

One user commented, “Really bad,” while another added, “There is zero town planning and all planning happens in isolation.” Another wrote, “India needs to spend major on city infrastructure.”

Yet another posted, “Hope that people like you who raises voices will help,” while another asked, “If this is the condition of VIP areas, what can we expect for the rest of the country? Urban planning has become a complete joke.”

Agnihotri’s remarks came just as the India Meteorological Department upgraded Mumbai’s rain alert from yellow to orange and then red, warning of extremely heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds.

The southwest monsoon made its onset over Mumbai late last month, marking its earliest arrival in Maharashtra in 35 years. Widespread rain alerts were issued across multiple states, including Maharashtra, Kerala, Delhi, and Tamil Nadu.

Mumbai’s flooding problems have sparked debates over the city’s civic infrastructure and preparedness. Despite repeated investments and monsoon readiness campaigns, residents continue to face serious disruptions after even moderate rainfall.



Photos by Russell Lutchman



Cricket fund-raiser nets \$1.16m

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neck cancers. Caribbean men have a higher incidence of prostate cancer, and are more likely to die from it, she said.

Said Yamashita: "Cricket is Canada's fastest growing sport. This event is about rallying a community, celebrating diversity, and changing the way cancer is understood, prevented, diagnosed, and treated."

The funds raised will support early detection, next-generation therapies, and mental health and caregiver support. The PMCF is recognised globally for its advances in immunotherapy, stem cell research, and liquid biopsy diagnostics.

According to the data, two in five Canadians are expected to face a cancer diagnosis in their lifetime. Globally, cancer cases are projected to rise by 77 percent by 2050. While Canada's five-year cancer survival rate has improved from 50 percent in the 1980s to 63 percent today, early-onset cancers have increased nearly 80 percent since the 1990s.

The urgency of these statistics lent sharp meaning to each over bowled, run scored, and wicket taken on May 31.

The event brought together cricket's rhythmic pulse and community commitment. For players, every delivery was a symbolic stand against cancer. For supporters, each donation became part of a larger innings in the fight for better outcomes.

With [registration already open for the 2026 event](#), organisers hope to build on this year's momentum and keep the innings going strong.



Matthews, Iqbal score top spots in ICC T20I batting, bowling rankings

— While West Indies suffered a clean sweep by England in the recently concluded T20I series, Hayley Matthews' form was a standout that took her back to No. 2 in the ICC T20I Batting Rankings, reinforcing her stature in world cricket. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Sadia Iqbal reclaiming the top bowling spot not only cements this nation's quality and depth, but also signals pivotal shifts in global women's cricket standings.

West Indies captain Hayley Matthews has returned to her career-best second place in the ICC Women's T20I Batting Rankings after a commanding performance against England, while Pakistan's Sadia Iqbal reclaimed the No. 1 bowling position following a reshuffle in the rankings.

Despite West Indies being swept 3-0 by England in the recently concluded T20I series, Matthews delivered a standout individual display, earning Player of the Series honours for her tally of 177 runs.

Matthews' performance included an unbeaten century in the opening contest at Canterbury, anchoring her team's innings and underscoring her consistency across formats.

On the bowling side, Pakistan's Sadia Iqbal capitalised on Sophie Ecclestone's absence due to injury to leapfrog back to the summit of the T20I bowling rankings. Ecclestone, sidelined during England's series against the West Indies, dropped to fourth.

Matthews' prolific series total saw her leap over India's Smriti Mandhana and Australia's Tahlia McGrath to regain the No. 2 position with 765 rating points – just 29 behind current leader Beth Mooney. She also leads the T20I all-rounder rankings by a margin of 54 points over Amelia Kerr, credited her preparation



Hayley Matthews

and global experience. "Obviously, really good to be able to go there and score some runs and get some wickets as well. I feel like I've been fortunate enough to play a lot of T20 cricket around the world... and thankfully... I've been able to execute pretty well," Matthews said.

Other West Indies players saw mobility in the rankings. Deandra Dottin, who missed the England tour, fell nine places to 20th, while opener Quina Joseph slipped 11 positions to No. 40.

For England, fast bowler Lauren Bell was rewarded for her strong showing with a 13-spot jump to sixth among T20I bowlers, while Linsey Smith and Issy Wong climbed 37 and 32 places respectively. Wong's return was especially notable, mark-



Sadia Iqbal

ing her comeback since her last appearance in September 2024.

While England controlled the series scoreboard, Matthews' innings, and the challenge she posed even in defeat, highlighted her role as a keystone in West Indies' batting lineup. Her methodical approach, grounded in "strong plans" and "playing to my strengths at all times", allowed her to extract success from otherwise difficult situations.

On the bowling front, Iqbal's resurgence comes with strategic insights gained from veteran advice.

"I used to keep talking to [Sana Mir]... regarding bowling different variations," said Iqbal in a PCB video, crediting the former captain's mentorship for her climb back to the No. 1 position.

Matthews last held the No. 2 T20I batting spot in December 2023, and her return underscores her upward trajectory as West Indies'

most consistent performer. With upcoming fixtures against South Africa, Matthews has a realistic opportunity to challenge Beth Mooney for the top spot.

Meanwhile, England's batting strength was reinforced by Nat Sciver-Brunt, who entered the top ten following a half-century during the series. Former captain Heather Knight climbed seven spots to No. 17, while Sophia Dunkley moved into No. 29 after finishing as the series' third highest run-scorer.

Matthews reflected on her preparation and performance, stating, "I think just having some really strong plans and playing to my strengths at all times. I've been able to execute pretty well."

And speaking to her mentorship from Sana Mir, Iqbal noted, "She has been number one bowler during her days. I used to keep talking to her... regarding bowling different variations."

Windies women feel brunt of Arlott's pace

— England's clean T20I sweep over West Indies has launched the Edwards and Sciver-Brunt partnership on solid footing. Add to this victory their core of quick bowlers in Arlott, Issy Wong, Lauren Bell, and it appears that England's depth has rapidly expanded. With a T20 and an ODI series against India next, followed by the 50-over World Cup this fall, their latest sweep may well be remembered as the moment when England hit the reset.

It was a debut to remember for seamer Emily Arlott and a composed captain's knock from Nat Sciver-Brunt that propelled England to a commanding nine-wicket win over West Indies in the final T20I, completing a clean sweep and ushering in a new era under head coach Charlotte Edwards.

West Indies, having shown flickers of resistance earlier in the series, were undone by a disciplined England attack that limited them to just 81 for 8. Arlott, only 48 hours after receiving her England cap, opened the bowling from the Sea End and struck gold with her second delivery, removing West Indies' standout performer Hayley Matthews.

Said a jubilant Arlott: "She was stood miles down leg stump. It was just adjusting my line and creating that angle back into her."

Matthews' early exit all but extinguished West Indies' hopes. Arlott bowled four consecutive overs, three of them inside the Powerplay, for a miserly return of 3 for 14.

She said, "I was told: 'You'll have one in the Powerplay and go from there and adjust. It went well, so we carried on. I didn't imagine I'd bowl four on the trot.'"

England's fielding bolstered Arlott's efforts. Charlie Dean held onto a sharp chance at extra cover, while Sophia Dunkley pulled off a spectacular one-handed catch at midwicket.

Dean then struck twice in two balls in the 14th over, breaking the only significant partnership of 34 off 51 balls between Shemaine Campbelle and Shabika Gajrani. Arlott then capped her night off with a boundary catch to dismiss Campbelle.

England's run chase was straightforward. Sciver-Brunt and Dunkley combined for an unbroken 82-run stand that saw England home with over ten overs to spare. Dunkley continued her fine form with inventive strokeplay, while Sciver-Brunt's 55 not out silenced any concerns about whether captaincy might affect her form with the bat.

Her innings was marked by precise placement and composed shot selection, in keeping with the leadership style she hopes to cultivate, which is to empower rather than direct.

Reflecting on the team's evolving identity, Sciver-Brunt noted, "It's hard to keep standards high but that's what we're

pushing for, that's what we're driving for. We wanted to be tested, to be put under pressure."

The strategic call to hand Arlott the new ball paid off immediately. Her accuracy in the Powerplay, including the dismissal of Matthews, swung the momentum firmly in England's favour.

It appears Edwards' decision to test new bowling combinations has now added depth, particularly with the emergence of left-arm spinner Linsey Smith, who took three wickets across the series at an economy rate of 4.83.

However, the third match also highlighted lingering fielding inconsistencies. England dropped three catches off Realeanna Grimmond during a rain-affected middle game; however, the team rebounded with a sharper showing in the final encounter. Danni Wyatt-Hodge's clean catch running in from midwicket provided a needed course correction.

The 3-0 series win marks a strong start for Charlotte Edwards, but context tempers the triumph. West Indies, who failed to qualify for the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup, struggled to offer consistent opposition. Matthews alone carried the side, amassing 177 runs across the three matches, more than the rest of her teammates combined.

Nevertheless, England's turnaround from their 16-0 Ashes defeat is significant, with Edwards praising the rejuvenated squad.

"With Em Arlott, we've all seen her in domestic cricket and how good she's been, but to come here and look at ease in international cricket in her first few games is really pleasing."

She also lauded Smith for seizing her opportunity, stating, "She's taken her opportunity with both hands and that's all you can do."

Meanwhile, Sciver-Brunt, newly-appointed and nursing an Achilles issue, is unlikely to bowl this summer.

As Edwards confirmed, "Nat's not bowling this series and she's probably not going to bowl most of the summer. We want to make sure she's fit and firing for the World Cup."

Despite the temporary absence of her bowling, Sciver-Brunt has led from the front, supported by a rotating leadership group that includes Dunkley and Dean.

As she noted, "The new leadership group has worked well", emphasising collaboration over central authority.

In reflecting on her growth since being sidelined in 2022 due to Covid-19, Arlott said, "The last time I came into this environment, I don't think I believed I was good enough... I think I'm more content with who I am, and not really caring how people take that. I'm really proud of myself for getting to this point."



Shubman Gill

Gill takes India's Test lead

India will enter their five-Test series against England this June with Shubman Gill as their new Test captain, signalling a generational shift following the retirements of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Ravichandran Ashwin from the format. The announcement was made late last month by Board of Control for Cricket in India's chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar, who confirmed Rishabh Pant as Gill's deputy.

At 25 years, Gill becomes the fifth-youngest cricketer to lead India in Tests, following in the footsteps of Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, Sachin Tendulkar, Kapil Dev, and Ravi Shastri. Though his red-ball captaincy experience is limited, having led in only five first-class matches, Gill's leadership in the IPL, where he guided Gujarat Titans (GT) to a playoff berth in just his second season, appears to have impressed selectors.

Said Agarkar: "We obviously discussed every option that's there. Over the last year or so, we have looked at Shubman at various times... to take a lot of feedback, even in the dressing room as well. Obviously, he is very young, but you have seen the improvement — for GT as well. We are hopeful we have picked the right guy. He's a terrific player, and best wishes to him."

India's 18-member squad for the England tour features two maiden Test call-ups: top-order batter Sai Sudharsan and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh. Karun Nair and Shardul Thakur have earned recalls, while notable absentees include Mohammed Shami, Sarfaraz Khan, Harshit Rana, and Devdutt Padikkal.

Agarkar confirmed that Jasprit Bumrah, though included in the squad and a former Test captain himself, was not considered for the leadership role due to workload management.

"He is unlikely to play all five matches," said Agarkar, emphasising the need for careful rotation during the long English summer.



Emily Arlott

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